

**For citation:**

AKANSEL, İ. (2024). Transformation of women labor in the public area in republican era: A case of Çalıkuşu novel *Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler ve Eğitim Dergisi – USBED* 6(10), 235-244. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10820316> , <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/usbed>

## Transformation of women’s labor in the public area in republican era: A case of *Çalıkuşu* novel<sup>1</sup>

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Article Type:	Research Article
Submission Date:	14/02/2024
Revision Dates:	26/02/2024
Accepted Date:	15/03/2024

### **Ethical Statement**

(X) Ethical approval was not obtained for the manuscript. The author declares that the study is not subject to ethics committee approval.

### **Contribution of the researchers to the study**

1. Author's contribution: Wrote the manuscript, collected the data and analysed/reported the results (100%).

### **Conflict of interest**

The author(s) declare that there is no possible conflict of interest in this study.

### **Similarity**

This study was scanned in **iThenticate** programme. The final similarity rate is. 17%.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented in its raw form at Econ TR 2023 Conference IV. International Conference on Economics, September 7-9, 2023, Başkent University, Ankara, Türkiye.

**Transformation of women's labor in the public area in the republican era:  
A case of Çalığışu novel****Abstract**

For centuries, women have been subordinated in the economic sphere. Women, whose labor has always been the subject of exploitation, have only been able to earn the rewards of their labor through severe struggles for rights. It is a historical fact that unlike women's labor, which has been engaged in a much more difficult struggle for rights, especially in the Western world, women's labor struggle during the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye was constructed far beyond the conditions of the 20th century. In this study, how women's labor was constructed after the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye will be examined with the novel "Çalığışu," one of the most prominent works of literature that can shed light on this. Thus, an analysis based on "patriarchy" and "gender," which are critical concepts in the difficulties experienced by women's labor, will be made from the economics-literature framework.

**EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

As a sub-discipline of economics, 'Economic Thought' has benefited significantly from other disciplines such as history, sociology, psychology, etc. In addition, the possibility of including newly developing fields in its content is the dynamic sub-structure of economic thought. Therefore, as an emerging field, the relationship between economics and literature adds a new field to the dynamic sub-structure of economic thought. Literary works not only focus on an event, environment, reflection of characters, etc. but also depict an economic environment through storytelling through character and fiction. In other words, works of literature reflect the economic and sociological structure. The positioning of women in the labor force has not only been the subject of many academic studies with cause-and-effect relationships. However, it has also inspired many works of literature. In this sense, the presentation of the female labor force in the public sphere contains details that need to be examined. How is women's labor made visible in the public sphere? While labor-capital contradictions within the capitalist system generally produce results to the detriment of labor, this situation can produce even more negative results regarding women's participation in the labor force in the public sphere. In this context, issues such as how women's participation in the labor force can be made visible, under which conditions the right to work between men and women can be made more egalitarian, etc., should be discussed. 'Gender,' on the other hand, unlike the concept of 'sex,' is the socially constructed characteristics assigned to women and men in society. In other words, while sex is innate, gender is socially determined. Literary works are essential keys to understanding the conditions of their period from an economic perspective. The main plot of the work and especially the personality structure of the main character may be compatible with the economic plot.

For this reason, this study aims to examine Reşat Nuri Güntekin's famous novel 'Çalığışu' from the perspective of women's labor force participation in the public sphere, women and economics, based on questions such as how women's participation in the labor force has been constructed from the beginning to the present day, where it has evolved, what difficulties it faces, etc. in the 100th anniversary of the Republic. In this discourse analysis, the concepts of 'patriarchy' and then 'gender' will be used to discuss the position of women in society and, secondly, the place of women in the public sphere and, thus, the female labor force will be examined. Thus, in addition to the relationship between literature and economics, the transformation of the female labor force in the public sphere will be examined through the novel 'Çalığışu,' one of the most prominent works of Turkish literature, which is essential both in terms of bringing a new dimension to the view of the female labor force from an economic perspective and in terms of revealing the mentality construction of a period.

