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The Reasons of Working in Informal Sector; A Research Among the Poor Women in Turkey

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Abstract

This research is done to analyze the reasons of poor women (women living in poor houses) taking part in informal employment. For this reason, 388 women living in poverty line and working in informal sector, in 7 districts of Ankara (Turkey) were interviewed. This research is planned and implemented as a descriptive research. The results are verified with SPSS statistical program and the following definitive results are obtained; the total household income of 9,8 % of the people living in poor houses that are surveyed is below 950 TL/month (351 \$/month) and the daily income of these people varies between \$ 2,9 and \$ 8,1. The household income of 56,2 % of these individuals changes from 950 to 1898 TL/month (352–702 \$/month) and daily income of these individuals alter between \$ 2,13 and \$ 11,7.

30,9 % of these individuals have total household income changing from 1899 to 2837 TL/month and daily income varies between \$ 4,3 and \$ 17,5. The last group (3,1 %) have total household income of 2838 TL/month and over. Daily income of the individuals in this group is between \$ 4,4 and \$ 17,6.

The economic contribution of the poor women, taking part in informal employment that are interviewed, to the household income are as follows; below 949 TL/month (351 \$/month) contributed to the household income by 72,4 % of these women. 13,7 % of these women make a contribution of exactly 949 TL/month (351 \$/month) to the household income and over 949 TL/month (351 \$/month) contributed to the household income by the remaining 13,9 %.

Table I:

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Patient/Elderly Care	6	1,5
Child Care	50	12,9
Food Production	66	17,0
Textile Production	50	12,9
Cleaning Services(Home/Office)	66	17,0
Bazaar Sales	36	9,3
Salesclerk	34	8,8
Others	80	20,5
Total	388	100,0

The jobs that poor women employed informally are shown in Table I. There are two groups with the percentage of 17; women in the first 17 % group give cleaning services (home and office), women in the second 17 % group work in food production sector. Similarly, there are two groups with the percentage of 12,9; one group gives childcare services informally and one group works in textile production sector. Following groups are; bazaar sales with the percentage of 9,3 and salesclerk with the percentage of 8,8. The group we determined as “others” are real estate agent, janitor, waitress, etc. with the percentage of 20,5.

Keywords: Poverty, Poverty of Woman, Informal Employment

1. Introduction

Poverty is approached and discussed distinctively because of its economic, social and political extent. In generally poverty is defined as individuals not having enough and regular income to provide basic needs ^[2].

UNDP, (one of the leading international organizations) which fights against poverty, describes poverty as; it is the condition of an individual's income is not enough to satisfy daily nutrition and basic needs apart from nutrition ^[5]. UNDP adopts “Human poverty” for the first time in Human Development Report 1997 ^[3]. Accordingly, human poverty is “*the deprivation of opportunities necessary for human development (lifetime healthiness, creative life, decent standard of life, freedom, self-esteem and the respect of others)*”. With this approach, UNDP

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prevents poverty to be associated not only with economical extent [12].

Researchers, who study on poverty (especially social scientists), are in tendency to address poverty in two major categories as “absolute poverty” and “relative poverty”. Absolute poverty is based on the idea of deprivation of basic conditions to manage on basic physical needs and stay healthy. Individuals who are unprovided with the basic needs such as enough food, shelter and clothing to ensure human existence is called poor [8]. Usually absolute poverty definition is used for the individuals that live below the poverty threshold [2]. According to Alcock, absolute poverty is, being lack of essential requirements of life [1].

Another important concept of poverty is relative poverty. Townsend defines relative poverty as; the condition in which people can absolutely fulfill the basic requirements of life, but are below general level of welfare and their social participation are restrained because of lacking personal resources [11].

The causes of poverty can be divided into two groups; poverty arising from individual selves (poor people) and poverty arising from other individuals [13]. Poverty caused by other individuals is referred as structural causes and they are; unemployment, status of the labor market, globalization, political reasons/government impact and economic depression. The causes of poverty arising from individual selves are personal ability and effort, level of financial prudence, responsibility and performance. Besides that, the culture of poverty is one of individual reasons of poverty [4; 9; 10; 11].

Informal employment occurs when operations and employees are not reported, specific level of work hours and wages are not reached, working in an unregistered business without labor agreement, working in behalf of one of the household and labor legislation is not practiced [7].

Informal employment occurs in case of;

- not reporting employee to the relevant state institutions and organizations
- reporting wages deficiently
- reporting hour of work deficiently
- not reporting to have a second job
- reporting to social security institution, but not to the tax office
- having undeclared work by one's own will
- Employing undeclared worker on the pretext of trial period [6].

Methods and Techniques

This is a survey research and it is done with the women in poor household (working informally) living in the city of Ankara (Turkey). 388 poor household and therefore 388 poor women taking part in informal economy were interviewed. The scale used in this research is developed by the researcher and is used in the researcher's PhD thesis which is approved and has similar subject. Data are collected and categorized with the help of the scale and these data are tested descriptively with the SPSS 18 statistical program.

Findings/Results

The reasons of poor women working in informal employment collected from this research are (it is an open ended question and categories are self-generated/ See Table II) as follows; 68,6 % of poor women stated that the reason for working in informal employment is “contribution to family budget”. 17,5 of these women stated that “providing for personal needs” is a

reason to work in informal economy and “to make a contribution to their children's education costs” is stated for a reason of poor women taking place in informal employment by 11,3 % of the women interviewed.

Table II:

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Contribution to Family Budget	266	68,6
Providing for Personal Needs	68	17,5
To Contribute to Children's Education Cost	44	11,3
Others	10	2,5
Total	388	100,0

Discussion

The results of the research indicates that women work in informal employment to contribute to family budget, on the other hand children's education costs are considered in family budget in Turkish culture. To this respect, it must be acknowledged that the category “to contribute to children's education costs” and the category “contribution to family budget” are intertwined. It is hard to differentiate between these two categories during the study, nevertheless the number of the women stating “to contribute to children's education costs” is large enough to ignore.

Personal expenditure of the household member are also considered in family budget, 17,3 % of the women interviewed, answered “providing for personal needs”. This result represents that majority of women living in poor households work in informal employment to support their family and especially children.

Even though it is not included in the survey, women who lives in poor households and stated that they work in informal economy to provide for personal needs might be single young women living in poor houses or women that have difficulty in providing personal needs from the family budget.

Conclusion

The results we have found are; the reason for poor women of working in informal employment is to make a contribution to the family income. Even if there is a group of women stating that they work for providing their personal needs, as a matter of fact, it appears to be possible that this group of women take part in informal economy because they do not want to overburden to family budget.

Limitations

This research is limited to the degree of the scale that is used in data collection and the answers that interviewers stated. It is designed and conducted taking consideration of poor households, therefore is limited to poor women living in poor households.

Conflict Interest

The authors declare that they have no potential conflict of interest.

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