

Gender Roles of Rural Women in Small Districts of Adana Province, Turkey

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Abstract: This study examined gender roles of rural women living in six small districts, "which is called *belde* in Turkish" of Yuregir Plain of Adana Province, Turkey. Data were collected from 282 rural women by means of questionnaire and face to face interview by the author. Research was started in the end of the 2002 and completed end of the 2003. Findings of the research show that living in small districts, which has both of the rural and urban characteristics, is not positively influenced factor on gender roles of women in the research area. Rural women have secondary position both in home and society like villages due to patriarchal structure.

Key words: Gender roles, rural women, Turkey, small districts

Introduction

After the years of 1950, industrialization, agricultural mechanization, inner and outer migration, urbanization, developments of transportation and highways, developments of mass media instruments and developments of population structure had been the main components for changing in rural society in Turkey (Merter, 1990).

These components also influenced social and economic structure in villages located in Yuregir Plain. Some of these villages were exposed to migration from East and South East Region of Turkey; increased their relation with urban area by means of developments of transportation and communication; benefit from health and education services and had "small district" status, which is called "*belde*" in Turkish, because of increased village population. Intensive increasing of population because of inner migration, developments of non-agricultural economic activities, high rate of housewife and unqualified male worker due to landlessness, and unemployment are some of the features observed in settlements that have small district status.

According to Nel's Study (1998) conducted in South Africa, small towns often tend to be concentration points of poverty, and they are often the first destination of rural people seeking on urban life-style. It is socially an advantageous process in which people with relatively low incomes in the rural sector will shift to relatively higher incomes in the urban sector. Even the small towns are expanding due to rural-urban migration (Reddy, 1988). But success of migration depends on social and economic sufficiency and cultural harmony of new settlements from the point of immigrant people.

In this context, it is important that to study on gender in small districts. Because, women are the main group that affected from migration (from rural to small districts and/or urban), socio-economic differentiation and different social and economic environment. Women play important roles in rural areas as producers, managers of households, income earners, mother and they are very important person for continuity of rural life. But their participation to decision making processes and their social and economic participation in society are insufficient.

In most of the studies (World Bank, 1993; King *et al.*, 2001; ICIMOD, 1997; Ogbuago, 1996 and FAO, 2004) stated that rural women are disadvantage person in education, occupation, participation to local government, accessibility to health, credit, land etc. when compared to men. Because of the tradition and patriarchy, women have little decision making power in home and society; and they are depend to their husbands economically and socially.

Although rural women are heavily involved almost all aspects of agricultural production, their share in decision making is not commensurate with the amount and type of agricultural work they shoulder. Men generally control decision making processes due to majority of household are male headed and patriarchal (FAO, 2000).

According to explanation given above, this study purpose to examine firstly gender roles of rural women (related demography, marriage, education, participation, decision making, occupation, expectation and daily life) living in small districts that have rural and urban characteristics because of the importance of women in rural society; secondly to evaluate whether living in small districts is influenced factor on gender roles from the point of view women.

Materials and Methods

Main material of this study is data collected by means of questionnaire and interview from the 282 married women living in 6 small districts of Yuregir and Karatas administrative districts. These small districts are Dogankent, Solakli, Yunusoglu, Suluca and Yakapinar for Yuregir administrative districts and Tuzla for Karatas administrative districts. Small districts can be defined as settlements which have rural and urban characteristics and have population 2000 and more; rural characteristics are more dominant and these settlements have municipality for administration. Selected small districts constitute 35.7% (14 units) of total small district in Yuregir administrative district. Tuzla is single small district in Karatas administrative district. Small districts are selected according to "simple probability sampling method".

Because of the homogeneity of selected small districts, sampling rates were taken as %3, %5 and %10. Population amount of small districts were determined by means of last Population Census, dated 1997 (SIS, 1999). Household numbers were counted according to the average rural family size (5.4) of Turkey (SPO, 1993). %3 sampling rate was used for small districts which had high population; %5 and %10 sampling rate were used for small districts which had low population (Table 1).

Table 1: Population amount, household number and sampling rate related research area

Small Districts	Administrative Districts	Population Amount(1)	Household Number(2)	Sampling Rate (%)	Required Questionnaire Number	Applied Questionnaire Number
Yakapinar	Yuregir	4.570	846	5	42	43
Suluca	Yuregir	2.412	447	10	45	46
Tuzla	Karatas	2.349	435	10	44	45
Dogankent	Yuregir	10.443	1.934	3	58	59
Solakli	Yuregir	5.359	992	5	50	52
Yunusoglu	Yuregir	3.914	725	5	36	37
Total	2 Adm. Dis.	29.047	5.379	-----	275	282

(1) SIS, 1999.

