

EVALUATION OF THE WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

The rural economies today encounter problems related to production costs, marketing constrains, food security, climate change and rural job opportunities. Rural poverty is being increased and women in rural are more exposed to rural poverty. In order to reduce rural poverty, activities that generate additional income for the family budget as the production of products that include especially women's manual labor, are encouraged. Women's cooperatives are the only enterprises that will enable women to organize and empower, especially in rural areas. This study aims to evaluate the position of women's cooperatives, their role in development and the current situation from an alternative rural development perspective. The most important impact of the cooperatives is that they turn women into the main actors of rural change and into intermediaries who will make women's labor that is invisible in the public space visible.

Key Words: Rural Development, Women's Cooperatives, Women's Labor, Turkish Economy Politics

ÖZET

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s "social statism and developmentalism", which is an extension of Keynesian policies, has begun to be adopted and spread out. (Patnaik;2005,5-18). The concept of developmentalism covers the policies and industrialization targets to improve the economic and social structure in order to get rid of the underdevelopment process of the countries that could not complete their development adventure after the Second World War. Despite the overproduction in capitalism, "hunger and poverty" continues to be a problem both in urban and rural areas. The academy's interest in development and development issues in today's science continues. The Nobel Prize of 2019 in economics was awarded to Abhijit Banarjee, Esther Duflo and Michale Kreme for their work on "experimental approaches in combating global poverty, development economics and developing countries".

The increasing usage of technology in agricultural production and the resulting economic, sociocultural, social, ecological problems encourage "new projects" in rural areas and lead to seek alternative development. Cooperatives have started to emerge as alternative means of earning in response to decreasing agricultural income. In particular, examples of cooperatives that include products based on women's labor have started to be seen. Recently, both general policy makers and local governments have been promoting especially women's cooperatives.

In rural areas, women are not sufficiently visible in economic and social life due to insufficient representation of women. Cooperatives became an important instrument for women's organization and increasing their visibility in socio-economic life. Although there has been an increase in the studies on cooperatives, there is a limited number of studies about women and cooperatives. The study aims to make a

modest contribution to the literature gap in this area by addressing women's cooperatives in terms of development policies. The main motivation of the study is to address women's cooperatives based on the development discourse and to evaluate the ability of these cooperatives to create alternatives for rural women.

2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Although rural development is one of the concepts discussed by organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, OECD, non-governmental organizations and government programs from time to time, there is no single universal definition that explains the concept. In general, the concept of rural development can be defined as "improving and increasing the living conditions of people living in rural areas and earning a significant part of their livelihood from agriculture". There are different classifications emphasizing the development level of the countries such as developed-developing, east-west, center-periphery. Most of the less developed countries have problems with "development". (King, 1998)

Rural development debate in Turkey takes place in the first five-year development plan. Especially when the first three development plans are examined, it is seen that policies towards the agricultural sector and the agricultural population are at the center of the rural development discourse. Agricultural sector is planned to be modernized with appropriate capital and technology. Being in the countryside as included in the development plans is being built as a sign of backwardness and underdevelopment not only globally but also on a national scale.

Development policies target social, economic, cultural and social transformations within the framework of a certain ideology. They generally have different effects on men and women. (Hoşgör, 2010). Many development policies today focus on poverty reduction, creation of education and employment opportunities for people living in rural areas. Considering that agriculture alone cannot eliminate rural poverty, these policies aim to increase non-agricultural employment (Hoşgör;2016). At this point, cooperatives have an important place due to their effect of improving the status of women living in rural areas and the effect of increasing income and improving rural life.

