

# **An Analysis of Mainstream Concepts of Development and Labor Equality**

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## **Abstract**

The present study analyzes the concepts of development, economic growth and labor in the current economic system. It also examines population and labor force participation, capital accumulation and technological developments, which are considered as development criteria, by taking into consideration women's labor. The study further discusses how the concept of "labor", which is at the core of development criteria and working, causes a change in labor requirement when it is considered as "labor equality". The aim of the study is to demonstrate the need to review definitions that show that women's labor is an economic value in the issue of production and distribution. The study is expected to contribute to the Labor Theory and the theoretical background of development.

**Keywords:** Development, Industrial Revolution, Labor Equality

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Development, global developments in key economic issues such as production and distribution, and the search of balance strengthen the relationship between employment and income distribution. In the context of human rights and human development, gender equality is involved in the efforts to remedy what economy has lacked for centuries. Indeed, gender inequality is considered as the reason for economic crises, economic growth or development, and unfairness of income distribution.

Just as the – unconsciously – ignored function of men in a child's formation in the matriarchal period, women's labor is not regarded as an economic value in today's patriarchal period. However, if the current economic structure is investigated under the bright light of modern time, there are visible dark curves created by labor inequality. The birth of the right to property with the transition to a patriarchal system has shaped the process of growth and development as well as human values. As is known, Economic Theory is based on the paradigm created by the patriarchal system. This paradigm problem is also thought to be the basis of current debates questioning growth, development and distribution (Kumcu, 2017).

As a prerequisite of labor equality, certain calculations need to be reviewed in order to see women's labor as an economic value (e.g. the data used in the calculation of gross domestic product (GDP), the determinant of economic growth). Data provided by the World Bank allowing such a calculation for all countries worldwide have been examined. The present study later analyzes the concept of development and its subcomponents such as growth and labor in the context of gender equality.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Due to ongoing labor neglect within the existing patriarchal economic structure in the world, development and all the criteria that determine it should be reanalyzed based on to the concept of "labor equality". Then, it will change the calculation method of many macroeconomic calculations such as development, growth, and employment as well as the results of calculations. Thus, the present study attempts to lay stress on the generalized definitions of the mainstream concept

of development and its subcomponents such as growth and labor from the perspective of gender inequality.

Policies for development, which is a broad concept ranging from the concepts of growth, efficiency and productivity to social, cultural values and the functioning of institutions, must also be extensive to include economic, social and institutional changes (Güneş, 2016, p. 467). A set of criteria including human development index (HDI), educational opportunities, gender equality, the use of technology, the direction of development index, educational opportunities, gender equality, use of technology, and productivity are used for the description and measurement of development.

The World Bank defines development as a goal of improving the quality of human life<sup>3</sup>. The World Bank<sup>4</sup> classifies development indicators into a total of eleven categories each of which has its own detailed description. They include infrastructure, economic policy and debt, education, public sector, financial sector, health, social development, poverty, labor and social protection, environment, and private sector and trade. The level of each criterion is regarded as a development indicator.

According to the strategies of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) carried out throughout the world, the economic development of countries is linked to the principle of equality between individuals. Sustainable development and elimination of poverty are achieved only through the efficient use of resources, empowerment of women and integration of women into economy (UNDP, 2007, p. 12). The United Nations Human Development Report 2015 defines the Sustainable Development Goals as eradication of poverty and hunger, achievement of food security and improved nutrition, promotion of sustainable agriculture and healthy lives, realization of inclusive and equitable quality education, achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, provision of access to modern energy, promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, promotion of full and productive employment and decent work for all, achievement of sustainable industrialization, establishment of sustainable consumption and production patterns, encouragement of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, , provision of access to justice for all, and establishment of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (United Nations 2015-b, p. 17).

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<sup>3</sup>The World Bank Development Report 1991 as cited in Güneş, 2016, p. 468

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.google.com.tr/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9\\_](http://www.google.com.tr/publicdata/explore?ds=d5bncppjof8f9_)

Considering the Continuity, Breakdowns and Returns from the dominant economics up to the present day<sup>5</sup>, it seems that the continuity that is evident in all processes is a gender-blind market. In other words, with the articulation of Marxist production styles referred to as the fourth break and new production methods, even the changes in the modes of production are inadequate to change the continuity as required by the intermarket capitalist competition although the values of the real world are noticed especially at the structural and class levels. In the period described as the Fifth Break and shaped by the views of such economists as Escobar, Esteva, Rahnama, Kothari and Munck<sup>6</sup>, theories of development are analyzed as discourse; however, the purpose of the productive mentality called development is suggested to include knowledge and practices to dominate women, environment and even the Third World as a whole. To put it differently, the fact that the issue of development is related to capitalism as a reality is again ignored and in this sense, capitalism is regarded as “an external phenomenon in the Third World without being associated with inner dynamics”. In market-based and government-sponsored/theoretical analyzes made by economists, for example, primarily J. Stiglitz to represent the modern era, the continuity of a market-centered, gender-blind and regulatory government rather than breaks is visible (Ercan, 2006 as cited in Kumcu, 2017).

The concept of economic growth appears to be defined as an increase in the amount of output produced by a country using all its resources – assumed to be scarce. It is also described as the extension of production facilities or achievement of a higher level of production by changing production technologies and organizational structure. As is known, there are four factors that are fundamental to the process of growth. These are labor, natural resources, capital and technological level (Unay, 1983, p. 248).

