

GENDER EQUALITY APPROACHES OF LARGE SCALED COMPANIES
IN TURKEY: GENDER POLICIES AND PRACTICES FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN DIRECTORS

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FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN DIRECTORS**

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ABSTRACT

GENDER EQUALITY APPROACHES OF LARGE SCALED COMPANIES IN TURKEY: GENDER POLICIES AND PRACTICES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN DIRECTORS

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This thesis study examines the contributions of women directors to the field of gender equality in business life and the policies they carry out, focusing on the case of Turkey. This thesis study focuses on the situations of large-scale companies (domestic and foreign) in Turkey. Based on explanatory frameworks that act from a gender perspective; this thesis study examines the role of women decision makers in the improvement of gender equality by taking the experiences, education and career paths of women directors as reference. This study is based on the interviews made with women executives of international companies with operations in Turkey, analyzing both their subjective experiences and their own perceptions and explanations about the sexist dynamics that led to their difficulties and their consequences. According to the study, women managers strongly believe in the successful profiles of women decision makers. They take the women figures who touched their lives as an example. Emphasizing the necessity of ensuring gender equality in all areas, they stated the steps they took to increase the number of female decision makers in business life. As a result of the theoretical framework, bilateral interviews and the literature review of the thesis, it is seen

that women managers play a role in the improvements of gender equality in business life.

Keywords: Large scaled companies, Women in the Boardroom, Turkey, Gender Equality, Gender Policy

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ BÜYÜK ÖLÇEKLİ ŞİRKETLERİN TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET EŞİTLİĞİ YAKLAŞIMLARI: KADIN YÖNETİCİLERİN DENEYİMLERİ İLE TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET EŞİTLİĞİ POLİTİKALARI VE UYGULAMALARI

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Yüksek Lisans, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü

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Bu tez çalışması, Türkiye örneğine odaklanarak, kadın yöneticilerin iş hayatındaki toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği alanına katkılarını ve yürüttükleri politikaları sorgulamaktadır. Türkiye’de bulunan büyük ölçekli şirketlerin(yerli ve yabancı) durumları analiz edilmektedir. Toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden hareket eden açıklayıcı çerçevelerden yola çıkarak; bu tez kadın yöneticilerin deneyimlerini, eğitim ve kariyer yollarını referans alarak toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanması yönünde kadın yöneticilerin, karar alıcıların iyileştirmelerdeki rolünü incelemektedir. Bu çalışma Türkiye’de operasyonları bulunan uluslararası şirketlerin kadın yöneticileri ile yapılan görüşmeleri, hem öznel deneyimlerini hem de yaşadıkları zorlukların oluşmasını sağlayan cinsiyetçi dinamikleri ve sonuçlarıyla ilgili kendi algı ve açıklamalarını analiz etmeye dayanmaktadır. Çalışmaya göre kadın yöneticiler, kadın karar alıcıların başarılı profillerine büyük bir inanç ile bağlılık göstermektedir. Kendilerine hayatlarına dokunan kadın figürleri örnek almaktadırlar. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin her alanda sağlanması gerekliliğini vurgulayarak iş hayatında kadın karar alıcıların artmasını sağlama

noktasında attıkları adımları belirtmişlerdir. Teorik çerçeve, yapılan ikili görüşmeler ve tezin literatür taraması sonuçlarında kadın yöneticilerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin iş hayatındaki iyileştirmelerde rol aldıkları görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Büyük ölçekli şirketler, Kadın yöneticiler, Türkiye, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği Politikaları

To all survivor women in the universe,

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The concept of gender is used to define male and female in social terms, the ways in which society distinguishes between men and women, as well as the social roles given to them. This concept points to an inequality rooted in gendered discrimination in almost every society and is used by feminists as a basic tool, a concept to question the power relations and inequalities between gender identities. A large number of feminist theorists like Dorothy E. Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, R. W. Connel and Judith Butler discuss the consequences of social orders based on male supremacy for women and their solutions. There are strict problems in the implementation of gender equality strategies. Gender equality studies aim to provide solutions to existing problems concerning the policies of gender equality and explanation of the process. This environment of inequality easily finds a place for itself in business life. Working women face with many barriers, especially in terms of climbing up the ladders and getting to higher decision-making positions in economic life. There are visible and invisible barriers in masculine professional life. There are many women employees who evaluate their potential in business life through their emotionality and potential to become a mother just because they are women.

Although women have at least as much place in society as men, it is possible to say that similar equality is not observed in terms of working life, politics and administration. It is not easy for women to come to a managerial position in societies like Turkey where traditional understanding is dominant. There are perceptions and prejudices that characteristics such as risk-taking, courage, and competitiveness are more common among men, and that the managerial task is

perceived as a male job. The main problems encountered in women's participation in managerial positions include the dominance of patriarchal societal values and traditional roles, gender segregation in occupations, where women mostly tend to concentrate in low-skill, low-paid jobs, glass ceiling that many women experience due to societal obstacles/barriers, problems about self-confidence, belief that success will bring loneliness, and that they can be successful by acting like male managers, as well as mobbing practices and gender stereotypes, to name a few (Türktaş, 2011).

Examining the main problems; it is necessary to focus on gender stereotypes. Gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives (Türktaş, 2011). These traits can be related to appearance, behavior, or emotional domain, and it doesn't matter whether all members of the group really conform to these stereotypes. The other problem that women face in working environment is gender segregation. The fact that gender discrimination is observed in employment also indicates the unequal distribution of women and men employees. They face the problem of unequal distribution in different positions in different sectors, industries, occupations and business sizes. As social norms continue to drive women's and men's career choices, they continue to distort labor markets, lower wages, and harm innovation and productivity. Thus, gender segregation in the workplace emerges as a problem (Adams & Ferreira, 2009). Another case is; managerial positions are not always charming for employees, in the crisis and risky periods male managers less prefer the senior positions; this is called as glass cliff.

Women who can find a way through the barriers derived from the gender discrimination, which they are subject to, can advance in the career, while women who cannot overcome the barriers experience blockages in their career path. Women who can overcome these barriers climb up the ladders in business life

whereas others experience blockages in their careers. This thesis aims to focus on the reflections of gender equality in the business world using the perspective of women directors and their experiences.

1.2. Background & Significance

The significance of this thesis is that the attitudes of private companies in Turkey have not been dealt with holistically. In the thesis study, when the literature on the subject was searched, it was clearly seen that the concept of gender equality in business life was not considered multidimensional but only on the basis of female employees. In this thesis, male employees were excluded from the scope of the study by focusing on female managers. Studies focusing only on women employees are insufficient to examine the separate situations faced by women employees in different positions. Women employees should also be classified and examined in separate ways. This study prioritizes the tendencies of women managers and feeds from the gender equality perspectives of companies.

This study will focus on women managers by approaching them from a different perspective. The reason behind considering private companies as a research group is that, unlike directors of public institutions, company managers are comparatively more easily accessible, free from public restrictions and various drawbacks. Since large-scale private companies in Turkey are growth-oriented in international trade markets, it is of great importance for such companies to attract capital, increase the value of the company, and have good visibility. Gender equality is a key issue for these companies in the priority areas of this thesis. Since private companies are also competing with each other, comparisons, reports and outputs can be seen clearly. For these reasons, the development of large-scale private companies in Turkey in the field of gender equality can be followed relatively more clearly. The glaring gap between men's and women's salaries, sexual harassment in the workplace, dress code and clothing issues, being less promoted at work than men are the main problems of gender equality in business. At the beginning of the problems faced by women in business life; gender

segregation, inequality in vocational education, mobbing, inequalities in job seeking and promotion, and benefiting from social rights (maternity leave, etc.) are seen as deficiencies. There are many valuable researches focusing on gender inequalities in employment but there are limited data on Turkey's current situation focusing on the level of women directors and their contribution to company gender equality policies.

1.3. Research Question and Objectives

The main research question is what is the role of women in high managerial positions in developing companies' gender equality policies and how do women managers contribute to gender policies? The research question is answered in the thesis based on the sample of the companies which are large scaled and have operations in Turkey. Research question concerns whether private companies support their women employees by gender equality policies, and the extent to which these policies are shaped/driven by women in high-level managerial positions. In other words, the reason why the thesis focuses on the gender equality policies carried out by private companies is to learn about the effects of women managers behind these policies, and to underline the developments made by their parties in the name of improvements.

This overall question is examined by the following sub-questions:

- What is the current position of private companies in Turkey in the field of gender equality?
- What is the importance of women in high-level managerial positions for the development of gender equality in private companies in Turkey?

What are the contributions of women in high-level managerial positions to the field of gender equality?

- Are the effects of institutionalization on women managers observed?
- Do women managers influence policy adoption patterns?

The main contribution of this study is its focus on women executives, investigating what they do to improve gender equality policies in their companies. In particular, this study aims to develop the literature on private companies' gender equality practices in Turkey, as there are not many studies focusing only on the subject of this study,

The study sheds light on the discrimination-based problems faced by women in business life. Achieving gender equality is important for workplaces not only because it is 'fair' and 'the right thing to do,' because it is also linked to a country's overall economic and performance and social development.

At the same time, gender equality is an important marker for businesses at the international stage. For instance, there are loans, awards, certificates provided for companies observing gender equality, and it is especially an important international standard in business life today. To illustrate, UN bodies strongly work on technical and financial support for promoting gender equality in the private sector. The UNDP Gender Equality Seal aims to integrate gender equality into all aspects working life in the private sector. Upon completing a range of specific standards, companies that successfully complete the Certification Programme are awarded the Gender Equality Seal – a recognized symbol of gender equality in the workplace. By engaging with the Seal, companies are better positioned to support the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of UNDP, Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme provides a concrete tool for the private sector to be part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by reducing gender gaps and promoting both equality in the workplace and women's economic empowerment. Adopting gender equality as a part of "good work", the private company takes comprehensive measures to develop and change its corporate structures and cultures, creating

fairer and better conditions for all employees, participating businesses, in order to develop a gender equality policy. Participating in the Gender Equality Seal Certification Program is seen as a commitment. This commitment provides many benefits for employees and companies (Gutiérrez, D., & Castaño, A. (2021). European Investment Bank, EBRD has gender equality criteria on giving large amount loan demands to large scaled companies.

International Organization of Employers outlines several reasons that companies give importance to gender equality;¹

Economic case: According to a study, utilizing women's talents wholly in the workforce has a potential effect to promote increase in GDP by USD 12 trillion. While this amount corresponds to 11% of the Global GDP, it is also equal to the blend of economies of China and the U.S. International Monetary Fund sets forth those large gains in economic welfare are achieved by increasing the incorporation of women in the workforce, and in the economies of the regions such as South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, over 20% welfare increase can be observed. ²

The research by the International Labour Organization's Bureau for Employer Activities indicates that productivity and competitiveness are two concepts that can be reached through diversity in workforce. The percentage of the profitability increases by 5-20% in the event that the gender diversity is realized. By this means, enterprises have the chance of searching their employees in a broader pool of talent which comprises diverse skills, whereby enterprise performance in total improves. Further, IMF's study reveals that women and men make a great team in terms of

¹ Morni, A. (2020, March 07). *Four business reasons to promote gender equality and diversity* Retrieved from www.ioe-emp.org/news/details/1583497747-four-business-reasons-to-promote-gender-equality-and-diversity .

² McKinsey Global Institute (2015, September 01). *How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth* Retrieved from www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth .

complementing one another's skills and by this way, an enforcement in wages for everyone is experienced. ³

Achieving gender equality in the workplace, as in every field, requires contemporary living conditions, women and men to participate in all areas of life with equal rights in order to make societies stronger and happier. Gender equality is not just a positive approach for women, it benefits society as a whole. In an environment where women are not given equal rights, half of the society can be considered displaced. As a matter of fact, the empowerment of women is not only related to women but also to the whole society. For this reason, creating gender equality can be possible by raising awareness of gender equality in all individuals. To support the participation of women in all areas of life, to contribute to the economic empowerment of women; support the elimination of discrimination in terms of employment and occupation; empowering women in the workplace and in society; Gender equality can be possible by raising awareness of a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable life.

Innovation intensity: Gender equality enables corporates to capture “innovation intensity” at the workplace, as a matter of fact, the companies with more women executives mean more patents compared to the ones with no women executives. Moreover, a workforce with diversity brings along customers' loyalty and brand strength. Since the very open, comprehensive and diverse environment enables individuals to be their authentic self at the work, this situation brings more opportunities to produce creative ideas for the brand. Furthermore, the clients and shareholder benefit from the diversity and the customer representation level of these enterprises increase accordingly. ⁴

³ Dabla, E. (2019, March) *Closing the Gender Gap* Retrieved from www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2019/03/closing-the-gender-gap-dabla.htm

⁴ Noordende, S. World Economic Forum (2018, October 17). *Diversity Makes the Workplace More Competitive* Retrieved from www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/10/why-diversity-matters-for-global-competitiveness/

Ease of doing business: Enterprises which achieve diversity in their workforce can easily build cooperation with similar companies. As this cooperation paves the way for enforced investments and business together, it also creates advantages to access new markets. Harvard Business Review states that diverse executive teams have higher possibility to be successful in the new markets and the percentage of this possibility is estimated to be 70%. Workplace gender equality is associated with improved national productivity and economic growth, increased organizational performance, enhanced ability of companies to attract talent and retain employees and enhanced organizational reputation. In this manner, this study aims to contribute to the raise awareness in order to increase the sensitivity of business environment to gender equality. Through the examples and interviews, it presents the strategies that companies are implementing on gender equality. Lastly, this study aims to contribute to the development of social ground with sustainable gender equality goals.

Various studies are carried out to examine the representation of women in the board management. These studies prove that the performance of companies with a high number of women on board is higher in almost every field, that companies have high ethical reputation, low corruption rates and more affordable risks (Akdoğan 2019). The entry of women into working life has given them their economic independence. The inequality between men and women in the business world is striking. Among the reasons for this double standard in business life; the low level of education of women and their inability to receive preparatory training for jobs requiring skills, the fact that women are not admitted to certain jobs and professions, female employment is filled in certain jobs and occupations, discriminatory practices in hiring and in the workplace, discriminatory practices in wages, dismissal in cases of marriage, in crises and economic recession situations, especially the dismissal of married women before men, the prevention of women from entering certain jobs due to protective legislation, the discrimination between male and female members in unions, and the underrepresentation of women in management cadres take place as a priority (Dalkıranoglu, 2006: 42). Traditional values, attitudes and socioeconomic

structure in our country also put women at a disadvantage in social and business life (Beduk, 2005: 23). Although there are many obstacles faced by women in professional life, these include inequality in education and vocational training (Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005: 207), inequality in finding a job and promotion (Öztürk, 2007: 48), inequality in remuneration (Karaca, 2007: 23), social inequality in benefiting from rights (Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005: 212), and mobbing (Tetik, 2010: 87) are the most common problems.

Unlike other studies, this thesis does not examine “the place of women in working environment” in general, but the problems faced by female employees in companies, the policies adopted by large-scale companies to solve these problems, the policy differences adopted by global companies and local companies in their attitudes towards to their employees, and their targets foreseen by international organizations.

1.4. Methodology

In this study, the effects of women directors on the gender equality policies adopted by the companies will be investigated. This question will be answered in the thesis based on the example of Turkey. This study followed qualitative research strategies based on semi-structured interviews which examined individual and organizational perceptions and experiences of women on board in large scaled companies. The research question is attempted to be answered in the thesis based on the sample of the companies which are large scaled and have operations in Turkey. It is hoped that the analysis of these issues will throw light on the conditions for the development of gender equality policies in the private sector in Turkey. For this purpose, in-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted with seven women directors who have a wide approach on gender policies and display serious efforts on it. The full list of interviewees’ socio-demographic characteristics and interview questions is provided in the Methodology Chapter. Due to Covid19, I could not conduct my interviews face to face. I had to postpone my interviews during the restrictions imposed by Covid-

19, and I completed my interviews in September-October 2021. I have been in contact with the interviewees since the beginning of my thesis process, so there were no disruptions or problems in the process, except for the travel and meeting restrictions imposed by Covid19. Interviews aimed to provide input for private sector gender equality policies, as well as to identify the main triggers for the development of these policies. 20 questions have been asked in the interview. These questions have kept in a wide perspective, from demographic data such as age and education level to the roles of the people to be interviewed in the company they work for. Another limitation is the possibility that the communication with the women managers may have remained as in expected level, since the interviews could not be conducted face to face. Communication through digital screens may have been perceived as a colder channel than face-to-face communication. In addition, the participants may have thought that they were answering the questions not only as themselves but also on behalf of their institutions, therefore they may not have conveyed objective data with a corporate responsibility instinct. Although it was tried to ensure that women managers had sufficient comfort while describing the disadvantages, this level may not have been sufficient.

1.5. The Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1; Introduction provides a synopsis of the thesis by identifying the subject matter, the methodology, limitations and the organization of the thesis. The introduction part provides the research question and the ways in which the answers have been sought. At the same time, the main questions to be focused on in the whole thesis are explained in this part.

Following the introduction part, **Chapter 2;** Conceptual Framework identifies the theoretical framework of the thesis with reference to the outlook of Turkey's women in business profile. In the second part of the Chapter 2, the recent inclinations in women directors' perspective on gender policies in business life in Turkey are discussed. The second chapter's exclusive focus is on women in business, which is discussed from different angles and explained with reference to

current figures by using the studies made by institutions such as international companies (Pwc, Deloitte), large research companies (Pipeline) and international organizations (UN Women, UNDP, OECD, World Economic Forum).

Chapter 3 aims to understand the position of Turkey in various rankings on gender equality (women in management, distribution of female employees in sectoral work areas). In this section, definitions and questions, as well as findings on gender equality in the working environments are presented, and gender equality policies at different levels are explained. In addition, this chapter focuses on how gender equality is observed in workplaces through international conventions and legal texts.

Chapter 4; Methodology presents the research process of this study and introduces the design based on in-depth interviews with seven female managers. The interviews were conducted with women who have been successful in their business life, to provide a broad perspective for explaining the main research question. The limitations of the research methodology will also be presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5; Findings, presents an analysis of the data obtained through interviews within this study. This chapter evaluates the data obtained from interviews and outlines the most significant findings of the study. The data obtained through interviews were analyzed by focusing on the following themes: the experiences of women as high-level decision-makers in their companies, gender equality policies in the respective companies, as well as international collaborations and practices related to this process.