The concept of rural development can be used in reference to different issues such as the development of rural areas and the increase in rural life quality. Efforts by both the private sector and the public to find recipes for the improvement of life in rural areas continue. While it used to be a matter of the public sector, today the private sector also includes issues such as rural development, women's situation, elderly and children with new projects. Generally, rural development can be defined as improving the living standards of people living in rural areas. (Chambers 2013; Lele U. 1975; Murdoch 2000; Thomas, A. & Potter, D. 1992)

According to Oakley and Garforth (1985), development is "a dynamic concept that includes the economic production activities of a society, the social welfare of the society and the development of the individual". They underline the importance of rural development projects in the development of a society as well as urban development projects. The concept of Rural Development includes the projects and plans prepared for the solution of the problems faced by the rural communities and to reach a safer life (Oakley&Garforth, 1985).

The World Bank evaluates rural development in a framework that deals with economy, politics, geography and other disciplines together. It aims to find global solutions to problems such as rural poverty, migration from rural to urban, land and water pollution, agricultural production problems and to look at these problems with a new perspective.

Escobar places special emphasis on development strategies that include the intersection areas of power, knowledge and practice in planning, rural studies, health, nutrition, sustainability, women's rights and the environment (1995). Mies and Shiva (1993) focus on the concept of rural development from an ecofeminism perspective and focus on ecological destructions and women.

2.1. Women in Rural Development Policies

Rural development is on the agenda of the public and private sectors. United Nations (2013) states that women play a key role for development in rural areas. The success of this role provides a broad framework that is essential for sustainable development as well as economic, environmental and social change. However, it states that there are obstacles for women in accessing many areas such as health, education and

financial support. Despite the diversity of work done in terms of place and activity, women play a very important role in food in general in rural areas.(Karl,2009) Women have multiple duties, such as being producers of agricultural products, custodians, protectors of traditional methods, collectors, and suppliers of the family's food needs. (ILO,1981;Dixon-Mueller 1985;Becker 2000; Karl,2009)

In many parts of the world, the collection and harvesting of the products planted in agricultural enterprises has been defined as "housework". Therefore, the position of women in production is seen as "unpaid family labor". The work performed by rural women, especially in agricultural production, is defined as the routine, heavy and unskilled jobs of the production process. The way women engage in agriculture is seen as "cheap labor" or "helping the family economy". Accepting their activities as part of their natural life instead of production causes the perception of the value of their work as low. Women's labor remains within the family economy. Women and girls helping mothers, who are deemed responsible for the nourishment of the family and society, undertake different tasks from growing the crop to harvesting. (Aksoy ve Günay, 2018; Candan 2017; Hablemitoğlu, 1998; Kulak, 2011; Sirman;1991.)

The invisibility of female labor in rural areas naturally triggers women's impoverishment. There are anti-poverty policies prepared to prevent women from becoming poor. In order to make these policies more functional, internationally joint studies are becoming widespread, and projects involving women at the local scale have recently become prominent. In families engaged in agriculture in the countryside in Turkey, there is a division of labor between men and women based on the traditions. In this division of labor, men generally do the part of agricultural work that generates more income. Women, on the other hand, perform activities aimed at meeting all the needs required for both reproduction and survival of the family.

Agricultural enterprises in Turkey are usually in the form of small family businesses. In this small business model, traditional structure in rural areas is preserved. In particular, women and children are seen as "unpaid family workers" within the family. According to many authors, women in rural areas are not only responsible for agricultural production but also the elderly and children. (Le Magadoux 1995; Hablemitoğlu, 1998; Ecevit, 2000; Saad 2013; Duguid, 2015; Hoşgör; 2016; Candan&Günal,2017) Women in these conditions suffer in the areas of wage, social security and land ownership, resulting in an inadequate female model in terms of organization and social status.

2.2. Development of Cooperatives

The International Cooperation Administration (ICA) defines cooperatives as "human-centered enterprises controlled and operated by its members to fulfill their common economic, social and cultural needs and desires" (ICA;2019). Cooperatives are structures of special importance that operate in a wide variety of fields. Because of these features, they are also defined as "third sector". Cooperatives representing national cooperative associations at the international level bring people together democratically and equally. Whether members are customers, employees, users, or residents, cooperatives are democratically governed by a "one member, one vote" rule. Members share equal voting rights regardless of the amount of capital invested in the business. Regarding cooperatives, ICA has determined seven principles: voluntary and open partnership, democratic control of the partners, economic participation of the partners, autonomy and independence, education, training and knowledge, cooperation between cooperatives, social responsibility. (ICA; 2019)

Unlike enterprises, cooperatives have equal voting rights regardless of the amount of capital invested by their members. Thus, cooperatives bring people together democratically and equally.

