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A Comparison of Decent and Non-Decent Labor Market Outcomes of Youth and Adults in Türkiye: An Empirical Analysis of Pre-pandemic and Post-pandemic Periods

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Abstract: This study explores the labor market outcomes of youth and adults in Türkiye, focusing on the distinction between decent and non-decent employment during the pre- and post-pandemic periods. Drawing on microdata from the Household Labor Force Survey (2018–2022), the research examines key dimensions of decent work, including job security, social protection, and equal opportunities. Youth, defined as individuals aged 15–24, are disproportionately affected by unemployment, precarious jobs, and skill mismatches, highlighting critical vulnerabilities in Türkiye’s labor market.

The findings reveal stark disparities between youth and adults. Youth are overrepresented in non-decent employment, particularly in sectors like agriculture and trade, and face significant wage disparities compared to adults. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, with youth experiencing greater employment instability and slower recovery in decent job opportunities. Educational attainment emerged as a pivotal factor, with higher levels correlating strongly with access to decent employment. However, systemic skill mismatches persist, impeding labor market integration.

The study underscores the importance of targeted policies to enhance

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education, align skills with market demands, and promote inclusive job creation. Addressing these challenges is crucial for Türkiye to capitalize on its demographic window of opportunity, ensuring sustainable economic growth and improved labor market outcomes for its young workforce.

Keywords: Decent work, Wage gap, Microeconometrics, Young workforce, COVID-19, Household Labor Force Survey

Jel Codes: J80, J31, C01, J11

Türkiye'deki Gençlerin ve Yetişkinlerin İnsana Yakışır ve İnsana Yakışmayan İşgücü Piyasası Sonuçlarının Karşılaştırılması: Pandemi Öncesi ve Pandemi Sonrası Dönemlerin Ampirik Bir Analizi

Öz: Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de gençler ve yetişkinler arasında, pandemi öncesi ve sonrası dönemlerde "insana yakışır" ve "insana yakışmayan" istihdam arasındaki farklılıklara odaklanmaktadır. 2018-2022 yıllarını kapsayan Hanehalkı İşgücü Anketi mikro verilerinden yararlanan araştırma, iş güvenliği, sosyal koruma ve eşit fırsatlar gibi insana yakışır işin temel boyutlarını değerlendirmektedir. 15-24 yaş arası bireyler olarak tanımlanan gençler, işsizlik, güvencesiz işler ve beceri uyumsuzluklarından orantısız bir şekilde etkilenmekte ve bu durum Türkiye'nin işgücü piyasasındaki kritik kırılğanlıkları ortaya koymaktadır.

Araştırma sonuçları, gençler ve yetişkinler arasında belirgin eşitsizlikler olduğunu göstermektedir. Gençler, özellikle tarım ve ticaret gibi sektörlerde insana yakışmayan istihdamda aşırı temsil edilmekte ve yetişkinlere kıyasla önemli ücret farklılıkları ile karşılaşmaktadır. COVID-19 pandemisi, bu sorunları daha da kötüleştirmiş, gençler arasında istihdam istikrarsızlığını artırmış ve insana yakışır iş fırsatlarına erişimde daha yavaş bir iyileşme süreci yaşanmasına neden olmuştur. Eğitim düzeyi, insana yakışır istihdama erişimle güçlü bir şekilde ilişkili kritik bir faktör olarak öne çıkmıştır. Ancak, sistematik beceri uyumsuzlukları devam etmekte ve işgücü piyasasına entegrasyonu engellemektedir.

Çalışma, eğitimi iyileştirmeye, becerileri piyasa talepleriyle uyumlu hale getirmeye ve kapsayıcı iş yaratmayı teşvik etmeye yönelik hedefe odaklı politikaların önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu sorunların ele alınması, Türkiye'nin demografik fırsat penceresinden yararlanması, sürdürülebilir ekonomik büyüme sağlaması ve genç iş gücü için daha iyi işgücü piyasası sonuçları elde etmesi açısından hayati öneme sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsana yakışır iş, Ücret farkları, Mikroekonometri, Genç işgücü, COVID-19, Hanehalkı İşgücü Anketi

Jel Kodları: J80, J31, C01, J11

Introduction

The presence of employment opportunities in the labor market does not necessarily ensure economic security. For an individual engaged in work, it is essential that employment opportunities should not only abundant but also productive. It should offer a fair wage, job security, social protection, and equal opportunities for advancement. In developing countries, the high prevalence of poverty leaves many unable to afford prolonged unemployment, driving individuals to accept even low-productivity, poorly compensated jobs. Consequently, this results in the phenomenon of the 'working poor', those who, despite being employed, struggle to fulfill their basic needs. Therefore, beyond the challenge of creating jobs, a central concern in developing countries is the quality of employment and the provision of decent work.

The concept of "decent work," introduced by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1999, is built upon four foundational pillars: rights at work, employment protection, social protection, and social dialogue. According to the ILO, decent work is defined as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity." Within this framework, work-related rights encompass just and favorable working conditions, equal pay for equal work, protection against unemployment, reasonable work hours, paid leave, the right to rest and leisure, social security, and the right to organize and form unions. The ILO Decent Work framework² outlines ten key elements: employment opportunities, adequate earnings and productive work, reasonable working hours, work-life balance, the elimination of exploitative work practices, job stability and security, equal opportunity and treatment in employment, safe working conditions, social security, social dialogue, and the representation of both workers and employers.

Decent work is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to foster the creation of decent work as a means to drive sustained economic growth, alleviate poverty, reduce inequalities and hunger, and promote gender equality. Specifically, SDG Goal 8 emphasizes the promotion of sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, alongside the achievement of full and productive employment, and the provision of decent work for all. More importantly, the lack of sufficient decent work represents one of the most urgent global challenges confronting today's young population (defined as 15–24-year-olds), as highlighted by SDG 8.

² See ILO (2003).

Key concerns encompass elevated levels of working poverty and informality, underemployment, and insufficient demand for youth labor.

Young population of a country is pivotal in creating conditions conducive to sustained economic growth. As more young people join the working-age population, they hold the potential to make substantial contributions to economic development, provided that sufficient employment opportunities exist within the labor market. However, the growing prevalence of unemployment and underemployment among youth has become an increasingly significant global concern. According to the ILO, young people are more likely to be unemployed than adults worldwide. Furthermore, in terms of employment quality, they face more disadvantaged conditions than their adult counterparts. Given the growing influx of youth into the labor market, the high levels of youth unemployment have become a critical concern for researchers and policymakers, owing to their substantial economic and social ramifications.

Several factors contribute to the higher unemployment rates among youth compared to adults since the youth labor market possesses unique dimensions and characteristics. First is that youth emerge as the most vulnerable demographic, often facing disadvantage due to the "last hired, first fired" principle during an economic recession. In other words, young people are typically the first to lose their jobs in a downturn and the last to regain employment as the economy recovers.³ Second, the substitutability between young workers and their older counterparts in the labor market is limited.⁴ Furthermore, young people encounter age-specific challenges when transitioning from school to work, including limited work experience, a disparity between their skills and the requirements of the job market, and a lack of resources and organization to effectively pursue employment opportunities. Therefore, youth unemployment is more responsive to fluctuations in aggregate demand than adult unemployment. Another aspect of youth employment, particularly the subject of the present study, is that it is predominantly of low quality, marked by limited access to decent work. A significant portion of the young workforce is employed in the informal sector, often in low-paying jobs without contracts and with limited access to social security benefits compared to adults. Their involvement in the informal sector leads to unstable employment relationships, low wages, and irregular working hours.

In sum, the vulnerability of young people has several dimensions (i) higher unemployment rates, (ii) lower-quality jobs for those who do secure employment,

³ See (Schmid, 2015).

