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Potential Impact of Daycare Closures on Parental Child Caregiving in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Daycares closed on March 16, 2020 in Turkey to prevent the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, the two most common nonparental childcare arrangements in Turkey—care of children by grandparents and nannies—became undesirable due to health concerns and in some cases also unfeasible due to the partial lockdown for individuals under the age of 20 and over the age of 64. We estimate the potential impact of new constraints on nonparental childcare arrangements due to the pandemic on parental caregiving time of married parents of preschool-age children by using data from the 2014–15 Turkish Time Use Survey. Comparing how parental caregiving time varies by gender and use of nonparental childcare arrangements, we find that new constraints on nonparental childcare arrangements during the pandemic have potentially increased the gender difference in parental caregiving time by an hour and forty minutes in Turkey.

KEYWORDS: Gender Economics; Time Use; Unpaid Labor; Turkey; COVID-19

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS: D13; J16; J22

INTRODUCTION

Daycares, along with other educational institutions, closed in Turkey on March 16, 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. At the same time, social distancing measures and health concerns constrained opportunities for alternative nonparental childcare arrangements. Expected increases in care work burden of parents, especially mothers, due to daycare and school closures around the globe during the pandemic have received much attention in the popular media and in scholarly circles (Folbre 2020; Solaker 2020). While time use data during the pandemic have yet to become available, the magnitude of the increase in the time burden of caring for young children during the pandemic can be roughly estimated by using data from recent time use surveys and estimating the variation in parental caregiving time by whether or not parents use nonparental childcare arrangements. For instance, using data from the 2012–13 German time use surveys, Jessen, Spiess, and Waights (2020) compare the time parents with and without daycare usage spend providing primary and secondary childcare in Germany. They find that, in the absence of daycare services, mothers spend an additional 134 minutes in parental caregiving activities, while fathers spend only 19 minutes more on these activities.

In this paper, we take a similar approach to analyzing how married parents of preschool-age children in Turkey might reallocate their time during the pandemic. Due to lack of affordable and good quality childcare services in Turkey, the two most common nonparental childcare arrangements are care by grandparents (primarily grandmothers) and nannies. We include these childcare arrangements, daycare services, and other nonparental childcare arrangements (such as care by female relatives other than grandparents, babysitters, etc.) and compare the time parents of preschool-age children with and without nonparental care arrangements spend on parental caregiving activities.

To date, only two nationally representative time use surveys have been conducted in Turkey—one in 2006 and the other in 2014–15. The next nationally representative survey is scheduled to be conducted in 2024. We use data from the 2014–15 Turkish Time Use Survey (TTUS) and analyze how gendered patterns of parental caregiving time vary between married mothers and fathers of preschool-age children by use of nonparental childcare. Our work aims to contribute to

the feminist economics literature on the pandemic's potential impact (and the subsequent measures) on gendered patterns of unpaid work burdens by providing evidence from Turkey on parental caregiving time. We do not aim to document the pandemic's full effects on parents of preschool-age children in Turkey, which likely include widening gender gaps in the time spent on housework, adult care, and paid work activities (Memiş, Koyuncu, and Özar 2020).

Analysis of data from the 2006 TTUS shows that mothers of preschool-age children spent five times more time on parental caregiving activities compared to fathers (Kongar and Memiş 2017). This reflects the persistence of the male breadwinner norm in Turkey within an institutional context that reinforces women's role as caregivers. Use of nonparental childcare arrangements is likely to decrease mothers' rather than fathers' child caregiving time, narrowing the gender gap in parental-child caregiving time. Conversely, we expect the gender gap to be wider between parents who do not use nonparental childcare arrangements, which proxies the impact of daycare closures and constraints on other nonparental childcare arrangements during the pandemic in Turkey. This finding would be consistent with previous findings in the feminist economics literature that crises tend to exacerbate gender inequalities (Elson 2010; Elson and Çağatay 2000; Fukuda-Parr, Heintz, and Seguinó 2013). This was certainly the case in Turkey during the Great Recession of 2007–9, when women's relative unpaid work burden increased significantly compared to men's (Kaya-Bahce and Memis 2013). Growing evidence from around the globe suggests that the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and marginalized populations are being hit the hardest (Galea 2020). In Turkey, anecdotal evidence that has appeared in popular news media paints a picture of the male spouse replicating his typical workday in the home office in married couple households (Solaker 2020).