According to the ICA, the contemporary cooperatives are far from being marginal structures (ICA; 2019). At least 12 percent of people are partners of one of the 3 million cooperatives in the world. The 300 largest cooperatives and their partners generate a total annual turnover of 2.1 trillion USD. Cooperatives contribute to a sustainable economic growth employing 280 million people worldwide.

Cooperatives are organizations that develop responsibility and belonging automatically through the principles of democracy, equality and solidarity. In the cooperative tradition, partners have the ethical value of honesty, openness, social responsibility and valuing others. In addition, by increasing the sense of sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental responsibility, cooperatives provide an alternative vision to companies.

The effects of increasing employment, increasing the income of small producers by creating production and marketing facilities increase the importance of cooperatives in the development of society.

In the last thirty years, as a result of the changes in economic and social life and policies, the role of the state in the economic and social field has been decreasing in favor of local administrations. There has been a process towards balancing the development of different economic sectors in local governments. In this period, cooperatives fill the gap that has emerged as structures that can sustain economic solidarity on their own.

At this point, cooperatives have become one of the most important economic and non-governmental organizations of today, with a turnover of USD 2.1 trillion and the capacity to create employment for approximately 280 million people, while meeting the goods, service and infrastructure needs of societies. There are 3 million cooperatives and more than 1 billion cooperative members worldwide (ICA, 2019) With these aspects, cooperatives are one of the most important actors in reviving the local economy, increasing welfare and ensuring sustainability.

3. COOPERATIVES IN TURKEY

Cooperatives have special significance since the establishment of the Homeland Chests (1863), the first example of cooperatives in Turkey, until today. The "Cooperatives Law" entered into force in 1969 after approximately 25 years of preparatory work. The number of consumption cooperatives, credit and penance cooperatives, agricultural cooperatives and housing cooperatives has increased with the enactment of the law. The higher organization of cooperatives has been legalized and production cooperatives, supply distribution cooperatives and cooperatives operating in the transportation sector have been established as new types of cooperatives. (Koop.Raporu; 2017)

International organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) support cooperatives with their policies.

For the development of cooperatives, which has an important place in both the development of agriculture and the establishment of agriculture-based industry in our country, the planned period and the principle policies and measures are included in the annual programs and development plans. (Başaran & İnan,2014)

The 2018-2022 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry includes provisions regarding the cooperatives such as "To increase the knowledge level of producers; allow the establishment of cooperatives, unions and other producer organizations; supervising and supporting cooperatives, unions, chambers, producer organizations and their affiliates; to take the necessary measures in order to conclude their actions and transactions in accordance with the law".

Cooperatives traditionally operate in the field of agriculture (production, purchase and sales), wholesale and retail trade, housing construction, water, electricity and health sectors, banking and insurance. However, new cooperative organizations are increasingly being established in sectors such as information and communication technology, care service, handicrafts, tourism and cultural fields.

In order to ensure rural development and harmonization with the European Union, Agrarian Reform Implementation Project (ARIP) was accomplished in Turkey. Institutional Strengthening of Farmers' Organizations Project, one of the sub-components of ARIP, was implemented between 2005-2008. According to the project carried out prior to the study, one of the main problems of farmers' organizations in Turkey is the lack of capacity and institutional building. (Everest B. et al,2019)

Agriculture is the first sector that comes to mind when talking about rural development. Agriculture accounts for about 7 percent of Turkish Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Company size of agricultural holdings constitute about 79% of the rural population in Turkey is small and scattered at random from the 100 decrease. Cooperatives are seen as an alternative way in dealing with problems faced by the producer such as uncertainties in the production process, difficulties in marketing the product and finding financing.

