CHAPTER 13

MULTIPLE DISADVANTAGES IN THE LABOR MARKET OF TÜRKİYE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

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DOI: 10.26650/B/SS10.2024.013.013

Abstract

Promoting sustainable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all are essential parts of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Disabled people, one of the target groups for reducing non-decent work, are considered as one of the particularly vulnerable groups in many societies. The multitude of discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes faced by the disabled women both in the labor market and in their social lives raises the issue of disabled women and multiple disadvantages. Many disabled women are more likely to experience "non-decent work" in the job market as a result of these various disadvantages. The issue of "non-decent work conditions" is brought up in this study as a challenge faced by women with disabilities, on the axis of discrimination and exclusion in the job market in many regions and countries. This study makes arguments on how decent working standards arise in the working lives of 17 disabled women in the labor market of Türkiye by examining their working-life and job-seeking experiences. In this study, interviews were done utilizing a phenomenologically based semi-structured interview technique. The MaxQDA was used to conduct content analysis on the interviews. The findings showed that disabled women experienced condescending language and actions from their managers and coworkers, they weree rejected from jobs by their managers, they had struggles with accessibility, and experienced other issues. The disabled women who were looking for jobs, first struggled with poverty, and they were unable to locate occupations that would be appropriate for their occupational profiles and disabilities. Furthermore, they were subjected to employers' unfavorable attitudes throughout the job search, and lacked social networks that could have assisted them in finding jobs. The aforementioned problems were both the source and the effect of social exclusion and discrimination. According to this research, there should be a variety of policies developed for "women with disabilities" in labor markets in order to provide criterias for decent work.

Keywords: Disabled Women, Decent Work, Quality of Employment

1. Introduction

Employment supports the individual's active participation in socioeconomic life and is an important tool in the fight against the poverty and exclusion that affect people with disabilities. For this reason, the promotion of participation in working life is recognized as a social support for both disabled and non-disabled people and is also an economic policy measure. However, although promoting the labor force participation of people with disabilities is a priority in many countries, in reality, these goals are sometimes not achievable. The reasons for this include many factors such as the current socio-economic structure of the country, deficiencies in the skills and competencies of the workforce, shortcomings in legal regulations and the formation of individual (employer) prejudices. One of these factors is related to the level of education and professional skills of the disabled. Although increasing the level of education of people with disabilities has a positive impact on employability and the average income of people with disabilities, the negative impact of disability on educational participation (Sevak, et. al, 2015:81) highlights an important paradox related to employability and a decent job. Therefore, in our opinion, two important challenges must be overcome for people with disabilities to obtain a decent job. These challenges are access to quality education and access to the labor market after education. After finding solutions to these two problems, the agenda will be to discuss the employability of disabled people in decent jobs. When these discussions are examined in terms of the employment situation of disabled workers in Türkiye, it is inevitable that being a "disabled woman" will be classified as an even more precarious situation. Because these people are usually employed in the labor market in low-skilled jobs with low status, low wages, non-decent working conditions and limited opportunities for advancement (Kağnıcıoğlu vd., 2019:164). In this direction, this research addresses the current situation of "women with disabilities" in the labor market of Türkiye within the framework of "Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth", which emphasizes the issue of "employment" within the Sustainable Development Goals. The study examines the job search experiences, past and current employment conditions of women with disabilities in accessing the labor market in Türkiye, and discusses possible implications for the stages of decent work conditions.

This study, which is divided into three parts, begins with the background of research that addresses the problems faced by disabled people, especially women, in the labor market. The relevant section focuses on understanding the current situation in the world regarding the employment of people with disabilities, and in particular the employment of women with disabilities, in line with the findings of previous research. The second part of the study examines the definition and elements of the concept of decent work, its place in the Sustainable

Development Goals, and the employment of women with disabilities. The third and final part examines the employment conditions of women with disabilities in the labor market of Türkiye in terms of decent work and discusses the findings of the qualitative field research we conducted on women with disabilities. Thus, with the aim of "supporting stable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", the current situation of women with disabilities, a vulnerable group in the labor market of Türkiye, has been examined. Based on qualitative research findings showing that women with disabilities are not working on a decent work axis in the labor market of Türkiye, this study concludes by proposing some specific measures for the labor market of Türkiye to fulfil the promised commitments.

2. Background of the Research

Decent work and the quality of working life are important to everyone. In this process, it becomes much more important for disabled people to combat social exclusion and develop their self-efficacy awareness. Having fair and decent working conditions has become a globally accepted policy area, primarily because it is a human right. The struggle for fair and decent employment for all is undoubtedly becoming more important "due to the fragility" of the disabled. The study conducted by Brown and Ciciurkaite (2022) found that disabled people face more 'precarious employment' compared to non-disabled people and these people are associated with higher rates of psychological distress. Similarly, Lindsay (2011) stated that individuals' disability is a barrier to securing and maintaining employment. It was emphasized that various socio-economic and demographic factors such as the severity, type, duration of disability and education level, gender, low income, geographical location, and the number of people living in the household affect the discrimination in employment of the disabled. Disabled people and women are called disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the labor market due to their employment relations or perceived individual characteristics. Being a disabled woman, however, represents 'double fragility' and reveals a problematic area that will deepen both in economic life and social life. Indeed, according to Hirano et. al (2023), young women with disabilities tend to have worse employment outcomes after school than young men with disabilities and their peers without disabilities.