⁴ See (O'Higgins, 2001).

(iii) greater labor market inequalities among various youth groups, (iv) longer and more precarious transitions from school to work, and (v) increased disengagement from the labor market.

The failure of the economy to create adequate and decent employment opportunities for young people undermines the potential to harness the demographic dividend and leads to numerous social and developmental repercussions. Therefore, effective policy interventions targeting youth are essential to tackle both challenges: the sluggish pace of employment creation and the high proportion of young people engaged in low-productivity jobs. The central objective is to incorporate employment into development strategies so that policies aimed at economic growth also foster sustained, decent employment opportunities for youth. Furthermore, this approach must concurrently promote pro-employment economic policies, robust educational and training systems, and effective measures to facilitate the transition from school to work.

As also for the Turkish labor market, youth unemployment appears to be one of the most severe problems that the country faces since the current population is comparatively young. Youth unemployment is a significant issue in Türkiye, as the country's rate exceeds the global average. Rising unemployment and the challenges in securing job opportunities push young people into low-skilled, low-paying, and precarious employment. As the working-age population grows more rapidly than job opportunities, Türkiye's performance in employment creation falls short, failing to provide adequate job opportunities, especially for young people. Urban areas exhibit higher youth unemployment rates compared to rural areas, with female youth in urban regions facing even greater challenges, largely due to the shift in the employment structure away from agriculture. A critical issue for Türkiye is its highest NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate among OECD countries. The UNDP highlights that the urban youth population in Türkiye is adversely affected by the slow pace of employment growth, coupled with the rising working-age population. In Türkiye, young, unskilled men are disproportionately represented in the construction sector compared to the overall labor force, while young, unskilled women are predominantly employed in the clothing and textile industry. Many of these workers lack social security coverage, especially direct social insurance. This situation has particular policy implications for youth, as both sectors are among those where informal employment is most prevalent.

The "demographic window of opportunity" refers to a temporary demographic phase, lasting roughly 20 to 25 years for each country, occurring when the population growth rate declines and the working-age population rises. This is a unique and critical period. Türkiye entered this window of opportunity in

the early 2000s, and it remains open for the country today. A country can capitalize on the "demographic window of opportunity" by implementing comprehensive policies tailored to the needs of young people (Çelik and Lüküslü, 2018; Bloom et al., 2009; Groth & May, 2017).

Türkiye has seen a gradual yet steady increase in educational attainment across all levels. However, educational attainment does not seem to enhance employment opportunities for younger generations, a situation that may reflect both a scarcity of suitable job openings and a mismatch between educational qualifications and labor market demands. As a result, concerns persist regarding the quality of education and the extent to which the growth in educational participation addresses skill mismatches arising from both overeducation and undereducation. The figures for over-education and under-education among the youth indicate that the issue is not solely a matter of lacking skills for available jobs. However, the prevalence of over-education is significantly lower than that of under-education, suggesting that the shortage of skills for existing jobs is a more pressing issue in Türkiye. Moreover, the skills mismatch among individuals with tertiary education is greater than that observed among those with secondary education. The results also reveal a significant gender bias, with women experiencing higher levels of skill mismatch across various measures. A study by TEPAV concluded that the higher education sector is unable to produce graduates who meet the needs of the private sector, and unless it undergoes rapid transformation, the degree of mismatch is likely to worsen in the future.⁵ Yet another significant issue of the youth in Turkish labor market is the disproportionately high proportion of young people who are neither employed nor engaged in education (NEET) and training.

The large body of literature on young people in Turkish labor market mainly consists of those studies investigating the structure and nature of unemployment for youth and identifying the youth labor market challenges with respect to employment generation. However, there has been insufficient empirical research into young worker's experiences in the context of the decent work in Türkiye to date despite its vital importance in attaining a sustainable development. One contribution of the present study is to fill this gap in the literature. By using an individual-level micro data, we first explore the characteristics of decent work among young Turkish workers and then compare its dimensions among youth and adult workers.

Research indicates that the Covid-19 pandemic affected workers differently depending on their gender and age, their education levels and occupations, and the

⁵ See (TEPAV, 2007).

country where they live etc. Younger age groups are known to be suffered more strongly globally. Decent work deficits and the expansion of the informal economy especially across youth has deepened during pandemic worldwide and Türkiye is no exception. With this agenda, the research on decent work for a greater engagement of young people has gained importance. Therefore, another purpose of this study is to contribute to this strand of the literature by analyzing the labor market implications with a particular interest of decent work conditions for youth and adults. We aim to compare pre and post pandemic status of decent work for young and adults.

The study is structured along in the following sections. Next section focuses on a review of literature. Section 3 presents data and methodology. Results of the analysis are presented in Section 4. And, the last section concludes.

Related Literature

Traditionally, the literature investigating labor markets for young people has concentrated on unemployment problem, and particularly on the supply side factors that focuses on their skill levels. Abdullah and Mansoor (2024) examine the structure and nature of youth employment, identifying the challenges within the youth labor market in India concerning both employment generation and the quality of work. Their research reveals that slow employment growth has impacted youth more severely than adults. By analyzing two rounds of employment and unemployment surveys from 2017 and 2018, they assess decent work across five dimensions: employment opportunities, adequate earnings and productive work, equal opportunity and treatment in the workplace, job stability and security, and social security. They compare these dimensions between youth and adult workers in India. In their report, Sparreboom and Staneva (2014) present up-to-date evidence on labor market outcomes and education for youth aged 15 to 29 in developing economies. They conclude that the lack of quality education in many low-income countries perpetuates a cycle in which poverty leads to low educational attainment, which in turn results in vulnerable employment, undereducation, and low wages for young workers, thereby hindering their financial capacity to support the education of the next generation. Barford et al. (2021) present findings from an international survey conducted in lower-income countries, along with a series of focus group discussions and interviews in Uganda. They highlight that, despite the challenges posed by their circumstances, young people in lower-income countries tend to be dynamic and dedicated to contributing to their communities on a voluntary basis, often driven by the very limitations that hinder their access to decent work. Guimarães et al. (2018) examine the experiences of Brazilian youth in

the labor market. Their study reveals that the trajectories of young people are diverse, marked by a variety of experiences: they may simultaneously study and work, leave school only to return later, or start their first job before resuming their education. These, along with many other possible scenarios, illustrate the complex interconnections between work, education, and family trajectories. In another report, Feldt et al. (2019) examine the challenges faced by rural youth in Cambodia in accessing decent work. They emphasize the significant shortage of quality employment opportunities within the agricultural value chain in rural areas. A limited number of employers were identified along these value chains, with most preferring unskilled, seasonal laborers. As a result, there is no substantial formal mismatch between the skills demanded by employers and those possessed by the youth. Few decent employment opportunities were found in rural areas, and many existing jobs offered inadequate income, poor working conditions, and failed to meet occupational safety standards. Aisenso et al. (2022) develop a qualitative approach to studying young workers in Argentina. Their findings reveal a pervasive acceptance and resignation to highly precarious working conditions, driven by the unstable broader context and the scarcity of quality employment opportunities. Izzi (2020) examines the status of decent work and informality among youth in Africa. She argues that the global rise of gig work platforms—characterized by independent, temporary work conducted on a short-term or task-by-task basis—and microwork platforms has exacerbated the challenges of upholding employment rights in non-traditional work settings. While the gig economy in high-income countries is often criticized for eroding workers' rights and social protection, similar trends are already emerging in African labor markets, and current trajectories suggest these issues will become even more widespread.

