



Gender differences in cigarette consumption in Turkey: Evidence from the Global Adult Tobacco Survey



Dilek Kilic*, Selcen Ozturk

Hacettepe University, Department of Economics, Beytepe Campus, 06800 Ankara, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study is to examine the potential factors associated with both smoking participation and the level of cigarette consumption in Turkey from a gender perspective, the understanding of which are crucial to the formulation and implementation of anti-smoking policies.

Methods: The Global Adult Tobacco Survey for 2008 is used in the analysis. Since the dependent variable, the number of cigarettes smoked per day, consists of nonnegative integer values, Negative Binomial and Zero-inflated Negative Binomial models are used as an estimation methodology. The zero-inflated model allows the interpretation of smoking propensity and smoking intensity behaviours separately.

Results: The main findings of this study are twofold. First, the factors affecting the smoking behaviour of males and females are different. Second, there are also differences between the factors affecting the decisions of whether to smoke and how much to smoke for both genders. Cigarette prices, for example, affect the level of cigarette consumption of females but not of males whereas pro-cigarette marketing affects the decision of how much to smoke for males with no effect on female smoking.

Conclusions: The findings highlight the importance of gender differences in cigarette consumption. Overall, education programs, cigarette taxation and tobacco advertising bans have different effects on each gender whereas social interaction is important for cigarette smoking behaviour of both genders. The anti-smoking policies can be more effective if policy makers take into account gender differences in both smoking propensity and intensity.

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1. Introduction

Smoking is a major contributor to the burden of disease and subsequently has received much attention by policy makers. As a result of the growing attention to smoking and anti-tobacco policies, smoking prevalence rates have started to decline in most countries over recent decades. However, especially in developing countries, the decrease has generally been most pronounced among males. The

smoking prevalence rates of females have not shown any change or an increasing trend has been observed [1–3]. Therefore, it can be argued that the smoking prevalence rates of males and females have converged and, if the current trend cannot be reversed, it is estimated that the number of female smokers will double by 2025. More importantly, smoking has become concentrated in the most disadvantaged groups of women in terms of socio-economic status, education and income [4].

Tobacco consumption behaviour is generally different between males and females potentially due to different smoking risk judgements and attitudes [1,5]. Females face additional health risks from smoking compared to males because of the well-established link between smoking and

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +90 312 2978650; fax: +90 312 2992003.
E-mail addresses: dbasar@hacettepe.edu.tr (D. Kilic),
selcen@hacettepe.edu.tr (S. Ozturk).

a variety of foetal diseases as well as cervical and breast cancer. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of complications and is well known to have a negative effect on pregnancy outcomes such as a lower birth-weight and a higher rate of still births [1,6]. Females also tend to smoke for different reasons to males. They smoke to help cope with the responsibilities of caring for children and job related stress as well as weight control and female physical health issues. Therefore, the factors that motivate smoking may differ for males and females [7] and this indicates the importance of the potential gender-based differences in smoking behaviour.

Female tobacco use, in particular, is affected by a range of complex factors such as tobacco marketing, emancipation, globalisation and urbanisation. Among these factors, tobacco marketing plays an important role in female smoking prevalence. Women and girls are a major target group of the tobacco industry due to the rising prevalence rate in female smoking especially in developing countries [4]. Tobacco marketing has tried to use advertising to establish a link between smoking and desirable female characteristics such as modernity, freedom, high fashion, and weight control to incentivise female smoking where smoking among women has not been culturally acceptable [3,4,8]. Moreover, the tobacco industry has specifically been marketing “low tar”, “light” and “ultra-light” cigarettes to women who underestimate the health hazards of these types of cigarettes [9]. This fact demonstrates the need of gender-sensitive health education to curb the increase in female smoking. On the other hand, the majority of women and children are exposed to second-hand smoking in their homes since they do not have bargaining power for a smoke-free home [3]. Therefore, health education is also essential for males to reduce familial exposure to second-hand smoking. In this context, female smoking is not only associated with biological factors, changing gender role, social trends and socio-economic status but also with the external factors such as tobacco marketing, health knowledge and the smoking behaviour of others.

Most anti-smoking policies are designed by taking into consideration the smoking patterns and characteristics of males only. However, anti-smoking policies can be more effective if gender differences in the factors that motivate smoking and prevent cessation are considered [7]. In this regard, tobacco control studies are criticised by being gender blind and, therefore, there have been numerous calls for including gender dimension in tobacco control research [3,4]. Furthermore, gender-sensitive tobacco consumption studies generally focused on high-income countries [10–14] and there is a limited number of gender-based approaches to smoking for low-income and middle-income countries. Most of existing gender-based tobacco studies investigated gender differences in cessation [15–17] and concluded that females are less likely to quit smoking compared to males. The primary reason why females are less likely to successfully quit is fear of weight gain [15,16].

There is a clear need for gender-based tobacco consumption studies which can provide insights into fundamental processes that motivate smoking behaviour and the effects of anti-smoking policies especially for developing countries. Turkey has a significantly high rate of

smoking prevalence, and there is a considerable gender difference in smoking. Nearly one-third (30%) of adults aged 15 and over (47.7% among males and 14% among females) were current smokers in 2008 [18]. Turkey has also arguably attached increasing importance to anti-smoking policies especially in recent years in order to decrease the high smoking prevalence rate and to fulfil the EU membership requirements. On the other hand, the smoking prevalence rate of females has increased sharply in recent years, by nearly 40% between 1997 and 2009 from 10.9% to 15.2% [19]. Turkey is a country experiencing a process that changes her old traditional culture to the popular culture that encompasses the whole world through mass media. This has resulted in a significant change in the traditional female role in Turkey. In this respect, the increasing prevalence of female smokers may be explained by increasing economic independence of Turkish women and clever tobacco marketing campaigns targeting them [20]. Although there is a dramatic increase in the rate of smoking among females, no study appears to have formally analysed gender differences in cigarette consumption from a microeconomic perspective for Turkey. Moreover, there are only a few studies on cigarette smoking in Turkey, which is a tobacco producing country with a high prevalence of cigarette smoking, particularly using micro-level data [21,22]. These existing studies focus on estimating cigarette demand models without considering the gender dimension. This study fills this gap by examining the potential factors associated with both smoking participation and the level of cigarette consumption at the individual level in Turkey from a gender perspective.

2. Data and methods

The empirical analysis is based on data drawn from the GATS (Global Adult Tobacco Survey) for 2008. The survey was administrated by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) as a nationally representative household survey of individuals aged 15 years and over. In total, 9030 individual interviews were completed, with 4584 urban and 4446 rural and 4269 males and 4761 females. The most important feature of this survey is that it provides data on the use of tobacco and tobacco products by adults as well as the information on exposure to tobacco smoke, and on individuals' attitudes and perceptions on media and health warnings. This survey, the most recent available one for Turkey, was implemented for the first time in November 2008. The year 2008 is a turning point in the implementation of anti-smoking policies in Turkey. A comprehensive tobacco regulation law, including a set of measures such as a smoking ban in all indoor public areas and a ban on tobacco advertising, was adopted in 2008 [19]. Before this, strong tobacco control policies were almost non-existent in Turkey. In this regard, one of the aims of the GATS is to assess the outcomes of the introduction of tobacco regulations. Therefore, it can be argued that the results of this study have particular importance in terms of reflecting the effects of recent significant changes in the tobacco environment of Turkey. The results of the analysis also provide useful information for policy makers on the smoking patterns of males and females in such a critical year.

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