Various studies have revealed that women with disabilities are approximately four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than women without disabilities (Martin et al., 2006). It is known that there are various results such as that disabled women have higher rates of depression and stress than non-disabled women (Nosek & Hughes, 2003). Considering the problems experienced by disabled people in socio-economic life, employment becomes a

more important factor for disabled women to break the psycho-social violence cycle they experience (Smith, 2008). However, considering the problems experienced by both the disabled and women in the labor market, it is inevitable that being a 'disabled and a woman' indicates the existence of a situation that may cause a double disadvantage of people. Vick and Lightman (2010) defined the barriers to the employability of women in two groups as individual reasons and structural reasons for their study. Accordingly, the individual reasons for the employment of women were defined as precarious bodies (poor health and disability), emotional struggles, especially inadequacy, shame, incompetence, and poor self-worth. The structural reasons were listed as institutional misunderstanding, employer misunderstanding and the embodiment of work. Therefore, the issue of the employability of women with disabilities is an area with more challenges in the labor market. Disabled women face various difficulties not only while seeking employment opportunities, but even if they are employed. The research carried out reveals that women with disabilities are exposed to negative behaviors and inequalities at various levels of socio-economic life. The research conducted by Kim et al (2012) showed that women with disabilities are employed at lower wages than men with disabilities and are not treated equally in terms of working hours. When the existing research from the past to the present is examined, it is seen that the problem of wage discrimination is more negative for women than for men, and it shows that this difference occurs at a much more negative level for women with disabilities. (Baldwin, 1995; Landes, 1977; Longhi, 2017:44) On the other hand, the employment rates for people with psychosocial impairments appear to be rather low, and women are disproportionately affected by the structural exclusion of people with psychosocial disabilities from the workforce. (Gitonga et. al, 2021). Due to the double discrimination of gender and disability, it becomes more difficult for women with disabilities to have a more egalitarian and fairer standard of living in society. The fact that women with disabilities form a more vulnerable group in the labor market due to facing multiple disadvantages also increases the importance of their access to the quality of their working life and working at decent work standards. The argument that women with disabilities are at a double disadvantage in the labor market has been put forward by O'Hara (2004). According to this argument, women with disabilities are twice penalized due to potential discrimination based on both their gender and their disability status. In addition, being a disabled woman also describes a structure that can be called "Intersectional Discrimination", which describes the situation where "various forms of oppression intersect with each other in multiple, complex ways" (Gedikli, 2022:85, quoting Garry 2011). The common point of these two concepts is the combination of more than one phenomenon that can characterise a person as being disadvantaged. In this direction, being a "disabled woman" constitutes a field of

study where "disability problems" intersect with "gender" problems. These problem areas result in various discriminatory attitudes toward the use of basic working-life rights, particularly wage discrimination and accessibility, which are extensively documented in the literature. The disadvantage of people with disabilities in the labor market has, however, not received as much attention as that of other minority groups. (Østerud, 2022:1). Studies that have examined the experiences of disabled women workers have produced results that demonstrate this condition from the past to the present. For example, Burke (1999) discovered that women with disabilities reported less favorable employment experiences than women without disabilities. These unfavorable conditions included higher levels of harassment, a riskier and more demanding workplace, higher job demands, and greater job instability. However, studies also show that being a woman with disabilities is not necessarily a disadvantage. For example, a study conducted by Hwa and Ang (2017) on employers' perceptions of employing people with disabilities found that, contrary to existing research, employers were more positive about women with disabilities than men with disabilities in their hiring practices. The results of the above study also showed that employers' perceptions in the hiring process are mainly influenced by the type of disability. These findings are also supported by Doğan and Unal's (2023) study on the different forms of disability in Türkiye. As a result, the interviewers showed that disabled individuals with certain types of disabilities (especially orthopedic and hearing impaired) perceive themselves as more disadvantaged in the labor market compared to other disabled individuals in the hiring process. In fact, according to the results of an empirical study by Benito et al. (2016), for both men and women, the average earnings of deaf or hard-of-hearing members were lower than those who were not deaf. These analyses have shown us that discrimination against people with disabilities is not just focused on "gender" but can be a significant barrier to employment depending on the "type" of disability. While being a disabled woman is a significant disadvantage in the labor market, personal preferences such as ethnicity, skin color, religious orientation, or differences such as age, education, and place of residence can compound this disadvantage. Being a less educated, non-white woman or any combination of the above criteria may have created the conditions in which women with disabilities find it difficult to find work. (Johnson & Janes, 1984:346). These discrimination-based problems, which have continued from the past to the present, sometimes deepen the negative effects of being a disabled woman who characterizes a disadvantage. Indeed, Oberoi et al. (2015) found that African-American women with disabilities have lower employment rates when compared to white (disabled) women. Considering the impact of employment on the socio-economic inclusion of individuals, these problems constitute a risk area for social peace. Because being employed in a decent job increases the quality and stan-

dards of people's social life as well as their economic life standards. Therefore, participation in employment and the quality of working life is not only an economic goal but also an important social phenomenon. Various studies have proven that participation in employment positively affects not only the economic well-being of individuals but also many different indicators such as their self-esteem and self-confidence, their participation in social life, their psycho-social well-being and their physical health (Bond et al, 2001; Crowther & Marshall, 2002; Stuart, 2006; Brunes and Heir, 2022). Furthermore, considering the aggravating effect of lack of employment on the possibility of people having chronic diseases such as depression, anxiety, diabetes, heart disease and obesity (Goodman, 2015:8), employment gains vital importance to improve the existing health conditions of the disabled or prevent their health problems from progressing. However, at this stage, the quality of employment, which is important for everyone, becomes more vital for disabled people. It is known that non-decent jobs and harmful employment further exacerbate the existing health problems of people with disabilities and cause the emergence of permanent problems that are sometimes irreversible in the disability levels of people. The strategies for integrating people with disabilities into the labor market have evolved toward a social approach, in which the objective is the integration with stable and decent jobs (Castro Núñez., 2020:202). For example, The Serbian Labor Act (2005) has introduced a category of workers with health problems and stipulates that those workers could not be assigned to a job that could have a negative effect on the health status/condition of an individual (Stojković-Zlatanović, 2016). In line with this background information, this research has been prepared to evaluate the situation of women with disabilities in the labor market of Türkiye on the axis of 'decent work'.