There is also another strand of the literature that focuses on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic on youth work. Gonzalez et al. (2020) and Helliwell et al. (2020) highlight that younger age groups, particularly those aged 15-29, are experiencing the crisis in distinctive ways. They face higher risks of income and job loss compared to more established members of the workforce. The WHO (2020) reports that pandemic-induced disruptions in employment opportunities are likely to significantly impact the career trajectories and future earnings of young people. These individuals are more likely to have limited financial resources, as they are often employed in temporary or part-time positions, and work in service sectors such as retail, hospitality, and the gig economy. Dowd et al. (2020) and Gonzalez et al. (2020) argue that it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to transition to more appropriate employment as their period of unemployment or job mismatch extends. Delays in entering the labor market or shifting from one ill-suited job to another are likely to have lasting effects on an individual's life course. Belot et al.

(2021) conduct a six-country survey, covering China, South Korea, Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and document how various age groups and income levels were impacted early in the pandemic. Christie and Swingewood (2022) examine the impact of Covid-19 on young workers in England. They report that those lacking the safety net of social support networks face the greatest difficulty in transitioning to decent work. The concept of decent work emerged as a valuable framework for exploring the aspirations and future hopes of young people. Eichhorst et al. (2022) investigate the diverse impacts of COVID-19 on youth labor market outcomes and propose key policy responses for younger workers in selected countries. They conclude that nations in the Global North were generally better prepared to address the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on youth compared to those in the Global South. Many countries in the Global North were able to leverage an existing array of labor market policies, including those specifically targeting youth.

Empirical studies on the status of decent work in Türkiye are limited. A study by Baş et al. (2024) examine the impact levels of the ILO's decent work criteria by expanding nine indicators into twelve criteria using the Fuzzy DEMATEL method. The results indicate that the highest-ranked criteria, in order of importance, are 'healthy workplace environment,' 'decent working hours,' and 'safe working conditions,' all of which significantly contribute to the concept of decent work. Most of the studies aim to analyze the dynamics and consequences of youth unemployment. Bayırbağ et al. (2018) examine the nature, causes, and consequences of child poverty and youth unemployment in Türkiye, arguing that the country still lacks a long-term policy framework to address these issues, treating them as interconnected aspects of a broader problem. In another study, Alkan, I. (2015) analyzes the structure and characteristics of youth employment in Türkiye, offering recommendations to policymakers on the issue. Çelik and Lüküslü (2018) examine factors such as labor market structure, demographics, gender, and migration dynamics that influence unemployment and labor relations in Türkiye, with a focus on assessing their impact on the younger generation and shedding light on youth unemployment and labor issues in the country. Durotoye (2014) investigates the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to youth unemployment in the MINT countries (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Türkiye). He concludes that addressing the unemployment issue in these countries will require effective policy measures, including the reprioritization of the agricultural sector, reform of the educational system, and the creation of a conducive environment for employment. Çelik (2006) conducts an in-depth study on the unemployment experiences of youth in Ankara and Şanlıurfa, concluding that these experiences are highly heterogeneous. She identifies various factors that

influence an individual's unemployment experience, including gender, education level and type, skill set and occupation, marital status, health status, the presence or absence of a father, family income level, the number of dependent family members, and the province of residence. Attar (2013) examines the issue of youth unemployment in Türkiye, focusing particularly on skills mismatches and policy challenges. He notes that while Türkiye's youth unemployment rate is less severe compared to some European countries and many in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, it still remains notably higher than countries such as Germany and Japan. He states that although Türkiye is not in the same position as Greece and Spain, where the global financial crisis has had a profound impact on youth unemployment, the situation remains concerning. He further highlights that the prevalence of skills mismatches suggests a potentially more challenging future for youth employment in Türkiye. A particularly troubling issue is the high proportion of young people in the country who are neither employed nor engaged in education or training.

Among studies investigating the status of decent work or unemployment of youth during Covid-19 pandemic in Türkiye, Acar (2020) examines the impact of the pandemic on employment and working conditions, asserting that it has exacerbated the working conditions for a substantial portion of the labor force, particularly among the youth. This deterioration includes wages, job and income security, as well as other rights and benefits. Kalkavan et al. (2021) employ the fuzzy DEMATEL technique to develop strategies for mitigating unemployment during the COVID-19 period. The results indicate that providing adequate income protection is the most effective criterion for alleviating the unemployment crisis during the pandemic. Aldan et al. (2021) make a significant contribution to the literature on the heterogeneous labor market impacts of COVID-19. Their findings reveal that the pandemic's effects were most severe among both the young (aged 15-24) and the elderly (aged 55+), exhibiting a U-shaped pattern. Özkubat et al. (2023) provide evidence that women, youth, and workers in informal and temporary employment-identified as disadvantaged groups in the Turkish labor market-experienced fewer lost working hours during the initial phase of the pandemic. Their findings indicate that youth were the least affected age group, contrary to previous studies that suggested youth were more severely impacted. However, the results for the elderly align with those of Aldan et al. (2021) for Türkiye.

Data and Methodology

Data

This study utilizes microdata from the Household Labor Force Survey (HLFS) spanning the years 2018 to 2022. The HLFS microdata lacks explicit or proxy indicators to differentiate between decent and non-decent employment. To address this, we developed these variables using information on employment type (registered or unregistered), employment status (part-time or full-time), and labor force participation (employed, unemployed, or out of the labor force) for each individual. Excluding those not in the labor force, we constructed the variable DecEmp for individuals aged 14 and older to identify whether they hold a decent job. An individual is classified as decently employed if they are employed, registered, and working full-time. Accordingly, DecEmp is coded as 1 if the individual is employed (Employed = 1), works full-time (FullTimeEmp = 1), and is registered (RegisteredEmp = 1); otherwise, it is coded as 0.

Non-decent employment is defined as any form of unregistered or part-time work. Thus, registered and unregistered part-time employees, along with unregistered full-time employees, are classified as non-decent. The variable NonDecEmp is set to 1 for individuals who are employed (Employed = 1) but either unregistered (RegisteredEmp = 0) or work part-time (FullTimeEmp = 0); otherwise, it is coded as 0. This classification is repeated for each year within the 2018–2022 HLFS dataset.

Additionally, we created an age-group variable to analyze differences across demographics. Individuals aged 15–24 are categorized as youth, while those older than 24 are classified as adults. Consequently, our microdata sample comprises decent employees, non-decent employees, and unemployed individuals across age groups, with individuals outside the labor force excluded.

Descriptive Statistics and Key Findings

The descriptive statistics are presented in two composite tables: one detailing employee distribution and another summarizing weighted average wages. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of youth and adult employees (decent and non-decent) across various dimensions, including sector, education level, marital status, firm size, and public/private or registered/unregistered full-time/part-time employment categories.

Youth Representation in Decent and Non-Decent Employment

Youth are disproportionately represented in non-decent employment compared to decent employment. In 2018, 17.9% of non-decent employees were youth,

decreasing to 16.4% in 2020 (pandemic year) and rising again to 16.8% by 2022. For decent employment, the youth share was 11.4% in 2018, dipped to 9.9% in 2020, and recovered to 11.6% in 2022. The year 2020 marked a significant shift in the distribution of youth and adults across decent and non-decent employment categories. Pre-pandemic, the industrial sector exhibited the highest share of non-decent youth employment, shifting to the trade sector in 2020, before reverting to the industrial sector in 2022.

Marital Status and Employment Type

Among non-decent single employees, youth constituted 65–69%, whereas the reverse pattern was observed for decent single employees. This suggests that a significant portion of single youth are engaged in non-decent jobs.

Private vs. Public Sector

Youth representation in non-decent employment was higher in the private sector than in the public sector. Notably, the share of youth in public non-decent employment declined during the pandemic and subsequently increased to exceed pre-pandemic levels. Non-decent public employment likely includes workers in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as government entities predominantly employ full-time registered workers.

