

The Paradox of Progress: Well-Educated Yet Non-Employed NEET Women in Turkey

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Abstract:

Turkey consistently ranks among the OECD countries with the highest proportion of women who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). On the other hand, NEET women are not a homogeneous group; various factors, such as age, educational level, family responsibilities, and the environment in which they live, differentiate the reasons why these women remain outside the system. Therefore, examining NEET women by dividing them into meaningful subcategories enables a deeper understanding of the reasons behind this situation and facilitates the development of targeted social and economic policies specific to different groups. Such a categorisation will enable policymakers to utilise resources more efficiently and develop more effective solutions to reduce NEET rates. So, why do well-educated women not prefer to be included in employment? This research will be conducted within the framework of this research question and through the concept of NEET. Considering the positive developments in the inclusion of women in education in Turkey over the past decade, the lack of employment among educated women can also be interpreted as a failure of education policies to be reflected in employment policies. The continuing high unemployment rate for women is also seen as an indicator of this, and this situation is triggered by social policy trends that position women within the family. Being NEET not only makes it difficult to assess individual potential, but it can also lead to structural outcomes that may hinder the effective use of human capital. In this sense, an approach that evaluates well-educated but unemployed women through the concept of NEET questions the place of women in education and employment policies. Based on all this, within the scope of this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with well-educated women who have completed their undergraduate education but are currently not employed and not participating in the labor force, and their assessments on this subject were obtained.

Keywords:

Education–employment mismatch, NEET, Well-educated women, Women’s employment, Turkey.