3. Disabled Women in the Labor Market of Türkiye

The statistics on disabled people in the labor market of Türkiye are mainly based on the results of the 2011 Population and Housing Survey, and a bulletin on disability statistics is published quarterly based on these data (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2023). The related survey was conducted with a total of 2.2 million households and persons in institutional settings using the full survey method. In the survey study, "disability" is defined by the International Classification of Functioning (ICF), Disability and Health developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). In accordance with the results of the corresponding survey, the proportion of disabled women in the total population in Türkiye is 7.9%, while the proportion of men is 5.9%. This shows that the population density of disabled women is higher. Considering the population density in question, the labor force participation rate of the population with at least one disability was 35.4% for men and 12.5% for women. This

indicates that women with disabilities are disadvantaged in terms of labor force participation. Although there are various problems in the employment of disabled women in the labor market of Türkiye, in practice, there are various practices for the employment of disabled women under the active employment policy. These are vocational training and rehabilitation programs, work programs for the benefit of society, wage subsidies, on-the-job training programs, and entrepreneurship subsidies (Çakır, 2021). Despite the existence of these supports, it can be said that the targeted policies have not yet had the expected effect, considering the labor force participation of women with disabilities and the low employment rates. Another problem about disabled women is the gender distribution in the employment of disabled people in the public sector. Although most disabled people are employed in the "public sector", in terms of the gender distribution of disabled civil servants, it is found that the percentage of women is quite low at 27.09%. Existing research results have revealed that decent working conditions are better for people with disabilities who are employed in the public sector when compared to those working in the private sector. (Doğan and Ünal, 2023) However, the fact that the rate of women with disabilities in public employment is very low compared to men also shows that disabled women have a significant distribution problem in accessing decent work conditions. In this sense, it can be claimed that disabled women in the labor market of Türkiye face a significant obstacle to "productive and full employment," which is one of the requirements for standards of decent work.

4. The Concept of Decent Work and Issues Related to the Employment of Women with Disabilities

The eighth Sustainable Development Goal aims to guarantee that the equal pay for equal work principle is fully implemented by 2030 and that all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, have access to full and productive employment as well as decent work. The International Labor Organization (ILO) gave decent work's first official definition in 1999, and it is based on the moral precepts of fairness and equality for human rights. Decent work has been identified as a sensitive tool for reducing the vulnerability of persons with disabilities, as well as an important goal of sustainable development. The ILO's emphasis on the link between decent work and sustainable development clarifies the relationship between the two concepts. Both increasing job opportunities and ensuring that everyone has access to decent jobs are necessary for sustainable development. Inequalities and poverty are reduced and individuals are empowered through quality employment and decent working conditions, especially women, young people and the most vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities (Pouyaud, 2016).

Concepts like decent employment are used to define the quality of working life, but because of how vulnerable women with disabilities are on the job market, these concepts—which essentially refer to the existence of excellent and equitable working conditions—are given extra significance. The fact that state supports and incentive arrangements positively affect the employability of women with disabilities (Castello, 2012) causes the policies on this issue to be 'publicly funded'. In this context, the International Labor Organization (ILO) is also known to emphasize the importance of public regulations and inspections in the employment of women with disabilities under decent working conditions in its various reports and recommendations. Four headings become clear upon analysis of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. These include full and productive employment, rights at work, social protection and promotion of social dialogue. The quality of working life is assessed in accordance with these indicators, and different sub-indicators explain these strategic aims. These indicators include employment opportunities, adequate earnings and productive work, decent working time, combining work, family and personal life, work that should be abolished, stability and security of work, equal opportunity and treatment in employment, safe work environment, social security and social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation. In essence, initiatives for providing individuals with disabilities with productive employment and decent working conditions have been organized into four areas by the United Nations ESCAP (2021). The first one is to assist people with disabilities through legal regulations and labor market policies. Implementation of employment quotas, preferential contracting, rules for job retention and return to work, social protection, and actions to lower the cost of employment for employers and employees with disabilities are all included under this heading. The second strategy heading is about employment services to facilitate the implementation of measures supporting disability-inclusive employment. The third strategy is training to prepare persons with disabilities for the labor market and deals with the employment of the disabled under three headings. These are vocational and technical education of the disabled, job coaching and increasing the job search skills of the disabled. The fourth and final section on promoting productivity and decent work in the employment of people with disabilities at UN addresses "supporting entrepreneurs with disabilities" through legal regulations and labor market policies. These relate to vocational and technical training for people with disabilities, job coaching practices, and improving job search skills.

Although these titles are implemented in line with the employment of disabled people in the labor market of Türkiye and ensuring their access to decent work, it is seen that the policies and measures implemented are insufficient when the current labor force participation

rates and statistics are taken into consideration. Accordingly, this research analyzes the current situation of women with disabilities in the labor market of Türkiye, which can be described with concepts such as “Twice Penalized” or “Intersectional Discrimination”, on the axis of “decent work”, one of the sustainable development goals. This analysis is based on the experiences of women with disabilities in the labor market with reference to ILO indicators. Due to the limited number of field studies directly examining the relationship between disabled employment and decent work, this research is unique. No field research on the direct relationship between the current situation of women with disabilities in employment in line with or inclusive of all decent work indicators was found in our literature review in WoS and SSCI-based journals. In this context, this chapter will contribute not only to the current situation of women with disabilities in the labor market of Türkiye, market but also to the international literature. A limited and valuable study examining the employment of women with disabilities in terms of decent work standards, although not directly with women with disabilities, was conducted by Park (2016). The study analyzed 15 different types of disabilities using indicators of income, working hours, employment stability, fair treatment and social security. As a result of the research, the employment quality of individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism and epilepsy was found to be ‘very low’ in the earned income index and working hours, while employment security and social security indicators were found to be one of the areas where employment quality was ‘very low’ among most disability types. As a result, “decent work” indicators in disability employment are found to be quite weak for different types of disabilities. In this context, the research in this section of this book is conducted within the scope of the problem of employment of women with disabilities and examines these indicators qualitatively.