Firm Size and Youth Employment

Youth representation in non-decent employment increases with firm size, contrasting with the inverse relationship observed for decent employment. During the pandemic, the youth share in non-decent employment significantly declined in medium and large firms. For instance, in firms with 50+ employees, the youth share in non-decent employment fell from 39.5% in 2018 to 26.5% in 2020. Post-pandemic, these levels stabilized.

Registered vs. Unregistered Employment

Interestingly, the share of youth in registered non-decent employment exceeded that in unregistered employment. Since registered non-decent employment comprises only part-time roles, this suggests that youth prefer part-time registered jobs over unregistered work. Supporting this, youth representation in non-decent part-time employment (20.3% in 2018) exceeded that in unregistered employment (16.8%).

Education Level and Youth Employment

Across both decent and non-decent employment, youth are most represented among secondary school diploma holders, followed by vocational high school

graduates. Youth representation in non-decent employment consistently surpasses that in decent employment for these education levels. While youth ratios for secondary diploma holders in both categories decreased during the pandemic, post-pandemic trends revealed recovery only among vocational high school graduates, with secondary diploma holders remaining below pre-pandemic levels.

The findings highlight significant disparities in youth employment patterns across decent and non-decent categories, influenced by sector, marital status, firm size, and education. These trends underscore the precarious nature of youth employment, particularly within non-decent roles, and suggest targeted policy interventions to address these vulnerabilities.

Table 1: Distribution of decent and non-decent employees over selected categories

	Year 2018				Year 2020 (Covid Pandemic)				Year 2022			
	Non-Decent Adult	Youth	Decent Adult	Youth	Non-Decent Adult	Youth	Decent Adult	Youth	Non-Decent Adult	Youth	Decent Adult	Youth
Sector												
Agriculture	86.5	13.5	94.3	5.7	84.1	15.9	95.2	4.8	85.9	14.1	94.2	5.8
Industry	72.9	27.1	87.2	12.8	79.4	20.6	88.4	11.6	75.6	24.4	86.2	13.8
Construction	81.1	18.9	85.7	14.3	84.5	15.5	88.8	11.2	83.6	16.4	86.0	14.0
Trade	75.0	25.0	84.1	15.9	79.0	21.0	85.4	14.6	76.0	24.0	83.4	16.6
Services	81.9	18.1	90.6	9.4	86.3	13.7	92.2	7.8	84.5	15.5	91.0	9.0
Marital Status												
Single	31.2	68.8	61.3	38.7	34.3	65.7	65.8	34.2	34.6	65.4	63.3	36.7
Married	97.0	3.0	98.1	1.9	97.8	2.2	98.6	1.4	98.1	1.9	98.7	1.3
Divorced	98.6	1.4	98.8	1.2	98.5	1.5	99.2	0.8	98.4	1.6	99.1	0.9
Widowed	99.9	0.1	99.9	0.1	99.8	0.2	100.0	0.0	99.9	0.1	100.0	0.0
Public/Private												
Private	81.8	18.2	86.7	13.3	82.8	17.2	88.1	11.9	83.3	16.7	86.4	13.6
Public	86.6	13.4	95.4	4.6	92.8	7.2	96.3	3.7	78.5	21.5	96.1	3.9
Firm Size												
1-10 Employees	84.5	15.5	88.4	11.6	84.8	15.2	89.3	10.7	85.3	14.7	87.9	12.1
11-19 " "	63.0	37.0	85.5	14.5	69.0	31.0	86.6	13.4	67.5	32.5	85.1	14.9
20-49 " "	61.9	38.1	86.9	13.1	75.4	24.6	88.7	11.3	70.7	29.3	87.8	12.2
50+ " "	60.5	39.5	90.1	9.9	73.5	26.5	91.9	8.1	----	----	----	----

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50-249 " "	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	68.7	31.3	89.7	10.3
250+ " "	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	46.5	53.5	90.9	9.1
Unknown	63.9	36.1	82.6	17.4	61.0	39.0	89.0	11.0	58.5	41.5	90.2	9.8
Register												
UnregisteredEmp	82.7	17.3	----	----	83.8	16.2	----	----	84.4	15.6	----	----
RegisteredEmp	74.1	25.9	88.6	11.4	81.4	18.6	90.1	9.9	73.3	26.7	88.4	11.6
Employment Type												
FullTime	83.2	16.8	88.6	11.4	83.8	16.2	90.1	9.9	84.6	15.4	88.4	11.6
PartTime	79.7	20.3	----	----	83.2	16.8			80.3	19.7		
Education												
NoEdu	89.9	10.1	87.3	12.7	92.1	7.9	89.9	10.1	93.2	6.8	91.1	8.9
PrimarySch	98.3	1.7	99.6	0.4	98.6	1.4	99.5	0.5	98.2	1.8	99.3	0.7
SecondarySch	50.3	49.7	75.0	25.0	56.2	43.8	79.9	20.1	58.6	41.4	81.3	18.7
VocationalHighSch	64.0	36.0	80.2	19.8	66.4	33.6	80.1	19.9	64.1	35.9	74.9	25.1
HighSch	73.9	26.1	90.0	10.0	72.3	27.7	90.1	9.9	68.2	31.8	84.4	15.6
2YearsCollege	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	77.2	22.8	82.4	17.6
University	84.0	16.0	90.4	9.6	87.0	13.0	92.4	7.6	91.2	8.8	95.3	4.7
MastersOrPhD	100.0	0.0	99.3	0.7	97.1	2.9	99.1	0.9	99.0	1.0	98.6	1.4
Total	82.1	17.9	88.6	11.4	83.6	16.4	90.1	9.9	83.2	16.8	88.4	11.6

Source: Author's own calculations using Household Labor Force Survey micro data

Table 2, presented below, illustrates the weighted average wages across selected categories, consistent with those in the preceding table. These values are shown for both decent and non-decent employees, segmented by the specified age groups. Additionally, it provides the wage ratios comparing decent to non-decent wages for both youth and adult employees. The aggregate values for all variables are displayed in the final row.

The **initial observation** is that the aggregate wage ratio of decent to non-decent employment for youth stands at 1.84, while for adults, it is slightly lower at 1.83. This indicates that the relative disparity between decent and non-decent wages is remarkably similar across the two age groups. During the pandemic year, the ratio declines to 1.68 for adults and 1.71 for youth but subsequently exceeds pre-pandemic levels by 2022. Thus, despite the shock of the pandemic, the wage gap between decent and non-decent employees demonstrates an upward trend over time.

A **noteworthy sectoral detail** is that agriculture is the only sector in 2018 where the youth wage ratio (decent to non-decent) surpasses that of adults. In the industrial sector, the ratios are equivalent, while in services, trade, and construction, the adult wage ratio is higher. However, during the pandemic year, both the industry and agriculture sectors exhibit higher youth wage ratios compared to adults. Furthermore, the services sector consistently displays the largest wage disparity between decent and non-decent employment for both age groups across pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

Regarding **marital status**, single employees have the lowest youth wage ratio (decent to non-decent), whereas widowed employees hold the highest ratios for both age groups in the pre-pandemic period. Among adults, the married category consistently shows the lowest ratio, a pattern that persists throughout the observed timeline. By the post-pandemic period, the correlation between marital status and wage ratios returns to its pre-pandemic state, indicating a near-complete recovery.