We examine how the time parents spend on primary, secondary, and total (primary and secondary) caregiving activities varies by gender and by use of nonparental childcare services. Secondary childcare activities are activities provided in conjunction with a primary activity other than child caregiving, such as housework or leisure. We expect mothers to spend more time in both types of child caregiving activities and the gender differences to be larger between parents who do not use nonparental childcare arrangements. We also examine how these activities vary by the time of day in a typical day for mothers and fathers of preschool-age children and how use

of nonparental childcare arrangements affects parental caregiving throughout the day. Use of nonparental childcare arrangements is most likely to reduce the daily childcare burden during typical daycare hours (8 AM and 5 PM).

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF CHILDCARE IN TURKEY

Women in Turkey have one of the heaviest unpaid work burdens in any OECD country. They spend on average 5 hours and 5 minutes per day on unpaid work activities—43 minutes more than the OECD (2020) average. This is primarily due to the persistence of the traditional male breadwinner model of gender division of labor in Turkey, where single-earner households comprise 70 percent of couple households, unlike most OECD countries, where dual-earner couples are now the norm (OECD 2018). Married women have the lowest labor force participation rate compared to their single, divorced, and widowed counterparts (İlkkaracan 2012; Kızılırmak 2008; Özar and Günlük-Şenesen 1998). Specifically, in 2016, only one-third of married women in Turkey participated in the labor force (TSI 2018). The male breadwinner model is most evident in households with young children, as in other country contexts with inadequate provision of childcare services in the global South and the North (Pande, Namy, and Malhotra 2020; Gammage, Joshi, and van der Meulen Rodgers 2020). Specifically, in Turkey, only 26.5 percent of women in their peak reproductive and productive years (between the ages of 25–49) living in households with children under the of age 3 were employed in 2018, compared to 90.4 percent of their male counterparts (TSI 2019). Having childcare responsibilities is the primary reason ever-married women who were employed at some point in the past cite for not being employed in the 12-month period prior to a survey in 2018 (HUIPS 2018). Identifying as a housewife was the second-most-commonly cited reason (29 percent of respondents), followed by not being allowed to work by their spouse or family (13.4 percent) (HUIPS 2018, 182). These survey results indicate that a lack of affordable and good quality childcare services and gender norms constrain women’s ability to participate in paid work activities and contribute to their disproportionate share of the unpaid work burden in Turkey.

Since 2006, when the first nationally representative time use survey data became available for Turkey, a growing body of research has examined gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work burdens and the linkages between the two (Kongar and Memiş 2017; Kaya-Bahce and Memiş 2013; Öneş, Memiş, and Kızılırmak 2013). Analysis of data from the 2006 TTUS shows that mothers of preschool-age children (ages 0–5) spend 2 hours and 34 minutes in parental child caregiving, which is nearly five times more than fathers who spend only 32 minutes on these activities (Kongar and Memiş 2017). When the changes in the demographic composition of mothers and fathers are controlled for, gender differences in the unpaid work burden between married parents of preschool-age children remains unchanged between 2006 and 2015 (Kongar and Memiş 2020). Mothers' heavy care work burden reflects institutional constraints, particularly gender-asymmetric parental leave policies and insufficient public provision of affordable and quality childcare and adult care services (İlkkaracan 2012; Kongar and Memiş 2017).

In European Union (EU) countries, increasing availability of childcare services for preschool-age children has been a priority to meet the EU 2020 target employment rate of 75 percent for the population aged 20–64 (Plantenga et al. 2009). In 2018, 30.3 percent of children under the age of 3 were in a formal childcare facility, with 22 percent of children under the age of 3 using it for 30 hours per week or more. In Turkey, only 0.9 percent of children under the age of 3 were enrolled in early childhood education and only 39.1 percent of children between the ages of 3–5 used formal childcare arrangements during the 2018–19 school year. In total, only in 2.8 percent of households are preschool-age children enrolled in formal early education and childcare services such as a daycare, nursery, or kindergarten. For Turkey to reach the OECD average enrollment rate for preschool-age children, 3.27 million additional children need to be enrolled in childcare centers and preschools (İlkkaracan et al. 2019).