5. Methodology

5.1. Purpose and Method of Research

The aim of this study is to examine the employment conditions of women with disabilities, who are among the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the Turkish labour market, in terms of decent working conditions. The phenomenological approach, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research that explains the current situation of disabled women in the Turkish labour market by considering the concept of ‘decent work’. Thus, this research was conducted in line with the ‘discovery’ and ‘interpretation’ of the experiences of disabled women in the Turkish labour market. Indeed, the phenomenological approach is a form of qualitative research that focuses on the study of an individual’s lived experiences within the world (Neubauer et al. 2019:90) and provides an opportunity to learn

about how individuals participating in particular research experience the phenomenon under study (Matenge, 2015). Given that the aim of this research is to investigate and describe the experiences of women with disabilities in the labour market, the phenomenological approach is an appropriate framework for this study.

- *What challenges do women with disabilities face in the labor market of Türkiye in relation to the indicators of "Decent Work"?*
- *What issues and challenges do women with disabilities encounter while trying to find jobs in the labor market of Türkiye?*

As a result, this chapter attempts to understand the working conditions of women with disabilities in the Turkish labour market and the relations between their superiors and co-workers by examining their current and historical experiences. Through semi-structured interviews designed to address the stated research questions, it is aimed to examine the current situation by focusing on the experiences and stories of the participants. In addition, this study is exploratory in nature as it aims to analyze the quality of working conditions of women with disabilities on the basis of decent work in the labour market. Accordingly, the research was conducted using "in-depth interviews", which is a highly efficient qualitative research method due to the nature of exploratory studies. The interviews in question were conducted "remotely" using digital tools such as the telephone and zoom and were recorded with the consent of the participants. The records obtained were transcribed, and the results were interpreted according to content analysis.

5.2. Sample Group and Interviewer Profile

Within the scope of the research, 17 in-depth interviews were conducted. As part of the research, interviews were conducted with female participants with different types of disabilities, especially orthopedically disabled ones. Disabled women were reached using snowball sampling, and women with a disability report of 40% or more were included in the research. When the employment-related status of the participants is examined, it is seen that 10 disabled women, mostly in the public sector are in employment, while 7 women participants are unemployed. The study revealed that there is a heterogeneous structure in the education levels of the women interviewed. Accordingly, participants from different education levels, from primary school to university level took part in the interviews. There was no relationship between the employment status of the people and their level of education.

5.3. Ethical Standards of Research

Ethical standards were given special attention as the research involved the participation of a sensitive group. Since the participant profile was female, all interviews were conducted by a female researcher. Thus, the participants were made to feel more comfortable. Particular attention was paid to the privacy of the participants, and it was ensured that their personal information and the names of their workplaces were kept confidential. The statements given by the participants were presented with "pseudonym codes" (e.g. K1, K10, K12…). During the interview, the interviews were recorded and deciphered with the permission of the participants. The transcripts obtained were analyzed independently of the personal information of the participants, and the audio recordings were destroyed.

6. Findings

The interpretation of the results of the interviews conducted during the research was in accordance with the four strategic objectives established by the ILO. The titles in question were defined as "tools for decent work", and when one of these tools about the work is missing or insufficient, the characteristic of decent work disappears. (Işığıçok, 2018: 306). This is why the themes of the interviews with disabled women on the analysis of decent work were based on these methods. The results of the interviews were analyzed in accordance with the pertinent subject areas. Interviews with female participants with a variety of disabilities, primarily orthopedic disabilities, were done as part of the research. While 7 of the 17 female participants (working mainly in the public sector) were currently employed, 10 participants were unemployed. Since the research was designed phenomenologically, it was avoided using words for directional phrases for the participants and in this process, the working conditions of the participants in their current and past work experiences and their experiences in the job search processes were taken into account and the results were interpreted.

6.1. Full and Productive Employment

The first basic element of decent work is "employment". For this reason, sometimes 'mandatory' policies play an important role in supporting full and productive employment, with support and incentives to increase the employability of people with disabilities. When the studies on the disabled and decent work are examined, it is stated that the quota system used for the employment of the disabled is effective in achieving sustainable development goals (Schneider et al., 2022). In the labor market of Türkiye, providing employment opportunities with a compulsory quota system in both the private and public sectors is the most frequently used employment method in the employment of the disabled. Employment of people with dis-

abilities is not only an economic activity but also important for their social inclusion. Therefore, the goal of promoting full and productive employment carries with it a greater impact. Thus, employment is a very important opportunity for people, especially the disadvantaged, to improve their well-being. Furthermore, it provides security and participation in life for people with disabilities, especially for women. As a matter of fact, one participant stated her ideas as follows, regarding the effect of employment on social inclusion:

> *"I love to work, I relieve stress. Because I am disabled, I have to stay up to do the housework all the time. I can't do the housework. My neighbors and relatives, who see that I cannot do the housework properly, do not come to sit because they are worried that they will disturb me. I mean, they don't come at all… Well, when they don't come, I can't go to them this time. I am left alone. But when I come to the workplace, I can at least see one or two people, speak a word or two, and have a conversation. Even if I couldn't do anything, when I come home in the evening and go to work in the morning, I take a breath and walk. But when I stay at home on my annual leave or something, I don't go for a walk at all, I don't get that much air either. The only place I get air is the balcony of the house. I look around and I'm inside in less than a minute." (K3, Orthopedically Disabled)*

