

Uysal, M. (2016). Gender in Academia in Turkey. *International Journal of Educational Policies*. Vol. 10 (2). pp. 141-148.

ISSN: 1307-3842

Gender in Academia in Turkey

Meral Uysal*

Ankara University, Turkey

Abstract

Author's aim in this study is to analyze the appearances of gender in academia in Turkey. Gender relations in academia cannot be considered as independent from the position of woman labor in general employment. The issue of how woman labor is subordinated under capitalism circumstances and how it contributes to continuing of class exploitation is less apparent in academic profession. However, it has own specific characteristics. On one hand the academia in Turkey aims the gender equity on discourse level as part of neoliberal governance ideology, it maintains to accommodate the gender discriminative approaches with its men dominant structure on the other hand. Women are disadvantaged especially for dealing with the promoting criteria based on performance as reflection of neoliberal approaches on employment. Later, related empirical data were presented. When the academy as being a life style or discourses on commitment to science come side by side with the existing gender codes, it is not possible to say that any conflict does not result in. The issue of woman in academia is a part of the issue of woman in society, so unless the structural inequalities surrounding this issue are not changed it will continue as a struggling arena in the academia.

Keywords: *gender in academia, neoliberal policies, higher education.*

* Professor Meral Uysal is Head of Department Life Long Learning in Faculty of Educational Sciences in Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey. Address: Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences, Cebeci Campus, 06590, Cebeci, Ankara. E-mail: muysal@ankara.edu.tr

Gender in Academia in Turkey

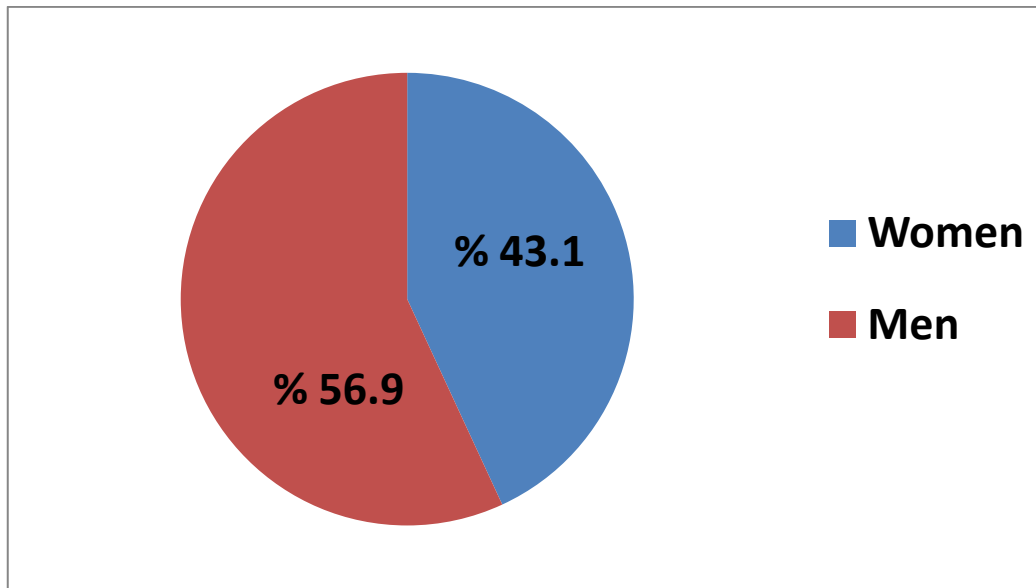
My aim in this study is to analyze the appearances of gender in academia in Turkey. Gender relations in academia cannot be considered as independent from the position of woman labor in general employment. The issue of how woman labor is subordinated under capitalism circumstances and how it contributes to continuing of class exploitation is less apparent in academic profession. However, it has own specific characteristics. On one hand the academia in Turkey aims the gender equity on discourse level as part of neoliberal governance ideology, it maintains to accommodate the gender discriminative approaches with its men dominant structure on the other hand. Women are disadvantaged especially for dealing with the promoting criteria based on performance as reflection of neoliberal approaches on employment. I will present the related empirical data later.

When the academy as being a life style or discourses on commitment to science come side by side with the existing gender codes, it is not possible to say that any conflict does not result in. The issue of woman in academia is a part of the issue of woman in society, so unless the structural inequalities surrounding this issue are not changed it will continue as a struggling arena in the academia.

Firstly, we can analyze the indicators related with representations of women numerically in academic positions, academic fields and management tasks in order to show how gender exists in academic life. Secondly, we can look at what are the existing gendered practices of “to be woman in academia” such as gendered attitudes and behaviors faced and coped with by women, the consequences of the problem of balancing work and family life in academic life and the gendered points of view internalized.