**Keywords:** Women labor force, Public area, Private area, Economics, Literature, Patriarchy, Gender

## INTRODUCTION

The discipline of economics was influenced by the revolutions experienced by the sciences, especially in the 19th century, and emulated the discipline of physics, primarily through the concept of rationality. The pattern of explaining and understanding the economic relations of social phenomena, which has been present in the content of economics since the 18th century, when economics began to become a discipline systematically and has not been rejected, has brought about a shift towards mathematization in the 19th century. However, the connection of economics with disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and history, which are already inherent in economics, will clarify the understanding of many economic phenomena. In this context, can literature be a tool for understanding economic events and revealing economically problematic situations? More precisely, rethinking the areas that have been disconnected from economics (Güler-Aydın & Akdere, 2018: 9) and giving them new content will be able to seek new doors to produce different solutions to economic disruptions.

Economics is a tool to understand the economic actions of people and societies since the last quarter of the 19th. Century economics broke ties with other social disciplines such as history, philosophy, sociology, etc. This disengagement has caused several economic issues. Economics forgot that accepting human behaviors and economic actions as living creatures is a discipline. So, as a new brand studying the field, economics, and literature have common points to explain economic actions and people's behaviors. The reason lies in 'the ideal' world behind two disciplines. Either discipline tries to build an 'ideal world' regarding their aspects.

Here, we interpret the first aim of our study. The first aim of this study is to explain whether any contribution of any literature piece has the power to perceive economic thought. We claim that as two different social disciplines, there is a unique link between economics and literature to determine economic actions. On the other hand, economic actions and discrimination between sexes are unique roles to understand how an economic institution can be built as a political economy action of a country. This discrimination must not be underestimated because, for thousands of years, discrimination between sexes has been a way of economic exploitation. Although it is generally called economic exploitation, there are deeper reasons behind it. This point is our second argument. If there is any sex discrimination in public areas, what circumstances affect it? Thirdly, this study aims to get a link between a literature piece and sex discrimination in public areas.

**Pioneering view of women's labour**

It is a new field to examine whether the artistic fiction of the literary artist in terms of different literary periods and genres can shed light on the history of economic thought (Güler-Aydın & Akdere, 2018, p. 11) and the most prominent type of economic discrimination. The relationship between economics and literature as a new field in expanding knowledge production is a new area of interest in Turkish and English literature. In the Turkish literature, for example, book chapters such as Sarfati & Atamtürk (2015), Ruben (2017), etc. can be found, while books such as Güler-Aydın & Akdere (2018), Özel (2018) and Özel (2019) are available (Kılıç, 2021, p. 183).

The ideas created in the fictional world of literature also carry contexts that shed light on economic problems. For example, gender discrimination, which is the most visible of economic discrimination but is hidden in a way, can also be read through the fiction of novels. However, it is necessary to understand some basic concepts that will enable us to understand the appearance of women's labor in literature. Through these concepts, it will be more apparent to understand why women's labor was subordinated and how the problems created by these concepts could be overcome with the vision the Republic drew for women.

In any case, sex discrimination is one of the critical discrimination types of economic exploitation. Because it not only separates the two sexes but also causes broad economic exploitation between them. So, one crucial question must be asked: What is the real reason for sex discrimination? In other words, why are women and men treated differently economically? The reason why women and men are dealt with differently is all about gender roles.

Gender roles can be defined as, aside from biological sex differences, women and men have different kinds of roles in society because of their sexes'. Gender role differences cause essential stratification. When society is a traditional type, primarily, men are seen as superior to women. These stratifications generate that different roles and duties are attributed to women, such as being a mother or domestic workers; unlike women, men are seen to be responsible for earning money or having a high-status job responsibility, etc. (Ataklı Yavuz, 2016, p. 79; Akansel, 2022, p. 15).

Thus, one question appears: How are minds being shaped by which sex is responsible for exterior works? This is a socio-cultural dimension. All gender roles are encoded by the society which we belong to. For Butler, sexes are inevitable. However, gender is constructed by society (Butler, 2014).

One can claim two different aspects regarding why roles are differentiated between women and men. The first opinion is the 'naturalist view,' claiming that social differences are rooted in biological differences. The second view is called the 'progressive view,' and it alleges that gender differences are caused by cultural disparities and are constructed socially. The central diversity between the two approaches is based on how they see the inequalities between sexes. According to the 'progressive view,' there are physical and biological differences between women and men. So, it is possible to discuss the division of labor. Men are more robust than women physically. Women have the capability of giving birth. This is why men are seen as responsible for exterior works in terms of 'natural view.'