Mothers are the primary daytime caregivers in 86 percent of households with preschool-age children (TSI 2016c). In 7.4 percent of households grandparents provide daytime care and in 1.5 percent of households nannies provide in-home childcare (TSI 2016c). Among employed women with at least one child under the age of 6, 20 percent use some form of childcare service (kindergarten or babysitter) while they are at work (HUIPS 2013). Forty percent of employed

mothers of preschool-age children rely on the unpaid work of women relatives (mother-in-law, mother, female children) for primary care of their preschool-age child(ren) while they are at work (HUIPS 2013, 183). About 30 percent of employed mothers take their preschool-age child(ren) to work with them (HUIPS 2013). Given the lack of affordable and good quality childcare services, it is not surprising that the share of mothers who use childcare services (kindergarten or babysitter) is 43 times higher in the wealthiest households compared to the poorest households, with only 1 percent of mothers in households at the bottom 20 percent of the wealth distribution using childcare services in 2013 (HUIPS 2013).

During the pandemic, daycares closed and other nonparental arrangements became unavailable, affecting 14 percent of households with preschool-age children that used nonparental childcare arrangements. Below, we estimate the gender-differentiated outcomes of unavailability of nonparental childcare arrangements for parental caregiving time between mothers and fathers of preschool-age children.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The second nationally representative TTUS that was carried out in 2014–15 provides time use data for 25,109 individuals ages 10 and up in 9,073 households. The data were collected by interviews and daily time use diaries. Household members provided data for one weekday and one weekend day, recording their daily activities in 10-minute intervals for 24 hours of a day. All days of the week surveyed in equal proportions and postponement of diary days is allowed for a maximum of two weeks. All members of the household keep their diary on the same day. If the respondent is engaged in more than one activity simultaneously, one of these activities is recorded as the primary activity and the data show the distribution of the time spent on this activity in 24 hours. Daily activities are classified according to the Eurostat (2000) activity codes. We calculate the weekly time use in childcare activities and divide this by seven to come up with daily time spent on primary, secondary, and total (sum of primary and secondary) childcare activities. We exclude from the sample respondents above the age of 64 to minimize the influence of retirement that could have a strong intertemporal effect.

Our focus is on families with preschool-age children. Using a variant of the household typologies by Anxo et. al. (2011) we construct a household typology for married parents who reside in the same household with preschool-age children (mean age of household children is under 6 years). These households would be most affected by daycare closures and constraints on other nonparental childcare arrangements. Our sample includes 5,372 married and cohabiting women and men who reside in the same household with preschool-age children in 2,686 households.

THE PANDEMIC'S EFFECT ON CHILD CAREGIVING TIME OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS OF PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

We present our findings for the variations in the time mothers and fathers spend in total, primary, and secondary child caregiving activities by use of nonparental childcare arrangements in table 1. Compared to their counterparts who use nonparental childcare arrangements, mothers of preschool-age children who do not use nonparental childcare arrangements spend 1 hour and 28 minutes more in parental caregiving activities. Fathers' caregiving time varies considerably less with use of nonparental childcare arrangements and is actually associated with slightly more time spent providing childcare. Compared to fathers in households with nonparental childcare arrangements, fathers without nonparental childcare arrangements spend 11 more minutes in households with preschool-age children. Primarily because mothers in households that use nonparental childcare arrangements spend less time in child caregiving activities, but also because fathers in these households spend slightly more time providing childcare, use of nonparental childcare arrangements is associated with a smaller gender difference in child caregiving time. The gender difference in child caregiving time narrows from 2 hours and 32 minutes in households without nonparental childcare arrangements to 53 minutes in households with nonparental childcare arrangements. The gender difference in child caregiving time in part reflects the impact of mothers' employment status, as households with employed mothers are more likely to use nonparental childcare arrangements. For comparison, in the United States, nonemployed mothers of preschool-age children spend two times more time providing childcare than full-time employed fathers (Connelly and Kimmel 2010, 39). Our findings show that in

households without childcare services, mothers spend three times more than fathers providing childcare.