(2) Household numbers were counted according to the average rural family size (5.4) of Turkey (SPO, 1993).

Questionnaire forms were applied to women selected according to "simple probability sampling method". Collected data and observations were analyzed in packet program of SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science) were used in computer for proportional distribution, cross-tabulation etc. Except women questionnaire, to collect general knowledge about small districts, "Small District General Knowledge Form" was prepared and this form was completed together with Mayor. Data collected from Mayor were controlled indirectly, during the interview with women and other rural people living in small districts. Research started in the end of the 2002 and completed in the end of the 2003.

Results

General Information about the Research Area: Population amount of small districts (especially Yunusoglu, Solakli and Dogankent) increased severely in the last 40 years, because of the migration from South East Anatolia. Main reason for this migration movement is socio-economic problems like unemployment, blood feud and etc. Distance of small districts to Adana City Center is approximately 27 km., the nearest distance is 17 km., and farthest distance is 48 km.

There are no infrastructure problems like transportation, drinking and using water, electrification, education and etc. Especially free shifting system organized by the government is very important public services for rural students from the point of view of formal education sustainability. Non-formal education activities are conducted by the ministry of education and all of the activities are related to women like sewing and embroidery. Quality of health services and non-formal education activities are at satisfactory level. There is no epidemic disease among the people. There is no polygamous family, except 1 or 2 families in every small district.

Insufficiency of arable land caused to deprivation of people-land relations. Therefore people tend to find a job in non-agricultural occupation like grocery, jewelers, internet cafe services, hardware-seller, electrician and etc. Therefore, agricultural activities are conducted as a seasonal agricultural worker and subsistence animal husbandry and vegetable production. In the research area, there is a linear relation between the type of occupation and the number of occupation on account of increasing population.

In the research area, health services, formal and informal education-especially extension- activities, transportation

facilities are middle level. There is no any problem with electricity, drinking water and irrigation water. Main problems of small districts are explained that unemployment, high birth rate and insufficient health services.

Demographic Indicators of Women: Total interviewed women number is 282 persons in the research area but male number was determined as a 272 because of they have passed away. Majority of these persons (95.8%) are located between 15-64 age group and rest of them (4.2%) is 65 and above. Average age is 36.2 for women and 39.8 for men. Most of the women (74.1%) and men (77.9%) were born in the village.

Total child number that interviewed women have is 752 and average child number per women in the research area is 2.6. Most of the children (61.6%) were born in the small districts like their parents and women are given birth by means of midwives and especially old women.

Average household size is 4.8 for Turkey. These numbers are 4.3 in urban area and 5.4 in rural area (SPO, 1993). Average household size in the research area is 4.9 and this number is lower than rural Turkey's value. In the research area, common family type is nuclear family (80.5%) that formed from mother, father and unmarried children while the reminder of families (19.5%) are living as extended family.

In the research area 11 women are widowed because of their husbands had been passed away. Close relative marriage is not so common (24.8%) but important. 75.2% of respondents explained that they have not relative marriage.

Selecting of partner is generally made according to parent's decision in rural Turkey and majority of children obey or accept voluntarily this rule or tradition (Soysal, 1998). In Turkish society, this traditional partner selection is called "görücü" method in Turkish, and this practice is still important. 59.9% of women had been married "görücü" method. Rest of the women (40.1%) had been married as a mutual understanding, in other words they had given decision themselves.

Women are married earlier than men in rural place. In 1970 (SIS) average first marriage age was found to be 17 for women and 21 for men in Turkey. But first marriage age is increasing in time. In the research area, average first marriage age is 18.5 for women and 22.8 for men. Generally, first marriage age is spreading in 15-17 (35.8%) and 18-20 (37.6%) for women; 21-23 (27.2%) and 24-26 (23.9%) ages groups for men. There is negative relation between first marriage age and sex (Cramer's $V=0.01$).

Formal and Informal Education Status of Women: One of the most evident features of Turkey's population is high rate of women in total illiterate people. Similar situation was observed in the research area and there is negative relation between sex and education level of women (Cramer's $V=0.00$). Rate of illiterate women in total illiterate people is 77.4% in the research area. On the other hand, number of men (54.9%) is higher than women (45.1%) in elementary level.