In addition to this, it is extremely important that the quality of jobs created is equally as important as their employment rate. (Işığıçok, 2018:306). However, while providing employment opportunities constitutes the qualitative dimension of this discussion, the quantitative dimension of the issue also gains importance when the proportions of women with disabilities are examined in terms of entering the labor market. The fact that the labor force participation rate of women with disabilities is limited to 12.5% in the labor market Türkiye indicates the existence of a significant problem against women. This situation indicates the existence of an important problematic area for the labor market in Türkiye in terms of "creating employment", which is the prerequisite for the concept of decent work. The fact that most of the women with disabilities we randomly interviewed were not in employment supports these statistics. When the reasons why the interviewed women with disabilities could not participate in employment were examined, the following sub-codes were obtained: *Not giving disabled people a job suitable for the type of disability they have, prejudice and attitude of the employer, lack of social networks to find a job, high disability rate, insufficient employment quota for disabled people, insufficient employment consultancy services related to local governments, not being offered jobs suitable for the education of disabled people, having accessibility issues and fear of being harassed at work/in the job search process.* In these examples, the most frequently cited reasons for not being able to participate in employment are the code of high disability rate, which interacts with the problem of employer prejudice, and the fact that people are not

given jobs suitable for their type of disability. Accordingly, one participant stated the reasons for not being currently employed as follows:

> *"For example, I am currently using a 'wheelchair', when I go for a job interview with some of the local supermarkets for a cashier job, the interviewer always says that 'there will be problems with your wheelchair in getting in and out of the cash register'. Workplaces are generally not suitable for us, they do not have ramps. Also, I was not given a suitable job. When I go to İŞKUR for a job interview, I can do jobs such as secretarial and call center. I studied office management and I have an F Keyboard course certificate. But for example, they offer me an interview for the janitor." (K2, Orthopedically Disabled)*

> *"I went to 15 factories for job interviews through İŞKUR's information. Of course, the factories prefer those who can stand. The same thing happened in a bank where I went for an interview before. When we went for the interviews, they only preferred the disabled people who could stand. I continue my life with a battery-powered vehicle. I am going and returning to work with my wheelchair. As I said, the bank preferred people with disabilities who could stand, as did the factories. They hired people with kidney disease or hearing impairment... in other words, they paid a lot of attention to the appearance of the disabled applicants (Orthopedically disabled)*

> *"If you look like you are disabled, employers do not want to hire you. They see you as unable to work and have prejudices about why they should give a blind person a job. Now we are hearing that people with diabetes or other diseases can also get a disability card. If this is the case, the employer asks why should I hire someone who cannot see or walk and prefers other persons. As such, we can not get a job (P14, visually impaired and orthopedically disabled)*

Accordingly, some respondents indicated that they did not want to be hired by employers because of the 'visibility' of their current disability. As indicated by the research mentioned in the background section of our study, there is a significant risk that employers may hold prejudice against disabled women based on the nature of their disability. As a result of this situation, women with orthopedic disabilities may face more difficult barriers in entering employment. Accordingly, the first problem area cited by women with disabilities in the employment process was "*employer prejudice regarding the nature of the disability."* Furthermore, participants indicated that they were unable to find a job because they were not offered jobs that were suitable for their current qualifications or the nature of their disability. One participant even summarized the problem as follows:

> *"I have been to İŞKUR many times. But no suitable job has ever been found for me. I studied teaching and want to start my own business, but when I am disabled, they only offer me unskilled jobs. That's why I can not work" (P4, orthopedically disabled)*

> *"The employer does not want to hire you if they see that you are disabled. He considers you incapable of working. He approaches with prejudice and says why should I give a job to someone who can not see. Now we hear, for example, that someone with diabetes or other diseases can also get a disability card. So the employer asks why should they hire someone who can not see or walk and prefers them. So we can not get a job (K14, visually impaired and orthopedically disabled)*

When analyzing the interviews, it became clear that the jobs they do are not suitable for the type of disability of the disabled people or that they do not do the jobs that correspond to their current level of education, which has a negative psychological impact on these people. It was observed that prolonging this situation leads to damaging the sense of hope in the process of finding a job. When examining the existing subcodes (problems) related to non-employment, it becomes clear that there are areas that can characterize the common problems of all disabled people. However, the "concern of being harassed", which is also encountered within the scope of these interviews, expresses one of the unique and important problems of "being a disabled woman". A disabled female participant, who lives in a women's shelter and is looking for a job, expressed the harassment problems she experienced during the job search process. This participant expressed one of the most common problems she had with this problem with a critique of how İŞKUR interviews are conducted as follows:

> *"Sometimes İŞKUR invites us to group interviews. Instead of inviting us to group interviews, it would be better if they interviewed us individually in private rooms because others hear my private things there. For example, while one person is talking to me, another person is being interviewed by me on the other side. He is hearing my information. So I had a lot of problems in that direction. I talk to the employer and say, 'I live in a women's shelter, I need this job to get my life in order' and explain my situation. The man next to me hears this and harasses me from a different perspective. He waits for me at the exit and says: 'Come, let us live together, you are alone'. Unfortunately, I have also received such offers, and it happens frequently." (K2, orthopedically disabled)*

The problem described by this participant also brought up the issue of "privacy" at the interview. This situation became an important example and a call for the introduction of forms for job interviews that do not interfere with women's privacy. The fact that women are exposed to various dimensions of harassment in socioeconomic life, whether they are disabled or not, makes the issue of privacy in the job search increasingly important. This example was also an important example of women's experiences of harassment in the job search process, and it was understood that İŞKUR's group interviews could pose a problem for women's privacy. This is an important problem in terms of quality of work life. Looking

at the available interviews, only 7 of the 17 respondents are women with disabilities who are currently employed, and almost all of these individuals are employed in the public sector. Looking at the current employment status of the participants interviewed in this research, we find that it is predominantly women with disabilities who are looking for jobs. Furthermore, the fact that people are not offered jobs that match their qualifications or training shows that there are problems with "*productivity in employment*". Considering the above content and sub-codes describing the problems, it can be said that the employment condition, which is the first condition for decent work for women with disabilities, is not sufficiently provided in the labor market of Türkiye.