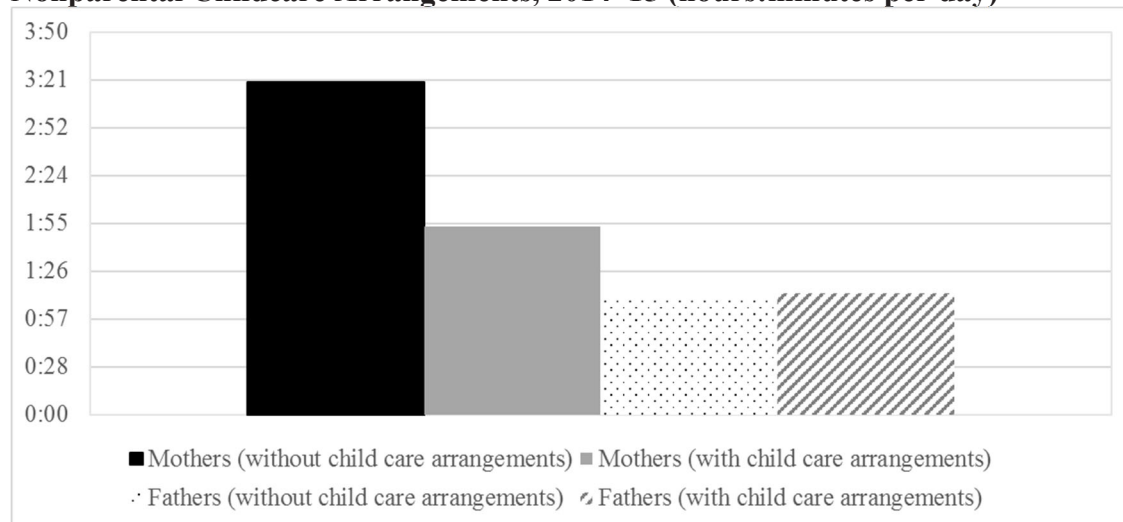
Table 1. Daily Total Child Caregiving Time of Married Mothers and Fathers of Preschool Children by Use of Nonparental Childcare in Turkey, 2014–15 (hours:minutes per day)

	Mothers	Fathers	Gender ratio (mothers/fathers)
With nonparental childcare	2:21	1:28	1.8
Without nonparental childcare	3:49	1:17	3.0

Notes: Authors’ calculations from TTUS data files for 2014–15. Our sample includes 5,372 married and cohabiting women and men who reside in the same household with preschool-age children in 2,686 households. The values are weighted averages of weekend and weekday samples. All observations are weighted by TTUS sampling weights.

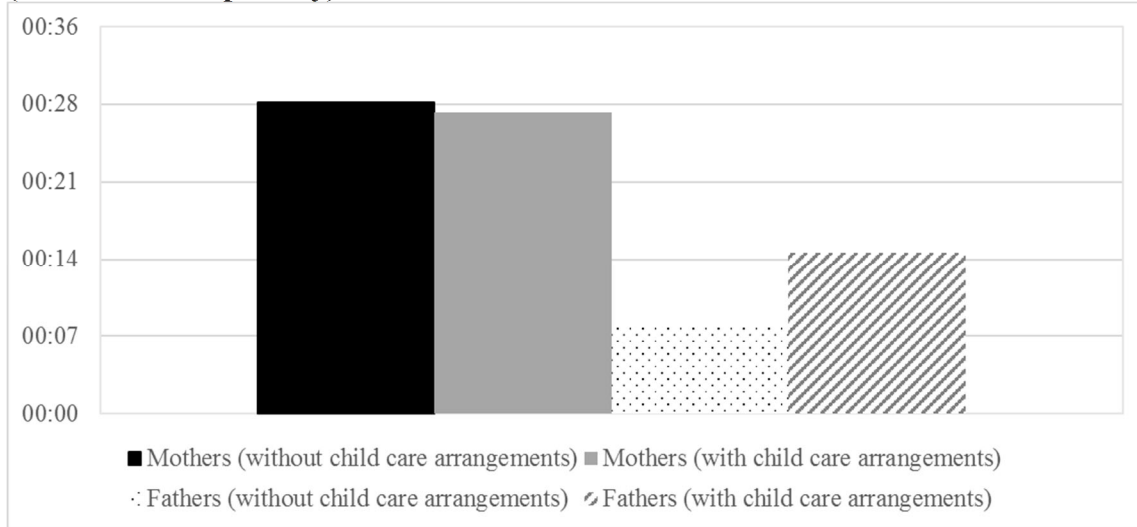
We examine the variation in mothers’ and fathers’ primary and secondary child caregiving time with or without use of nonparental childcare arrangements in figures 1 and 2. Use of nonparental childcare arrangements is associated with considerably less time mothers spent on primary child caregiving activities while it has virtually no effect on fathers’ primary child caregiving time. Mothers’ secondary child caregiving time varies very little with or without use of nonparental childcare arrangements. Fathers in households with nonparental childcare arrangements spend slightly more time providing secondary childcare.

