

Estimating the Impact of the 2008-09 Economic Crisis on Work Time in Turkey

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The most salient effects of the 2008–09 economic crisis on the developing world have been higher unemployment and vulnerable employment caused by dramatic declines in aggregate demand and falling exports. Since the crisis emerged, empirical research has mainly explored the changes in employment status in labor markets; however, the consequences for work time, both market and nonmarket, have been neglected. To remedy this lacuna, Bahçe and Memiş introduce a new and flexible method for estimating the potential effects of the 2008–09 economic crisis on unpaid and paid work time in Turkey. They find that increases in men’s unemployment risk directly affect their female spouses – who must then spend more time in both paid and unpaid work.

Using the data from the Turkish Time-Use Survey of 2006, Bahçe and Memiş provide a simulated measure of the change in work time due to the crisis based on two-step estimation. First, they estimate the probability of being unemployed (defined as the unemployment risk) for individuals; they next estimate the effect of this probability on unpaid and paid work time of spouses. Assuming that a change in the probability of being unemployed equals the change in the official rates of unemployment seen over the crisis period, the authors estimate the impact of the crisis on each individual’s work time based on their spouse’s unemployment risk. Bahçe and Memiş argue that this method can be applied to other countries where infrequent collection of time-use data does not allow direct comparisons of time-use patterns from before and after the crisis.

The results of the study indicate differences between women and men. A one percentage point increase in a male spouse’s unemployment risk increases a woman’s total work time by 5 percent, while the corresponding rise for a man is only 0.7 percent. This increase widens the existing work-time gap between women and men by 25 percent (or 18 minutes per day). Differences between women and men are more pronounced in urban areas, where the gender gap in total work time increases by 50 percent (27 minutes per day). When these effects are compared in absolute terms, nationwide averages show that in Turkey, women’s total work time rises approximately eleven times more than that of men. While women’s total work time rises by 22 minutes per day (from 440 to 462 minutes), the corresponding figure for men is 2 minutes per day (from 369 to 371 minutes).

Empirical evidence obtained from Turkey supports the argument that pre-existing gender inequalities in work time are deepened by economic crises and that the impact of economic crises takes a gender-biased form, putting most of the work burden upon women. Assessments of such crises often overlook this impact, particularly within the unpaid domain, even though the unpaid economy is more vulnerable and unprotected during crises. The current contribution aims to help complete the picture of the costs of the economic crisis by focusing on a usually neglected dimension: the hidden costs in the unpaid sphere of the economy.

Read the article in full at

www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13545701.2013.786182#Uq7_0_