According to the Capitalist System, the indicators of a healthy growing economy include positive macroeconomic outcomes such as reduction of unemployment, increase in purchasing power, growth of consumption in line with its contribution to production through a distribution in all segments of society, more income and sales tax payments, rise of revenues in the state budget, transfer of resources by

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<sup>5</sup>For further information see <https://fuatercan.wordpress.com/2006/07/09/yktisat-ve-kalkynma-ekonomisi/>Ercan, 2006

<sup>6</sup>Ronaldo Munck. Professor of Political Sociology at the University of Liverpool. A thoughtful, critical and provocative Marxism researcher interested in the main themes of ecology, culture, feminism, development and nationalism.

foreign investors to a country in order to get a share of this potential, and the demandable nature of local currency.

In Amartya Sen's terms, growth is income per capita and depends on market variables assessed only by money. Values that lack a monetary value measured and are not labeled such as environment, human rights, social ethics, unity and solidarity are not included in growth criteria! In this sense, production values without monetary equivalents are not taken into account in the calculations of growth in the dominant economics literature.

### **3. LABOR EQUALITY**

Labor is a material and immaterial effort made for the production of work. The distinction made concerning for whom and by whom the produced work is made is the result of the discrimination created by the capitalist economy. In fact, in the capitalist system, the labor spared in the "work" (cooking, cleaning, ironing, etc.) that is done by women usually at home and necessary to ensure the continuity of the "employed" person in the working life is not economically valuable. In the era of agriculture starting with the transition from nomadic life to settled life, the perception of household chores and agricultural work as a whole also caused women's labor to be invisible or to be regarded as individual as being ignored economically. While the Renaissance, the Reform, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Industrial Revolution shaped art, art, social life and science, they also confined women to household chores in the social structure and doomed them to be a cheaper worker of mechanized production and to become one of those who migrate from villages to cities and are deprived of education.

In the Industrial Revolution when employer concepts emerged, labor gained a professional meaning and became a value in return for which a fee was paid to its owner. Thus, this labor that does not make an economic sense because women are not paid money for the work they do at home has been neglected, disregarded and become invisible. It has taken its part as a secret actor of injustice in the gender-blind capitalist system.

Several studies on women and men argue that women work in a human-focused manner and men in a work-focused manner (Statham, 1987, p. 425) or that competition, authority, strict control, non-emotional behavior and analytical thinking are considered "masculine" while cooperation, loose control, empathy and problem solving based on intuition are "feminine" (Laden, 1985). However, this argument disregards the fact that the differentiation in human-specific

qualities may result from the gender-based division of labor and unequal conditions. In other words, the perception of gender-based division of labor, which is as old as the history of mankind, has naturally led to the passivity of women in many ways and the creation of *cultural norms* that require women to embrace the role of subordinate (Bass et al., 1992, p. 235). Although men have been raised with ideals for centuries, it is a centuries-long, gender-blind attitude abusing science to passivize women through the imposition of the principle of domestic loyalty and being subject to the dominance of men and to describe women as passive.

Paradigm-based studies in which the concept of labor has emerged and taken shape have facilitated the improvement of the science of economics on the one hand, but have delayed the emergence of ordinary discoveries of science on the other hand due to the constraints arising from the trust in paradigm. The reason why the present study focuses on the concept of "labor" is the scientific depression that is thought to be experienced in economics. The issue of paradigm is open to broader discussions in the field of Sociology of Science. This paradigm chosen as the backbone of economic theories is needed to know whether women's labor is indeed contrary to the definition of "economic value". If scientists cannot keep up with the new and more rigorous definitions that the paradigm brings to the field of science, they make their way alone in the field of philosophy that has become the special science of the present. However, in normal science, when the paradigm from which research arises loses its functionality, constraints are reduced, the nature of the research questions changes, and thus it becomes possible to overcome the existing scientific crises and create new theories (Kuhn, 2008, pp. 83-99).

"Labor equality" argues that the labor devoted by women to household chores is an economic value realized by the same "workforce" that enables work outside the home to be done. Economic Theory that does **not define** "an individual's doing his/her own work" as an economic value at the micro level also maintains the same approach at the macro level and neglects the labor of millions of women who do all household chores apart from their own work. "Labor equality" implies that the labor of millions of women who are no more individuals doing their own work at the micro level but "housewives" doing all household chores at the macro level is equal to the labor of employed workforce as an economic value (Kumcu, 2017).

#### **4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Women are increasingly – albeit not adequately yet – included in the resolution of many problems such as the international capitalist competition considered to be one of the causes of economic crises in today's world and liberalization of financial systems. There is no doubt that women's participation in labor force brings about a number of economic and social costs. However, these kinds of costs and the problems that extend to social corruption should be interpreted as indicators that show that the transition from the centuries-long patriarchal period representing male dominated society to equality between men and women cannot happen suddenly and smoothly.

There are theories and models put forward by the studies in the literature on gender equality. However, as it is argued by such theories and models, women's labor that has no money equivalent is not considered as an economic value and no analysis is made to increase women's labor in employment. It is planned to analyze the applicability of the below-listed models and theories postulated by considering the effects of gender inequality on socioeconomic development in further studies based on the approach of "labor equality", that is, by considering the labor of housewives.

- Gender Inequality – the Kuznets Curve
- Sen's Theory of the Right to Change
- Efficiency and Equality
- Theories of Growth
- Becker's Distribution of Households
- Model of Surplus Labor

It seems that humanity needs values that have been neglected and ignored so far for the solution of a great number of problems (Kumcu, 2017). In fact, the achievement of the aforementioned goals depends on individuals who have self-worth, self-esteem and self-awareness as it is argued in the review of Todaro and Smith. These individuals are male and female individuals who know what they want among different alternatives and freedoms offered in the society.