Figure 1. Mothers’ and Fathers’ Primary Child Caregiving Time, With and Without Use of Nonparental Childcare Arrangements, 2014–15 (hours:minutes per day)



Source: Authors’ calculations from TTUS data files, 2014–15

Figure 2. Daily Primary Child Caregiving Time of Married Mothers and Fathers of Preschool-aged Children by Use of Nonparental Childcare Arrangements, 2014–15 (hours:minutes per day)



Source: Authors' calculations from TTUS data files, 2014–15

In figures 3 and 4, we present the patterns of child caregiving throughout the day for mothers and fathers, respectively. As preschool-aged children need and receive care around the clock, mothers in households that do not use childcare services provide care at every hour of the day, with caregiving time at its peak between 10 AM and 4 PM (figure 1). Mothers who use nonparental childcare arrangements spend less time providing childcare than their counterparts without nonparental childcare arrangements, and the difference is most notable during typical daycare hours of 8 AM to 4 PM. Use of nonparental childcare arrangements makes little difference for fathers' child caregiving time, except between 6 PM and 8 PM, when fathers without childcare services spend slightly more time on child caregiving (figure 2).

Figure 3. Mothers' Total Child Caregiving Time by Time of Day, With and Without Use of Nonparental Childcare Arrangements, 2014–15 (minutes per day)

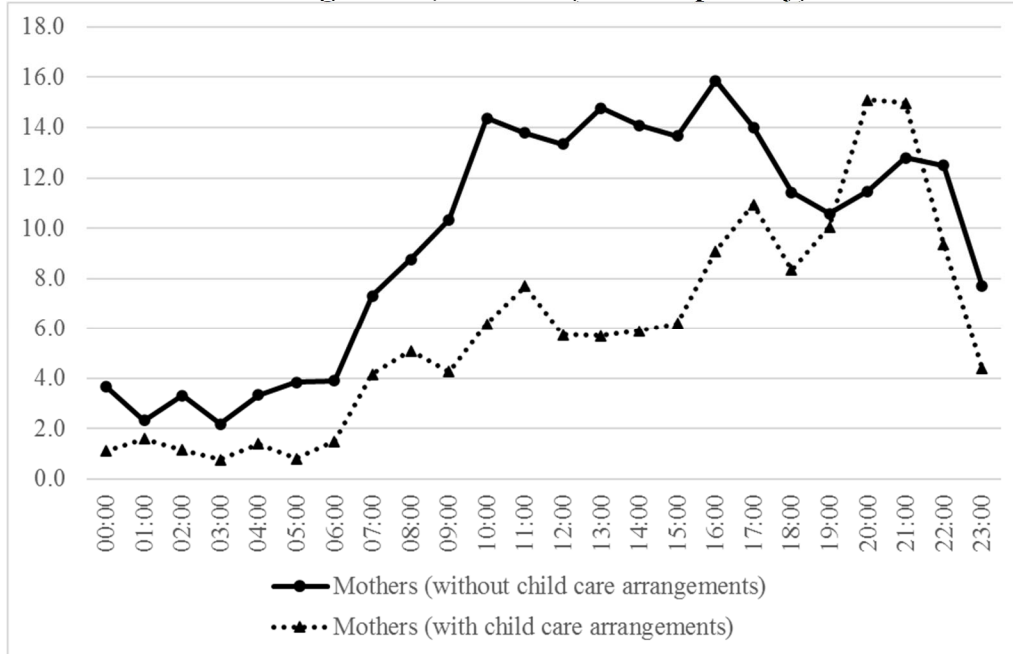
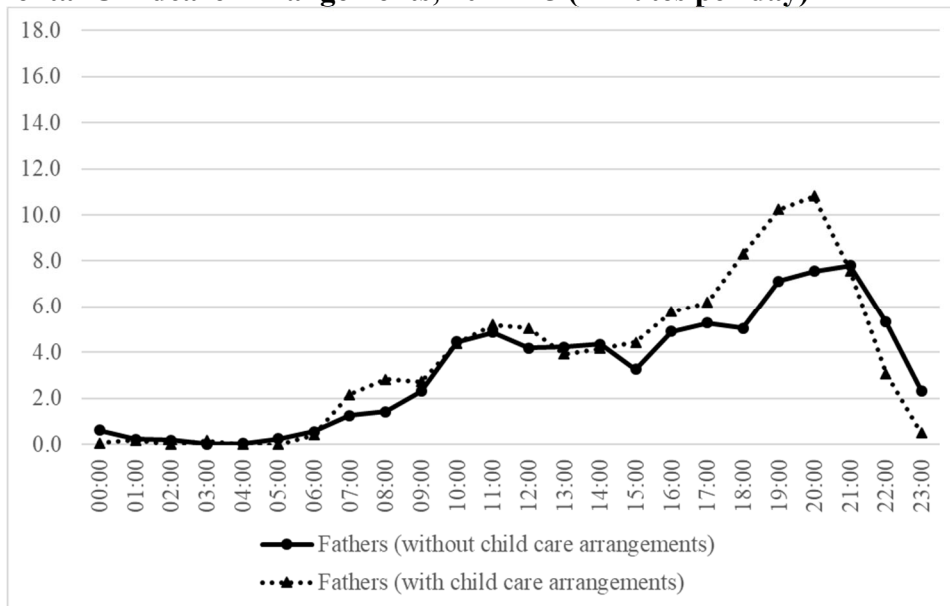


