Abstract for "The Role of Social Norms and Culture on the Labour Force Participation of Women in Turkey"

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Eliminating the factors that hinder women`s participation in the labour market continues to be one of the vital instrument to enhance women's empowerment, particularly in developing countries. Accordingly, this paper explores the labour market participation status of women in Turkey, with a special focus on the potential impact of conservative or traditional social norms and culture.

To this aim, four indices are developed by using a polychoric Principle Component Analysis (PCA) in order to measure the extent of traditional marriages, awareness and use of contraception, women's tolerance against domestic violence and their attitudes towards traditional gender roles. The labour market participation status of women is analysed by multinomial logit model that allows consideration of four distinct labour force outcomes. That is, "working as a wage worker", "working in self-employment", "working as an unpaid family worker" and "not working". Finally, in order to see whether social norms and culture provide an additional explanation to the low and stagnant participation rates of women in Turkey, the indices are included as explanatory variables, in addition to the main determinants found in the previous literature (such as age, education, the presence of children), in the multinomial logit model.

The results provide evidence that social norms and culture matter for a woman`s employment regardless of the level of education she has, or whether she lives in rural or urban areas of the country, or in a region with a relatively high level of development, although the size and form of the effect differ across the factors. While conservative or traditional social norms and culture reduce the probability of a highly educated, urban woman being a wage worker significantly and increases her chance of not working, they are also associated with an increased probability of a poorly educated, rural woman being in informal work in the form of being an unpaid family worker.