

## **THE RELATION BETWEEN WOMEN'S STATUS and DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEYS: IN THE CASE OF TURKEY**

The relationship between women's status and demographic change has been on the demographic agenda increasingly in the last 20 years. In the Western societies, the demographic change has been explained through focusing on modernization, industrialization, urbanization and improvement in education level. On the other hand, demographic change has been linked with the issue of development in the non-western countries. However, developing countries with a declining fertility levels attenuated this link and prevailed that "fertility transition" has experienced nearly all over the world in last 40 years.

From the 1960's many demographers have stated that family planning programs have an important roles in the fertility decline. As a result of social development, impact of education and increase in life expectancy at birth with advancements in health, developing countries have interested in demographic change and conducted plenty of studies. Impact of institutions, family and gender relations are also discussed in those studies (Dyson and Moore, 1982). However, especially in last 20 years, those studies are concentrated on the concept of women's status and the effect of women's status on fertility in transition process.

Although women's status is a frequently used concept in social sciences, it does not have an implicit and clear definition. While some of the demographers (such as; Epstein, 1982) focusing on "prestige" that is given by gender system to women, others ( for example; Dyson and Moore, 1983) emphasize on power relations in the family or women's access and control over critical resources. However, the common denominator for the definition of women's status contains women's autonomy, access and control over critical resources, legal rights and sexual rights.

Relation between women's status and fertility transition has become a current interest and widely studied especially after the intense emphasize at International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo (1994) and Fourth Women's Conference in Beijing (1995).

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are the main surveys which try to measure women's status by using different indicators. All DHS have the following indicators for women's status literacy and educational attainment, employment and education, control over own earnings, age at first marriage, age at first birth, contraceptive use, spousal age and education. Since 1999, these surveys give some additional information about women's participation in household decision, women's attitudes toward wife-beating by husband, women's opinions on whether women can refuse sex to her husband, hurdles faced by women by accessing health care themselves.

However, many demographers express that there are some problems in measuring women's status in demographic surveys. Mason (1993) mentioned about problems such as the complexity of women's status concept; measuring it in demographic surveys; incoherence of the designs of these surveys for expressing women's status; and cross-sectional structure of these surveys.

The contraceptive use, age at first marriage, son preference and fertility level have been used in addition to main indicators such as education level and labor force participation of women in order to measure women's status till 1990s. However, after that time, new questions included to create indicators for measuring women's status such as women's empowerment, women's autonomy and mobility. In some countries, DHS includes additional information about choice of spouse, natal family support, asset ownership and control of money for different purposes, knowledge and use of micro-credit programs, freedom of movement, membership of any organization, having a bank account, attitudes about gender roles. In addition to these developments domestic violence and female genital cutting modules are also available for some countries.

In Turkey, demographic surveys have been conducted since 1968, and the last three of them are demographic and health surveys. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the DHS surveys by focusing on challenges in women's status and discussing the mentioned problems in literature with a critical perspective.