On the other hand, the 'progressive view' obtains that all gender roles are constructed sociologically. It means that we do not need muscular force in the technological era. Men can sweep either (Ecevit, 2011, p. 5-6; Akansel, 2022, p. 16).

All these debates bring up another point regarding transforming the women's labor force: public area. Although the public area is much more related to political sciences, it profoundly connects with gender debates. Public area is a term to describe an accessible area in order to make critics and opposition where people have a chance to have rights to say about society describing a liberal ideology instead of feudal ideology (Çiçekli, 2019, p. 4). For feminism, public area is a place having rationality where the power is instituted (Çiçekli, 2019, p. 4).

The dichotomy between private area/public area is based on Ancient Greek. Since Ancient Greek biology tried to give an excuse between women and men, the distinction between public area/private area is derived from 'polis' (public area) and 'oikos' (house) notions. Men rule the polis. On the other hand, women belong to the Oikos. The distinction between public/private areas is less particular than ages as in Ancient Greek. Because women in noble families can share the power to some extent., Also, the Christian belief blesses the women in the abbey, which gives them more vital prestige in private areas. In the 17th century, the distinction between 'polis' and 'oikos' was regulated by laws (Günindi Ersöz, 2015, p. 84-85). It is possible to say that historically, women are permanently excluded from public areas. Men have real power in public areas.

For feminists' public area is a way of oppression of men over women. For feminists' the public area is related to masculinity, while the private area is related to femininity. Public area determines politics, and men make it, and economic power occurs here (Çaha, 2006; Koparan, 2020, p. 57). The crucial way to explain why women are excluded by public area can be to clarify economic change in the Industrial Revolution because the home-made production style

has changed. Giant firms and monopolies have occurred. Women have greater responsibilities at home; they are excluded by the production (Sancar, 2009; Koparan, 2020, p. 57).

Nevertheless, women were excluded from production for some time, especially after World War I; the production needed women's labor. Whereas women could have worked any production, the capitalist system pushed women to work specific jobs. This has concluded as men work and women work. Being a teacher, nurse, nursemaid, etc., has been accepted as women's work because almost all of these are directly identified with domestic work.

### **“Çalığışu” (Wren): Modern working model**

When analyzing discrimination based on gender and patriarchy, literature is an essential tool in understanding how social change and transformation take place. Literary works and the periods in which they were written shed light on society's economic, social, cultural, and psychological conditions. For this reason, this study, a vital work of Turkish Literature, sheds light on the period shortly before the Republic was proclaimed and enables us to read about the participation of women in working life and the economic and social consequences of this situation through the concepts of gender and patriarchy, has been selected.

After the Industrial Revolution, women were allowed to be in public areas, but they were only permitted to work in jobs related to domestic work. Could it be possible to evaluate being a teacher as a domestic worker or savior of a country? Our argument is both yes and no. A novel called '*Çalığışu*' written by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, gives us a key answer as to why it must be accepted both ways.

After the Turkish Republic announced, there is no doubt that women participate in the labor force as a part of the citizens. On the other hand, women are allowed to work as a continuing part of domestic work. At that point, two relevant essential questions come to mind: Is it possible to understand how gender roles play an essential role in instituting a country and how they affect having a job? Also, is it possible to perceive what kind of circumstances would have been done with a novel piece regarding gender roles?

We argue that gender roles determine what kind of job roles a woman or a man has in a public area. Novels are not only tools to create a world, but they also can have the power to show us what happens in reality. So, in this paper, we choose a novel that has the potential to display how gender roles separate in public areas and how a new country uses this separation mostly in favor of women; however, it has an adverse effect after a while.

In our argument, '*Çalıkuşu*,' which was written by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, has a significant impact on revealing our assumptions. Firstly, *Çalıkuşu* was published before the Turkish Republic was first instituted. Nevertheless, the fiction of the novel has a great power to recognize how gender roles have been separated in the public area and how women are affected by all public area conditions both in their private life and public.