First, when we look at the representation of women in academia, it draws attention firstly that women representation in academic positions is equal to and even more compared to that in west and many developed countries.

According to statistics of Higher Education 2015¹, 43.1% of academics working in public and private universities in Turkey are women academics. It's observed that distribution of women and men among academics changes according to universities and rate of women academics increases in central universities. Percentages of women academics are 43.6 % in Australia, 12.7 % in Japan, 31 % in Denmark, 31.7 % in Norway and 36.7 % in Sweden as of 2013-2014 years.²



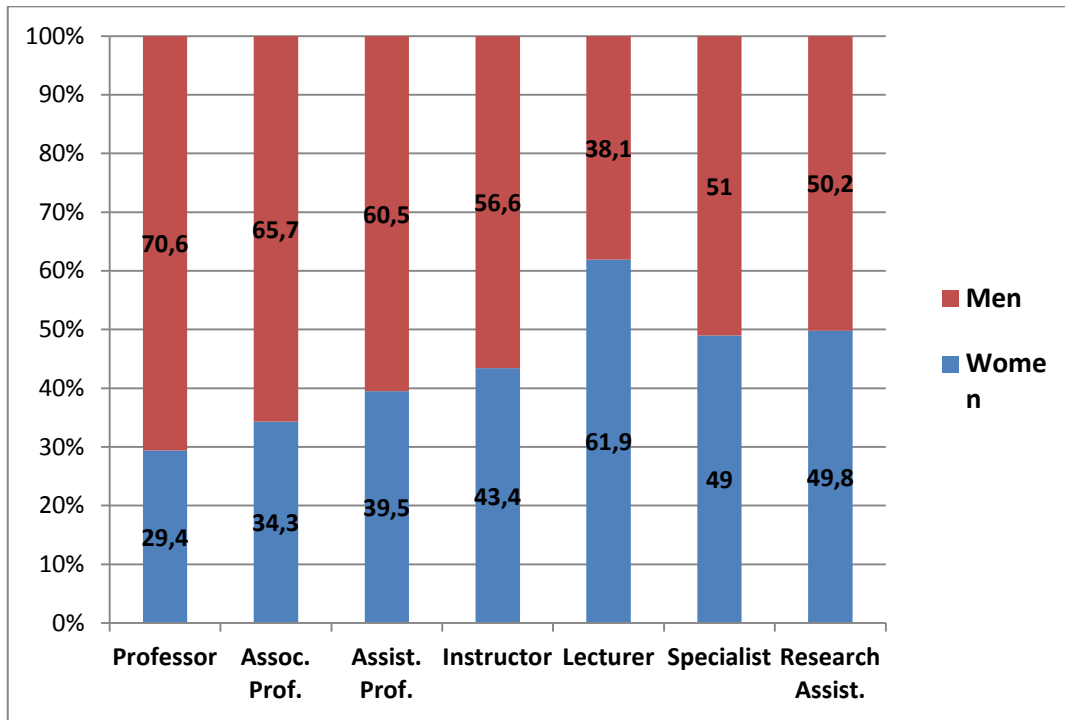
Graphic 1. Representation of Women in Academia in Turkey

Whether or not the high rate of women representation in academia in Turkey (although not equal) corresponds to an equality in real terms is closely related with how the existing numerical indicators are evaluated. As it can be seen from the graph, when the distribution according to academic positions in public and private universities analyzed, it's observed that the percentage of women academics as 43.1 % in the total academics decreases to 29.4 % in professors, to 34.3 % in associate professors, and to 39.5 % in assistant professors. However, the percentage increases to 43.4 % in instructor staff and exceeds the percentage of men academics with 61.9 % in lecturer staff for whom temporary employment is prevalent. Women and men participating in the academic process from relative near points at bachelor's degree

¹ The data in this study has been obtained from Higher Education Statistics 2015, from the website of Higher Education Council of Turkey. <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