Considering the data of the world and various country groups, the number of working women by sectors is gradually decreasing. However, in low-income country groups, women are very important in terms of production in agriculture. In agriculture, while 40.3 percent of women were employed in the agricultural sector in the world in 2000, this rate decreased to 27.6 percent in 2018. As of 2018, the proportion of

women employed in the agricultural sector in developed countries is 2 percent, in developing countries 44.6 percent, and in low-income countries 66.7 percent (WB, 2019). Referring to Turkey's data, while the employment rate of women in agriculture in 2000 was 64.7 percent, it decreased to 27.9 percent in 2018. This rate is around 7.9 percent in Europe and Central Asia. In Turkey, women's employment in agriculture still holds a very important place.

Table 1: Agricultural Employment Rate (%)

	Male employment rate		Female employment rate	
	2000	2018	2000	2018
Turkey	28,8	15,2	64,7	27,9
World	40,3	28,7	39,7	27,6

Source: WB, 2019

Considering the rate of contribution of men and women working in the family businesses in agriculture sector in the world and Turkey as of 2017 data, in Turkey there is a significant difference between male and female family workers. While the rate of men being family workers was 4.4 percent, this rate for women is 25.5 percent. The contribution of men to the family budget is 17.1 percent in the average of low-income countries while this rate is 5 per thousand in the average of high-income countries. In low-income countries, while the contribution of women to the family budget is 44.2 percent, this rate is 1.6 percent in high-income countries. This data shows that in Turkey a high rate of women take place as workers in rural families.

Agricultural enterprises in Turkey are usually in the form of small family businesses. In this small business model, traditional structure in rural areas is preserved. In the family, especially women and children are seen as "unpaid family workers". Under these conditions, cooperatives emerge as an important alternative for rural women. Governments and local governments should encourage rural women to establish cooperatives, cooperative education should be provided and alternative ways should be considered. The ratio of women to contribute to the family economy as unpaid family workers in Turkey is located on even the world average.

Table 2: Distribution of Contributors to Family Budget by Gender (Percentage)¹

	Male (Percentage)	Female (Percentage)
Turkey	4,4	25,5
Average Of The Low- Income Countries	17,1	44,2
Average Of The High-Income Countries	0,5	1,6
Average Of The World	6,5	18,4

Source: WB, 2019

4. AN OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S COOPERATIVES

Especially cooperatives have an important place in the organization of women's labor instead of traditional forms of organization. The participation of women in the cooperatives, which have social goals as well as economic goals, is a factor that increases social development. Women's cooperatives started to gain weight in our country after 2000's. Establishment procedures of women's cooperatives are carried out with the approval of the Ministry of Trade. Legal regulation on this issue was made in 2011. According to this regulation, a uniform sample master contract has been prepared for the establishment of 'Women, Environment Culture Business Cooperative'. It was stated that these cooperatives could be established with the initiative of seven women who came together, as in other cooperatives.

In rural areas, cooperatives play a fundamental role on self-sufficiency and solidarity. (Kadin Kooperatifleri Kılavuzu,2018) This type of production is a powerful voice for rural women in matters such as employment, health care, education, nutrition and market entry. Although women living in rural areas are involved in all stages of agricultural production, they do not have enough power in the decision-making process. National and international studies on women's cooperatives are limited. However, looking at the studies, the number of women in leadership positions in women's cooperatives is higher than in other

¹ The employment status indicator distinguishes between the two categories of the total employed; a) wage and salaried workers, b) Self Employed. Self-employed group divided into subcategories: employers, self-employed, members of producer cooperatives and unpaid family workers. Precise employment means the sum of family workers and self-employed workers. The series is part of ILO estimates and has been harmonized to ensure comparability between countries and over time, taking into account differences in data source, coverage, methodology and other country-specific factors. Estimates are based solely on representative national labor force surveys, however, other data (censuses and nationally reported estimates) are only used in the absence of survey data.