6.2. Guaranteeing Rights at Working Life

This section essentially refers to the full realization of socio-economic rights in the workplace. These labor rights refer to wages, working conditions and anti-discrimination policies (Tüzünkan, 2015:6). During the analysis of the interviews, it was found that women with disabilities have problems with their rights related to working life, especially about 'discrimination'. This discrimination can be exercised directly by supervisors, managers and employers, but also by coworkers. One of the interesting findings of this research was that not only negative discrimination but also positive discrimination makes people unhappy in their working life. For example, one participant stated that the reason he left his previous job was because he was "not given work" by his colleagues because of his current disability. The disabled respondent stated that this situation isolated him in the workplace, in the following words.

> *"I worked there for 4 years, or rather I sat there, they didn't even give me a job. Nobody talked to me. I asked them to give me a job and they said sit down, don't get involved in anything, don't get tired. It was as if I was not there. I was just sitting there all day without talking to anyone, without doing any work, and I was going home in the evening." (P1, Speech and Orthopedic Disability)*

Although it is a well-intentioned behavior to justify the lack of fatigue of the disabled person due to his current disability status, it led to the isolation and exclusion of this person. In this sense, the negative effects of the discrimination of not letting the disabled person work, which was positively intended, inevitably emerged. On the other hand, some participants stated that they were frequently exposed to words and behaviors that could be directly described as "*negative*" discrimination. The issue of wages categorized under the right to work is generally raised in the context of "*wage discrimination*" and "*decent wages*". In the interviews we conducted, no negative experiences regarding wage discrimination were reported. However, it was observed that there were some problems with the problem of "decent wag-

es". Accordingly, the common point expressed by all participants is that health expenditures and medical care expenses are higher due to their current disability status. Accordingly, all participants stated that their current wage levels were not sufficient due to health expenditures. For this reason, some suggestions were given, and these suggestions were quoted and interpreted in the next section as they can be evaluated within the scope of *'social protection and social securit*y' measures. In terms of working conditions, the interviews were evaluated on the axis of appropriate working time, the impact of work on work-family life, harmful jobs, and job security. When the experiences of the participants were analyzed in the axis of these sub-headings, it was seen that the working participants did not pose a problem in terms of working hours since they were predominantly employed in the public sector. However, it was understood that women who worked independently with their work history in the private sector did not report any problems in this regard. However, when the issue of work-life balance was brought up, it was understood that some negative statements were made. It was understood that the problem in question did not stem from working hours but from gender perceptions and the domestic roles expected of women. Accordingly, it has been observed that women did not receive help from their husbands or other members of the household while doing household chores (cleaning, cooking, etc.). Furthermore, it was understood that due to their current disability status, they do these household chores more slowly and get tired. It was observed that one participant was included in the classification of harmful jobs related to her working conditions. Accordingly, a disabled participant who was selling handicraft products informally in the neighborhood market where she currently lives stated the following about her current working conditions:

> *"...When I try to sell 3-5 pieces of booties that I have knitted with labor, the municipal police can prevent me. Sometimes shopkeepers intervene and say, "Don't touch her, she is disabled". I wish they would allow us, even give us special booths in the bazaars for free. For example, I always get wet when it rains because I am not in the bazaar. I cannot sell in winter." (P16, Orthopedically Disabled).*

The disabled woman stated that she had to work due to poverty, but that she worked in poor conditions because she could not afford to rent a stall (on the ground, in cold weather, in the rain, etc.). This example exemplifies an important need for local governments to provide neighborhood-level areas where women with disabilities can sell their products free of charge. Regulations on accessibility in the workplace are also one of the fundamental rights in working life. Physical accessibility is also an important issue in terms of occupational health and safety. In the interviews conducted, one participant stated that accessibility facilities were

lacking in the workplace (public) but stated that they did not have any problems or complaints about this. Accordingly, he used the following statements:

> *"The building of the institution where I work is very old. I have been working in the same building for 37 years. There was no need for a ramp or something for the time being. Because I am disabled in one leg, I can climb up and down the stair railings. We do not have an employee who is completely forced into a wheelchair. We have a visually impaired switchboard operator who is more severely disabled than me. Thanks to his friends, they never leave him alone, they help him by holding his arm, including taking him to Friday prayers, and they say let's go and take him away. They do not offend this person at all, so there is no need for way-finding bars. He can go anywhere easily by holding on to the wall" (K11, Orthopedically Disabled)*

Although this disabled person has no complaints, the lack of these infrastructure arrangements, which causes the limitation of the mobility of visually impaired colleagues, is an important problem for the criteria of decent work in the workplace. The fact that the visually impaired colleague of this disabled person in the workplace is dependent on other employees in terms of movement and that other friends help this person when this person needs their support is good in terms of solidarity in the workplace, but it can hurt the freedom of movement of this disabled person. The example of solidarity among employees creates a very good environment. However, if there is no such solidarity in a workplace and people with disabilities have to act dependent on others due to their lack of infrastructure, this may pose a problem for disabled employees. Another example given about negative situations in occupational health and safety is related to discrimination and exclusion. One participant expressed his past negative experience at his current workplace with the following statements.

> *"First, they officially excluded me because I was newly appointed. They gave me a room. Not only for a visually impaired person, even a normal person cannot live in that room. No glass in the room, no light, moldy, a dark and dreary room. The room hadn't even been cleaned. Look, I said I have a visually impaired report. I don't have very good eyesight. He said to me, -what can I do? I said take me to another room. He said "handle it" and made me work in that room for a year. So I was tortured for a year. Then I said I'm going to complain about you now. then it allowed me to work in another room." (K5, Visually Impaired)*

Accordingly, it was understood that this disabled person was forced to work in an environment where there were no decent working conditions. It has been seen that this was done for the purpose of exclusion by the superior because the person was 'newly appointed'. The discriminatory attitude towards people with disabilities in a way different from the working conditions of other employees shows the existence of an important problem when the current

disability of this person is taken into account. The situation in question has become an example of an important problem as it makes the person vulnerable to accidents and risks that may further their existing disability. When we analyze all the interviews, it is seen that there are problems (insufficient ventilation, pollution, lack of equipment, etc.) in occupational health and safety as in a similar example. It has been observed that these problems are generally caused by supervisors and managers for lack of awareness or mobbing/exclusion. When we evaluated the interviews in question, it was revealed that there were problems with the issue of 'rights at work', which is an important component of decent work.

