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**A Comparative Analysis of Poverty Status Between Genders
in Rural Areas of Turkey**

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Extended Abstract

Poverty is a complex concept in its nature. Thus, it does not cover any universal description. In the most basic recognition of poverty, it is usually accepted as an absolute term which is measured with a specific poverty line and identifies the poor which are below this threshold level. One another approach which identifies poverty as a relative term suggests that there is relativity at some forms on describing poverty. Influential Indian economist Amartya Sen suggests that the conflict between the absolute and relative approach could be overcome with a capability approach which considers the functioning of persons and the capabilities of a person reflects the various combinations of functionings he can achieve. With this approach, we are now more able to understand the real freedoms that people enjoy and more aware in evaluating human well-being. This study mostly involves with the poverty status of the rural households and it will aim to show the real deprivations of poor. Initial results suggest that the poverty in rural areas is far more challenging, especially in multidimensional term. Thus, the study will aim to present the actual conditions of the poor and to suggest main ways to alleviate poverty. Secondly, the study will examine whether capability sets of male and female populations are equal in selected rural areas of Turkey and if there's distinct differences, then, the study will try to understand the main reasons of these differences.

*Globally, it is accepted that women tend to be poorer than men; and they are more deprived in health and education and in freedoms in all its forms. As women make up a substantial majority of the world's poor, women's unequal failure of capability needs to be seen as a problem of justice. In principle, it should be understood that nobody should be disadvantaged because of their gender. A basic foundation for a theory of gender justice emerged in the form of the capabilities approach. In his influential work, *Development as Freedom*, Sen (1999) argues that the goal of governments should be expanding the real freedom to choose the kind of life one has reason to value. Here, the main quality of Sen's capability approach is to focus what individuals are able to do or to be. It proposes that 'social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value'. This view makes a substantial difference in our understanding that what we need now is an approach of equality of opportunity. Because, gender justice requires that adequate economic resources flow to both genders in such measure as to ensure that each has the means to acquire the necessary capabilities. Although Sen has offered some basic capabilities, we couldn't find any gendered list of capabilities in his works. But Robeyns (2003) has offered some guidance on a specific set of capabilities. The list includes crucial capabilities such as education, bodily integration, political empowerment, mobility and respect. Also, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has published, a new index called Gender Inequality Index (GII) for measuring gender inequality in its Human Development Report (HDR) 2010. It measures three dimensions of gender inequality in a society which includes maternal mortality rate, adolescent fertility rate, seats in parliament, education, labor force participation and seemed a combination of previous gender indices. In HDR 2011, the index shows poor results for Turkey where the results have ranked Turkey 77th out of 145 countries.*

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The study covers both UNDP and TurkStat data, in principle. In initial analyses, the study finds distinct differences in capability sets of genders and in general, underscores the low levels of education in rural areas of Turkey. Because, despite education is compulsory in all level, in education practice, families tend to favour boys at all stages of education. Traditional reluctance to school the girls still persists in the lower income groups and rural areas. As analyses illustrated, government implement some aid policies for those families to school their girls, but the general trend still depicts poor scenery

Keywords: capability, gender, poverty, education, rural poverty.

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