enterprises (ILO & ICA 2014). According to the report prepared by Duguid et al. (2015) for the World Bank, the number of women in leadership positions is higher in cooperatives than in other enterprises. Women's representation is particularly high in consumption cooperatives, social service cooperatives and low-profit agricultural cooperatives. However, cooperatives with high profitability land ownership and high capital investment predominantly have male members. In cooperatives whose partners are both men and women, women generally do not hold leadership positions. Women's participation in cooperatives is constrained by literacy, low job skills, lack of land ownership, and gender inequalities in limited access to credit and information.

Cooperatives are very important tools for the economic development of women as they do not generate income. There are women's cooperatives in many areas in Turkey. The production and marketing of traditional food products, from cultivated mushrooms to caper seedling cultivation, from cheese making to traditional felt craftsmanship, from sick and elderly care to sericulture, these cooperatives have been demonstrated by researches that they develop both women and their environment (Kızılaslan 2010, Gümüšoğlu 2012, Yılmaz 2019). In addition, women carry out the marketing of products such as clothing and souvenirs produced by their own hands through these cooperatives.

Özdemir (2013) argues that the establishment of cooperatives should be established with a voluntary action from the below. Additionally, independent cooperatives like women's cooperatives, established with the organization from the bottom to up, continue to develop in an economically weak and dispersed structure. Therefore, they emphasize that in order for women's cooperatives not to fall into the same situation, they should organize and manage cooperatives more consciously.

Cooperatives act with motives of partnership, solidarity and volunteering. Women living in rural areas are among the most vulnerable groups in society. Many national and international organizations are looking for a way to struggle in order to change the traditional way of life, the low female employment rate, inability in taking part in decision mechanisms and lack of organization. Cooperatives are an important tool in improving the social status of women who remain in this situation, providing economic gain and assuming a driving role in community development.

Thanks to the cooperatives, women's employment opportunities are increasing. Today, the most important problems around the world are still development issues such as poverty. Since women are among the groups most affected by poverty, the importance of women's cooperatives increases even more in the fight against poverty.

In all economic systems, it is accepted that women are disadvantaged and inadequate in terms of participation in employment. The most important method that will enable women to have less risk in economic activities and to be more effective in social life is cooperatives. In order to draw attention to the importance of the issue and to produce solutions, international organizations such as FAO and ILO from India to Africa support the work of women's cooperatives by developing various projects.

The purpose of including women's labor under the roof of the cooperative differs from the establishment purpose of other cooperatives. In the women's cooperative sample articles of association; It includes objectives such as "meeting the economic, social and cultural needs of its partners and their needs for the production of goods and services within the scope of their economic activities and their marketing, supporting their enterprises, improving their production skills, thus ensuring their partners to live in a healthy and developed environment by protecting their economic interests". The number of cooperatives with the phrase "woman" in their name and in which women actively operate has reached 141. Despite the recent increase in number, it is aimed to reach more women.

Table 3: Cooperative Titles with the Word "Woman" in its Title (Source: GTB)

Title of The Cooperative	Number of Cooperatives
Operational Cooperative	71
Woman Entrepreneur Production and Operation Cooperative	56
Craft Cooperative	4
Production and Marketing Cooperative	4
Consumers Cooperative	3
Scientific Research and Development Cooperative	1
Supply and Distribution Cooperative	1
Solidarity Cooperative	1
Total	141

Common working areas of women's cooperatives operating outside rural development and agriculture are classified by the Ministry of Trade as follows;

- ✓ Organizing training courses for hand skills
- ✓ Production and marketing of traditional food, clothing, souvenirs etc.
- ✓ Restaurant business
- ✓ Education and care of the disabled
- ✓ Preschool Education

These job descriptions show that mostly gender-based areas are studied in the evaluation of women's labor. Considering cooperative women and gender concepts, the goals can be evaluated as follows;