Chapter 6; Conclusion summarizes the main findings of the study, and offers further insights regarding interviews and their interpretations. It also poses new questions based on the findings for the future research studies.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW: GENDER AND BUSINESS

2.1. Introduction

The concept of gender equality concerns every individual in the society with its inclusive structure. It involves working together to bring about changes in attitudes, behavior, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace and in the society. Gender equality is more than the limits drawn by the law, more than numbers. Expanding the areas of freedom, improving the quality of life and thus ensuring equality without compromising the gains for men or women is seen as the main goal.

In this section, the studies in international literature and Turkey will be scanned holistically and the data will be shared with comparisons. Likewise, information based on women's employment in Turkey will be briefly conveyed. In the light of these data, the current situation of female managers in Turkey will be examined in depth.

When the international literature is examined, women managers and their effects on their companies are mostly discussed with their economic aspects. Their achievements were evaluated by emphasizing their contributions to the performances of the companies they are in. These studies investigate the relationship between gender diversity within the board of directors and company's financial performance (Arora, 2021).

According to the role of female directors in the boardroom: Examining their impact on competitive dynamics study, women in high managerial positions have serious positive effects on business, such as coming with great understanding on

business problems, high ability on spreading the risks, better communication skills and influence competitive dynamics and shape the strategic direction of the company (D. Kolev, K., Hughes-Morgan, M., & Rehbein, K. (2021).

According to Rachel Habbert from Cultivate USA as a Senior People Scientist, female managers spend more time communicating with their employees than male managers, their communication is denser, and they are more respectful of work-life balance for their teams. There are some prominent features of female managers such as communication ability and emotion management (Habbert, 2020). One of the main themes of this study is focused on women managers outstanding verbal skills through their employees. In this part of the study, the answers received by asking questions about communication with the employees were analyzed. The expected inference from this is to examine the basis on which the characteristics of female managers, which they say stand out, are based. Biologically based explanations or inferences only on abstract concepts were expected.

Besides, the impacts of gender diversity in boardroom are linked with companies' performance and improvements (Nigam, N. K., Singh, K., & Arya, P. (2021). Another effect takes place directly within the institution, women employees are supported by women managers, gain increased motivation and achieve greater productivity, thus making female managers more effective (Périlleux, A., & Szafarz, A. (2021).

As it is clearly stated in another international study; female managers expand the field of activity of companies in corporate social responsibility areas and increase their success rates. In this study, which examines the annual valuation criteria of companies, it is seen that; Private companies with a high rate of female managers are very successful in developing their social responsibility activities (Valls Martínez et al., 2021).

2.2. General View from the Big Frame: Meaning of Gender Equality in Workplace

Sexism can be approached as an opinion that embraces and defends the fact that one sex is superior to another. When the question of gender equality directed to the society, the first answer of the majority is that men and women have equal rights in all areas of life (Sakalli-Ugurlu, N. 2003).

Although awareness about gender discrimination seems to have started through activities of civil society, international collaborations, company attitudes and even though policy proposals, representatives, advances in academia, and corporates supporting women seek to make progress in the issues such as providing women with opportunities in management level and paving the way for the rights such as maternity and breast-feeding leave, these are still regarded as the main areas of struggle for women in business. As stated in many studies, the characteristics of working life are derived from bias and values pertaining to male.

Some obstacles ahead of women's progress in business exist. Some of these obstacles have been set forth by researches. Prejudices in men have been detected regarding that woman are not sufficient in terms of personality, decisiveness and perseverance (Van Leeuwen, F. C. (2009). It has been indicated that women reach to middle management furthest due to both prejudices and biological characteristics, and then mostly discontinue. There is only one senior female manager against every ten senior male managers in Turkey.⁵ Women either do not participate in the labor market at all or engage in late for reasons such as marriage and childbirth. Along with the obstacles caused by sexism in society, this raises difficulties for women in working life. Nevertheless, business life from past to today is in need of both men and women (Phillips, N. J. (2006).

⁵ See also www.hthayat.haberturk.com/is-hayatinda-kadin-olmak-1072598

The fact that women feel obliged to act like men in order to succeed has become a subject of debate (Sobczak, A. (2018). Yet, the truth that humankind lives in a universe where women speak about being present as well, without dulling the edge of their "feminine" sides is evident. As the business world is analyzed, it is noticed that some characteristics defined as "feminine" are now needed for a balanced business environment and success.

In an ideal world, women could easily support other women in their school and professional work. However, because of gender bias and unequal opportunities for women, some women engage in "Queen Bee" behavior and fail to support other women in their field. Unfortunately, this decreases diversity in the workplace and creates barriers for all women to succeed in their careers. Queen Bee Syndrome is defined as a situation where high-ranking women in positions of authority treat the women who work below them more critically than their male counterparts, largely because the patriarchal culture of work encouraged the few women who rose to the top to become obsessed with maintaining their authority. Queen bees are women in positions of authority who are more critical of female subordinates.

According to the United Nations World Population Prospects Report, the world population is approximately 7.7 billion. Based on the report, women constitute half the population.⁶ Women encounter multifaceted problems in a great number of areas from education to health, from participation in the labor to their representation in politics and to gender equality in their business life. Notwithstanding that Turkey differs from developed countries in a negative aspect specifically with regard to the participation of women in workforce, gender equality or rather inequality is confronted as a common issue that has to be disentangled in developed and/or developing countries.

⁶ See also [http://www.diken.com.tr/bm-raporu-dunya-nufusu-2050-sonunda-9-7-milyar-ulasacak/#:~:text=Birle%C5%9Fmi%C5%9F%20Milletler%20\(BM\)%2C%20d%C3%BCn,9.7%20milyara%20ula%C5%9Fmas%C4%B1%20beklendi%C4%9Fini%20a%C3%A7%C4%B1klad%C4%B1.&text=Birle%C5%9Fmi%C5%9F%20Milletler%20Ekonomik%20ve%20Sosyal,n%C3%BCfus%20tahmini%20ise%2011%20milyar](http://www.diken.com.tr/bm-raporu-dunya-nufusu-2050-sonunda-9-7-milyar-ulasacak/#:~:text=Birle%C5%9Fmi%C5%9F%20Milletler%20(BM)%2C%20d%C3%BCn,9.7%20milyara%20ula%C5%9Fmas%C4%B1%20beklendi%C4%9Fini%20a%C3%A7%C4%B1klad%C4%B1.&text=Birle%C5%9Fmi%C5%9F%20Milletler%20Ekonomik%20ve%20Sosyal,n%C3%BCfus%20tahmini%20ise%2011%20milyar).

Based on the research conducted around the world, Turkey does not deliver a promising outlook in terms of gender equality (Pwc, Inc. (2018)). In accordance with Global Gender Gap Report of World Economic Forum in which 4 thematic areas such as economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment are evaluated and which involves 153 countries, Turkey ranks 133rd . Differences in labor force participation of women have been observed over the years according to education, marital status and age groups. In this case, it created some obstacles in front of women's employment (Korkmaz, A. (2012)). In the research on gender-based wage inequality among private sector employees by Gizem Kaya and Raziye Selim, it has been observed that the average wages of men are higher than the average wages of women (Kaya & Selim, 2018).

Wages and fundamental rights take place as basic data that can be most distinctly measured and needs to be checked first in terms of gender equality in working life. According to results of a research conducted by PwC, half of the respondents consider that there is no wage inequality in their institution, on the other part, women considering that there is a wage inequality outnumber men.

PwC's global research on this subject named "Winning the fight for female talent" report sets forth similar results and thus, it becomes possible to spot the problem in a global scale.

Under the framework of topics such as education, development, promotion, while 70% of respondents think that women and men have equal development and education opportunities, this rate falls back to 53% in promotion opportunities. It points out that women take notice of a barrier to promotions, even if they have equal or similar opportunities in education and development opportunities. Recently, corporate and multinational companies in particular place great importance on diversity policies and implement different practices with the aim of promote diversity inside the company (Pwc, Inc. (2018)).

As specified by the global CEO survey, 87% of respondent CEOs focus on having various talents and being more inclusive. Yet, a significant proportion of female employees feel being exposed to discrimination. In other words, according to the "Winning the fight for female talent" report, 21% of women notify that they are exposed to gender discrimination during a job application or interview, while this rate is only 5% in men. In Turkey, the proportion of women who feels being exposed to discrimination among the participants in the study is double that of men in Pwc, Inc. (2018).

In the light of the data obtained from A Guide for Gender-Responsive Companies and Institutions published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2020, the policies applied by the companies and the current situation are evaluated below;

5th Goal of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are targeted to be reached by the year of 2030, is a common subject included in all goals as well as directly grounding on Gender Equality. In other words, regardless of the issue area which is subject to development, considering gender equality and women without the perspective of empowering them will be incomplete in terms of comprehending that problem and providing solutions.

- According to the relevant OECD report published in 2018, in Turkey, 70.8% of men and 32.7% of women are employed in the economically active population.
- Only 5.4% of women can have senior management positions in companies.
- Only 0.3% of women own majority stakes of companies.
- Women's monthly earnings are 20% less than men's in average.
- The vast majority of women; 62% are subjected to psychological or physical harassment in the workplace.

- Paid maternity leave defined by law is 16 weeks in total, while paternity leave is 5 working days. At this point, equality cannot be achieved either.

The average time women spend on household work and childcare is 4 hours and 35 minutes, while it is approximately 53 minutes for men. This is the main reason preventing women from their participation in the workforce, as per the report. Besides, it is indicated in the report that other reasons such as lack of education and skills arise due to the fact that time devoted to household work and childcare is an obstacle to women's involvement in social life (UNDP, 2020). A Guide for Gender-Responsive Companies and Institutions Retrieved from 11 September 2020 from https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/tr/home/library/syria_programme/gender-responsive-company-guidelines.html).

2.3. Equality between Men and Women at the Workplace: Definitions and Questions

To set out definitions in the first place, a gender-responsive company and institution can be stated as a structure that realizes many needs and problems of employees that are visible and vice versa. These institutions take steps towards solutions produced in consequence of acting with the aim of creating answers to such needs and observe and follow the results in the long term by presenting practices. Regardless of which gender identity the employee belongs to, it intensely works in order to increase employee satisfaction and eliminate complaints.

Being gender-responsive in the workplace has recently been of national and international importance. In addition to many international companies such as P&G, L'oreal, GM, Unilever, Turkish companies operating in a multifaceted way such as Limak Holding, Koç Holding, Kale Group, Sabancı Holding, Fiba Group, Lcwaikiki adopt gender equality-responsive policies as well. These companies act

on by patterning the objectives of some international and transnational institutions (objectives of United Nations, resolutions of European Commission, etc.) in their development processes in the field.

Being gender-responsive in the workplace increases productivity and improves financial returns by 15%, as stated in UNDP's Guide for Gender-Responsive Companies and Institutions 2020. Every 10% progress in equality policies for men and women increases earnings before interest and tax by 3.5%. Operating margins raises by 8% and the absenteeism rate in the workplace decreases. There is an 8% increase in workplace attendance, as well as a 14% increase in work commitment, performance and job satisfaction. Another improvement observed is that employees have enhanced their workplace health and safety by 12% (UNDP, 2020). A Guide for Gender-Responsive Companies and Institutions Retrieved from 11 September 2020 from https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/tr/home/library/syria_programme/gender-responsive-company-guidelines.html).

Examining the main problems; it is necessary to focus on gender stereotypes. Gender stereotype is a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men. A gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and/or make choices about their lives (Türkkan,2011).

These traits can be related to appearance, behavior, or emotional domain, and it doesn't matter whether all members of the group really conform to these stereotypes. The formation of these stereotypes is likened to a puzzle in the literature. In this context, the first part of the puzzle is revealed as the individual's biological characteristics, the relations she/he has established with people in the context of her/his gender, and the selection of her/his interests accordingly, and the use of existing stereotypes regarding genders in her/his life time.

The other problem that women face in working environment is gender segregation; In some occupational groups and sectors, women employees are in the minority and men are in the majority. The fact that gender discrimination is observed in employment also indicates the unequal distribution of women and men employees. They face the problem of unequal distribution in different positions in different sectors, industries, occupations and business sizes. As social norms continue to drive women's and men's career choices, they continue to distort labor markets, lower wages, and harm innovation and productivity. Thus, gender segregation in the workplace emerges as a problem (Adams, R. B., and D. Ferreira. 2009). Another case is; managerial positions are not always charming for employees, in the crisis and risky periods male managers less prefer the senior positions; this is called as glass cliff.

With this concept, it is expressed that there is a wage difference between female and male employees and that one employee earns more than the other. If two people working in a firm have the same qualifications and do similar jobs, but their wages are not equal, this is wage inequality. If gender is the basis of this inequality, we can call it gender pay gap. In many countries, women's hourly wages are on average less than that of male employees. In practice, it is excused that women do not have enough time to earn more and have too many domestic responsibilities. At the same time, this problem, which is based on social foundations, is not considered normal in business life today. There may be wage differences between men and women from their first jobs. Systemic causes of this situation may be education, career choice, specialization or craftsmanship and industry. But business scaling and negotiation also play a part. While men bargain more for position and pay, women do so less frequently and with perseverance. Once the fare is determined, this initial level continues for years until the very end.

CHAPTER 3

WOMEN IN HIGH LEVEL MANAGEMENT IN TURKEY

3.1. An Overview of Women on Board: Turkey

Various studies are carried out to examine the representation of women in the board management. These studies prove that the performance of companies with women on board is higher in almost every field, that companies have high ethical reputation, low corruption rates and more affordable risks (Akdoğan 2019). According to the Women on Boards 2019 report, researchers collected publicly available data on the board of directors and board committees of the companies listed in BIST, using Public Disclosure Platform and company websites (Ararat,2019). According to the aforementioned report, the proportion of women in management has increased, albeit slightly.

According to the report titled “The Place of Women in the Labor Market”; Turkey ranks significantly low in the world with its female employment rate (Bayar, 2021). According to OECD, women's employment participation rate in Turkey is in the last place among member countries. While it is 77 percent in Iceland, 73 percent in Germany and 59 percent in the OECD average, this rate is only around 26-29 percent in Turkey (OECD Data Bank,2021). According to the World Bank data, Turkey is among the 25 countries with the lowest rate of female labor force participation among 200 countries in 2019.

Women's labor force participation rate is 30-32%, employment rate is 26-29% and unemployment rate fluctuate around 11-16%. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), when looking at the difference between male and female employment rates, it is noted that the employment rate of women is less than half of that of men (about 47 percent) (World Bank. (2021a))

The Women in Statistics Data' of the Turkish Statistical Institute updated in 2021⁷ indicates that, according to the results of the Address Based Population

⁷ İstatistiklerle Kadın, 2020 - TÜİK, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=İstatistiklerle-Kadin-2020-37221#:~:text=T%C3%9C%C4%B0K%20Kurumsal&text=Adrese%20Dayal%C4%B1%20N%C3%BCfus%20Kay%C4%B1t%20Sistemi.1'ini%20ise%20erkekler%20olu%C5%9Fturdu.>

Registration System, in 2020, the female population was 41 million 698 thousand 377 people, and the male population was 41 million 915 thousand 985 people. In other words; 49.9% of the total population was women and 50.1% was men.

According to the results of the National Education Statistics Database, the ratio of the population aged 25 and above, who have at least a university degree, in the total population was 9.8% in 2008, while it became 20.8% in 2019. When this ratio is analyzed by gender; In 2008, the rate of women aged 25 and above and at least university graduate was 7.6% and the rate of men was 12.1%, while this rate was 18.5% for women and 23.1% for men in 2019.

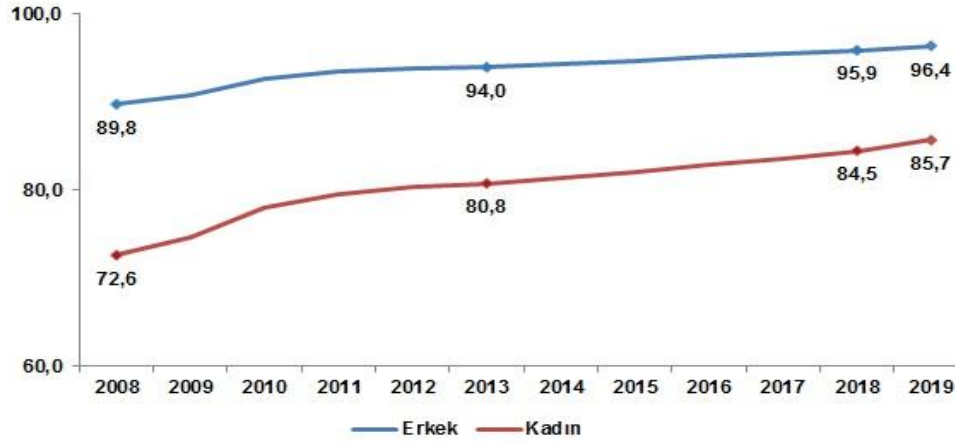


Figure 1. Proportion of people⁸

When the place women take in employment in Turkey is examined; according to the results of the household labor force survey; In 2019, the rate of employed people aged 15 and over was 45.7% in Turkey, while this rate was 28.7% for women and 63.1% for men. When these rates are examined, it is seen that the employment rate of women is much lower than that of men, starting from the first years of employment. When the gender statistics analyzed for EU and OECD countries; the OECD area employment rate rose at broadly the same pace for women (to 60.8%, from 60.2% in the second quarter) and men (to 75.3%, from

⁸ Figure 1: Retrived from www.data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Kadin-2020-37221

74.7%), as well as among young people aged 15-24 (to 41.6%, from 40.9%), people aged 25-54 (to 77.9%, from 77.3%) and those aged 55-64 (to 61.7%, from 61.1%). The EU employment rate for men of working age was 79.0 % in 2019, exceeding that of women (67.3 %) by 11.7 percentage points. Considering these figures, the situation in Turkey will be evaluated.