An **interesting finding** is that the wage ratio (decent to non-decent) is significantly higher in public employment than in private sector employment for both age groups. Additionally, the ratio is consistently larger for youth than for adults. For example, in 2018, the wage ratio in public sector youth employment was 4.65, compared to 1.68 for adults. In the private sector, the ratio was uniformly 1.68 for both groups. This stark difference suggests that the data likely includes individuals working for NGOs or similar organizations rather than strictly regulated public institutions, where such a wage gap would be unusual.

For **firm size**, the wage gap (decent to non-decent) increases with firm size among youth, whereas the opposite trend is observed for adult employees. This pattern holds across all periods: pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and post-pandemic. Notably, the pandemic period saw a significant narrowing of the wage ratio in medium and large firms for adult employees.

For **registered employment**, the youth wage ratio is markedly higher than that of adults and remains relatively stable over the analyzed period. Since decent employment is logically infeasible in unregistered (informal) contexts, wage ratios are calculated exclusively for registered employees. Similarly, as decent employment cannot logically occur in part-time roles, wage ratios are computed only for full-time employees. In contrast to registered employment, full-time adult employees exhibit higher wage ratios than their youth counterparts.

Finally, in terms of **education**, no consistent pattern emerges between wage ratios and educational attainment across age groups. During the pandemic, the youth wage ratio declined across nearly all education levels but increased for adults, highlighting divergent impacts based on age group and educational attainment.

Comparison of Decent and Non-Decent Labor Market Outcomes of Youth and Adults in Türkiye:
An Empirical Analysis of Pre-pandemic and Post-pandemic Periods

Table 1: Weighted average wages and decent/non-decent wage ratios over selected categories.

	Year 2018				Decent/ NonDecent Wage Ratios		Year 2020				Decent/ NonDecent Wage Ratios		Year 2022				Decent/ NonDecent Wage Ratios	
	Non-Decent		Decent		Adult	Youth	Non-Decent		Decent		Adult	Youth	Non-Decent		Decent		Adult	Youth
	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth			Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth			Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth		
Sector																		
Agriculture	1199	1165	2135	1580	1.78	1.36	1620	1651	2985	2319	1.84	1.40	3311	3365	5921	5673	1.79	1.69
Industry	1506	1104	2419	1777	1.61	1.61	2064	1583	3330	2443	1.61	1.54	4160	3202	6804	5182	1.64	1.62
Construction	1699	1297	2390	1881	1.41	1.45	2058	1521	3126	2449	1.52	1.61	4235	3357	6048	5032	1.43	1.50
Trade	1439	997	2284	1728	1.59	1.73	1984	1459	2959	2377	1.49	1.63	3807	3042	6208	4974	1.63	1.64
Services	1578	924	3172	2068	2.01	2.24	2487	1406	4323	2778	1.74	1.98	4097	2551	8668	5673	2.12	2.22
Marital Status																		
Single	1556	1017	2670	1874	1.72	1.84	2365	1485	3624	2541	1.53	1.71	4731	2883	7487	5305	1.58	1.84
Married	1557	1223	2853	2058	1.83	1.68	2273	1653	3888	2782	1.71	1.68	3936	3495	7786	5507	1.98	1.58
Divorced	1431	928	2785	1714	1.95	1.85	2223	1477	3701	2359	1.66	1.60	4312	4201	7492	5318	1.74	1.27
Widowed	1123	531	2336	1800	2.08	3.39	1806		3482		1.93		2749		6651		2.42	
Public/Private																		
Private	1466	1069	2459	1791	1.68	1.68	1989	1544	3298	2425	1.66	1.57	3540	3039	6853	5127	1.94	1.69
Public	1767	623	3691	2894	2.09	4.65	2898	910	5009	3856	1.73	4.24	8599	1587	9947	7722	1.16	4.87
Firm Size																		
1-10 Employees	1283	1045	2136	1719	1.66	1.64	1747	1495	2881	2320	1.65	1.55	3202	3013	5793	4734	1.81	1.57
11-19 " "	1721	1160	2559	1817	1.49	1.57	2622	1715	3439	2488	1.31	1.45	4904	3100	6712	5084	1.37	1.64
20-49 " "	2135	1098	2684	1874	1.26	1.71	3433	1603	3690	2514	1.07	1.57	6328	3076	7448	5342	1.18	1.74
50+ " "	2734	822	3222	2081	1.18	2.53	4104	1225	4352	2834	1.06	2.31	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
50-249 " "	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	7205	2430	8128	5693	1.13	2.34
250+ " "	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	7624	1798	9742	6220	1.28	3.46
Unknown	1404	988	1917	1536	1.37	1.55	2105	1503	3007	2471	1.43	1.64	4318	2269	6759	5144	1.57	2.27
Register																		
UnregisteredEmp	1375	1092	-----	-----	-----	-----	1870	1661	-----	-----	-----	-----	3512	3393	-----	-----	0.00	0.00
RegisteredEmp	2735	677	2812	1895	1.03	2.80	3680	948	3825	2564	1.04	2.70	6094	1908	7698	5320	1.26	2.79
Employment Type																		
FullTime	1462	1205	2812	1895	1.92	1.57	2016	1754	3825	2564	1.90	1.46	3719	3610	7698	5320	2.07	1.47
PartTime	1790	599	-----	-----	-----	-----	2760	926	-----	-----	-----	-----	4761	1883	-----	-----	-----	-----
Education																		
NoEdu	1153	1220	1750	1746	1.52	1.43	1548	1752	2400	2341	1.55	1.34	2904	3132	5046	4705	1.74	1.50
PrimarySch	1304	1183	1965	1583	1.51	1.34	1721	1608	2672	2296	1.55	1.43	3212	3475	5510	4953	1.72	1.43
SecondarySch	1424	933	2059	1718	1.45	1.84	1879	1359	2790	2276	1.48	1.67	3765	2693	5709	4461	1.52	1.66
VocationalHighSch	1514	1152	2456	1845	1.62	1.60	2075	1662	3377	2578	1.63	1.55	3872	3108	6797	5457	1.76	1.76
HighSch	1621	1074	2384	1825	1.47	1.70	2028	1542	3277	2480	1.62	1.61	3650	3121	6366	5240	1.74	1.68
2YearsCollege	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	4113	2994	7731	5635	1.88	1.88
University	2678	1270	3637	2244	1.36	1.77	3948	1799	4685	2973	1.19	1.65	7654	3802	10166	6787	1.33	1.79
MastersOrPhD	3291	0	5935	3742	1.80		5101	500	7623	4432	1.49	8.86	8448	3130	14741	9504	1.74	3.04
Total	1537	1030	2812	1895	1.83	1.84	2271	1497	3825	2564	1.68	1.71	4024	2926	7698	5320	1.91	1.82

Source: Author's own calculations using Household Labor Force Survey micro data

Model

We have chosen to apply a probit model, given the binary nature of employment status, where individuals are either employed or unemployed. Consequently, we estimate two distinct probit models for decent and non-decent employment. The explanatory variables used in both models include age, age squared, education, marital status, household size, and the number of employed people in the household, as these factors are considered key determinants of the likelihood of employment. Moreover, we conduct separate models for youth and adults to explore potential age segment differences in the probability of decent and non-decent employment. Finally, we check for the robustness by running alternative logit models. If the signs of coefficients in logit model are in line with those of probit model and if they have an approximate ratio of 1.6, then we can conclude that the probit model regression results are robust⁶. The logit and probit tables for just one group in 2018 are given in the appendix for comparison required for robustness test. The rest of logit tables are available upon request. As it can be seen in appendix, signs of logit model are in line with that of probit model, and each coefficient in logit model is approximately 1.6-1.7 times corresponding coefficient in probit model.