The novel is based on a love story between two cousins. The main characters are Feride (female) and Kâmrân (male). Feride is an orphan, and her cousin's family raised her. She went to a privileged school and learned French as a native. At the novel's beginning, she does not want to admit that she fell in love with her cousin 'Kâmrân.' After a while, Feride and Kâmrân realized that they mutually fell in love and engaged. After a while, Kâmrân went to Europe for an occupation in foreign affairs; Feride returned to her education. When she graduated and returned to Kâmrân from Europe, her family decided to have a wedding for them. Just a day before their wedding, Feride learned he had cheated on her in Europe.

From this part, we will see how she entered the public area as a teacher. First, teaching was considered a proper job for women at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Türkiye. We see that the teaching profession is sanctified within the novel's plot. Therefore, at first, teaching was already the most appropriate profession for women in Türkiye's founding history.

The Constitutional Monarchy Period was the first period women were made visible in the public sphere. Women could work in professions such as teaching, nursing, and tailoring, albeit limited. With the establishment of the Republic, the role assigned to women merges with the roles of mother and sister serving for liberation (Karaca, 2012, p. 1-2).

Since the novel is set in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, we often see that women's presence in the public sphere is highly frowned upon by society. On the other hand, concepts such as 'raising the children of the country, motherly affection,' etc., frequently mentioned in the novel, are also often sanctified by the profession of 'teaching,' which allows women to be in the public sphere.

However, even in the teaching profession, which is considered appropriate for women in the public sphere, we see that women can only be in the public sphere or even work with the permission and approval of men. In particular, we observe that the emphasis on 'raising students like children' is associated with the process of building a homeland, which is again in harmony with the role of motherhood. Notably, this emphasis was especially made during the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye.

From Feride's first application to start working as a teacher until the time she is forced to resign, the emphasis on her beauty in the public sphere instead of the importance of her work emphasizes that women should not bring their physical characteristics to the forefront when evaluated from a feminist point of view.

From a critical feminist perspective, the character of Feride represents a free female identity in social and economic contexts (Demir, 2021, p. 335).

In other words, if a woman is to be in the public sphere, she should not carry any characteristics from the private sphere to the public sphere. Otherwise, this is seen as a contrary behavior that disrupts the balance and order of the public sphere. It is even unacceptable for a woman to work as a 'beautiful woman' in a blessed profession such as teaching. This emphasis is repeated quite often in the novel. Almost all events in the novel's fiction are based on Feride's beauty and her clinging to life as a strong woman alone.

Therefore, it can be said here that while trying to maintain the teaching profession, one of the professions deemed appropriate for women due to gender roles, in the public sphere, one can only work by adhering to the boundaries drawn by the public sphere. In other words, the positioning of male and female teachers in the teaching profession in terms of gendered roles is different. This situation has remained the same in the teaching profession, deemed most appropriate for women and considered a highly blessed profession at the foundation of the Republic of Türkiye. These explanations constitute the negative aspect of the reflection of gendered roles in the public sphere, which we emphasized at the beginning of the study.

Then, the second question to be asked is whether there are no positive aspects.

During the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, many positive economic steps were taken with confidence in reason and science. One of these economic steps was to ensure equality between men and women, albeit relatively. For this reason, although a limited number of professions, such as the training of women scientists, women fighter pilots, etc., were emphasized, the teaching profession was deemed appropriate for large masses of women. The positive aspect of this concerning the position of women in the public sphere is that a gender considered unfavorable even to work in the public sphere during the Ottoman Empire has now found the opportunity to work in the public sphere. Although teaching is called a profession that is considered appropriate for women, primarily if it is remembered that it is a dream for a woman to attend a secretarial course at most, for example, to go to a university in the period mentioned above, this right that the Republic of Türkiye has granted

to women in the public sphere is a reflection of the gendered roles in the public sphere. It is the most favorable state of its reflection in the field.

## CONCLUSION

In light of all these explanations, it can be said that women were allowed to participate in the public sphere within the framework of gender roles during the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye. In the public sphere, forms of work that have gendered roles that ensure the continuation of women's roles in the private sphere have been deemed appropriate for women. However, the fact that the Republic of Türkiye, which created a modern state from a closed society such as the Ottoman society, did not create a direct obstacle to women's right to work has led to women becoming more visible in the public sphere as time progressed. Thus, different forms of women's presence in the public sphere have paved the way.

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