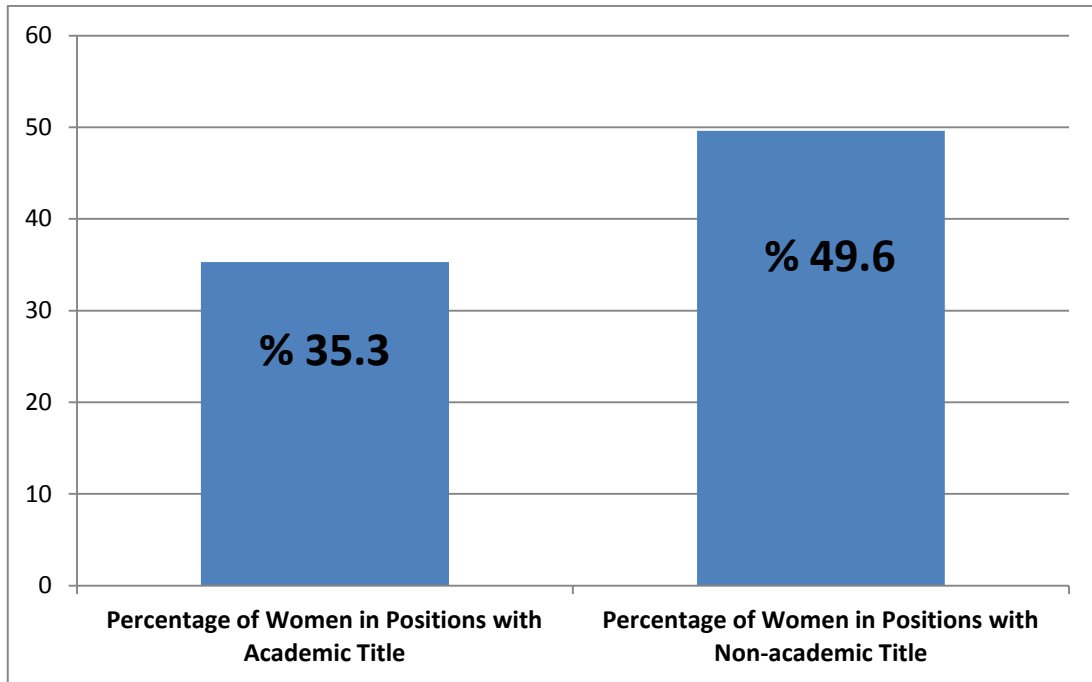
² http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-academia#footnote27_2z12yh3

and even doctorate level create stratification based on gender by diverging in the progressive stages of their academic career.



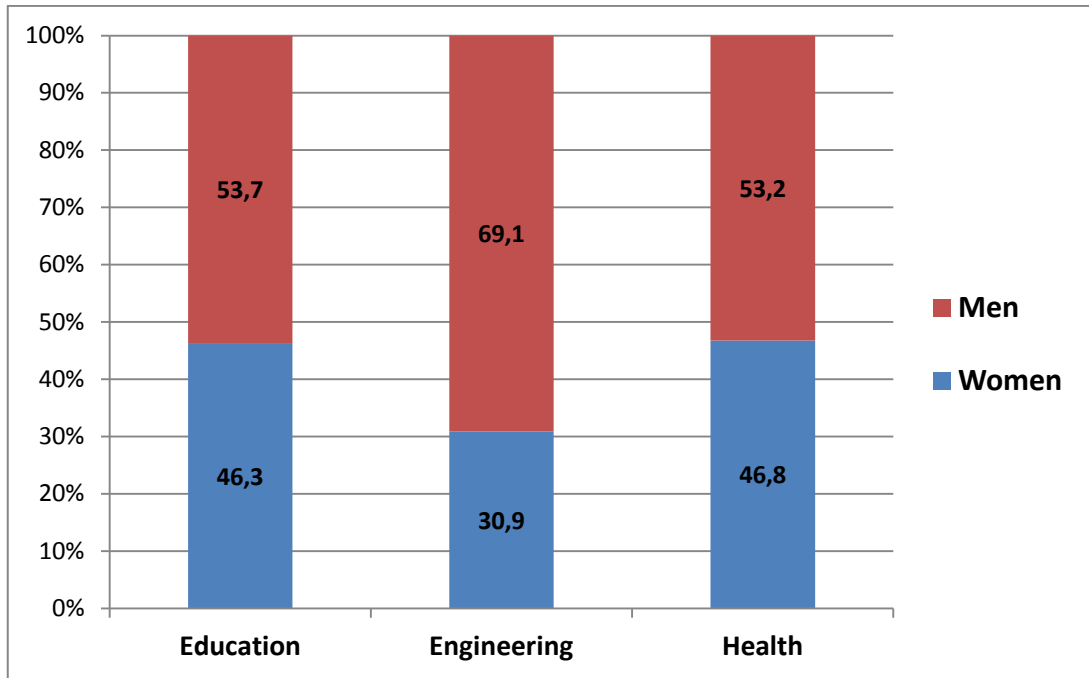
Graphic 2. Women and Men Distribution According to Academic Positions

When the above distribution is rearranged as positions with academic titles and positions with non-academic titles, the distribution is revealed as seen in the graphic. While the percentage of women holding academic positions with titles is 35.3 % (thity five point three percent), the percentage of women holding positions with no academic titles is 49.6 % as consisting nearly half of the whole group. As it’s known, although sometimes transitions occur from positions like instructors and lecturers to positions with academic titles, those are the cadres that have no possibility for promoting in academic hierarchy. When viewed in terms of academic titles it can be said that there is no equality among genders and there is academic stratification. This shows that “women can accommodate in the academia only when being academician is come down to teaching. On the other hand, women face more with the unsecure employment as a neoliberal imposition.