According to the results of the household labor force survey; While the employment rate of individuals in the 25-49 age group with children under the age of 3 in their household was 59.8% in 2014, it became 58.7% in 2019. When this ratio is analyzed by gender; In 2019, the employment rate of women in the 25-49 age group with children under the age of 3 in their household was 26.7%, while the employment rate for men was 87.3%. When these rates are examined, the rate of withdrawal from employment of mothers with young children is considerably higher than men. Indeed, having children is one of the main reasons why women withdraw from the labour market in Turkey. This can be explained in relation to the patriarchal societal structure in Turkey, which sees the care of children as the primary responsibility of women. It is obviously seen that it is not easy to return due to the fact that pregnant women take leave during the prenatal period and then the break in business life is prolonged. This constitutes the main reasons affecting these figures.

The duration of employment is defined as the number of years a person is expected to be active in the labor market during his or her lifetime. According to the results of the household labor force survey; While the length of stay in working life was 16.7 years for women aged 15 and over and 37.7 years for men in 2013, it was 19.1 years for women and 39.0 years for men in 2019. An increase in the length of stay in working life is observed over the years. There may be different reasons for this; The first reason can be predicted on the basis of economy. The developing labor market may have created employment opportunities for women. The second one can be handled on the basis of gender equality; Thanks to equitable improvements, an increase in the employment rate can be seen.

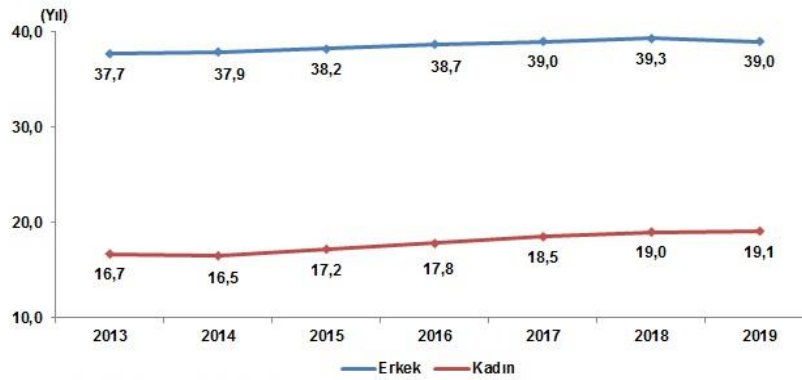


Figure 2. Lifetime Labor Market Existence ⁹

The “Independent Women Directors” 2019 report is prepared every year by Sabancı University CGFT in partnership with Egon Zehnder Turkey.¹⁰ According to the data provided by Borsa Istanbul, the current number of companies traded is 518. According to the report prepared by Sabancı University, the total number of board members was 2734, slightly below the number of seats in 2018. However, there has been an increase in the number of independent board members since 2017.

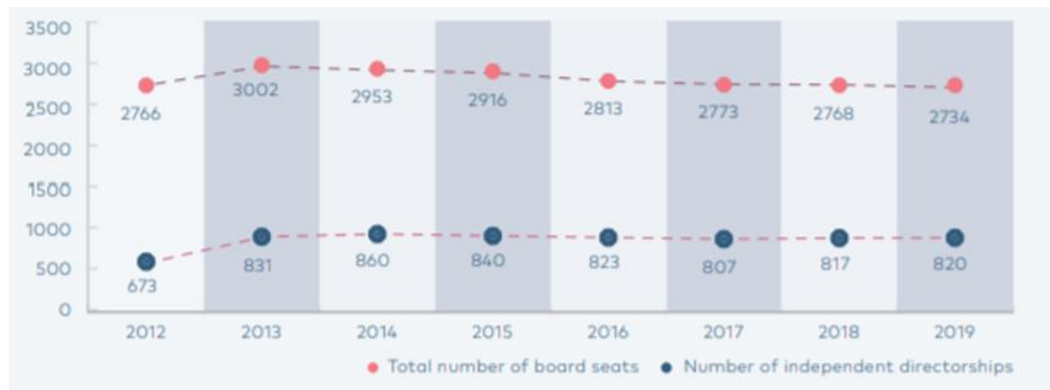


Figure 3. Overview of Board Seats ¹¹

⁹ Figure 2: Retrived from www.data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Kadin-2020-37221

¹⁰ Data source: Yönetim Kurulunda Kadınlar Derneği Raporlar, retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

¹¹ Figure 3: Retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

According to the shared data from the aforementioned report; 340 women held 435 directorships compared to 421 in 2018, whereas 1810 men held 2299 as shown. In the table below, the ratio of women to men in the number of seats in the board of directors is given in detail and the difference can be clearly observed.

Table 1. Women and Men Holding Multiple Directorships¹²

Number of Chairs	Number of Chairs									Number Of Individuals	Total Directorships
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
FM. Directors	280	42	10	2	3	3	0	0	0	340	435
M. Directors	1504	199	70	17	9	7	2	0	2	1810	2299
All	1784	241	80	19	12	10	2	0	2	2150	2734



Figure 4. Number of Boards Directors Sit BIST Companies¹³

¹² Table 1: Retrieved from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

¹³ Figure 4: Retrieved from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

In 2019, 152 companies listed on Borsa Istanbul did not have female executives on their boards of directors. When the data for the same year is examined, it is seen that the number of companies without female managers in the distribution of companies with and without female managers is higher than the ratio of companies with female managers. The table below will be a reference for the distribution of companies with and without female directors;



Figure 5. Overview of BIST Companies With/Without Women Directors¹⁴

When we look at the ‘Overview of Women Managers in BIST’ more than 400 hundred female directors were in place. The ratio of female managers in the so-called family companies was also examined in the aforementioned report, considering these figures.

189 female directors were affiliated with owner families in BIST. Only 43.5% of all was represented by women managers. In 2018, there was an increase in directors affiliated with owner families, however; there is a decrease in both male and female directors affiliated with owner families in 2019. The statistics of family affiliated directorships increased from 27.8% to 28.9% so it shows the reluctance of controlling families to professionalize the boards in Turkey.

¹⁴ Figure 5: Retried from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

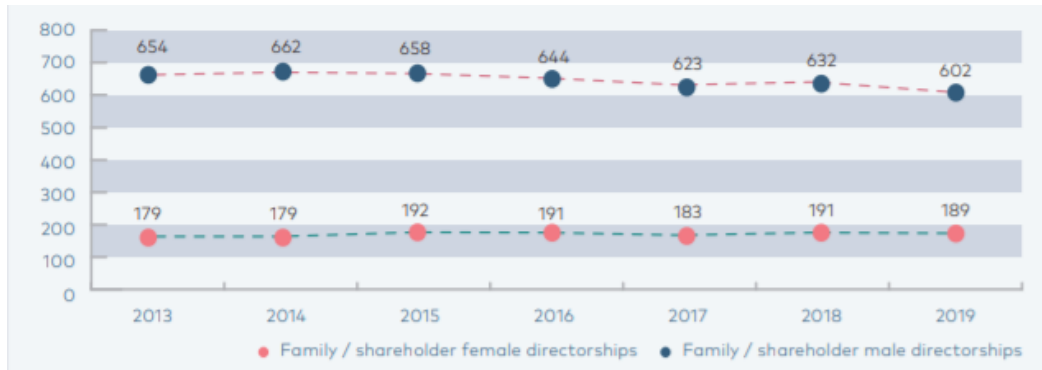


Figure 6. Number of Seats Occupied by Female and Male Directors¹⁵

The board seats occupied by professional women have increased from 142 in 2012 to 246 in 2018 with 105 new seats in the table. There is an increasing rate 73.9% in the number of professional women compared to 2012 and 7.4% increase from 2018 and also the number of female family members has slightly decreased to 189. While a rapid increase was observed in the number of women managers in the early 2010s, a slowdown was observed in 2018. In the economic crisis experienced in 2018, many companies in Turkey were adversely affected by high inflation and fluctuations in exchange rates. It is known that in economic crises female employees are more easily disregarded, so this might have affected women in high-level managerial positions.

Table 2. Number of Female Directors in Different Positions¹⁶

¹⁵ Figure 6: Retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

¹⁶ Table 2: Retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

Years	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Independent Professional	52	73	80	83	102	98	131	144
Other Professionals	90	100	93	100	106	105	99	102
Executive	32	24	22	23	21	18	16	24
Non-executive	58	76	71	77	85	87	83	78
Family/Shareholder	177	179	179	192	191	183	191	189
Executive	44	45	46	51	53	52	52	51
Non-executive	133	134	133	141	138	131	139	138
Total	319	352	352	375	399	386	421	435

3.1.1. The Ratio of Women-Men on Board (CEO/General Manager Positions on BIST Boards)

As shown in the chart below just 36 companies had a women chairperson in 2019 corresponding to 8% of all companies. Besides, 28 of the 36 women chairpersons are affiliated with the controlling families and/or they directly own significant number of shares. Only 8 professional women were appointed as the chair this year compared to 138 professional men corresponding to 5.6% of professional chairs.

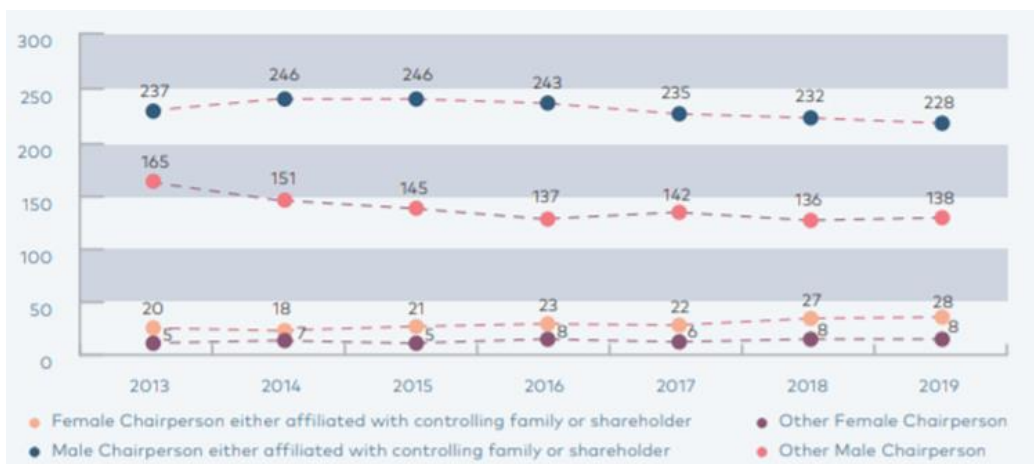


Figure 7. The Ratio of Women-Men on Board (as a chairperson)¹⁷

When we examine the figures at the CEO or general manager level; the number of male CEOs is 157. In 2019 only 14 women CEO exists. Considering the gender-based indicators, the rate of male CEOs is considerably higher than the rate of female CEO.



Figure 8. The Ratio of Women-Men on Board (as a CEO/General Manager)¹⁸

In the Women on Boards Turkey report there are several sectors examined such as Education, Health, Sports and Other Social Services, Electricity Gas and Water, Administrative and Support Services, Manufacturing Industry, Construction and Public Works, Mining, Financial Institutions, Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, Agriculture, Wood Products and Fishing, Technology and Defense, Wholesale and Retail Trade, Hotels and Restaurants, Transportation, Telecommunication and Storage. As it can be seen that below manufacturing and financial institutions are listed as prominent.

Table 3. Women Managers from Different Sectors¹⁹

¹⁷ Figure 7: Retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

¹⁸ Figure 8: Retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

¹⁹ Table 3: Retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

	Total #of companies		Companies with Female directors		Total #of directorships		Female directorships	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Education, Health, Sports and Other Social Services	6	16.7	1	16.7	40	5	2	5
Electricity Gas and Water	9	100	9	100	62	11	17.7	
Administrative and Support Services	4	50	2	50	22	2	9.1	
Manufacturing Industry	179	63.1	113	63.1	1209	194	16.1	
Construction and Public Works	8	25	2	25	42	3	7.1	
Mining	5	0	0	0	25	0	0	
Financial Institutions	131	64.1	84	64.1	947	162	17.1	
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	1	100	1	100	3	1	33.3	
Agriculture, Wood Products and Fishing	3	100	3	100	16	8	50	
Technology and Defense	17	47.1	8	47.1	113	12	10.6	
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Hotels and Restaurants	29	75.9	22	75.9	186	35	18.8	
Transportation, Telecommunication and Storage	10	50	5	50	69	5	7.2	

In private companies there are several committees such as Advisory Committee, Audit Committee, Improvement Committee, Risk Committee and Corporate Governance Committee. When the committees examine, the place given to women managers is as follows;

When the presence of female managers in the committees is examined, an increase is observed for each committee. We can consider this as a positive improvement.



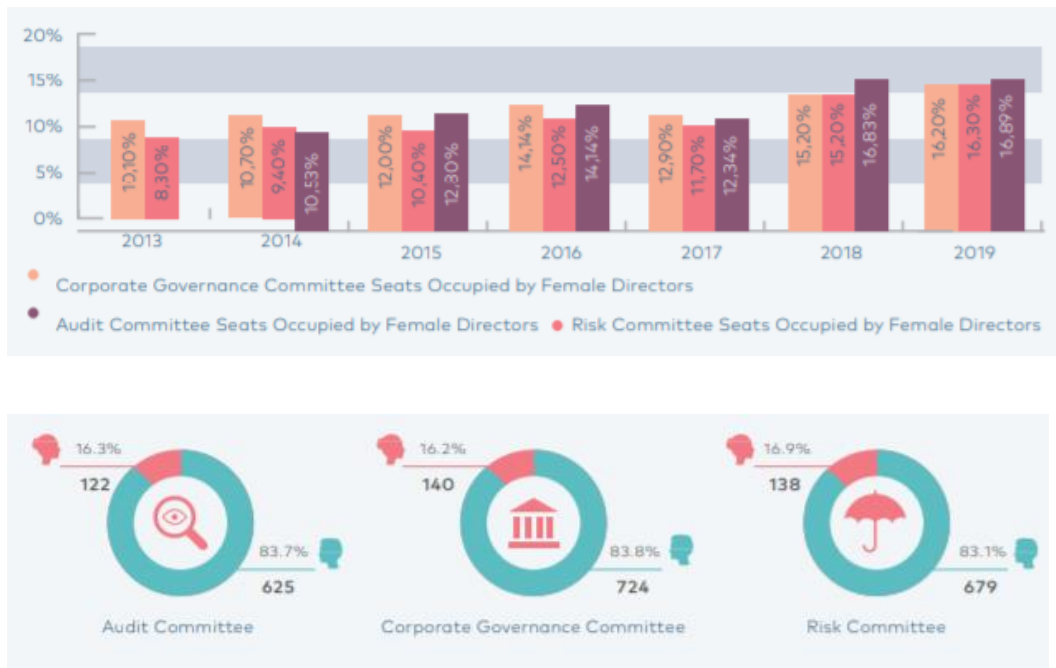


Figure 9. Representation of Women Managers in different committees ²⁰

When we look at the changes in the rate of women in BIST 100 companies (existing in the record of Borsa İstanbul); there are no women board members on 35 companies in BIST 100 in 2019. 65 companies had at least one women board member in the related year. It is seen that the largest companies in BIST perform worse with respect to improving gender diversity in their boards since the number of companies with all men board members could not reach even below 30.



²⁰ Figure 9: Retrieved from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report

Figure 10. 2012-2019 Women Representation in BIST 100 Companies²¹

Table 4. 2012-2019 Women Representation in BIST 100 Companies

	2012		2013		2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total number of board seats	818	-	862	-	853	-	882	-	846	-	836	-	829	-	826	-
Female held directorships	82	10.02	97	11.3	88	10.3	100	11.4	99	11.7	110	12.2	118	14.2	114	13.8
Man held directorships	736	89.98	765	88.7	765	89.7	772	88.6	747	88.3	726	86.8	711	85.8	712	86.2
Independent directorships	193	23.6	246	28.5	263	30.8	259	29.6	248	29.3	249	29.9	253	30.5	260	31.5
Independent female directorships	10	5.2	17	6.9	20	7.6	19	7.3	18	7.3	21	8.4	42	16.6	46	17.7
Independent male directorships	183	94.8	229	93.1	243	92.4	239	92.7	230	92.7	228	91.6	211	83.4	214	82.3

In this report Women Empowered Board Index data is used. Their methodology is to differentiate female directors who sit on the boards as direct shareholders or representatives of controlling families from professional female directors. As it can be seen, the concept of “glass ceiling” in Turkey explains the position of professional women.

3.2. Analyzing Gender Equality Index 2021

According to the latest report of World Economic Forum namely ‘Global Gender Gap Report 2020’ there are serious findings (WEF, 2021). Turkey ranked as 133rd. Economic participation and opportunity ranking is 140. As mentioned in the latest report, women existence in working environment is not equal to men. Women’s access to finance is limited, civil and political freedom is rated as poor. Wages paid during maternity/paternity leave, annual gross wage are limited.

²¹ Figure 10: Retrived from: www.yonetimkurulundakadin.org/rapor/34/women-on-board-turkey-2019-7th-annual-report



Figure 11. Global Gender Gap Index: Turkey²²

As seen in the table, Turkey's place in the ranking has decreased since 2006. There were major regressions in the Global Gender Gap Index, economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and finally, political empowerment. When the report is examined, there have been different reflections in the period before and after Covid19. The quarantine processes in Turkey, the economy coming to a standstill, caused female employees to leave their jobs or to work informally during this period.

3.3. Gender Equality Policies Applicable at Different Levels

Gender equality policies can take place at multiple levels in companies. At the management level, involving women in the most important unit of most gender-responsive workplaces and having all responsibility and accountability related to execution of the process shared by gender roles affect the strategies, identities,

²² Figure 11: Retrieved from: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

representation competencies and relationship management of the companies in a positive way.

Gender equality policies implemented at the human resources level contribute to the mainstreaming of equality between men and women. As the departments of human resources is a significant unit directly responsible for the personnel in the company, they are required to be driven by gender equality, from recruitment processes to in-house daily practices. When the human resources unit adopts the policy of maintaining a balance between men and women in departments such as 'purchasing' or 'planning', which are coded as men and women, and in departments where work efficiency and employee loyalty are relatively low, companies will have taken another step-in gender-responsiveness.

