ABSTRACT

What can women’s participation in professional work in Turkey tell us about the operations of patriarchy on work?

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This paper is questioning the theoretical formulations of patriarchy on women’s work. Here, by the inspiration of Walby’s statement saying “the changing structure and the principles of change, which should not be reduced to historical accident, is crucial to analyse patriarchy”, I am basically questioning how patriarchy operates on women’s work in articulation with other dominating systems. To do this, I focus on women’s participation in professional work. I believe, the case or the phenomenon of women’s participation in professional work provides us with a fertile field for observing different strategies of patriarchy. Especially this scope enables me to question the theoretical approaches of patriarchy on work.

Can theories of patriarchy on women’s work satisfactorily explain women’s oppression also in professional work? Is there any possibility to identify a form of patriarchal oppression specific to professional work? If we take a look at the other side of the coin, can the forms of oppression of professional women provide us with additional knowledge concerning the operations of patriarchy within women’s work? Those questions, therefore, form the basis around which the theoretical framework, as well as the theoretical assumption, of the present study is built. To search for the answers, I discuss theoretical approaches and argue the class-based formulations of patriarchy. I also question how patriarchy contextually and historically constructs itself. To do this, I focus the characteristics of women’s participation in professions in Turkey, which is an original example.