# Understanding Women's Well-being in Turkey: Trends and Determinants of Women's Satisfaction with Life

Dr. Dilek Yıldız[1]
Dr. Hilal Arslan[2]
Doç. Dr. Alanur Çavlin[3]

**Extended Abtsract**

The countries of the world have promised to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls through providing equal rights and opportunities and protect them from violence and discrimination (Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations 2019). According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2018 which measures progress of the countries towards gender equality by focusing on gender parity across four thematic dimensions: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment; Turkey has ranked 130th among 149 countries. Although gender inequality has been a major concern for most of the societies, especially for the developing ones, the relationship between gender and happiness is one of the most puzzling issues in SWB research that the while results of some studies show that women tend to report higher average levels of well-being than men do (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Dolan et al., 2008; Haller & Hadler, 2006; Lalive & Stutzer, 2004; Tay, Ng, Kuykendall, & Diener, 2014). Some others state that the average levels of life satisfaction is higher for men than women (Tesch-Römer, 2007; Stevenson and Wolfers, 2009). While, on one hand, in a recent study, Stevenson and Wolfers (2009) argue against the findings of Blanchflower and Oswald (2004) on Britain and USA, and show that female happiness has started to decline in U.S.A., where women gained relatively better social rights as a result of a long struggle of the feminist movement in comparison to less developed countries of the world. The most recent results of Turkey Life Satisfaction Survey indicated as well that the women on average much happier than men. Despite inconclusive and differing relationship between gender and happiness across societies, this study aims to contribute to recently growing area of research on demography and well-being by providing insights about the determinants of women's happiness in Turkey by focusing on the socio-demographic

[1] Post-doctoral Researcher, Vienna Institute of Demographics (WID), Vien, AUSTRIA
[2] Lecturer, Department of Social Research Methodology, Institute of Population Studies, Hacettepe University, Ankara, TURKEY
[3] Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of Demography, Institute of Population Studies, Hacettepe University, Ankara, TURKEY

characteristics, i.e. age, ethnic identity, regional background, education level, health and labor market status.

The study adopts secondary quantitative data analysis and analysis of the study is based on large cross-sectional survey data series of Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) and World Values Survey (WVS). First, empirical data from the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) (1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018) which employed a weighted, stratified and multi-staged cluster sample design that helps to estimate indicators related to basic demographic indicators at the national level, as well as for 12 regions and urban/rural strata. TDHS, similar to other DHS surveys, collects invaluable information for women aged between 15 and 45 including women's fertility and migration histories among many other characteristics. Moreover, TDHS 2018 collected life satisfaction information for first time in a DHS survey in Turkey. The recently collected indicator opens a new door to investigate women's life satisfaction, its determinants and the inequalities among different groups in detail. The second data set is a pooled data set from World Values Survey (WVS) (1990, 1996, 2001, 2007, and 2012) that provides unique opportunity to observe both subjective well-being indicators and socio-demographic characteristics of people living in Turkey. However, the information collected about women's characteristics are limited.

In accordance with this, this research attempts to shed more light into women's life satisfaction in Turkey through examining longer time period. We have three main objectives. First, we use descriptive statistics to monitor the gender happiness gap across different socio-demographic groups i.e. age, ethnic identity, regional background, education, health and working status using WVS data set. Second, we will identify the determinants of women's life satisfaction making use of the new TDHS 2018 data set. Third, using the information from the first two steps, we will investigate statistical methods to construct a detailed synthetic time series data set for life satisfaction of Turkish women.

In order to achieve the third objective, we will start with exploring different methods on a pooled TDHS data set such as out-of-sample prediction and validate the results with WVS. Considering the complexities in predicting life satisfaction, another, and a more likely, possibility to construct such a synthetic data set is to combine information from TDHS and

WVS. We will investigate both frequentist methods such as regression-based matching and mixed-methods, and probabilistic methods such as multiple imputation, which have been used in literature. A detailed description of different methods for statistical matching can be found in Eurostat (2013). Understanding determinants of women's well-being and generating a synthetic time series data set are crucial in order to eliminate the inequalities in life satisfaction.

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