As stated in research by UNDP, corporate success in working environments where gender diversity is approached with sensitivity (in a way that gender balance exists) escalates through increased productivity of employees. When the target is to improve productivity, restrictions and motivational losses should not be caused due to issues such as dress codes in the workplace. Egalitarian manner should be adopted in dress codes without reducing it to gender.

Gender equality is also a highly crucial area in in-house communication. Gender equality-responsive communication is an inclusive positioning, language and visual use that serves to mainstream gender equality, where men and women are represented equally, make equal use of resources and opportunities, take on roles equally, balance is observed in decision-making processes, patterns are questioned (Koç, 2017).

Gender stereotypes are embodied in four main areas in communication channels: Character, physical characteristics, roles and professions. Male characters are predominantly represented as aggressive, competitive and sociable; women are represented as passive, cooperative and timid. The man is positioned as the one who provides for the family and the house, while the woman is given the role of mother/wife, who provides for the care of the family. Physical characteristics and

professions are also encoded with patterns of femininity and masculinity, regardless of the characteristics of individuals.

Traditional Gender Stereotypes.

<u><i>Feminine.</i></u>	<u><i>Masculine.</i></u>
<i>Not aggressive.</i>	<i>Aggressive.</i>
<i>Dependent.</i>	<i>Independent.</i>
<i>Easily influenced.</i>	<i>Not easily influenced.</i>
<i>Submissive.</i>	<i>Dominant.</i>
<i>Passive.</i>	<i>Active.</i>
<i>Home-oriented.</i>	<i>Worldly.</i>
<i>Easily hurt emotionally.</i>	<i>Not easily hurt emotionally.</i>
<i>Indecisive.</i>	<i>Decisive.</i>
<i>Talkative.</i>	<i>Not at all talkative.</i>
<i>Gentle.</i>	<i>Tough.</i>
<i>Sensitive to other's feelings.</i>	<i>Less sensitive to other's feelings.</i>
<i>Very desirous of security.</i>	<i>Not very desirous of security.</i>
<i>Cries a lot.</i>	<i>Rarely cries.</i>
<i>Emotional.</i>	<i>Logical.</i>
<i>Verbal.</i>	<i>Analytical.</i>
<i>Kind.</i>	<i>Cruel.</i>
<i>Tactful.</i>	<i>Blunt.</i>
<i>Nurturing.</i>	<i>Not nurturing.</i>

Figure 12. Traditional Gender Stereotypes ²³

In means and tools of communication, woman is either not represented at all or is defined at home with tasks such as cleaning, cooking and in a way corresponding to the role of mother. Man, however, is positioned as a person who earns money in the public sphere, owns a business and makes decisions. In fact, men and women vary in themselves. In fiction, pairing men and women with specific roles and traits is one of the biggest obstacles to equal and inclusive representation.

When the effect of these patterns on the world of visual communication is examined, it is seen that its visual use is critical for gender equality. When gender stereotypes are reflected in the visuals, the representation of men and women and their resources become dissimilar. Through the angle, costume and character used

²³ Figure 12: Retrived from: www.scalar.usc.edu/works/index-2/media/traditional-gender-stereotypes

in the visuals, gender stereotypes are fostered and reproduced. Another common issue in materials of visual communication is the positioning of individuals as sexual objects. Although it is more often designated to women, similar use of the male body is becoming prevalent. This approach contains the sub-message that individuals can only have ideal physical conditions on the condition that a product is consumed or achieve what they desire thanks to their ideal physical conditions.

3.4. Examples of Gender Equality Policies of Companies in Turkey

In this part of the study, four different examples will be examined. The main reason for choosing these examples is that they are the pioneer and prominent examples when the leading companies in Turkey are examined in terms of gender equality policies in the workplace. Since the thesis sample could not include all large-scale private companies with operations in Turkey, it was tried to contribute to the thesis framework by giving initiator examples.

3.4.1. Limak Holding-UNDP Gender Equality Model

The Gender Equality Seal incentivizes UNDP Country Offices to integrate gender equality into all aspects of their development work. Gender Equality Seal Certification Programme provides a concrete tool for private sectors to be part of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by reducing gender gaps and promoting both equality in the workplace and women's economic empowerment. Adopting gender equality as a part of "good work", the private company takes comprehensive measures to develop and change its corporate structures and cultures, creating fairer and better conditions for all employees, participating businesses, in order to develop a gender equality policy. Participating in the Gender Equality Seal Certification Program is seen as a commitment. This commitment provides many benefits for employees and companies (Gutiérrez, D., & Castaño, A. (2021).

Key benefits for companies;

- Better employee performance and commitment, reducing absenteeism;
- A more just work environment that maximizes the capacities of all personnel;
- An enhanced public image as a leader in fostering corporate responsibility.

To receive a Gender Equality Seal, standards must be met in the following seven areas:

- Management Systems;
- In-house Capacities;
- Enabling Environment;
- Communications and Knowledge Management;
- Programmes;
- Partnerships; and
- Gender Equality Impact/Results

UNDP implements the "Gender Equality Seal" Program to reinforce women's position in the workplace in Turkey. Limak Holding is the first practitioner of the program in Turkey.

Limak Holding Manager Ebru Özdemir states that their aim is to lay the concept of gender equality on the DNA of institutions and that they account investment in this field as essential as other investment areas, and indicates that

Gender equality is one of our investment areas as both Limak Foundation and company. "I incline toward referring to our work in this direction as social investment instead of designating it as corporate social responsibility, since in fact we are investing in our future and the future of our country through our investments in gender equality.

We do not deploy enough of the impact and surplus value that women will effectuate in different sectors. As Limak, we endeavor to raise awareness related to the responsibility that companies can assume in the direction of gender equality. What is important for us is to ensure that everyone reaches a better point in their criteria and that is also encouraged financially. We started to implement this practice in Limak Investment together with UNDP, and now we are implementing it in our other companies.²⁴

Limak, together with UNDP Turkey, carries out the 'Gender Equality Seal Program' within the body of Limak Investment since 2019. This is a project implemented for the first time in Turkey and its main purpose is to create a gender sensitive corporate business model. When the program is completed, Limak Investment will be the first company in Turkey to be awarded this seal. In the next step, they aim to spread this program to other companies within the Group, and they want to set an example and role model for the private sector in Turkey.

How this process is carried out can be summarized as follows;

- The company has fundamental goals in gender equality,
- They announced their sustainability targets in August 2020, there are 12 strategic objectives,
- Ebru Özdemir emphasizes that the targets for women's employment are very valuable for them,
- They want to increase the rate of female employment within the Group by 40 percent until 2026,

²⁴ Garanti Bankası ve Limak Holding arasında imzalanan sözleşmeye dair demeçler; <http://www.businesslife.com.tr/Home/NewsDetail/292>

- They follow good practices both in Turkey and abroad by constantly meeting with domestic and foreign partners and learning from them,
- They are in strong cooperation with UNDP Turkey,
- They also work with consultancy companies, especially in the field of sustainability,
- One of the most important points of the study is stated as ownership, they strongly believe the spirit of this Programme.
- Under this program, they make equality adjustments in areas such as hiring – layoffs, recruitment, trainings, promotions, wages, productivity at work.

3.4.2. Gender Equality Credit, Garanti BBVA

Garanti BBVA, which has contributed to a great number of projects in order to enrich society with the consideration of responsible banking for years, has currently adopted the Gender Loan which is used for the first time in Turkey, subsequent to the first Gender Bond issued by a private bank in emerging markets.

Having a speech about the implementation of the Gender Loan which is the first and only one in Turkey, Deputy General Manager of Garanti BBVA Ebru Dildar Edin states that;

As Garanti BBVA, we believe that gender equality is above all a human rights issue. The importance of women should be realized both for a just society which respects human rights and for a better economy. At this stage, the employment rate of women in Turkey is less than half of men's employment rate. If we as Turkey can reach the OECD average of 63% with strong policies to support women's labor force participation, Turkey's gross domestic product has the potential to increase by 20% in 2025. Women constitute between 45-50% of the educated part of society. However, even in leading companies, when we separate the financial sector, the female representation rate does not exceed 30%. Both

our government and the private sector have really crucial tasks in this area. Thanks to Gender Loan, companies will have the opportunity to provide financing under more proper conditions through the steps they will take for gender equality. As Garanti BBVA, we have actualized many studies and firsts both in our Bank and for our customers regarding the active participation of women in the economy; We experienced the proud of being in the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index three times in a row. As is known, Garanti BBVA is the first bank from Turkey to sign the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). In addition, we have taken many pioneering steps with practices such as the Gender Equality Committee established in 2015, the Women Managers Program established to increase the proportion of women in senior management, Domestic Violence Platform, motherhood experience project, mentoring program, fair wage policy, trainings for subconscious bias and equality, and, of course, our holistic women entrepreneurship program based on the principle of women's empowerment for economic and social development..²⁵

Garanti BBVA led the way in Turkey and the world and realized the second loan agreement of the "Gender Loan" structure, in which the loan interest is indexed to providing equal opportunities for male and female employees, with four tourism companies operating within the Limak Group. Within the scope of the loan agreement of 151.2 million Turkish Lira signed with four tourism companies operating within the Limak Group, Garanti BBVA adopted Turkey's second Gender Loan (loan promoting women and men to have equal opportunities in business life), the first of which was held last year. According to the evaluation made by Garanti BBVA at the end of the first year, there will be a reduction in the loan interest on the condition that the performance of the four tourism companies covered by the loan improves on gender equality.

The loan interest will be reduced on the score of the loan taken by the four tourism companies operating within Limak in accordance with different criteria such as postnatal return-to-work programs, observing the principle of equality in new hires, prioritizing women-dominated partner businesses in the supply chain, the male-female pay ratio, the policy of preventing harassment and trainings on combating unconscious negative bias against women. The score, which will be

²⁵ Garanti Bankası ve Limak Holding arasında imzalanan sözleşmeye dair demeçler; <http://www.businesslife.com.tr/Home/NewsDetail/292>

calculated by Garanti BBVA's own methodology, will also reveal the Limak Group's performance in gender equality in the tourism sector"

3.4.3. Koç Holding, Gender Equality Guide

Koç Holding aims to reflect gender equality in all areas of its business. With Gender Equality in Communication Guidelines and Workshops, they aim to develop an approach sensitive to gender equality in communication teams and the agencies they work with.

To date, Gender Equality in Communication Workshops; More than 100 marketing and communication experts from Koç Group companies participated in more than 30 advertising, PR and social media agencies. Now, they are taking steps to measure brand communication with this filter. They encourage good examples by evaluating the advertisements with the methodology they put forward in the Gender Equality Guide.

At the same time, Koç Holding was chosen among the leaders of the Generations Equality Forum, hosted by the United Nations. Koç Holding, which will lead the works in the field of technology and innovation within the scope of the forum, will play a transformative role in the creation and spread of global best practices. Koç Holding CEO Levent Çakıroğlu said, "As one of the Global Impact Leaders of the HeForShe movement, we will contribute to the global studies on gender equality by bringing together the work we have done for the last 5 years with our expertise and experience in technology and innovation".²⁶

The action group led by Koç Holding will work on transformative interventions and projects in the field of technology and innovation in order to remove the obstacles to achieving gender equality. It will support the evaluation of

²⁶ See also; <https://www.koc.com.tr/medya-merkezi/haberler/2021/nesiller-boyu-esitlik>

opportunities and the establishment of collaborations with technology and innovation. In addition, it will set out a road map to ensure global expansion and set 5-year targets and share these goals with the public.

3.4.3. Sabancı Holding, Gender Equality Practices

In Capital Magazine Women Friendly Companies Research; Sabancı Holding received the first prize in the Group with the Highest Number of Female Executives and the second prize in the Group with the Highest Number of Female Employees. The rate of female employees is 31%, and the rate of female managers is 37%.

As they acknowledge in the Declaration of Equality at Work, establishing and maintaining a fair working environment for employees is considered as the most important priority in Sabancı Group companies. Any kind of discrimination among employees for language, race, color, gender, political opinion, belief, religion, sect, age, physical disability or similar reasons is strictly prohibited.

Equality of opportunity is ensured by implementing encouraging practices to ensure that women, young people and people with disabilities participate effectively in business life.²⁷

In addition to this perspective, Sabancı Group fully supports the Business Against Domestic Violence (BADV) project managed by the Sabancı University Corporate Governance Forum. The project aims to determine measures and support ways against domestic violence by using the managerial and organizational capabilities of the business world in order to establish support mechanisms in workplaces against domestic violence and to make violence against women more visible. Within the scope of this project, all our companies

²⁷ See also; <https://yatirimciiliskileri.sabanci.com/tr/surdurulebilirlik/detay/Cinsiyet-Esitligi/72/40/0>

participated in the "Gender Equality Trainer Training" and "Workplace Policy Development Training for Combating Domestic Violence Against Women" within the scope of BADV in 2019. In this context, BADV guide implementation was carried out in 2019 in Avivasa, Çimsa, Kordsa, Teknosa and Yünsa. Equality of opportunity is ensured by implementing encouraging practices to ensure that women, young people and people with disabilities participate actively in business life.²⁸

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to understand the position of Turkey in various rankings on gender equality (women in management, distribution of female employees in sectoral work areas). In this section, definitions and questions, as well as findings on gender equality in the working environments are presented, and gender equality policies at different levels are explained. In addition, this chapter focuses on how gender equality is observed in workplaces through international conventions and legal texts. This chapter aimed to understand the position of Turkey in various rankings on gender equality (women in management, distribution of female employees in sectoral work areas). In this section, definitions and questions, as well as findings on gender equality in the working environments are presented, and gender equality policies at different levels are explained. Firstly, I tried to make an overview of the Women on Board with numbers. As mentioned in the Gender Equality Index 2021 part, we can see Turkey's poor rankings on gender equality. In order to examine the effect of female managers on gender policies, which is the main subject of the research question, I first examined the current situation in Turkey and the ratio of female managers in this section. With the analyzes made, it was seen that the ratio of female managers was not equal to the ratio of male managers. In the last part of this chapter, I gave examples of the best practices of leading companies in the field of gender equality in Turkey. Since the thesis sample could not include all large-scale private companies with operations

²⁸ See also; <https://badv.sabanciuniv.edu/node/166>

in Turkey, it was tried to contribute to the thesis framework by giving initiator examples.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

In this study, the contributions of women directors on the gender equality policies adopted by private companies in Turkey are investigated. The research has been conducted through in-depth interviews with seven women directors. This thesis study followed qualitative research strategies based on semi-structured interviews which examined individual and organizational perceptions and experiences of women on board in large scaled companies. The thesis focuses on how women directors' affect the gender policies adopted by their companies. The research question is attempted to be answered in the thesis based on the sample of the companies which are large scaled and has operations in Turkey. In-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted with seven women directors who has a wide approach on gender policies and make some serious efforts on it.

The main priority in the research process was listening, understanding and trying to explain women directors' perspectives on gender policies and their implementation. The cultural and institutional barriers that women directors faced in their working period was also included in the analysis as this is an integral element of gender equality in the workplace and helps us understand the dynamics and processes within companies. I asked how they struggled with the problems they faced due to gender stereotypes. I aimed to increase the usefulness of this research by asking their suggestions on how to solve such problems. Therefore, experiences and opinions of women are placed at the centre in this framework from Turkey. In addition, the thesis focuses on the major international companies with operations in Turkey as well as their projects aimed at gender equality.

Five of the managers I interviewed were over the age of 35. One of the managers who participated in the interview was pregnant, one was divorced, and the rest were married. 5 of the managers I interviewed had children. This is important as to provide an understanding of the variables that affect managers' perception of, and commitment to gender equality, as well as their priority areas in this respect.

The full list of interviewees' personal details and interview questions is attached in the Appendix part. Due to Covid19, I could not conduct my interviews face to face. I had to postpone my interviews during the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, and I completed my interviews in September-October 2021. I have been in contact with the interviewees since the beginning of my thesis process, so there were no disruptions or problems in the process, except for Covid19.

In order to find out and evaluate the women directors' perspective I conducted semi-structured interviews with them. The questions were drawn from my own approach, as well as the broader theoretical ideas explored in my research. One of the main expectations in the interviews with this group was to get the answer to the question of whether the management by a female executive has an effect on the implementation of gender equality policies. The main reason for interviewing with women executives is the fact that the problems that may arise in the business environment are solved by the management base and the aim is to understand the executives' tendencies in this direction. This study puts under scrutiny the gender-sensitivity in the business life, also asking whether there are gender equality policies in their companies, and if this is the case, in which area and at what levels are they applied.

Interviews aimed to provide input for private sector gender equality policies, as well as to identify the main triggers for the development of these policies. 20 questions have been asked in the interview. These questions have kept in a wide perspective, from demographic data such as age and education level to the roles of the people to be interviewed in the company they work for. The existence of different approaches due to the position of the interviewees and their perceptions of gender equality has been examined. The experiences of the interviewees related to the research question have been discussed. The main themes of the interview include the experiences of women as high-level decision-makers in their companies, gender equality policies in the respective companies, as well as international collaborations and practices related to this process.

The interview questionnaire basically consisted of two main parts. The first part aims to provide general information about the interviewees mainly through demographic data. In the second part, there are questions about gender equality and its place in business life, gender equality policies and their development process, and answers to the research question are sought with a holistic approach.

The criteria examined for the purposes of the thesis include the number of employees (white-collar - blue-collar) of the companies, sectoral operation fields, the gender and age composition of the executive boards and decision makers, and whether the company had international operations/collaborations. The companies were selected based on these criteria and the women executives of the respective companies were approached accordingly. Some of the women directors participating in the study are collaborating in gender equality programmes carried out by international organizations, which has important implications for this study.

Interviews have been conducted with seven participants from different international companies. The main reason for this is that there are few, if any, comprehensive and special studies focusing on the private sector and women directors with operations in Turkey. In the study, the global perspectives of the international companies are also examined based on the Turkey sample, which adds an international aspect to the study. Another important contribution of the study is to directly engage with female executives of these companies. Interviews were used in this qualitative study to understand and describe women executives' own perceptions on gender equality and policies.