There is no capacity building courses not only technical content for agriculture but also women empowerment. In small districts, sewing courses were organized for women but not regularly and sufficient. Most of the women (91.5%) prefer informal education program about sewing, family planning, reading and writing, computer operating, carpet weaving etc.

Occupational Status and Daily Life of Women: In the research area, majority of women define themselves as a housewife (96.5%). The rest of them define themselves as seasonal agricultural worker (1.4%) and civil servant in municipality, unqualified worker in Adana Industrial Zone and cleanser women to urban area (2.1%). None of the women defined their occupation as a farmer even if some of them participate to agricultural activities in their own land or off-farm. Farming is not a main occupation for men and they are working generally firstly as unqualified worker (33.8%), secondly farmer (25.7%), thirdly seasonal worker (12.1%) and employee (13.2%).

Almost all of the women (93.6%) do not have any income generating activities like carpet weaving, embroidery, tailor, making cheese and yogurt and so on. Rests of the women are making cheese and yogurt and dealing with sewing activity.

In the research area women have triple roles as productive, reproductive and community. Women are dealing with production and reproduction activities (animal care, washing dishes and clothes, making meal and bread, house cleaning and child care) approximately 12.1 hours a day. When the women participate to agricultural activities, in farm or off farm, they decrease reproduction activity times or get support from elderly women or girls children. Interweaved women are making a thin bread (it is called "yufka bread" in Turkish and it takes 6-8 hours a day) at least 1 or 2 times a month together with a few neighbors or relatives. When women make bread, they are decrease also reproduction activity times.

Women do not separate regularly time to cultural activities like reading newspaper and book, go to the cinema etc.

Main reasons of this are explained as low educational level, insufficient time and it is not a habit for rural people by the respondents. There are only 4 women that read newspaper, but this reading is not regularly. Women are just watching TV when they have time and they are generally watching entertainment programs which are far away from educational content.

Participation to Agricultural Activities in-farm and off-farm: Most of the women (73.0%) do not have own land in the research area while 27.0% of women have own land. 68.4% of women that have land, do not participate to agricultural activities. Main reasons of this are hiring seasonal worker, insufficient agricultural land of families, husband' s do not give permission to women, renting own land, do not have time of women due to little children and so on. Women are performing hoeing and harvesting activities when they participate to agricultural activities in their own land.

Participation to agricultural activities in off-farm is very limited. There are only 13.1% of women that working in off-farm. Main reasons of this are the same which is given above related the in-farm working.

Societal Relationships of Women with Neighbors, Relatives and Husbands: Most of the women generally have good relations with their neighbors and relatives (91.2%). Rests of the women have middle level or bad relations; most important reasons related bad relations are explained by the women that insufficient time and mutual economic problems between the families. Women explained that there is no any decreasing related the degree of relationship with neighbor and relatives. Interweaved women do not separate regularly time to visit their relatives and neighbors. They are generally visiting near neighbors when they have a time.

Majority of women (86.9%) have good relations with their husbands due to mutual understanding and women's submissive behaviors. Rest of the women have middle level relationship because of economic problems, jealousy of their husbands and interference of husband's family to social and economic life's of their own family.

Participation to Decision Making Processes at Home and out of Home: Participation of women to social and economic decision making processes at home is not high. Approximately half of the respondents explained that women and men should give decision together (47.8% for economic decision; 51.4% for social decision) or men give decision himself (30.9% for economic decision; 27.6% for social decision). Actually, even if women participate to decision making processes together with men, last decision is always given by husbands. Most of the women explained that they satisfy from this process. Actually they are not satisfied but accept this rule.

Except 5.4% of respondents, women also do not participate to decision making processes out of home like local government, NGO, political party etc. But this 5.4% of women are not active or conscious participant because they are registered to local government or political party by their husbands and all of the decisions are given by their husbands. Generally these women are seen as a kind of vote potential by the husbands and these families have a political, social or cultural tie with these institutions.

Women' s Insights about Gender Roles: Women's idea related gender roles is very classical for women and man and its concentrated on mainly house wife, cleaning and motherhood for women; earning enough money, taking care of family and faithfully of men to theirs wife for men. Girl children are main helper person for their mother and they are socialized according to their family's gender roles ideas.