Graphic 3. *Women Percentage According to Academic Positions*

One another dimension is that distribution of women and men academician points to a differentiation based on gender with respect to education and teaching fields. Graphic 4 shows the gender distribution of academicians in education, health and engineering areas. As it's seen while the percentage of women academics in the fields of education and health increases, it decreases significantly in the engineering areas. In a male dominant society, because it's seen as an extension of domestic roles, educational field becomes more oriented one by women in comparison with other fields. Also, health field exhibits a similar state with its functions such as care and surveillance. Pharmacy and dentistry fields, where women academics increase relatively, provide opportunity to earn much more other than academy. Thus, they're left to the women mostly. However, there exist men academics densely in engineering fields. This situation can be interpreted as a reflection of professional differentiation based on gender in society on academic field.



Graphic 4. Percentages of Women and Men According to Education Teaching Field

Furthermore, the representation of women in managerial tasks exhibits the asymmetry between women and men clearly. The following findings were obtained in the research conducted through scanning the web sites of 100 out of 104 public universities as of March 2015:

- Only 2 of the present 17 members of the Higher Education Council are women. Members of the Supervising Board are totally men
- There are woman chancellors only in 5 of 100 public universities. Out of 245 vice chancelors, only 11 are women. This corresponds to 4.5 % .
- There are 95 women deans of 918 faculties. This corresponds to about 10 %.

Although it's revealed that women-men distribution in academia in Turkey is not too far to equality, it's observed that women going through the same academic processes as men do not have a voice adequately in decision making mechanisms. Distance of women academics to managerial tasks strengthen and reproduce the male dominant culture and masculine structure in university.

While the research on gender in academia take us to examine the representation of women in hierarchy of academic title, scientific fields and university management in one sense, it also leads us to that there is also cause or result of these representation manners and to research into what are the gender patterns originating from being

woman that threaten women's existence equally with men in science generation process and their progress, from another aspect.

Being academia comprise of scholars does not change gender codes regarding womanhood and manhood. Socialization process exists in society continues in academia too.

Gender patterns make themselves feel in the concepts such as woman sexuality, beauty, honor exist also in academia although less apparent. Generally women academics seem to be withdrawn to express the sexual abuse they experienced due to the fact that although injured party is woman, woman is held responsible for the behavior she faced with because of gender discriminatory attitudes. On the other hand, it's observed that women academics are obliged to bear those things for their progress because of power relations in the academic process.

Women exist in academia on the condition of balancing their marriage, children and work life within the framework of patterns imposed by division of labor based on gender and they subject to compete with men not sharing same circumstances. When research conducted on this topic in Turkey evaluated all together, the following results are revealed:

- Research carried out show that women academics never married or married lately and having no child or having child in late ages and few children. Percentage of women never married and divorced is quite higher than that of men.
- It has been found that almost all men married with children could get over first critical and hard years of their career easily because the responsibilities of housework and children taken over by their wives. However, since the doctorate years for a woman academic correspond to marriage and having child and the responsibilities are not shared equally, women academics can overcome this term with double difficulties compared to men. The reflections of neoliberal processes on academy strike at women more. It has been observed that the women of this era, which characterized by increasing expectations, raising standards and professional assurance problems in academic life, experience the conflict between home and academy less and

get over the critical periods (between doctorate and associate professorship) easier when there is wage labor, family support, sharing of responsibilities for house and child with spouse, establishing a mutual understanding and balance with the spouse who is academic too and having a supporting managerial environment.

- It's observed that having insufficiency feeling for both academic studies and motherhood is more prevalent among women. It can be said that this arises from gendered values internalized by women.
- While women academics need making arrangements and getting help from their family for academic travelling and mobility, this is perceived by men as going away from the environment, diversity and embellishing the life.
- Women academics produce some metaphors for themselves like cloned human being, octopus and Swiss pocket knife. This event reflects the women's existence in academia in a harmony of home and work.

Last words

We can say as conclusion that the women in academia are centered on the fields specific to woman, place below the stratification in academic hierarchy, represented in low levels in management, and experience problems originating from "being woman". It seems like that, despite the intellectual climate attributed to academia, it will have its share from this inequality as long as the inequality between women and men remains.

International Journal of Educational Policies

ISSN: 1307-3842

<http://ijep.icpres.org>

<http://ojs.ijep.info>

©IJEP