4.2. Interviewee Profile

The criteria which have been considered when choosing the companies included their international operations and volume, gender equality perspective, the presence of women executives, sectoral diversity and being located in Turkey. Considering these criteria, the potential respondents of this study were approached, and particularly the sectoral distribution amongst FMCG, group

holdings and aviation was considered. The main reason for concentrating these areas is the desire to analyze the potential of different results across companies operating in different sectors/areas. All of the companies have more than 5000 employees. Although all of them have international operations, they are well-established and large-scale companies located in Turkey.

Table 5. Interviewee Profile

	Gender	Educa tion	Age	Gender Equality Perspective yes/no	Company - Organization & Position	Interview Method	International Operations	Number of Employees	Sector
1	W	Msc	43	YES	Chairperson and CEO	Online	has international operations. Origin: Turkey	50.000+	Group - Holding
2	W	Msc	51	YES	Chairperson		has international operations. Origin: Turkey	60.000+	Group - Holding
3	W	Msc	45	YES	Managing Director - Country Executive		is an international company and also has wide operations in Turkey. Origin: USA	143.000+	Aviation
4	W	Msc	44	YES	Public Policy, Government Affairs and Communications Senior Director, Turkey and Greater Balkans		is an international company and also has wide operations in Turkey. Origin: USA	291.000+	Food & Agriculture
5	W	Msc	46	YES	Regulatory and Corporate Affairs Manager		is an international company and also has wide operations in Turkey. Origin: USA	130.000+	Food & Agriculture
6	W	Bachelo	38	YES	Corporate Affairs Director		is an international company and also has wide operations in Turkey. Origin: USA	24.000+	Food & Agriculture
7	W	Msc	40	YES	Account Manager		is an international company and also has wide operations in Turkey. Origin: Netherlands	23.000+	Food & Agriculture&Supple ment

All of the interviewees are women in high-level decision-making positions, i.e. managers, executives, etc. It was not easy to reach them, considering their position and their workload. Even though the process took time, their assistants and special agents helped me a lot in this process. I made more than 20 phone calls and more than 10 preliminary interviews. As a result, I was able to gain access to women executives of large-scale prestigious companies. All of those who accepted my interview invitation and participated were managers who had a university education, knew more than one foreign language, and had overseas experience. Another common feature was that all of them were over 35 years old. All of the interviewees had other work experience. They also had a gender equality

perspective. All interviews were conducted online via zoom virtual meeting platform. The interviews took about an hour. All the questions were answered by the participants.

4.3. Company Profile

One of the companies selected for the purpose of this study has operations in the construction, tourism, cement, infrastructure, energy, energy contracting, food and aviation sectors. This group company has large investments in Turkey, Russia, Africa and generally EMEA region. The Group operates in the field of energy generation, distribution, sale and trade in the energy sector. This company has more than 60,000 employees. They have their own social foundation established 2016. This foundation focuses on education, culture, gender equality and heritage. The company is proud of its social investments, as well as its economic activities. The company is implementing 3 different gender equality projects. One of them has international partners and collaborates with UN bodies. This company pays attention to gender equality at the highest possible level and makes this a principle. As indicated in its documents and web sites, it is built on raising generations that will contribute to the solution of social and economic problems of a strong, gender equal, contemporary, respected society, respectful of universal values. Also, this company is the first Turkish company to adopt the UNDP Gender Equality Seal Program, and aims to develop, adopt and implement a gender-sensitive approach at the corporate level within the scope of the program with the technical support of UNDP.

The second represented company in this study is a holding company established in Turkey and operating internationally. It operates in the fields of machinery and manufacturing, defense, chemistry, electrical materials, energy, informatics, transportation, tourism and food, especially ceramics. This company is among the largest scale companies in Turkey and has been operating since 1957. There are 17 companies and more than five thousand employees within the holding. It is the 3rd largest ceramic tile manufacturer in Europe and the 12th largest in the world

in the ceramics industry, which is the main field of activity of the company, and in the construction chemicals industry, it is the first company in Turkey and the 5th largest company in Europe in terms of production and sales capacity. The company also has a well-established foundation that focuses on education, culture and social welfare. Gender equality is also taken into consideration and prioritized while working in the mentioned areas through this foundation. The foundation was established in 1991, and operates a scholarship program. It continues its activities within the framework of physical infrastructure investments such as schools, student dormitories, training centers and programs implemented to develop industry-university cooperation. The activities that foundation has carried out to contribute to the society since its establishment are carried out under the headings of "Education" and "Employment".

The third company is an international food company, which has 130,000 associates in 80 countries around the world. They are investing \$1 billion over the next several years to become sustainable in a generation, working to improve the wellbeing for families, leveraging and sharing our research to create a better world for pets. 41% of company directors are women and they have advanced the number of gender-balanced teams from 43 to 50% from 2020 to 2021. They indicate that they are committed to equal pay, and focusing on women's social and economic empowerment through their Generations Strategy and their Protecting Children Action Plan. Together with an institution, they published an Empathy Report with new insights on empowerment opportunities for women and girls. They are working to remove gender bias and negative stereotypes within the scope of a UN Women Project. They are one of the founding members and part of the executive leadership team of UN Women's Unstereotype Alliance. They joined the global WeConnect network and sit on the Leadership Advisory Council in the EU to support our procurement teams around the world as they progress their gender equity ambitions.

The fourth company was established in 1980 and has multinational structure. It also promotes nutrition and healthy life style by focusing on food and food

ingredients. Since they actively use direct sales channels, they have a special approach to both female consumers and female distributors. Today, this company operates in more than 90 countries with over 8,000 employees. They have their own gender equality mission quote ‘When women are empowered, society as a whole benefits’. They are both focusing at the same time on gender equality and zero hunger. They are working on solutions that include gender equity and women empowerment, with the belief that greater impact can be made to reduce malnutrition, food insecurity and hunger.

The fifth is US-based multinational company, founded in 1865. It operates in 70 countries, including Turkey since 2015. It is also the second largest company in the world in the field of grain trade. This company has been working for 155 years to feed the world in a safe, responsible and sustainable way. They have more than 155.000 employees. As a food and agriculture company, they strongly believe women are at the heart of farming communities and are a vital link between farms, families and especially women breeders. They have ‘She Feeds the World’ initiative, focusing on improving the lives of millions of female farmers. Also, they are working on lifting up women through increased incomes and access to education.

The sixth is a New York-based multinational food and beverage company. It is the producer of beverages and chips, which is consumed all over the world, as the two most well-known producers of the fizzy drink and snack sector. They are working on food, beverage production, marketing and distribution services. The company has grown even more with the merger of two giant food companies in 1965 and is one of the leading companies in the field of food and beverage. The company's Turkey operation chairs various food, beverage, sustainability associations and federations. At the same time, they have factories in 3 different cities in Turkey, and they include women producers in their portfolios. The company has projects for women and girls that it carries out in Turkey. They have ongoing “Our Girls are Going to School Project”, aiming to support girls with insufficient socio-economic conditions to continue their high school education. It is aimed to help

girls become more equal and stronger by dealing with the problems they face. With these projects, children are introduced to all aspects of current life and contribute to their development so that they can make decisions on their own, be conscious and beneficial to the society.

The last company is an American multinational aerospace company that designs and manufactures primarily aircraft, helicopters, rockets, satellites, telecommunications equipment, and missiles worldwide. It was established in 1916 in Washington, USA. It is built on values of gender equity, diversity and inclusion, defined in its corporate vision. The company is working with a foundation to create equal employment opportunities. They are strongly believing equal pay for equal work is the right thing to do and makes them a better, more inclusive and higher-performing company. The company has paid parental leave implementation. It is ranked as 17th out of more than 1,800 companies due to its increasing focus on workplace diversity and inclusion. Also, it is ranked as the top third U.S. company for women engineers. The company prepares Global Equity, Diversity and Inclusion report every year.

4.4. Limitations

Due to the Covid19 it was not possible to organize face to face interviews, so the field work had to consist of online interviews. If the interviews could be done face to face, an easier communication environment could have been established, and it would have provided more opportunities to observe the work environment and relations, as well as the body language of the respondents. Still, although the interviews were online, the participants felt comfortable and had no trouble answering the questions. No adverse events or side effects were encountered, but this was a risk that could be encountered in online interviews.

Another limitation is the possibility that the communication with the women managers may have remained as in expected level, since the interviews could not

be conducted face to face. Communication through digital screens may have been perceived as a colder channel than face-to-face communication. In addition, the participants may have thought that they were answering the questions not only as themselves but also on behalf of their institutions, therefore they may not have conveyed objective data with a corporate responsibility instinct. The study acknowledges these limitations and accepts that these might have affected the findings although every effort has been made to double check the respondents' arguments with available company-related sources and data.

Moreover, the time limitations allowed me to interview seven women executives. To be able to reach more respondents would have enriched the findings of the study and bring about a larger, and more diverse, perspective. Due to the intensive work schedule of the managers and Covid19 situation, I was not able to conduct face-to-face interviews with limited number of women. I had to postpone my interviews during the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, and I completed my interviews in September-October 2021. I have been in contact with the interviewees since the beginning of my thesis process, so there were no disruptions or problems in the process, except for Covid19. All in all, I tried to answer my research questions as detailed as possible.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected through the field study. The main themes along which the interviews have been analysed include: (1) the experiences of women as high-level decision-makers in their companies, (2) gender equality policies in the respective companies, and (3) international

collaborations and practices related to this process. The first theme focused on the following aspects:

- Career progress of woman managers,
- Advantages of being a woman in a managerial position,
- Disadvantages of being a woman manager.

The second theme, concerning gender equality policies in the respective companies, had the following elements:

- Communication with employees,
- Specialized policies on gender equality.
- Perspective of gender equality of women managers,
- Women managers' contribution to the improvement of gender equality policies

The third theme, focusing on international collaboration and practices related to this process, had the following aspects:

- Current situation in Turkey,
- International cooperation prospects,
- Examples and practices of gender-sensitive projects.

Within the framework of these themes, the answers given by woman managers to the questions were analyzed. The approaches of interviewees to gender equality

policies were examined by asking various questions based on their career progress, private lives, business lives, perspectives on gender equality.

By asking the disadvantage of being a woman manager, the aim was to obtain information about the inequality-based problems, perspectives and improvement efforts they faced in business life. Also, advantages of being a woman manager is deeply examined. Considering the possibility of combining the characteristics of the interviewees that they thought they were only due to being a woman with the ability to manage, this issue was extensively covered in the interviews.

One of the themes, the contribution of managers to gender equality policies, is focused on the sensitivity of being a woman and the possibility of bringing a more egalitarian environment for female employees.

Furthermore, the specialized policies focused on gender equality carried out by companies were examined. The projects conducted in this respect, and the effects of female managers on these projects were discussed under this theme.

The gender equality approaches of women managers and the basic dynamics of this approach were found to be important to determine the commitment and vision of the respondents and their implications on the policies adopted/implemented by the companies.

Finally, cooperation with international organizations and their prioritized policy areas constituted another important axis for the study. In this framework, particular attention was paid the socio-economic environment and context in Turkey, as this is thought to have significant implications for private sector gender equality policies.

Generally, the development of the gender equality environment in business life, the experiences of the participants, the approaches of large-scale-international

companies, and the contributions of female managers to these were the main focus of the interviews, and were tried to be reflected in this analysis part.

A final focus is on the gender sensitive projects that were realized by these women executives in these companies, in order to have a complete picture about the impact of the gender sensitivity of the respondents, as well as the gender policies adopted by the respective companies.

5.2. Key Findings

As stated above, all companies that are taken as cases of this study have their own gender equality policies. All of the companies are members of various international non-governmental organizations, they have international operations for many years and cooperate with national and international institutions. It would not be correct to say that all companies have the same gender equality policy perspective, as they have different priorities in this respect. It can be seen as a very general assessment that all women directors have gender sensitivity. In this study, while examining the sensitivities of women directors to gender equality, it was also emphasized whether they have a gender equality perspective at all. While 3 of the companies prioritized projects focused on education and girls, one of the companies highlighted the projects that support the education life of STEM graduate female students. The prominent projects of the remaining three companies focused mostly on female employees, working mothers and improving their conditions. The conclusion that can be made as a common point is that all of them have adopted the 'Equal Pay' principle.

Three of the women executives are leading the gender equality policies and projects of their companies and always stand by these policies as their biggest supporters. They play a vital role in the gender equality policies of their companies and take place as game changers. They act on the basis of developing gender equality projects, working to set an impressive example of private companies in Turkey, improving the educational life of girls, financially supporting the

university life of female students in STEM departments, and making use of internship opportunities in their job seeking processes.

The other three women managers interviewed are aware of the gender equality policies of their companies, they know enough to talk about their projects, but they are not actively involved in these. One of the female managers interviewed was not aware of the gender equality policies implemented in her company. Therefore, the respondents' levels of awareness and involvement in gender equality policies and practices are diverse.

It is observed that the respondents' ages are close to each other, and while they reside in different provinces, are graduated from different universities, they are part of a similar business world. In addition, all of the women managers who take an active role are mothers. Another common observation is that female managers empathize in improving the problems faced by female employees in business life. They are generally in favor of maintaining gender equality policies. They agree that it should be maintained whether or not they are actively involved. The analysis that can be done here is; female managers are in favor of improving the work environment both for themselves and for other female managers and female employees.

The interviews suggest that female managers are very sensitive to gender equality issues. When we look at the interviewee 4, 5, 6 and 7 have common points, the sector they work in Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector offers both the convenience and the difficulties of being a female manager. The interviewees had different educational and work backgrounds. 2 people stated that they could intersect their education life and business life, and that the education they received not only added vision to them, but also benefited from the education they received in their business life. In the other interviews, it was stated that the educational life of the people only provided them with a vision.

5.3. Experiences of Women as High-Level Decision-Makers in their Companies

5.3.1. Career Progress

In terms of the business life of the interviewees, the beginning of their business life and their career progression are different but it is also possible to see similarities in some areas. All of the respondents completed their undergraduate education. Five of the respondents had a master's degree. There was no similarity between their field of study. They had completed their undergraduate education in different departments of different universities. The lack of similarity in their educational life also helped to diversify the results. Respondents are graduates from different universities, but most of them completed their undergraduate education in Istanbul. Only one of the respondents had spent her university life in Bolu. In this sample, which mainly includes agriculture, food and group companies, no direct similarity has been observed between the graduated departments and the current positions. One of the questions asked was about the impact of education life on business life. To this question, six respondents stated that their education life gave them a broad vision and holistic thinking skills, but did not contribute directly to their work in terms of knowledge. One of the respondents emphasized that the education she received in her current position made a great contribution. She stated that she benefited greatly from the legal education she received in the communication with the ministries, in the examination of legal texts, in reading the legislation and following the parliament.

5.3.2. Advantages of Being a Woman in a Managerial Position

As for the advantages of being a woman in a managerial position, the answers vary, and the following points are the most frequently cited;

- Belief in the high communication ability of women,

- Opinion on the higher success of the female perspective in the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) sector,
- Idea of the success of female managers in mood management,
- Understanding female employees and the problems they are likely to encounter, and acting solution-oriented,
- Efforts made to ensure gender equality.

For example, an interviewee who underlines the advantages that women can bring to company management list the advantages as follows:

First of all, the sector I work in is FMCG, that is, a shopping-intensive sector. In our society, mostly women do the shopping for the house, and the preferences for grocery shopping are generally determined by women. The female point of view becomes very important at this point.

Another advantage is; It's about maintaining emotional balance. In business life, there is a perception that women generally make emotional decisions and men act within the framework of logic. Fertility is a phenomenon in the sense of creation in women. I think this has a huge impact. Women are very creative. In addition, female managers establish the balance of emotions and work better than men, which is an important point.

Additionally, let's think about the woman in the kitchen, a woman cooking; They prepare great meals by combining ingredients. Here, once again, the ability to create is seen.

In addition, women's skills are very high in the field of communication. Women managers achieve success by using their communication skills.

And again, I must state that; female touch, aesthetic point of view and elegance are the features that are at the forefront of women. (Interviewee 4)

Five of the female managers interviewed stated that they see women as stronger in their ability to communicate, and that they use these features in their current positions. However, any referencing or basing on concrete data as the source of this information did not occur during the interview. As can be understood from

the direct sentences, female managers find themselves more successful in the field of communication. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that women have a belief that their communication skills are better than men. In addition, female managers of companies in the food and beverage sector stated that they can analyze the pulse and consumption dynamics of consumers better than men, which seems as an advantage. From this point of view, it can be argued that women position themselves as shopper, shopping responsible. Placing shopping as a responsibility of women can also be seen as a point that can harm gender equality.

The widespread belief that ‘women are emotional and being sensitive’ are generally mentioned by men. Here, female managers emphasized that their mood management abilities came to the fore. Among the examples given, it was stated that management is not just about numbers and calculations. Being a leader requires assisting your team-employees in providing morale, mood changes and work-life balance are among the fundamental needs due to their “being human”. Interviewed managers believe that they have a better understanding of female employees than men. They can easily take themselves to the women employee and analyse the potential problem. Two respondents strongly believe that they are totally able to see what kind of problems female employees are facing. Other respondents emphasized the importance of approaching both female and male employees from the same perspective. In this case, it can be argued that an objective equality expectation is dominant instead of positive discrimination.

5.3.3. Disadvantages of Being a Woman Manager

When asked about the disadvantages caused by being a female manager, all of the interviewees stated that, contrary to the negativity, this situation causes positive discrimination in the companies where they take part in the management. While they agreed that as a consequence of living in a patriarchal society, they faced the problem of being seen as weak and inadequate, they emphasized the benefits by stating that there was no reflection of this in the companies they were involved in.