Majority of respondents (60.3%) think that women should work in waged job because, if women gain money, they have a right to comment in family. Rests of the women do not want to working in waged job due to huge responsibility (home management, child care, house work etc.) of women in house and traditional structure of society. One-third of women (32.3%) think that men or husbands should give last decision related women's work in waged job because of dependency of women to their husbands. 48.9% of women think that working decision of women should take together by men and women to provide harmony in home.

Majority of women (65.3%) think that feminine works (like part time works, lecturer, nursing etc.) are suitable for women both in rural and urban. The rest of them have no idea. One-third of respondents (36.8%) have different idea related type of waged job when they consider urban women. They think that women can perform all type of occupation in urban areas because urban women are free and urban places are modern. The rest of them prefer feminine job for urban women.

Women' s Insights Related Marriage, Child Number and Family Planning: In the research area, most of the women (89.8%) think that people absolutely should marry. Reasons of this are explained as to have a baby, God's imperatives, tradition, to obstacle adultery and loneliness. Rest of the women thinks that marrying is not an

absolutely necessary because marrying is restrictive fact on personnel freedom and married people have huge responsibility. Especially, if women have economic freedom, they do not have to marry.

In the research area, women generally wants three (46.1%) or four (28.7%) children while the rests of them want five and more. Majority of women (78.7%) supported family planning because of economic insufficiency. But 3.9% of them do not supported because of religious beliefs and families think that high sizes of children create solidarity and power among the sibling again to society.

Expectations of Women: In the research area, women do not have any expectation related directly themselves. Just 1.1% of women think to participate informal education courses like sewing, embroidery etc. 62.7% of the women think that to migrate urban place, to gain more money, to rise up their children and etc. which are related directly family and children not women. The rest of them have not any expectations.

All of the women do not want to back to their village even if they have low income. Their children education and more comfortable life than abandoned villages are most important factors to stay small districts and women are expecting to migrate to urban area in the near future.

Interweaved women have also not complex expectation from their couples and children. They want to just a more understanding and respect from their husbands. Women want to their children university education, good marrying, respect to society and become dutiful person.

Most of the women (62.4%) want to occupational courses from the government like accounting, computer operating, sewing and embroidery, carpet weaving, ceramics and etc. Rest of the women prefer to reading and writing courses, religious courses and family planning methods.

Main problems of women are explained as insufficient education and health facility, conservative rural structure, high unemployment and environmental pollution by the respondents.

Conclusion

In the research area, because of the migration from East and South East part of Turkey, most of the families have low income because of they are landless or have insufficient land. Therefore men are dealing with seasonal agricultural work/unqualified work and the women are housewife.

Owing to low education status, women do not have accessibility to publication related agriculture, do not have qualified job, do not have cultural sufficiency to socialize their children and do not know home economics and management. At the same time, participation of women to decision making processes in home and out home is not satisfied level. In the research area there is no any informal education, which is very important in informal or cognitive education of women, related agricultural, home economics and management etc. to empowerment women in home and society.

As a general observation, we can say that first marriage age is increasing both women and men day by day. Nevertheless, first marriage age should more increase. Because, in early aged marrying are caused to high birth rate as a general. In other words, early marriage provides longer pregnancy time for women between their fertility periods or ages that 15-45.

As a result, gender roles of rural women living in small districts are not different than other women living in villages. They have secondary position related marriage, education, participation, decision making, occupation, and daily life in home and society due to patriarchy and tradition. They are depended person to their family before marrying and to husband after marrying in every subject. Living in small districts is not an positively influenced factor on gender roles from the point of women, on the contrary women are isolated to home in small districts. In fact women are freer in villages because of villages' homogeneity. But husband are more conservative in small districts, which have rural and urban characteristics, to protect their family from urban life style which is not suitable for rural people's traditions. Therefore women are isolated in home and because of low education, patriarchy and insufficient work opportunity for women they are not access easily to outer world. But their children especially girls, if they go to the university, have different life than their families.

To improve these people's life quality, firstly informal education should organize for women and man about literacy, difficulties of early marriage, responsibility of high number of children, home management, sharing of family life, and importance of women for continuity family etc. Secondly, income generating courses should organize to create income to women and men. Women do not want classical informal courses like sewing, making pickle etc. which is very common in Turkey because they can reach all kind of consumption goods in small districts. These education activities should organize together with the non-governmental organizations, universities and government to provide coordination.

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