An individual is considered to be youth if his age is less 25 and defined as adult if he is older. The probit models for both non-decent and decent employment are specified as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} P(NonDecEmp)_i &= \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Age_i + \alpha_2 AgeSquare_i + \alpha_3 HouseHoldSize_i + \alpha_4 NumEmp_i \\ &+ D_1^n Education_i + D_2^n MaritalStatus_i + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned} \quad 1)$$

$$\begin{aligned} P(DecEmp)_i &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 Age_i + \beta_2 AgeSquare_i + \beta_3 HouseHoldSize_i + \beta_4 NumEmp_i \\ &+ D_1^d Education_i + D_2^d MaritalStatus_i + \mu_i \end{aligned} \quad 2)$$

A positive coefficient for β_1 is predicted, as age often serves as a proxy for experience, which generally enhances the probability of securing a decent job. Conversely, with increased experience in the labor market, the likelihood of obtaining a non-decent job diminishes, leading us to expect α_1 to be negative. The magnitudes of β_1 are likely to vary between probit regressions for youth and adults. Specifically, β_1 is expected to be higher in youth regressions since educational

⁶ See Wooldridge, *Introductory Econometrics*, 5ed., ch. 17, p. 586

attainment, which is closely tied to age, tends to be more pronounced in this group. For example, the probability of a university graduate securing a decent job significantly exceeds that of a high school graduate, making the 18–22 age range particularly critical. Similarly, we anticipate distinct magnitudes for α_1 in youth and adult regressions. For the squared age term, due to diminishing returns associated with age and experience, the expected signs are reversed, with $\alpha_2 > 0$ and $\beta_2 < 0$.

Education is a pivotal factor in determining access to decent employment opportunities. Higher levels of education significantly enhance the chances of obtaining a decent job while simultaneously decreasing the likelihood of securing a non-decent one. As a result, the coefficients for education in the non-decent job category are expected to be negative.

Marital status exerts a complex influence on employment outcomes. For married women, the coefficient for the decent job category is expected to be negative due to childcare responsibilities, which often restrict their labor market participation. In the non-decent job category, competing dynamics are at play. On one side, domestic responsibilities and childcare can hinder employment; on the other, economic pressures may compel married women to enter the labor force, even in part-time or less desirable roles. Consequently, the net effect for this group is ambiguous, with no clear directional expectation for the coefficient in the non-decent category.

These opposing forces are anticipated to have a greater impact in adult regressions for both job types, as marriage and childcare responsibilities are more prevalent in this demographic. For men, however, marital status is expected to have a consistently positive effect across both decent and non-decent job categories, reflecting traditional expectations around male economic roles and the financial obligations associated with marriage.

Non-decent jobs are more prevalent among individuals with lower income and educational attainment. For such groups, household size is likely to exert a positive influence, as larger households often face greater financial strain, compelling members to seek employment. In contrast, for the decent job category, this relationship is expected to invert, as larger household sizes may reflect stable income levels reducing the need for additional employment. For women, childcare responsibilities significantly impact their labor market participation. Since childcare responsibilities are more likely for the adult group, this affect is expected to be stronger for them. This dynamic suggests $\alpha_3 > 0$ and $\beta_3 < 0$, with a stronger effect in regressions focused on adult groups.

The number of employed individuals in a household (NumEmp) is expected to show a positive relationship across both job categories and both age groups. In households dominated by non-decent jobs, income insufficiency drives additional

household members to work. Conversely, in households with decent jobs, the employment of one spouse often motivates the other to join the labor market. In middle-class households, higher consumption demands necessitate dual incomes, reinforcing this positive correlation.

Results

Table 3 below provides a detailed analysis of the factors influencing employment outcomes, classified into decent and non-decent jobs for youth and adults across three time periods: 2018, 2020 (pandemic), and 2022.

The first point to mention about result tables is the issue of relatively low R-square. This issue may cause problems in financial models, in which the estimation of dependent variable itself is important. However, if the attention is on explanatory variables rather than the dependent variable itself, a low R-square is not a serious problem (Nagelkerke, 1991).

Results show that age has a significant positive effect on securing decent employment for both youth and adults across all years, but this effect diminishes with age, as shown by the negative coefficients of age squared. For non-decent jobs, age negatively affects youth employment and shows smaller or weaker effects for adults. This suggests that age plays a more critical role in distinguishing job quality for youth than adults.

Secondly, the table indicates that education is a crucial determinant of employment outcomes. Higher education levels (e.g., university degrees, Master's, or Ph.D.) substantially increase the probability of securing decent jobs, particularly for adults. Vocational high school education also positively impacts decent employment, though its effect is generally weaker than tertiary education. On the other hand, lower educational levels (e.g., primary and secondary school) tend to decrease the likelihood of decent employment, often correlating with higher probabilities of non-decent employment. These trends are consistent across all years, with some variations during the pandemic.

Marital status influences employment differently for youth and adults. Married adults are more likely to secure decent jobs, reflecting possible economic stability linked to marriage. However, for youth, the relationship is mixed, with minor impacts across years. Divorce and widowhood show minimal influence on adult employment but can increase the probability of youth being employed in non-decent jobs, especially for widowed individuals.

Household size negatively impacts the likelihood of securing decent jobs across all groups and years, suggesting potential resource constraints in larger families. Conversely, the number of employed household members is positively

associated with better job outcomes, particularly for adults in decent employment.

The pandemic in 2020 disrupted employment dynamics, particularly for youth, who faced declining probabilities of securing decent jobs compared to 2018. By 2022, adults showed signs of recovery in the decent job market, while youth continued to struggle in both decent and non-decent job categories. These trends highlight the lingering impacts of the pandemic on younger workers.

The results emphasize the importance of education, family dynamics, and economic conditions in shaping labor market outcomes. Youth and adults experience distinct challenges, with youth particularly vulnerable to economic shocks and educational disparities, as seen during the pandemic.

Table 2: Probit regression results

	Year 2018				Year 2020 (Pandemic)				Year 2022			
	Decent		Non-Decent		Decent		Non-Decent		Decent		Non-Decent	
	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult
age	.833***	.141***	-.803***	-.112***	.662***	.165***	-.828***	-.132***	.283***	.143***	-.366***	-.114***
ageSquare	-.016***	-.002***	.016***	.002***	-.012***	-.002***	.017***	.002***	-.004***	-.002***	.006***	.002***
Education												
PrimaryS.	.215***	.607***	-.106***	-.574***	.256***	.595***	-.384***	-.539***	.116***	.657***	-.036***	-.693***
SecondaryS.	.499***	.999***	-.466***	-.905***	.43***	.918***	-.522***	-.805***	.412***	.955***	-.414***	-.926***
HighSch	.305***	1.175***	-.446***	-1.138***	.258***	1.128***	-.489***	-1.043***	.451***	1.167***	-.573***	-1.189***
Voc.HighS.	.695***	1.36***	-.857***	-1.271***	.659***	1.279***	-.943***	-1.166***	.732***	1.333***	-.941***	-1.313***
2YearsCollege	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	.584***	1.381***	-1.113***	-1.544***
University	.499***	1.482***	-1.052***	-1.565***	.351***	1.384***	-.958***	-1.324***	.316***	1.42***	-.813***	-1.48***
MastersOrPhD	.735***	1.753***		-1.74***	.397***	1.654***	-.686***	-1.549***	.63***	1.63***	-1.393***	-1.67***
Marital Status												
Married	-.132***	.284***	.342***	.109***	-.1***	.278***	.277***	.157***	-.145***	.191***	.293***	.146***
Divorced	-.087***	.022***	-.194***	.185***	-.221***	.021***	.25***	.187***	-.31***	-.033***	.234***	.193***
Widowed	-.503***	-.11***	1.021***	.486***		-.051***	1.201***	.471***		-.157***	2.051***	.483***
Family												
HouseholdSize	-.098***	-.094***	-.041***	-.004***	-.11***	-.097***	-.055***	-.016***	-.109***	-.096***	-.031***	.006***
NumberEmp.	.166***	.103***	.375***	.287***	.17***	.154***	.449***	.329***	.203***	.158***	.327***	.236***
_cons	-10.723***	-3.11***	9.05***	1.493***	-8.863***	-3.625***	9.218***	1.718***	-4.618***	-3.174***	4.308***	1.584***
Observations	25916	155209	25870	155209	27938	182264	27946	182264	30962	204621	30965	204621
Pseudo R ²	0.122	0.165	0.23	0.237	0.103	0.155	0.253	0.23	0.096	0.143	0.191	0.209

Source: Author's own work. Standard errors are in parentheses *** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$

Conclusion

The study highlights the critical role of decent work in fostering sustainable development and addressing socio-economic challenges, particularly in Türkiye's labor market. Decent work ensures not only economic stability but also equitable opportunities, job security, and social protection, which are vital for enhancing the quality of life for both youth and adults.