One reason why all respondents do not see any disadvantages may be that gender equality policies of their companies was adopted before them. In other words, these international companies may have been working in the field of gender equality for many years, therefore, an egalitarian environment for women managers may have been created, and the problems that they may encounter at present may have been eliminated. Therefore, in this study, a limited amount of information was provided for the disadvantages of being a woman manager. It is possible that there are different reasons why women managers do not see any disadvantages. For example, the sample of interviewed female managers represents a small group. For this reason, there may be problems and difficulties that they do not encounter. Another reason may be that they are not aware or conscious of these difficulties due to their position, which can be explained with the queen bee syndrome where they are not prone to acknowledging the obstacles and difficulties and they perceive their career progress as a ‘normal’ process, which can be undertaken by all women. Moreover, all of the managers continue their business life in international companies in metropolitan cities, so it is necessary to evaluate the possibility that the situation may not be like this in all companies in Turkey. Even if these women managers do not think that they have a disadvantage, they at least argue that they pay great attention to ensuring gender equality in business life.

5.4. Company Gender Equality Policies

5.4.1. Communication with Employees

The responses received at the point of communication with the employees differed significantly on the basis of women managers attitudes. One of the respondents stated that she communicates with the employees with the same codes, regardless of gender, whether male or female, and uses an egalitarian and objective view and behavior. At this point, it is possible to say that being a female manager does not bring any privileges to female employees (for this respondent) and does not make working life difficult or easier. As mentioned before, this may have caused this

situation because the ethical codes, business ethics and gender equality policies of these international companies were determined long ago. Women managers, who are in a management with pre-drawn boundaries, may have preferred to break the mold or not to take big steps to improve current conditions.

In other respects, four respondents stated that they use the company's gender-sensitive communication strategies in communication with employees. They stated that they received several trainings on codes of conduct, ethical rules, and communication rules when they started to work, and these trainings have provided great benefits and made their business life easier. It was also mentioned that these companies organize the trainings periodically with the strategies that are updated every year. It can be argued that these respondents are managers who follow the rules and put forward practices within the framework drawn by the company. Even if they are sensitive to gender equality, the current improved international company environment seems to be sufficient for them.

One of the respondents expressed her communication as healthy and strong communication. She stated that the greatest requirement of strong communication is sincerity. Other requirements of the communication established; being a good listener, being able to empathize, being emotionally connected, and using body language well.

Two respondents said that they show high level of sensitivity in communication with employees. Within the framework of this sensitivity, we can deduce that being a mother has an effect. The examples they gave were about facilitating the working life of working mothers. In the interview, these respondents stated that as both a mother and a female manager, they understood female employees better. To give a clear example, we can examine the following quotation;

The issues regarding the promotion of women are areas that I am sensitive and prioritize. We are sensitive and give priority to the development plans of our female employees. E.g; there may be issues of urgency for the children of working mothers; They have to take leave and go to school with their children, of

course, the same applies to male employees, but these situations are more common with female employees. As a female manager, when I encounter such situations, it seems very normal to me. I am a woman manager who is aware of the responsibilities that women have (Interviewee 4)

As can be seen, this respondent finds it right to take steps to facilitate the working mother when she encounters an emergency regarding her child. In other words, it is considered more appropriate for the respondent to make adjustments in business life in some situations caused by motherhood, and this is the main point considered by the respondents in terms of gender equality.

5.4.2. Specialized Policies on Gender Equality

As for the possibility of companies developing special policies for the different units, i.e., gender equality policies/practices applied for different departments, it can be observed that some companies apply the same training and policy to everyone, while others develop different policy areas and privatize these areas. As stated in the literature review, most of the large-scale companies in Turkey develop different policies specific to their units and benefit from it. In the light of the answers from the interviewed samples, different results are evaluated in this section.

To illustrate;

In our company, the same trainings are provided to everyone, especially in the field of gender equality. We do not have different policy patterns for blue-collar and white-collar employees in terms of gender equality, the company finds it more appropriate to provide it this way.

Another answer is;

Yes, there are different situations that each unit faces, so there are mentors and coaches in the teams. For example, in the sales departments, which used to be one of the links of the supply chain, the local employees (the team dealing with the grocery stores and markets) consisted entirely of men, this is a communication job somewhere. We are trying to achieve gender equality by making a change here. I can't say it's fully evenly distributed yet, but we're working on it. When

you look at our factories, you can observe positive discrimination from collector to packer.

Although the main themes of the selected projects focus on gender equality in general, differentiations are observed in sub-branches. There may be multiple reasons for this differentiation. As mentioned before, such differentiations may be due to the global agenda that international companies have to follow. In addition, when examined in Turkey, one of the companies interviewed stated that they had to choose a region. For this reason, it has been stated that the general opinion in the management bodies of company have to give priority to the provinces with low educational status, poor level of development, low urbanization rates and the basic urgent gender equality needs of these provinces. As it can be understood from here, spatial changes can have different dynamics. Another main potential reason may be sector-based, the group companies interviewed were mostly companies that recruited engineers and graduates of basic sciences, so it can be inferred that they focused on improving the conditions of female engineers and facilitating the educational life of STEM graduates. However, on the contrary, since the female manager of one of the companies is also a female engineer, she feels a direct and strong connection to gender equality policies, and this is clearly evident from the interview.

No common point was found in the gender equality projecting perspectives of food and beverage companies. In this case, the analysis that the examined companies concentrate on common areas only for sector-based reasons is not feasible. One of the interviewed food companies stated that they are working to support female producers on cocoa in their global agenda, but since there is no cocoa production in Turkey, no reflection is seen in this region. In a different way, another food company stated that since they are chips & snack producers, they try to procure potatoes, which are their raw materials, from women producers, but this is not implemented within the framework of any gender equality project.

5.5. Perspective of Gender Equality and Women Managers

The findings obtained in this part of the interview consisted of the careers of women in managerial positions and the problems faced by female employees. Women managers gave examples from their work experiences and described the problems they have faced in business life so far. Their thoughts on their careers and their views on gender equality were evaluated in this section. All of the participants were involved in the management of international companies, they emphasized the sensitivity and diligent policies of the companies they were in, and gave examples. As mentioned in the literature review, female employees and especially female managers face different problems in business life. In the interviews, these questions were included extensively and the situations of encountering the problems included in the literature were questioned. The answers obtained vary, so the following examples are presented.

When the results obtained in the interviews are evaluated, it can be seen that, as women managers are able to understand the problems faced by female employees, they are willing to develop gender equality policies. As emphasized in the inferences made in the sections above, one of the female managers in particular makes a great effort to build gender equality in business life. She prioritized gender both in their foundation and in outreach and project development for the company. When the corporate structure of this company is examined, it is seen that the company is a family company. Maintaining traditions, diversifying them with innovations and adding vision are among the developments observed in family companies. It is observed that gender equality policies have gained momentum since the first day a female manager took part in this company.

One of the female managers was not clear about the gender equality policies of the company. The same manager stated that she did not encounter any difficulties in her working life, and she did not experience inequality in any step or field. When the career steps of the woman manager are examined, it is observed that she does not work in any small or medium-sized company, but always takes place in

international companies. It can be argued that female managers who have not worked in local, small or medium-sized companies may not be able to observe the current situation holistically.

Another important observation was that women managers and women employees feel more comfortable when companies have their own gender equality routes. It is seen that the interviewed women managers found this working environment more egalitarian. This inference is in the light of the answers received from the female managers working in the Turkey operations of the international companies interviewed. In other words, it can be said that the standardized and demarcated gender equality policies carried out by international companies wherever they have operations in the world, and the fact that this is established rather than being in a discussion level, causes female managers to think that their companies have "thought about women colleagues".

There are two ways to interpret the responses given on this matter:

- While it may take more effort to keep up with the current situation, women managers may instead focus on their day-to-day work and think that their company is dealing with gender equality issues on their behalf, while conditions could be improved.
- Women managers may not see the conditions determined by their companies as sufficient, they can go on and make an effort to improve them, participate in the relevant gender equality working and regulation groups and play an active role.

In this sense, the female managers of the international companies interviewed were divided into two in the light of the above-mentioned issues.

Besides, taking part in international or national gender-sensitive projects carried out by the companies they were in made women managers feel that their position was remunerated.

Expanding the perspective of gender equality, bringing it to a better and more productive point, and making all employees aware of the issue are among the inferences that they use their authority in their position.

5.5.1. What do Women Managers Bring in Terms of Gender Equality?

As for the difference that being a women director makes in the field of gender equality, the sensitivity of female managers to female employees comes to the fore. As mentioned in the literature review, female managers act by focusing on making progress, or the level of importance they attach changes according to the level of satisfaction they feel from their current situation. It was observed that six of the respondents showed sensitivity in the field of gender equality. It was understood that three of the six respondents strengthened and internalized this sensitivity by establishing a deep bond. It can be seen that the reason for this is that one of the respondents is also responsible for gender equality policies. Another respondent said that she followed the path of the person she took as an example in her life. This exemplary figure is the person who initiated the projects in the field of gender equality, especially for the Turkey operation of the company where the respondent works. From this point of view, it can be deduced that the respondent follows the path of the person she takes as an example and shows sensitivity to gender.

The managers who participated in the interview emphasized the areas of ensuring gender equality, equality in employment, maternity leave, improving working conditions and flexibility. It can be clearly observed that the women experience is taking place. To illustrate, female managers who have children emphasized the necessity of being responsive to situations that mothers and employees may encounter during the daily working life.

When it comes to gender equality in business life, 5 of the respondents say that the problems faced by women in business life, equal wages, elimination of dress codes, equal promotion rights, and evaluation processes free from prejudice are among their sentences.

One respondent stated that they already work in a company that has a sufficient level of gender equality, and that they have almost never encountered a problem. The responses received from this respondent differ greatly from the others. Similar to others, she has been working in international companies for a long time. However, unlike others, it was understood that she did not have full knowledge of the issues of gender equality and did not follow the developments closely.

The following can be deduced from here; female managers consider it more urgent than other issues that female employees are subject to equal pay policy with male employees. That could be the reason of why they prioritize it. Apart from that, they may have focused on these issues due to the global gender equality perspective of their companies. International companies often identify policy areas and then wait for their adoption at the national level and act accordingly. For this reason, there may be a concentration in these areas. Inferences can be made at this level, since no definite answer could be obtained regarding the reasons in the interviews.

One of the directors, unlike the other participants, mentioned another point about the privileges provided to women in recruitment. The company stated that when there are male and female candidates with the same qualifications, the priority is to recruit female candidates. From this point of view, it is observed that a different policy is followed in this company in the recruitment processes. Positive discrimination paves the way for female candidates to have a job under equal conditions for job applicants. As it is understood; female manager thinks that this is necessary in order to increase the rate of female employees. Contrary to this respondent, the other managers interviewed emphasized that the recruitment

processes were focused on equality and did not mention any positive discrimination. According to TUIK data, while the employment rate for men is 58.9% in Turkey, the same rate for women is only 26.3%. As can be seen here, it will take a long time to close the gap and even to reach an egalitarian point. When the answers to the interview question are examined in the light of these figures, positive discrimination and adopting an egalitarian behavior model on recruitment processes are seen as very valuable steps.

5.6. International Collaboration and Examples

5.6.1. Current Situation in Turkey

The proportion of women who have recently entered the business life and been promoted has been increasing. This situation also significantly affects the competitive environment in the business world. When a question was asked to the participants about the current situation in Turkey, the result obtained from the answers was that the general opinion is that the situation in Turkey is not satisfying.

While they state that they are actively involved in the work on "Women in Management", they agree that women face difficulties in promotions due to the male-dominated structure of Turkey, and personal life developments such as marriage and the possibility of becoming pregnant have a significant impact on promotions. The participants, who are in the managerial position, stated that they are working to make improvements in their companies in this regard as well.

Unlike the others, one participant stated that she was not exposed to any discrimination in business life, that the situation in the company she worked for was very good, and that the number of both female employees and female managers was much higher than that of men. The differences in the answers are approached with the perspective of enriching the study.

In the beginning of this part of interview I mentioned data based on women's employment in Turkey, female managers and representation rates. At that moment, women managers agree on this issue is the opinion that Turkey is far from the egalitarian point that it should be. Three of the participants stated that they carry out studies both in their companies and in non-governmental organizations in order to take improvement steps, develop projects sensitive to gender equality, ensure that girls can continue their education life uninterruptedly, and prevent early marriages. Some of these examples are shared below.

5.6.2. International Cooperation Prospects

The companies are mostly in cooperation with the World Bank, ILO, UNDP and international foundations of their companies in order to develop their gender equality policies. In addition, in country-based improvements, companies also work with the family and social services ministries of the relevant country where they are investors. Women managers take great pleasure in working arm in arm with their companies in order to spread this field, and they do their best to maintain this. In other respects, they do not see the gender equality perspectives of international companies as just a beginning, but as one of the most valuable areas that can be improved.

5.6.3. Women Managers' Contribution to the Improvement of Gender Equality Policies

All of the interviewed women managers have been in international companies for many years. For this reason, it can easily be said that they observe and contribute to the development process of their companies' gender equality policies. As the number of women employees in their companies increases and they take steps to increase this number, women managers observe the problems that arise more easily. From this point of view, it was observed that they realized the necessity of

developing gender equality policies and they saw that the process was not easy but long.

Due to the financial capacity of the companies, they were in, it was observed that they realized that there was a suitable opportunity to invest in this field. Experts said narrowing the gender gap in the workplace and creating an equitable work environment makes business sense and will boost global GDP growth (Kathleen S., WEF, 2021) Private sector can push for gender equality, they have financial capabilities, international cooperation and also large proportion of women employees.

Gender equality was not seen as solely emotionally based by any of the female managers interviewed, on the contrary, the majority of the interviewed women emphasized the effects of gender equality policies on business life. These topics are explained in the sections above. Large-scale companies are measured by their growth rates, PRs, international collaborations, environmental, social and governance developments (ESG). Any sales rate may not be seen as more important than building gender equality policies for these companies. Considering this situation, it is observed that part of their financial capacities is transferred to gender equality policies, both affects commercially and socially. The importance of financial capacity here is that it is easier for global companies to include these expenditure items in annual budgets compared to an average local company. For this reason, we observe more active participation, reporting and development of international companies compared to local companies.

5.7. Examples and Practices: The Gender Sensitive Projects (Running by the interviewees)

Some examples of the projects that the interviewed company executives talked about during the interview;

Kızlarımız Okuyor Projesi “**Our Girls are Going to School Project**”; the company, which carries out this project, plans to invest in initiatives that will benefit at least 12.5 million women and girls in the countries where it is located, as a target for 2025, with the Our Girls Are Going to School Project. Financial support is provided to successful female students in this project, which was implemented in Turkey to contribute to the fight against inequalities of opportunity in education. The main framework of the project was developed in 2003, aiming to create a social impact on gender equality. Within the scope of the education programs offered to female students who benefit from scholarship, education and internship programs with the project, they contribute not only to their personal development but also to their skill development in different areas of life. The main beneficiaries are successful female students who are unable to continue their high school and post-secondary education due to socio-economic conditions. Information about the development process of this project was obtained from the female manager in the management team of the company during the interview. This information is summarized below. This manager stated that she actively participated in the development processes of the project, participated in the field studies, conducted negotiations with the ministries, acted in cooperation with international foundations for funding mechanisms, and aimed to ensure that Turkey benefited from this project in the best way possible.

- With the project, girls with insufficient socio-economic conditions are supported to continue their high school education.
- It is aimed to help girls become more equal and stronger by dealing with the problems they face.
- With these projects, children are introduced to all aspects of current life and contribute to their development so that they can make decisions on their own, be conscious and beneficial to the society.

- In addition, female students are invited to conferences in Istanbul and their participation in special sessions and speeches is ensured. With the "Career Days" organized, female students who are brought together with successful names in their professions are guided professionally about the professions they want to choose in the future.
- When the project started in 2009, it was started with 20 girls. Today, more than 80 girls in total can continue their high school education in their own cities with this project.
- The project is run by the voluntary donations of PepsiCo Turkey employees.
- The project continues on its way with scholarships, which are funded by the voluntary contributions of company employees, which increase exponentially every year.

Milyon Kadina Mentör “**Million Women Mentor Program**”; this project is a mentoring program that aims to bring together young women (15-25 years old) and industry leaders working in the fields of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) through a digital platform. The program aims to provide mentoring support to the female managers of the future by senior managers and other volunteers of American companies in Turkey, thus establishing 1 million mentoring relationships within 10 years. During the interview with the female manager of one of the international companies that have operations in Turkey, it was learned that they were included in this program. The details given by are given below. The interviewed female manager stated that she took an active role in participating in this program, that she enjoyed mentoring the students, and that she observed positive reflections both in the students and within the company. Emphasizing the importance of cooperation with other international companies, the manager stated that he met with the company managers regularly

during the initiation of the project and that they planned the main framework of the project together.

- Million Women Mentors/1 Milyon Kadina Mentör has founding circle members: the Beba Foundation, PepsiCo Turkey, Limak Holding and Logo Yazılım.
- This program focusing on advance more women on STEM pathways across the globe, the addition of the Turkey chapter will create new opportunities to further work.
- The Million Women Mentors program, dubbed 1 Milyon Kadina Mentör in Turkish, will utilize TurkishWin's digital platform, BinYaprak, to connect young women with private sector leaders to foster mentorship opportunities across the region.
- The Turkey chapter plans to engage women in prominent STEM leadership roles across U.S. companies operating in Turkey as mentors to encourage the next generation of women leaders to explore STEM fields.

İyi ki Annem Çalışıyor Projesi “**Luckily Mom is Working Project**”; this project aims to raise social awareness about the value that working mothers will create for themselves and their families by continuing their business life. This project is carried out in partnership with local women's organizations. The main framework of this project was given by the manager during the meeting and is presented below. There is no wider information about the development processes of the project, the interviewed female manager stated that she did not take an active part in the project.

- The “Luckily, Mom is working project”, implemented in cooperation with KAGIDER and Danone Turkey, aims to raise social awareness about the value

that working mothers will create for themselves and their families by continuing their business life.

- Within the scope of the project, studies are carried out to encourage mothers who have stopped working for childcare responsibilities or for other reasons, to raise awareness in the society, and to encourage working mothers to stay in business life.
- With this project, it is tried to create a social awareness about the benefits that working mothers provide for themselves, their families and the country's economy.