- ✓ Decreasing female poverty over time
- ✓ Increasing women's employment and supporting the talented business lines without showing a sexist tendency in work areas
- ✓ Increasing the representation of women who cannot reach political actors and finding public authorities where they can report the problems encountered
- ✓ Creating areas where women can socialize and support their encounter with culturally new areas
- ✓ Supporting the participation of women while building alternative development models
- ✓ Developing women's organizational skills and preparing the grounds for organizing

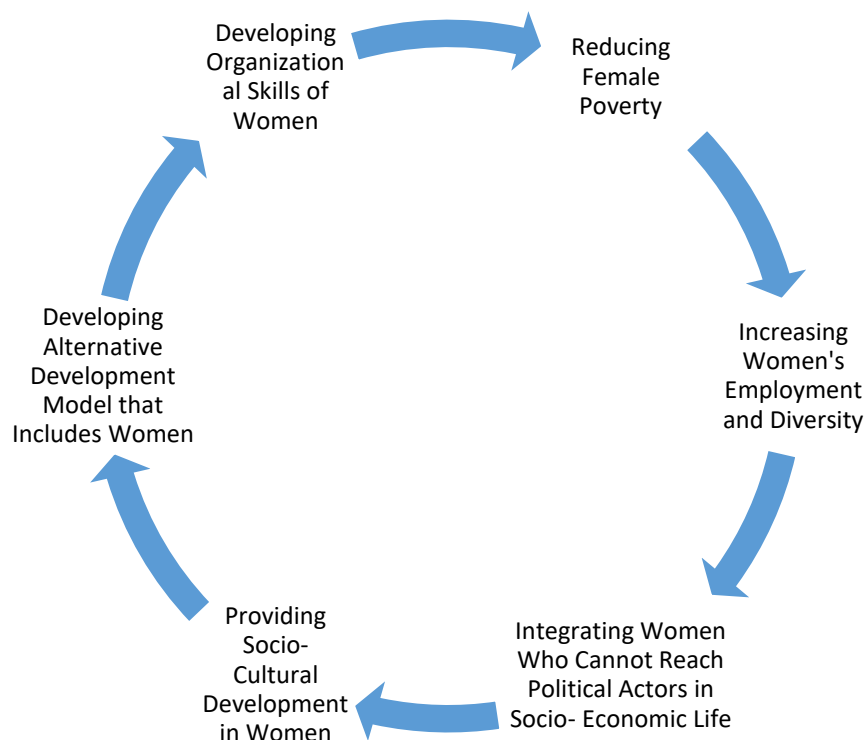


Figure 1: General Objectives of Women's Cooperatives

5. CONCLUSION

The jobs performed by rural women, especially in agricultural production, are the jobs defined as unskilled in the production process. Income-generating jobs are done mostly by men. Women, on the other hand, undertake many different jobs ranging from the production, collection, harvesting, marketing and bringing the product to the table. Although they do most of the work in agricultural production, their work is not seen as an income generating activity.

Cooperatives emerge as a mean that support women's production in rural areas. Cooperatives are an important type of organization that develops solidarity, self-sufficiency and cooperation skills. Cooperatives have different branches such as agriculture, health services and education. Many national and international organizations seek ways to combat problems such as low employment of women, not taking part in decision-making mechanisms, inadequacy of organization, and traditional lifestyle. In this case, cooperatives are an important way of improving the social status of women, providing economic gain and assuming a driving role in community development. Cooperatives overcome historical barriers to development by the way they bring people, resources and capital together.

Small family agricultural enterprises in Turkey is widely seen among the business model. In this small business model, traditional structure in rural areas is preserved. In particular, women and children are seen as “unpaid family workers” within the family. Under these circumstances, cooperatives emerge as an important alternative for women in rural areas. Governments and local governments should consider ways to encourage rural women's co-operatives. For this purpose, cooperative training should be provided and alternative ways should be considered.

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