Türkiye's youth labor market faces profound challenges, including high unemployment rates, a significant proportion of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), and a predominance of low-quality, precarious jobs. These issues reflect broader systemic problems such as skill mismatches, inadequate job creation, and limited access to social protections. Despite improvements in educational attainment, the country's education system struggles to align with labor market needs, exacerbating the difficulties young workers face in transitioning from school to employment.

The study underscores that the COVID-19 pandemic magnified existing vulnerabilities, disproportionately affecting younger workers. Youth were more likely to face job losses, reduced working hours, and income insecurity compared to adults. While adults exhibited some recovery in decent job opportunities post-pandemic, youth remained trapped in non-decent employment, reflecting a slower recovery trajectory and underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

Empirical analysis revealed stark disparities in labor market outcomes between youth and adults. Youth are overrepresented in non-decent employment across various sectors, particularly in agriculture and trade, and face significant gender-based inequalities. Moreover, the wage gap between decent and non-decent employment is more pronounced for youth, further emphasizing their precarious position in the labor market.

The findings emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive policy measures to address these challenges. Key recommendations include enhancing the quality and accessibility of education, aligning curricula with labor market demands, and promoting skill development through vocational training. An important problem regarding the young labor force is the skill mismatch issue. Addressing skill mismatch problem requires education system reforms, stronger industry-academia linkages, and lifelong learning initiatives. Integrating STEM, digital literacy, and soft skills into primary and secondary education and ensuring flexible and modular curricula that allow quick adaptation to new industry trends might be good policies at this point. Additionally, policies must focus on creating inclusive employment opportunities, reducing gender disparities, and expanding social protections to cover informal workers.

Capitalizing on Türkiye's "demographic window of opportunity" requires prioritizing youth employment within broader development strategies. By fostering decent work, Türkiye can harness the potential of its young workforce, drive economic growth, and mitigate the socio-economic repercussions of youth unemployment. Such efforts will not only improve individual livelihoods but also contribute to the nation's long-term economic and social resilience.

Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışmada; Türkiye'de gençler ve yetişkinler arasında düzgün (insana yakışır) iş bulma ve düzgün olmayan iş bulma olasılıkları ile ücret farklılıklarının pandemi öncesi ve sonrası dönemlerdeki seyri ele alınmıştır. Hanehalkı İşgücü Anketi mikro verilerini kullanan araştırma, genç çalışanların işgücü piyasasına geçişlerinde karşılaştıkları yapısal zorlukları ve istihdam kalitesini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü (ILO) tarafından tanımlanan "insana yakışır iş" kavramı, iş güvencesi, sosyal koruma, eşit fırsatlar ve uygun çalışma koşullarını kapsamaktadır. Bu kavram, sürdürülebilir kalkınma ve kapsayıcı ekonomik büyümenin temel taşlarından biridir.

Araştırma, 15-24 yaş arasındaki bireyler olarak tanımlanan gençlerin Türkiye'nin işgücü piyasasında önemli kırılganlıklarla karşı karşıya olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Başlıca zorluklar arasında yüksek işsizlik oranları, düşük kaliteli işlerin yaygınlığı ve NEET (Ne Eğitimde, Ne İstihdamda) olarak sınıflandırılan gençlerin yüksek oranı yer almaktadır. Yıllar içinde eğitim seviyelerinde sürekli bir artış yaşanmasına rağmen, işgücü piyasası ihtiyaçları ile genç iş arayanların nitelikleri arasındaki uyumsuzluk bu sorunları derinleştirmektedir. Bu uyumsuzluk, özellikle gençlerin ağırlıklı olarak düşük ücretli, güvencesiz ve kayıtdışı işlerde çalıştığı istihdamda görülmektedir.

Betimsel Bulgular

Çalışma, gençler ve yetişkinler için düzgün ve düzgün olmayan istihdamın farklı demografik ve ekonomik boyutlardaki belirgin desenlerini ortaya koymaktadır. Gençler, özellikle tarım ve ticaret gibi sektörlerde insana yakışmayan işlerde orantısız bir şekilde temsil edilmektedir. Bekâr gençler arasında düzgün olmayan istihdam daha yaygındır ve bu durum, istikrarlı ve güvenli iş fırsatlarının eksikliğine işaret etmektedir. Buna karşın, yetişkinler daha yüksek bir işgücü piyasası istikrarı ve dayanıklılığını yansıtan düzgün işlere erişim olasılığına sahiptir.

COVID-19 salgını, Türkiye'nin işgücü piyasasında önemli aksamalara neden olmuş ve gençlerin karşılaştığı zorlukları artırmıştır. Analizler, pandemi sonrası dönemde yetişkinlerin insana yakışır işlerdeki paylarını geri kazanmaya başladığını,

ancak gençlerin daha yavaş bir ilerleme gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu dönemde insana yakışır ve yakışmayan istihdam arasındaki ücret farkı daha da açılmış, genç işçiler daha da dezavantajlı bir konuma düşmüştür. Ayrıca, kamu sektöründe insana yakışır işlerde çalışan gençlerin, yakışmayan işlerdeki yaşlılarına kıyasla çok daha fazla kazandığı dikkat çekmektedir.

Eğitim düzeyi istihdam sonuçlarını şekillendirmede kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Mesleki eğitim ve üniversite diploması gibi daha yüksek eğitim seviyeleri, hem gençler hem de yetişkinler için insana yakışır işlere erişimi artırmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, sistematik beceri uyumsuzlukları devam etmekte ve işgücü piyasasına entegrasyonu engellemektedir. Bu sorun, özellikle kadınları daha fazla etkilemekte ve kentsel alanlarda işgücü piyasasına girişlerini zorlaştırmaktadır.

Medeni durum ve hane dinamikleri de istihdam desenlerini etkilemektedir. Toplumsal normlar nedeniyle evli erkekler arasında düzgün istihdam oranı yüksektir. Tersinden okumak gerekirse, düzgün istihdamda olmayan erkeklerin evlenme şansı görece düşüktür. Buna karşın, bekâr ve dul gençler daha çok düzgün olmayan işlere yönelmektedir. Hanede yaşayan insan sayısı arttıkça, bireylerin karşılaştığı finansal yükümlülükler ve sorumluluklar nedeniyle insana yakışır işlere erişim azaltmaktadır.