Süt Odası Lüks Değil İhtiyaçtır Projesi “**Nursing Room Is Not a Luxury, It Is a Necessity Project**”; the starting point of this project was stated by the interviewed female manager as the fact that only 9 percent of workplaces have nursing room. This project is carried out in partnership with local women's organizations. The project emphasizes that the nursing room is a necessity and works to improve the conditions, starting from the fact that the titles such as "meeting room, cleanliness, order" are mandatory needs for offices. There is no given information about the development processes of the project, the interviewed female manager stated that she did not take an active part in the project.

- This project aims to raise awareness to increase lactation rooms, which is only 9% of companies in Turkey.
- The main reason for the project is to consider the milk room as a basic need and right as a meeting room in every office and to develop this area.

Türkiye'nin Mühendis Kızları Projesi “**Engineer Girls of Turkey Project**”; this project was implemented with female engineering students from different universities in Turkey. Based on the discourse that professions have no gender, it is carried out in order to ensure that more women are included in a male-dominated sector such as engineering and are represented on equal terms. The company's foundation, the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Education and UNDP are the stakeholders of the project. In the university program of the project, which has been going on since 2015, future female engineer candidates studying in engineering faculties are offered scholarships, certificate programs, online English language training, mentoring support, internship, employment and networking opportunities. The university program provides students with the opportunity for academic, professional and personal development with the awareness of solidarity and empowerment. The interviewed female manager can be seen as the mother of ideas of the project, she started the project on her own, in order to increase the number of female engineers. The details and processes of the project are given below in the light of the information received.

- The Engineer Girls of Turkey project university program was created to support female students who chose engineering as their profession.
- Along with the scholarship opportunity given to the students within the scope of the program, opportunities such as a certificate program that will contribute to their personal and professional development during their education at the engineering faculty, online English language training, mentoring support, internship and employment opportunities are also offered.
- The program is open to female students studying in computer engineering, environmental engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, industrial engineering, civil engineering and mechanical engineering departments of universities.

5.7.1. Gender-Sensitivity of Companies

According to some studies, these sensitivities of companies are based on reasons such as finding financial resources, social responsibility, establishing international collaborations. When the respondents' answers are examined in this respect, the following points emerge:

- Women directors meet at a common point;
- Regardless of the reason and justification, the women managers fully believe that any work that will contribute to the field of gender equality will be beneficial.
- They find it logical to work in the field of gender policies under the umbrella of social responsibility.
- They state that they find companies with female managers to be more successful in the field of gender equality policies.

The findings show that women directors' effect on the gender policies adopted by their companies. The areas where they are effective; developing gender equality policies, allocating financial resources, improving the conditions of female employees, conducting egalitarian recruitment processes, positive discrimination, facilitating permission processes for working mothers (supporting when they encounter emergencies), equality in communication, equality in leadership, equality in promotion. Collaborating institutions for the establishment of the above-mentioned effects; World Bank, EBRD, UNDP, Ministry of Family and Social Services, women organizations, Ministry of Education, other international companies and foundations belonging to companies. When the opinions of female managers about the practices are examined; all of the women managers are convinced that gender equality policies should be continued, and they find the current practices and projects useful and agree that they should continue. They

stated that this area needs more improvement, more time should be spent, and they will work to ensure their companies are insistent on their policies. The effects of women directors on the gender equality policies adopted by the companies investigated and discussed in the findings section. Women directors' perspective on gender policies in business life in Turkey was studied in depth.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Women are the actors of the society and the business world that cannot be excluded or discriminated against. In a patriarchal order, women suffer from decisions they do not agree with. The representation of women in business life and the participation of women in management stand before us as the main factors that can change the current situation. Women directors have made great efforts in business life. Despite the great efforts, their presence remains quite low compared to men directors. This thesis focuses on the reflections of gender (in)equality in the business world. The main research question is what is the role of women in high managerial positions in developing companies' gender equality policies and how do women managers contribute to gender policies? The research question aims to be answered in the thesis based on the sample of the companies which are large scaled and has operations in Turkey.

The importance of this thesis is that the gender equality policies of private companies in Turkey have not been dealt with from the point of view of female managers themselves. In the thesis study, when the literature on the subject was searched, it was clearly seen that the concept of gender equality in business life was not considered multidimensional. This study focuses on women managers by approaching from a different perspective. The reason behind considering private companies as a research group is that, unlike directors of public institutions, company managers are easily accessible, free from public restrictions and various drawbacks. The glaring gap between men's and women's salaries, sexual harassment in the workplace, dress code and clothing issues, being less promoted at work than men are the main problems of gender equality in business. There are many valuable researches focusing on gender inequalities in employment but there are limited data on Turkey's current situation focusing on the level of directors and their positionings.

The main research question concerns whether private companies support their women employees by gender equality policies. This overall question is examined by the following sub-questions: what is the current position of private companies in Turkey in the field of gender equality, what is the importance of women in high-level managerial positions for the development of gender equality in private companies in Turkey, what are the contributions of women in high-level managerial positions to the field of gender equality, are the effects of institutionalization on women managers observed and do women managers influence policy adoption patterns.

The study sheds light on the discrimination-based problems faced by women in business life and explores the impact of the programs carried out by international institutions in these areas. Achieving gender equality is important for workplaces not only because it is 'fair' and 'the right thing to do,' because it is also linked to a country's overall economic and performance and social development. At the same time, gender equality is an important marker for businesses at the international stage. For instance, there are loans, awards, certificates provided for

companies observing gender equality, and it is especially an important international standard in business life today. The answers to these questions were sought through interviews.

Unlike other studies, this thesis does not examine “the place of women in working environment” in general, but the problems faced by female employees in companies, the policies adopted by large-scale companies to solve these problems, the policy differences adopted by global companies and local companies in their attitudes towards to their employees, and their targets foreseen by international organizations. Understanding the position of Turkey in various rankings on gender equality (women in management, distribution of female employees in sectoral work areas) is important for the thesis framework.

The study is based on interviews with women executives in Turkey. Findings of this study will serve as a background for further studies which will reveal women directors’ experiences in a more detailed and comprehensive way. While examining the influence areas of women in decision-making positions, the problems faced by women employees are also mentioned in this study. Social structure can be taken as the source of the gender inequality. For the improvements in this area, it is of great importance to allocate education life and a family order emphasizing the equality of men and women.

In the interviews, it was observed that women managers faced and experienced these problems in their business lives. The most appropriate deduction that can be made from here is; women managers determinedly and willingly want to contribute to gender equality area. In this study, which focuses on the sample of Turkey, the desire of women managers to improve gender equality policies and move business life to a better point has been clearly seen. Women managers take an active role in the improvements in the companies they find with their experience.

At the same time, based on the traditional structure of the society, thinking that women are emotional leads to the opinion that they cannot make rational

decisions, and it is observed that women managers face this. However, at this point, female managers stated that they found themselves more successful in mood-emotion management. They stated that it as one of the characteristics that should be included in management and leadership skills.

The opinions of the interviewees about improving the conditions of white-collar women employees, increasing the ratio of women managers, using company resources in this field, and cooperation with international organizations in the field of gender equality were found to be very positive.

The interview questions aimed to find answers about the opinions of the participants on the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman manager, their previous experiences, the gender equality policies of the companies they are in and their contributions to and potential effects on these policies. The interviewees openly shared their views on the problems experienced by women employees, their own practices, their company's gender equality policies, their support for these policies, and lasting improvements. Women managers are of the opinion that the most important thing is to develop gender equality practices in business life (and therefore in society).

Since all of the women managers interviewed are being part of international companies, it has been observed that certain steps have been taken in terms of gender equality policies. The results of these interviews with large-scale companies were similar precisely for this reason. Consistency has been achieved since this study only took women managers of large-scale companies in the private sector as a sample. Although this study does not contain any information on the situation of small-scale, local companies in Turkey, the findings are limited to the large scaled international companies' field.

It was observed that the women managers in the research sample strongly advocated gender balance in work environment as one of the clearest inferences.

It was seen in all of the interviews that they wanted to lead the studies on positive discrimination and emphasized gender equality in all business steps.

An important feature of the study is that the sample consists of women from different sectors and positions. Although the sector and the position of the participant are different from each other, the answers received overlap and illustrate similarities. This situation obviously shows that even if the position and the sector are different, the attitudes of women are similar when they take part in the managerial position. Although their being in different sectors did not affect their encounter with similar obstacles, they set out with similar solutions to overcome these obstacles. In the interviews, the importance of international cooperation, cooperation with foundations and state institutions about gender equality was emphasized. Although the findings obtained from the research sample are not valid for all sectors, it is important for the diversity of the results that the sample includes people from different sectors and positions. When the most important findings of the study are examined; It is clearly seen that female managers want to create benefits in the field of gender, support value-added idea production processes, and strongly believe in the success of female managers-female employees.

As a result of this study, it is foreseen and suggested that various institutional improvement mechanisms such as the introduction of female manager quotas, increasing the ratio of female managers, establishing legal grounds, establishing support and incentive mechanisms in the aforementioned area, establishing public-private partnerships, organizing training programs of companies can be beneficial.

Suggestions for future researches are presented depending on the results of the research. In this study, the possible contributions of women managers to the gender equality policies they carry out in their companies are evaluated. Considering the process until they came to the managerial position, their valuable evaluations were applied. The problems and obstacles they face in their working life were asked, and the bond they established with women employees and their

previous experiences were examined. This research measures the gender sensitivity of women managers in business life, especially with the findings obtained from the interviews. Based on the results obtained from this study, it is thought that these findings may lead to other similar studies with a wider research area.

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APPENDICES

A. PRIMARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TEMEL MÜLAKAT SORULARI)

Kadın Yöneticiler için(For Women Directors)

1. Kaç yaşındasınız?
2. Eğitim hayatınız hakkında bilgi alabilir miyiz?
3. Medeni durumunuz nedir? Çocuğunuz var mı?
4. Hangi şehirde ikamet etmektesiniz?
5. Ne zaman çalışmaya başladınız? Kısaca kariyerinizden bahseder misiniz?
6. Şirketinizin yönetimine ne zaman geldiniz? Ve ne kadar süredir yönetimde yer almaktasınız?

7. Bu yolda ilerleme kararınızda sizi etkileyen kişiler ve/veya kurumlar kimlerdir? Örnek aldığınız birileri oldu mu?
8. Yönetici pozisyonunda bir kadın olarak sizce böyle önemli pozisyonlarda kadınların yer almasının avantajları var mı? Var ise nelerdir?
9. Yönetici pozisyonunda bir kadın olarak sizce böyle önemli pozisyonlarda kadınların yer almasının dezavantajları var mı? Var ise nelerdir?
10. Şirketinizi yönetirken çalışanlarınız ile nasıl iletişim kurarsınız? Hassasiyet ve öncelikleriniz nelerdir?
11. Bir yönetici olarak şirketinizi yönetirken toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği açısından önce nelere dikkat edersiniz?
12. Kadın yönetici olmak size ne gibi zorluklar doğurdu ve sizin yolunuzdan ilerlemek isteyen bireylerin sizce ne gibi zorlukların üstesinden gelmeleri gerekir?
13. Şirketinizde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanmasına özen gösteriliyor mu? Bu anlamda uyguladığınız davranış, iletişim, maaşta eşitlik gibi politikalar mevcut mu?
14. Bu politikaların geliştirilmesi nasıl bir süreçte gerçekleşti? Neden bu politikalar benimsendi? (süreçle ilgili soru sormak gerekiyor – bir gereklilik miydi, kendiliğinden mi oluştu, ya da ne zamandır var, nasıl geliştirilmiş, başka örnekler incelenmiş mi, uzmanlardan yardım alınmış mı vb.)
15. Kadın yöneticilerin sayısının Dünya genelinde ve özellikle Türkiye’de bu kadar az olmasına nasıl bir açıklama getirirsiniz?
16. Şirketiniz birden çok iş kolundan oluşuyor farklı departmanlar için uygulanan farklı toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği kuralları mevcut mu? Örneğin satış departmanı ile mavi yakaya uygulanan kurallar arasında nasıl farklar bulunuyor?
17. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarını işleyen projeleriniz var mı? Var ise uluslararası kurumlarla birlikte mi hareket

ediyorsunuz? (UNDP, ILO gibi) Bazı araştırma sonuçlarına göre şirketler toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına hassasiyet gösteriyor fakat bunun altında yatan nedenler finansal kaynak bulma, PR geliştirme gibi? Bu konu hakkındaki düşüncelerinizi alabilir miyiz?

Queries of Interview

1. How old are you?
2. Can we get information about your education life?
3. What is your marital status? Do you have children?
4. Where are you living?
5. When did you start working? Can you briefly talk about your career?
6. When did you come to the management of your company? And how long have you been in management?
7. Who are the people and/or institutions that influence your decision to move forward on this path? Did anyone take an example?
8. As a woman in a managerial position, do you think there are advantages to women taking part in such important positions? If yes, what are they?
9. As a woman in a managerial position, do you think there are disadvantages to women taking part in such important positions? If yes, what are they?
10. How do you communicate with your employees while running your company? What are your sensitivities and priorities?
11. As a manager, what do you pay attention to in terms of gender equality when managing your company?

12. What difficulties did being a woman manager bring you and what kind of difficulties do you think individuals who want to follow your path should overcome?

13. Does your company take care to ensure gender equality? In this sense, do you have policies such as behavior, communication, equality in salary?

14. What was the process of developing these policies? Why were these policies adopted? (It is necessary to ask questions about the process – was it a necessity, did it occur spontaneously, or how long has it been in existence, how has it been developed, have other examples been studied, have experts been helped, etc.)

15. How would you explain the fact that the number of female managers is so low in the world and especially in Turkey?
16. Your company consists of multiple business lines. Are there different gender equality rules applied for different departments? For example, what are the differences between the sales department and the rules applied to the blue collar?

17. Do you have any projects dealing with gender equality policies? If yes, do you act together with international institutions? (such as UNDP, ILO) According to some research results, companies are sensitive to gender equality policies, but what are the underlying reasons such as finding financial resources and developing PR? Can we get your thoughts on this subject?

**B. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS
COMMITTEE**

Sayı: 28620816 /

23 AĞUSTOS 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç. Dr. Ayşe İdil Aybars

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Rabia AKTAŞ'ın "Türkiye'de Büyük Ölçekli Şirketlerin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği Yaklaşımları: Kadın Yöneticiler Perspektifinden Toplumsal Cinsiyet Politika ve Uygulamaları" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **356-ODTU-2021** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.


Prof. Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkan

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Kadınların iş hayatında buldukları konum, sahip oldukları rol ve karşılaştığı sorunlar dünden bugüne farklı açılardan tartışılmalıdır. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği kavramı; her bir bireyin kamusal ve özel yaşamın tüm alanlarına eşit

ölçüde yetkinleştirilmiş şekilde eşit katılımları anlamına gelmektedir. Dorothy E. Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, R. W. Connel ve Judith Butler gibi çok sayıda feminist teorisyen, erkek üstünlüğüne dayalı toplumsal düzenlerin kadınlar üzerindeki sonuçlarını ve çözümlerini tartışmaktadır. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği stratejilerinin uygulanmasında ciddi sorunlar görülmektedir. Bu noktada toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği çalışmaları, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına ilişkin mevcut sorunlara çözüm getirmeyi ve sürecin açıklanmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu eşitsizlik ortamı iş hayatında kendisine kolaylıkla yer bulmaktadır.

Bu tezin önemi, Türkiye'deki özel şirketlerin tutumlarının bütüncül olarak ele alınmamış olmasıdır. Tez çalışmasında konuyla ilgili literatür tarandığında iş hayatında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği kavramının çok boyutlu olarak ele alınmadığı, sadece kadın çalışanlar bazında ele alındığı açıkça görülmüştür. Bu tezde kadın yöneticilere odaklanılarak erkek çalışanlar çalışma kapsamı dışında tutulmuştur. Sadece kadın çalışanlara odaklanan çalışmalar, farklı pozisyonlardaki kadın çalışanların karşılaştıkları farklı durumları incelemek için yetersiz kalmaktadır. Kadın çalışanlar da ayrı ayrı sınıflandırılmalı ve incelenmelidir. Bu çalışma, kadın yöneticilerin eğilimlerine öncelik vermekte ve şirketlerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği perspektiflerinden beslenmektedir.

Bu çalışma, kadın yöneticilere farklı bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşarak onlara odaklanacaktır. Özel şirketlerin bir araştırma grubu olarak ele alınmasının nedeni, şirket yöneticilerinin kamu kurumlarının yöneticilerinden farklı olarak nispeten daha kolay erişilebilir olmaları, kamu kısıtlamalarından ve çeşitli dezavantajlardan uzak olmalarıdır. Türkiye'deki büyük ölçekli özel şirketler, uluslararası ticaret pazarlarında büyüme odaklı olduğundan, bu tür şirketlerin sermaye çekmesi, şirketin değerini artırması ve iyi bir görünürlüğe sahip olması büyük önem taşımaktadır. Cinsiyet eşitliği, bu tezin öncelikli alanlarında bu şirketler için kilit bir konudur. Özel şirketler de birbirleriyle rekabet halinde olduğu için karşılaştırmalar, raporlar ve çıktılar net bir şekilde görülebilmektedir. Bu nedenlerle Türkiye'de büyük ölçekli özel şirketlerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği

alanındaki gelişimi nispeten daha net takip edilebilmektedir. Kadın ve erkek maaşları arasındaki bariz fark, işyerinde cinsel taciz, kılık ve kıyafet sorunları, işyerinde erkeklere göre daha az terfi edilmek iş hayatında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin temel sorunlarıdır.