6.3. Social Protection and Social Security

Another sub-title of decent work is related to adequate social protection and social security. It has been shown that the majority of the interviewed and employed women do not have any problems accessing social protection and social security since they are employed in the public sector. There is no doubt that the existence of a 'state guarantee' is dominant in this. On the other hand, considering the majority of women with disabilities who are not currently employed, both within the scope of this interview and in the labor market of Türkiye, it is understood that there are various problems despite the political measures taken regarding access to social security and social protection. The social security system in Türkiye is implemented in two different types, the contributory system and the non-contributory system. The non-contributory system mostly characterizes free services such as social assistance and social work practices. Disabled people who are not in employment in Türkiye can benefit from social assistance and social services under the 'non-contributory system'. Accordingly, the following services are provided under the non-contributory social service practices for the disabled in Türkiye: The Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation provides disability pension to those with at least 40% disability. The needy pension is provided, home care pensions are given to those in need of care, and various tax exemptions and discounts are provided. (Income tax deduction, SCT exemption, Motor vehicle tax exemption, etc.) The fact that disabled pensions, which are specified in non-contributory social security practices, are only a right given to disabled people who are not in employment, has been a subject criticized by the participants. Because people with disabilities emphasized that their incomes were insufficient even though they were working. Accordingly, all the participants in employment stated that their current wage income is not sufficient due to the health expenditures they have made. The participants stated that they demanded that the disability pension assistance not be cut due to their employment. One participant used the following exemplary statements regarding this issue:

"Thankfully, I have a job and an income, but nowadays it is very difficult to make a living. I'm the only one running the house. I'm divorced and my ex doesn't pay child support much. I have a son at home who goes to secondary school. For example, I will have a hernia surgery in my neck in the coming months. I have a lot of medication expenses. I'm having a hard time maintaining my family. I think disabled people should be able to receive disability pension even if they work. It's not a huge amount anyway. Even though we work, we do not have expenses like normal people. Our healthcare expenses are too high. At least we should be able to receive this pension unconditionally for our medicine and health expenses." (K7, Orthopedically Disabled)

"The disability pension is already a small amount. It is not enough even for the disabled people who are not working. That's why I don't feel like saying disability pension to be paid to us (for employees). After all, we have a job. However, the fact is that a significant portion of the wages we receive goes to drug treatments or medical devices. I started using a white cane and it's a new expense. Being disabled also has a psychological effect. Therefore, the situation regarding the termination of the disability pension of employees should be reconsidered. But as I said, these monthly allowances are already insufficient. First of all, the monthly amount should be increased" (P5, Visually Impaired)

Accordingly, as a result of the interviews, the disabled people who work demanded that the disability pension benefit, which is provided only for disabled people who are not in employment, become an allowance for all disabled people within the scope of the health expenditures of the people. Accordingly, the demand for unconditional assistance to be given to all disabled people has an important place in social protection and social security opportunities. The contributory system, another form of social security practice in Türkiye, covers the insurance, pension and similar social security opportunities that a person obtains through employment and also by paying premiums. As one of the most important elements of social security, pension premium payment is a fundamental right, it becomes an important risk area for people who cannot be in employment for a long time. Considering the various difficulties regarding the entry and stay in employment of the disabled in Türkiye, it becomes more difficult for the disabled to retire than for everyone else. Considering this situation, various legal regulations and policies have been produced in the labor market of Türkiye. Whether a person is disabled from birth and starts working for the SSK (SSK: Social insurance institution), Bağ-Kur (Bağ-Kur: Pension fund for the self-employed), is a civil servant, or becomes disabled after getting a job; and all disabled employees with 40% or more loss of work power have the right to early retirement (Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, 2019:31). This is an important support for the right of access to retirement for people with disabilities who experience various problems in entering and staying in employment. Considering these situations,

it can be said that political measures are generally sufficient in terms of social security and social protection opportunities for the disabled in the labor market of Türkiye. However, the fact that no interviews were conducted with disabled women employed in the private sector within the scope of the research limits this research on social security opportunities. In the research conducted by Doğan and Ünal (2023), considering the prevalence of unregistered employment among the disabled, it is understood that social security opportunities and social protection constitute an important problematic area for disabled people working in the private sector and not working in the public sector. Since the disabled employees employed in the private sector were not interviewed within the scope of this research, an evaluation was not made on the existence of informal employment.

6.4. Social Dialog

The concept of social dialog is an important field defined in the narrow and broader sense. In the narrow sense, social dialog is defined as the structure that enables the development and implementation of economic and social policies between workers, employers and the state. In the broader sense, it refers to the processes and practices of discussion, cooperation and exchange of information on common problems related to economic and social policies between the state, workers' representatives and employers' representatives or only the employer (Oeren and Çevik, 2022:1). According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), social dialog between workers, employers, and governments is essential to achieve fair employment conditions, decent working conditions, safety and health at work, and development for the benefit of all. In this sense, social dialog takes on crucial importance for improving the quality of working life. This is because the existence of a strong social dialog mechanism has a positive impact on strengthening the fundamental rights of workers in working life. Through the instruments of the free participation in trade union activities and the participation in decision-making processes at the workplace, workers can ensure the improvement of their working conditions at the workplace. For this reason, disabled people who are currently employed were asked about their union membership and participation in decision-making processes at work. The interviews revealed that none of the women with disabilities are currently or have ever been members of a union. In this regard, it is generally believed that unions cannot influence working conditions. Since the fact that the women interviewed were not members of a union is a voluntary situation, it is assumed that there was no problem in terms of social dialog with regard to decent work. As far as participation in decision-making processes at the workplace is concerned, the situation is relatively better. Although they do not have a direct say in decision-making at work, some participants indicated that their supervisors regularly

ask them whether or not they have any demands. Accordingly, participants reported the following experiences with decision-making processes at work.