Figure 4. Fathers' Total Child Caregiving Time by Time of Day, With and Without Use of Nonparental Childcare Arrangements, 2014–15 (minutes per day)



These results are consistent with a traditional gender division of labor between parents of preschool-age children who do not use nonparental childcare arrangements: mothers provide considerably more child caregiving than fathers. Gender differences in parental child caregiving are smaller between parents who use nonparental childcare arrangements but only because

mothers spend less time providing primary childcare. Use of childcare services does not affect mothers' secondary child caregiving time and fathers' primary child caregiving time remains virtually unchanged by use of nonparental childcare arrangements; fathers with nonparental childcare arrangements spend more time in secondary child caregiving activities. Compared to their counterparts without nonparental childcare arrangements, the less time mothers spend providing primary childcare and the slightly more time fathers spend providing secondary childcare leads to a smaller gap in child caregiving time. This indicates that daycare closures are likely to have increased mothers' but not fathers' child caregiving time.

CONCLUSION

Daycare center and school closures during the pandemic have led to new forms of care crises around the world, potentially exacerbating gender inequalities in the care work burden. One given assumption behind this predication is that the childcare services are widely available and in use prior to the pandemic. However, despite all the advocacy through international organizations and women's rights organizations, there is no public provisioning of affordable and good quality childcare services in Turkey. In this paper, we analyzed the potential impact of the pandemic on unpaid care work in an institutional context where childcare services had not been prioritized prior to the pandemic. We find that the gender gap in parental caregiving time is smaller between parents who use nonparental childcare arrangements compared to their counterparts who do not use nonparental childcare arrangements. Therefore, daycare closures and social distancing measures that have put grandmothers and nannies out of parents' reach during the pandemic would have increased the gender gap in child caregiving time between parents of preschool-age children. In countries like Germany, where childcare services for preschool-age children are more widely utilized, daycare closures are estimated to have a larger impact on mothers' child caregiving time. Yet, our findings show that even in Turkey, where childcare services remain out of reach for most households because of their limited supply, the pandemic's impact on mothers' child caregiving time is likely to have caused a new form of care crisis, disproportionately increasing mothers' care work burden relative to fathers'. Our findings are consistent with the findings in the feminist economics literature that crises exacerbate gender inequalities. The

smaller gender gap in parental child caregiving time in households with nonparental childcare arrangements reveals how increased access to affordable and good quality childcare services could transform the gender division of labor in Turkey.

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