Ampirik Bulgular

Çalışmanın sonuçları, gençlerin Türkiye işgücü piyasasındaki kırılgan konumunu vurgulamaktadır. Düşük kaliteli işler ve COVID-19 salgınının neden olduğu gibi ekonomik şoklardan orantısız bir şekilde etkilenmeleri, ülkenin "demografik fırsat penceresi" olarak adlandırılan avantajından yararlanma yeteneğini engellemektedir. Bu pencere, çalışabilir yaş nüfusunun bağımlılardan daha fazla olduğu bir dönemi ifade etmekte ve hızlandırılmış ekonomik büyüme potansiyeli sunmaktadır.

Beceri uyumsuzlukları ve yetersiz iş yaratımı, genç istihdamında önemli engeller olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Artan eğitim seviyelerine rağmen, becerileri işgücü piyasası talepleriyle uyumlu hale getirememesi, genç işçiler arasında işsizlik ve eksik istihdamı devam ettirmektedir. Bu uyumsuzluk, özellikle inşaat ve tekstil gibi gençlerin yoğun olarak istihdam edildiği, kayıtdışı ve düşük kaliteli işlerin yaygın olduğu sektörlerde daha belirgindir.

COVID-19 salgını bu kırılganlıkları daha da derinleştirmiş, gençleri yetişkinlere kıyasla orantısız bir şekilde etkilemiştir. Daha genç işçiler, iş kaybı, çalışma saatlerinin azalması ve gelir güvencesizliği gibi daha yüksek risklerle karşı karşıya kalmıştır. Kadınlar ve kayıtdışı sektörlerde çalışanlar bu etkilerden özellikle zarar görmüştür. İnsana yakışır işlerde gençlerin daha yavaş toparlanması, bu demografiyi desteklemek için hedefe yönelik müdahalelere duyulan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır.

Politika Önerileri

Bu zorlukları ele almak için çalışma, eğitimi geliştirmeye, kaliteli işler yaratmaya ve sosyal korumaları genişletmeye odaklanan bütünlük politikaları önlemlerinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Başlıca öneriler şunlardır:

Eğitim ve Becerilerin Geliştirilmesi: Eğitim müfredatını işgücü piyasası ihtiyaçlarıyla uyumlu hale getirmek, beceri uyumsuzluğunu gidermek için gereklidir. Mesleki eğitim programlarının genişletilmesi ve STEM eğitiminin teşvik edilmesi, gençlerin istihdam edilebilirliğini artırabilir.

Kapsayıcı İş Yaratımının Teşvik Edilmesi: Özellikle gençlerin yoğun olarak istihdam edildiği sektörlerde kaliteli işlerin yaratılmasına yönelik politikalar geliştirilmelidir. Kayıtlı istihdamı teşvik etmek ve yüksek büyüme potansiyeline sahip sektörlerle yatırım yapmak, insana yakışır iş fırsatlarını artırabilir.

Cinsiyet Eşitsizliklerinin Giderilmesi: İşgücü piyasasında cinsiyete dayalı eşitsizlikleri azaltmak için hedefe yönelik müdahaleler gereklidir. Kadınların yüksek becerili sektörlerle katılımını teşvik etmek, esnek çalışma düzenlemeleri uygulamak ve çocuk bakımına erişimi genişletmek bu farkı kapatabilir.

Sosyal Korumanın Güçlendirilmesi: Kayıtdışı çalışanlar için sosyal güvenlik kapsamını genişletmek ve ekonomik durgunluk dönemlerinde gelir desteği sağlamak, genç işçilerin kırılganlıklarını hafifletebilir. Kamu istihdam programları ve çıraklık uygulamaları, eğitimden işe geçişi kolaylaştırabilir.

Bölgesel Kalkınmanın Teşvik Edilmesi: Genç istihdamındaki bölgesel eşitsizliklerin ele alınması, kırsal ve az gelişmiş bölgeler odaklı politikalar gerektirmektedir. Altyapı, eğitim ve yerel sanayilere yapılan yatırımlar daha adil fırsatlar yaratabilir.

Sonuç

Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de genç istihdamını iyileştirmeye yönelik kapsamlı stratejilere duyulan kritik ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. İnsana yakışır işe erişimdeki yapısal engellerin giderilmesi, ülkenin demografik avantajlarını kullanmasını ve sürdürülebilir ekonomik büyümeyi teşvik etmesini sağlayabilir. Bulgular, genç istihdamının kalitesine yatırım yapmanın yalnızca sosyal adalet meselesi değil, aynı zamanda Türkiye'nin uzun vadeli kalkınması için stratejik bir gereklilik olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Beyan

Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı: Kurum, kuruluş veya kişiler ile herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

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Appendix: Comparison of logit and probit models for robustness.

Probit regression		Number of obs = 25,916				
		LR chi2(13) = 792551.60				
		Prob > chi2 = 0.0000				
Log likelihood = -2860394		Pseudo R2 = 0.1217				
decentEmp	Coefficient	Std. err.	z	P> z	[95% conf. interval]	
age	.8325127	.0044176	188.45	0.000	.8238545	.841171
ageSquare	-.0162945	.0001083	-150.48	0.000	-.0165067	-.0160823
education						
PrimarySch	.215139	.0060653	35.47	0.000	.2032513	.2270268
SecondarySch	.4990789	.0032598	153.10	0.000	.4926898	.505468
University	.4987053	.003532	141.20	0.000	.4917828	.5056279
MastersOrPhD	.7352311	.0157361	46.72	0.000	.7043889	.7660734
HighSch	.3048682	.0036601	83.30	0.000	.2976945	.3120418
VocationalHighSch	.6951022	.0034759	199.98	0.000	.6882897	.7019148
MaritalStatus						
Married	-.1324532	.0020067	-66.01	0.000	-.1363862	-.1285202
Divorced	-.0868861	.0104807	-8.29	0.000	-.1074279	-.0663443
Widowed	-.5034282	.0729647	-6.90	0.000	-.6464363	-.3604201
HouseholdSize	-.097833	.0003147	-310.89	0.000	-.0984497	-.0972162
NumberOfIncomeEarners	.1657641	.000507	326.96	0.000	.1647704	.1667577
_cons	-10.72336	.044682	-239.99	0.000	-10.81094	-10.63579

Comparison of Decent and Non-Decent Labor Market Outcomes of Youth and Adults in Türkiye:
An Empirical Analysis of Pre-pandemic and Post-pandemic Periods

Logistic regression		Number of obs = 25,916				
		LR chi2(13) = 799485.84				
		Prob > chi2 = 0.0000				
Log likelihood = -2856926.9		Pseudo R2 = 0.1227				
decentEmp	Coefficient	Std. err.	z	P> z	[95% conf. interval]	
age	1.542898	.0077602	198.82	0.000	1.527688	1.558108
ageSquare	-.030918	.000189	-163.60	0.000	-.0312884	-.0305476
education						
PrimarySch	.3463024	.0111241	31.13	0.000	.3244997	.3681052
SecondarySch	.9125795	.0057812	157.85	0.000	.9012486	.9239104
University	.8935374	.0061423	145.47	0.000	.8814988	.905576
MastersOrPhD	1.27491	.0256211	49.76	0.000	1.224694	1.325126
HighSch	.585184	.0063691	91.88	0.000	.5727009	.5976672
VocationalHighSch	1.222496	.0060861	200.87	0.000	1.210567	1.234424
MaritalStatus						
Married	-.210577	.0032749	-64.30	0.000	-.2169956	-.2041584
Divorced	-.1654194	.0171243	-9.66	0.000	-.1989823	-.1318564
Widowed	-.7400574	.117407	-6.30	0.000	-.970171	-.5099439
HouseholdSize	-.1660352	.0005345	-310.64	0.000	-.1670828	-.1649876
NumberOfIncomeEarners	.2788669	.000849	328.47	0.000	.2772029	.2805309
_cons	-19.52532	.0791593	-246.66	0.000	-19.68047	-19.37017