> *"...What I am talking about is of course not a situation that determines the rules etc. at the workplace. Only the director and managers of the institution have meetings among themselves. But from time to time they come to us and ask us if we have a complaint or a request." (P5, Visually Impaired)*

> *"I am really lucky to have such supervisors. They treat me like an elder sister, like a big brother. I have never felt like a stranger. Of course, we are not involved in the meetings between the managers themselves. That is another issue. But if there is an issue to be discussed jointly, we are informed about it." (P11, Orthopedically Disabled)*

The participant who had problems in her previous job reported slightly more negative experiences in this regard. As a matter of fact, she stated the following about participation in decision-making processes at the workplace:

> *"In my previous job, nobody was talking to me anyway. There was no one even to greet me so that I could be consulted... I am in a better place now. But still, if I want to make a decision about my organization, I have no say at all."*

Analysis of these sample statements reveals that, in general, people with disabilities have no impact on involvement in workplace decision-making processes. It is acknowledged that such engagement is restricted to hearing the concerns and requests of the populace. It is evident that the organizational structure and workplace culture have a significant impact on how this situation has developed. All participants agreed on one thing, which was that only "managers and supervisors of the organization" had the authority to participate in decision-making procedures. Although this situation demonstrates that there is no genuine practice of participation in decision-making processes, it also demonstrates that employees value being heard when they have requests or grievances.

7. Conclusion

The issue of decent work, which has an important place in the Sustainable Development Goals, is vital for the quality of working life and the welfare of socio-economic life. The participation of people with disabilities in employment and their employment under decent work conditions becomes more important when the vulnerabilities in the labor market are taken into consideration. However, given the depth of the problems experienced by women in socio-economic life in gender studies, being a woman with a disability leads to a structure representing multiple disadvantages and bidirectional vulnerability in the labor market. Due to

this reason, it is acknowledged that women with disabilities constitute a category that requires special attention when examining the SDGs decent work heading's section on the accessibility of disabled persons to quality employment. This study uses the "ILO's decent work criteria" to interpret the current sitution of women with disabilities in the labor market of Türkiye. This is because the lack of any of these decent work criteria indicates that the person is employed under non-decent working conditions. Accordingly, the current situation of women with disabilities in the labor market of Türkiye has been evaluated under the sub-headings of full and productive employment, securing fundamental rights related to working life, social protection-social security and social dialogue.

Considering the interviews conducted, it is understood that every participant does not have a proper job due to at least one indicator. This interpretation stems not only from the violation of the basic rights of the interviewees regarding working life or the problems they experience in social dialogue, but also from the deficiencies related to the heading of full and productive employment, which is the first heading of a decent job. As a matter of fact, it was observed that the majority of disabled women interviewed were unemployed. This situation, as can be seen from TUIK (Türkiye Statistical Institute) statistics, reveals that employment opportunities for women with disabilities are not sufficiently created in Türkiye. In addition, the fact that the unemployed women interviewed stated that they were not offered jobs suitable for their current type of disability or field of education shows that there are also problems in productive employment. Disabled women with associate or bachelor's degrees stated that they were mostly offered unskilled jobs (cleaning, etc.) by İŞKUR. Therefore, they stated that they are not in employment.

Additionally, one participant brought up the issue of privacy in group interviews and collective recruitment interviews during the hiring process at İŞKUR. She demonstrated that because job interviews take place in a public place, women are more susceptible to being harassed by having their private information overheard. This example highlights the importance of creating a job interview environment where women have more privacy in the interview process. Given that the primary requirement for decent work is full and productive employment, it may be claimed that Türkiye generally performs poorly for the SDG Goal 8's subheading "employment of women with disabilities." Furthermore, our research has shown that women with disabilities who are employed in the labor market of Türkiye continued to experience various problems in terms of decent work indicators. It is feasible to say that the employment of women with disabilities is not in a good enough situation in terms of decent work indicators, despite the fact that the majority of them are employed in the public sector. Since they work mostly in the public sector, it has been noticed that people do not experience

issues with social protection and social security measures. However, considering the multiplicity of problems such as participation in decision-making processes in the workplace, accessibility, and discrimination, it is seen that women with disabilities do not have decent work conditions despite being employed in public institutions. Accordingly, when the problems faced by women with disabilities in the labor market are taken into consideration, it becomes clear that inclusive and holistic policies need to be produced. Accordingly, not only employment policies but also social policy and social service practices need to be integrated more strongly into employment policies.

On this issue, participants primarily asked that their disability pensions not be cut due to their employment. It is also clear that they wanted more monitoring and support in the employment process. Accordingly, it can be said that employment policies should not only open up more employment opportunities for women with disabilities, but also focus specifically on fundamental rights and social dialog in working life. In addition, it was found that employability is negatively affected by employers' perceptions in cases where the disability is visible (orthopedic disability, visual impairment, etc.). Finally, our research found that labor market policies should take into account different types of disadvantages and the diversity of disabilities when promoting the inclusion of women with disabilities in the labor market. Therefore, it was found that it is necessary to develop specific policies in the formulation of employment policies for women with disabilities that correspond to the current types and rates of people's disabilities. Accordingly, our findings show that women with disabilities are widely employed in non-decent working conditions or do not have access to employment opportunities. For this reason, it is important for Türkiye to establish a special area of employment policies for women with disabilities in labor markets and expand needs assessment studies in this area to achieve the SDG's 8 targets.

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