Kadınların iş hayatında karşılaştıkları sorunların başında; cinsiyet ayrımı, mesleki eğitimde eşitsizlik, mobbing, iş arama ve yükselmeye eşitsizlikler, sosyal haklardan yararlanma (doğum izni vb.) eksiklikler olarak görülmektedir. İstihdamda cinsiyet eşitsizliklerine odaklanan çok sayıda değerli araştırma var, ancak Türkiye'nin mevcut durumu hakkında kadın yöneticilerin düzeyine ve şirket cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına katkılarına odaklanan veriler sınırlıdır. Ana araştırma sorusu, şirketlerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarının geliştirilmesinde üst düzey yönetici pozisyonlarındaki kadınların rolü nedir ve kadın yöneticilerin toplumsal cinsiyet politikalarına nasıl katkıda bulunduğudır. Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren büyük ölçekli firmalar örneklemeden yola çıkılarak hazırlanan tezde araştırma sorusuna cevap aranmaktadır. Araştırma sorusu, özel şirketlerin kadın çalışanlarını toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarıyla destekleyip desteklemediği ve bu politikaların ne ölçüde üst düzey yönetici pozisyonlarındaki kadınlar tarafından şekillendirildiği/yönlendirildiği ile ilgilidir. Başka bir deyişle, tezin özel şirketler tarafından yürütülen toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına odaklanmasının nedeni, bu politikaların arkasında kadın yöneticilerin etkilerini öğrenmek ve iyileştirmeler adına taraflarının yaptığı gelişmelerin altını çizmektir. Bu çalışmanın ana katkısı, şirketlerinde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarını iyileştirmek için neler yaptıklarını araştıran kadın yöneticilere odaklanmasıdır. Özellikle bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki özel şirketlerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği uygulamalarına ilişkin literatürü geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır, çünkü sadece bu çalışmanın konusuna odaklanan çok sayıda çalışma bulunmamaktadır. Çalışma, kadınların iş hayatında karşılaştıkları ayrımcılık temelli sorunlara ışık tutuyor. Cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanması, işyerleri için yalnızca "adil" ve "yapılması gereken doğru şey" olduğu için değil, aynı zamanda bir ülkenin genel ekonomik, performans ve sosyal gelişimi ile bağlantılı olduğu için önemlidir.

Kadının çalışması ve bir gelire sahip olması onun özgürlüğünün ilk aşamasıdır. Fakat kadınların işleri ya da görevleri denildiğinde akla ilk gelen, onların geleneksel görevleri olarak kabul edilen annelik ve ev işleri olmaktadır. Aslında toplu hayata geçişle birlikte kadın, hem evde hem de dışarıda ekonomik hayata katkıda bulunmuştur (Ayan, 2000: 56). Ancak, kadının çalışma yaşamına günümüzdeki anlamda girişi, 18. yüzyıl sonunda Sanayi Devrimi ile gerçekleşmiştir. Üretim örgütlenişindeki değişikliğin ortaya çıkardığı iş gücü ihtiyacının yanında, o dönemde hâkim olan katı liberal iktisat anlayışının sonucu ortaya çıkan düşük ücret düzeyi, yaşayabilmek için kadınların da çalışma yaşamına girmesine neden olmuştur. Bununla birlikte kadın emeğinin daha ucuz olması da o dönemde hatta günümüzde bile kadın iş gücüne olan talebi artıran acı bir gerçeği ifade etmektedir (Açıkalın, 2000: 127). 19. yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren sosyal devlet anlayışının oluşması ile kadınların olumsuz çalışma koşullarının düzeltilmesi yönünde ilk adımlar atılmış ve kadınlara yönelik koruyucu yasalar düzenlenmiştir. Bunu takiben Birinci ve İkinci Dünya Savaşı yıllarında kadın iş gücü ekonominin her alanında yaygınlaşmaya başlamıştır. Ayrıca, silahaltında bulunan erkek iş gücü yerine de kadınlar kullanılmıştır. Bu dönemden sonra uluslararası sosyal politikaların gelişmesi ile yine kadınları koruyucu yasal düzenlemeler yapılmıştır.

Kadın iş gücünün tüm sektörlerde yavaş da olsa katılımının artması, dünya ile birlikte Türkiye için de geçerliliğini korumaktadır. Kadınlar giderek artan ölçüde kamu görevlerini üstlenmektedirler. Yakın tarihimize baktığımızda, kadınların çalışmaya atıldıkları ilk alan, Osmanlı döneminde, ebelik olmuştur. Bunu, 1872'de ilk kadın öğretmen, 1882'de ilk kadın okul yöneticisinin atanması takip etmektedir. 19. yüzyıl sonu ve 20. yüzyıl başı yaşanan savaşlar; erkeklerin cepheye gitmesine, boşalan memuriyetlere (postahanelere, telgrafhanelere) ve hastabakıcı olarak orduya kadınların alınmasına neden olmuştur (Açıkalın, 2000: 128). Yaşadığımız çağdaki hızlı teknolojik gelişmeler ve endüstrileşme sonucunda son yıllarda çalışma hayatına aktif olarak katılan kadınların sayısı daha da artmaktadır (Bedük, 2005: 21; Anafarta vd. 2010: 118). Özetlemek gerekirse kadınların tarım dışı alanlarda üretime katılımı, Sanayi Devrimi ile başlamakta,

İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası hız kazanmakta; bilgi tabanlı yeni bir ekonomik yapılanmaya geçişin yaşandığı 21. yüzyılda ise kadınlar çalışma hayatında erkeklerle denk bir konum talep etmektedir.

Her alanda olduğu gibi iş yaşamında da kadın-erkek eşitliğinin ya da cinsiyet adaletinin sağlanması, bugün ulusal ve uluslararası alanda ele alınan ortak bir sorun olarak önemini korumaktadır. Örneğin, Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü'nün (ILO) hazırlamış olduğu "İstihdam ve Meslekte Ayrım Yapılmasını Yasaklayan", "Eşit İşe Eşit Ücret", "Anılığın Korunması", "Aile Sorunları Olan Kadınların Çalışması" başlıklarını taşıyan çok sayıda uluslararası sözleşme ve tavsiye kararı, Birleşmiş Milletler tarafından toplum yaşantısında ve bunun bir parçasını oluşturan çalışma hayatında kadının durumuna ilişkin öngörülen esasları içeren çalışmaları bu bağlamda karşımıza çıkmaktadır (Kocacık ve Gökkaya, 2005: 206). Küresel arenadaki bu çalışma ve düzenlemelere rağmen, kadın gelişmiş toplumlarda bile hak ettiği yere gelememiş olup; toplumda daha çok "anne" ve "eş" olarak ön plandadır. Kadınlar bir taraftan toplum tarafından kendilerine biçilen geleneksel eş ve annelik rollerini yerine getirmeye çalışırken diğer taraftan da meslek yaşamlarında erkek rakipleri ile yarışarak iki misli sorumluluk üstlenmektedir (Bedük, 2005: 23). Özellikle de ekonomik yetersizlikler nedeniyle çalışan kadınlar, hem ev kadını olarak hem anne olarak birçok zorlukla karşılaşmakta, çalışma koşullarının olumsuzluğu toplumsal baskıların etkisi ile birleştiğinde çalışan kadınlar çok fazla sorumluluk taşımaktadır (Aytaç, 2005: 27). Bu noktada, mesai saatlerinin fazlalığı ve özellikle annelere yönelik yasa ve yönetmeliklerin hem yetersizliği hem de uygulamadaki eksiklikler nedeniyle kadın özel hayat-ış hayatı dengesini sağlamada zorlanmakta, mutsuz olmaktadır.

Tüm dünyada kadınların işgücü piyasaları ile ilgili problemleri ortaktır. Bu sorunlar sırasıyla işgücüne düşük katılım, istihdamda kayıt dışılık, ücret eşitsizliği meseleleridir. Bu noktadan hareketle, Türkiye'deki kadınların işgücü piyasasındaki genel görünümüne bakıldığında, toplam nüfusun yarısını oluşturan kadınların işgücüne katılım ve istihdam oranlarının çok düşük düzeylerde kaldığı görülmektedir. Ekonomik büyüme dönemlerinde bile, ülkemizdeki kadınların

işgücü piyasasındaki bu durumunun çok fazla değişmediği anlaşılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, kadın yöneticilerin şirketler tarafından benimsenen toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına etkileri araştırılacaktır. Bu soruya Türkiye örneğinden hareketle tezde cevap verilecektir. Bu çalışma, büyük ölçekli şirketlerde yönetim kurulunda yer alan kadınların bireysel ve örgütsel algılarını ve deneyimlerini inceleyen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayalı nitel araştırma stratejileri izlemiştir.

Büyük ölçekli ve Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren şirketler örneklemeden yola çıkılarak hazırlanan tezde araştırma sorusuna cevap aranmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu konuların analizinin Türkiye'de özel sektörde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarının geliştirilmesinin koşullarına ışık tutması umulmaktadır. Bu amaçla toplumsal cinsiyet politikalarına geniş bir bakış açısına sahip ve bu konuda ciddi çaba sarf eden yedi kadın yönetici ile derinlemesine yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Görüşülen kişilerin sosyo-demografik özelliklerinin ve görüşme sorularının tam listesi Metodoloji Bölümünde verilmektedir. Covid19 nedeniyle mülakatlarımı yüz yüze gerçekleştiremedim. Covid-19'un getirdiği kısıtlamalar sırasında mülakatlarımı ertelemek zorunda kaldım ve mülakatlarımı 2021 Eylül-Ekim aylarında tamamladım. Tez sürecimin başından beri görüşülen kişilerle iletişim halinde olduğum için herhangi bir aksama veya sorun yaşamadım. Covid19 tarafından getirilen seyahat ve toplantı kısıtlamaları dışında süreç. Mülakatlar, özel sektör cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına girdi sağlamayı ve bu politikaların geliştirilmesi için ana tetikleyicileri belirlemeyi amaçladı. Mülakatta 20 soru soruldu. Bu sorular, yaş ve eğitim düzeyi gibi demografik verilerden, görüşülecek kişilerin çalıştıkları şirketteki rollerine kadar geniş bir perspektifte tutulmuştur. Bir diğer sınırlılık ise, kadın yöneticilerle görüşmelerin yüz yüze yapılamaması nedeniyle iletişimin beklenen düzeyde kalmış olabileceği ihtimalidir. Dijital ekranlar aracılığıyla iletişim, yüz yüze iletişimden daha soğuk bir kanal olarak algılanmış olabilir. Ayrıca katılımcılar soruları sadece kendileri olarak değil kurumları adına da cevapladıklarını düşünmüş, dolayısıyla kurumsal sorumluluk içgüdüleri ile objektif verileri aktaramamış olabilirler. Dezavantajları

anlatılırken kadın yöneticilerin yeterince rahat olması sağlanmaya çalışılsa da bu düzey yeterli olmamış olabilir.

Çalışan kadınlar, özellikle iş hayatında kariyer merdivenlerini tırmanma ve daha üst karar verici pozisyonlara gelme konusunda birçok engelle karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Meslek hayatında görünen ve görünmeyen bir çok engel bulunmaktadır. Sadece kadın oldukları için iş hayatındaki potansiyellerini duygusallıkları ve anne olma ihtimalleriyle değerlendirilen kadın çalışan sayısı azımsanamayacak kadardır. Bu tez çalışması, kadın yöneticilerin iş hayatında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği alanına katkılarını ve yürüttükleri politikaları Türkiye örneğine odaklanarak incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada ile büyük ölçekli şirketlerin (yerli ve yabancı) Türkiye'deki durumlarına odaklanmaktadır.

Son yirmi yıl içinde iş dünyasında kadınların ağırlığının giderek artmasına rağmen üst düzey yönetici pozisyonlarında kadınların sayısının istenilen düzeye ulaşmadığı görülmekte olup; bu durum Cam Tavan Sendromu olarak kavramsallaştırılmaktadır. “Cam tavan” kavramı 1970’li yılların başında cinsiyete, etnik köken ve dine dayalı ayrımcılığın(Örn. Kadınların, zencilerin, Kızılderililerin ya da Yahudilerin üst kademe pozisyonlara çıkamaması gibi.) en fazla hissedildiği alan olan terfilerdeki ayrımcılığı tanımlamak için ABD’de ortaya çıkmış; Wall Street’de Hymowitz ve Schellhardt’ın 1986 yılındaki röportajı ile akademik alanda önemli bir çalışma konusu haline gelmiştir.

Kadın çalışanlar noktasından bakıldığında Cam Tavan Sendromu, en basit şekilde, kadınların üst düzey yönetim pozisyonlarına gelmelerinin önündeki görünmez ve yapay her türlü engeli ifade etmektedir. İş yaşamında kadınlar ile üst yönetim arasında bulunduğu varsayılan, görülmesi ve anlaşılması zor olan, gayriresmî bir terfi sınırı mevcuttur. Cam tavan; kadınlar ile üst yönetim arasında yer alan ve onların başarılarına ve liyakatlarına bakmaksızın ilerlemelerini engelleyen, açıkça görünmeyen, aynı zamanda pek de kolayca aşılamayan bir duvardır. Diğer bir deyişle, kadınların ilerlemelerini engelleyen görünmeyen engelleri tanımlamak için kullanılmaktadır.

Toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden hareket ederek kadın yöneticilerin deneyimlerini, eğitimlerini ve kariyer yollarını referans alarak, kadın karar vericilerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin geliştirilmesindeki rolünü incelenmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren uluslararası şirketlerin kadın yöneticileriyle yapılan görüşmelere, onların hem öznel deneyimlerini hem de yaşadıkları zorluklara ve sonuçlarına yol açan dinamiklere ilişkin kendi algı ve açıklamalarını analiz etmeye dayanmaktadır.

Türkiye'deki büyük ölçekli özel şirketler, uluslararası ticaret pazarlarında büyüme odaklı olduğundan, bu tür şirketlerin sermaye çekmesi, şirketin değerini artırması ve iyi bir görünürlüğe sahip olması büyük önem taşımaktadır. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği, bu kalibredeki şirketler için öncelikli alanlar arasında yer almaktadır. Özel şirketler de birbirleriyle rekabet halinde olduğu için karşılaştırmalar, raporlar ve çıktılar net bir şekilde görülebilmektedir. Bu nedenle Türkiye'de büyük ölçekli özel şirketlerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği alanındaki gelişimi görece daha kolay takip edilebilir sayılmaktadır.

Kadın ve erkek maaşları arasındaki bariz fark, işyerinde mobbing, kıyafete dair cinsiyetçi düzenlemeler, işyerinde erkeklere göre daha az terfi edilme ve buna bağlı önyargılar iş hayatında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin temel sorunları arasında yer almaktadır. Kadınların iş hayatında karşılaştıkları sorunların başında; cinsiyet ayrımı, mesleki eğitimde eşitsizlik, mobbing, iş arama ve yükselmede eşitsizlikler, sosyal haklardan yararlanma (doğum izni vb.) eksiklik olarak görülmektedir. İstihdamda toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerine odaklanan çok sayıda değerli araştırma bulunmaktadır fakat büyük ölçekli şirketlerdeki kadın yöneticilere ve şirketlerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına katkılarına odaklanan Türkiye'nin mevcut durumuna ilişkin kaynaklar sınırlıdır.

Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikaları ile iş yerinde de cinsiyet eşitliği sağlanmasının, mevcut işgücü açısından da büyük öneme sahip olduğu kabul edilmektedir. Bu dünya düzeninde küreselleşmenin etkileriyle şirketlerin

sürdürülebilir başarıyı yakalamaları, ideal yönetim kadroları oluşturup, devamlı iyileştirilebilen yönetim sistemleri kurmaları kadın yöneticilerin varlığı ile sağlanabilecektir. Avrupa ülkelerinde kadın istihdamı %60 düzeyinde, Dünya ortalaması ise %50'nin üzerindeyken bu oran Türkiye'de maalesef ki çok daha düşük seviyelerde seyretmektedir. Kadınların yönetim kurulundaki temsilini incelemek için çeşitli çalışmalar yapılmaktadır. Bu çalışmalar, yönetim kurulunda kadın çalışan sayısı fazla olan şirketlerin performansının hemen hemen her alanda daha yüksek olduğunu, şirketlerin etik itibarının yüksek, yolsuzluk oranlarının düşük ve daha uygun risklere sahip olduğunu kanıtlar niteliktedir(Akdoğan 2019). Women on Board 2019 raporuna göre yönetimde kadınların oranı az da olsa artmıştır. Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi (ADNKS) sonuçlarına göre; 2020 yılında, kadın nüfus 41 milyon 698 bin 377 kişi, erkek nüfus 41 milyon 915 bin 985 kişi oldu. Diğer bir ifadeyle; toplam nüfusun %49,9'unu kadınlar, %50,1'ini ise erkekler oluşturdu. Kadınlar ile erkekler arasındaki bu oransal denge, kadınların daha uzun yaşaması nedeniyle, 60 ve daha yukarı yaş grubundan itibaren kadınların lehine değişti. Kadın nüfusun oranı, 60-74 yaş grubunda %52,3 iken 90 ve üzeri yaş grubunda %73,4 oldu. Ulusal Eğitim İstatistikleri Veri Tabanı sonuçlarına göre; 2008-2019 yılları arasında, 25 ve daha yukarı yaşta olan ve en az bir eğitim düzeyini tamamlayanların toplam nüfus içindeki oranının yıllar itibarıyla arttığı görüldü. En az bir eğitim düzeyini tamamlayan 25 ve daha yukarı yaşta bireylerin toplam nüfus içindeki oranı, 2008 yılında %81,1 iken 2019 yılında %91,0 oldu. En az bir eğitim düzeyini tamamlayanların oranı cinsiyete göre incelendiğinde; 2008 yılında, kadınlarda %72,6, erkeklerde %89,8 olan bu oran, 2019 yılında sırasıyla %85,7 ve %96,4 oldu. Çalışma hayatında kalma süresi, bir kişinin hayatı boyunca işgücü piyasasında aktif olması beklenen yıl sayısı olarak tanımlanır. Hanehalkı işgücü araştırması sonuçlarına göre; çalışma hayatında kalma süresi, 2013 yılında 15 ve daha yukarı yaşta kadınlarda 16,7 yıl, erkeklerde 37,7 yıl iken 2019 yılında çalışma hayatında kalma süresi kadınlarda 19,1 yıl, erkeklerde 39,0 yıl oldu. Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi verilerine göre; 2020 yılında 584 milletvekili içerisinde kadın milletvekili sayısının 101, erkek milletvekili sayısının ise 483 olduğu görüldü. Meclise giren kadın milletvekili oranı, 2007 yılında %9,1 iken bu oran 2020 yılında %17,3 oldu.

“Kadının İşgücü Piyasasındaki Yeri” başlıklı bu rapora göre; Türkiye, kadın istihdam oranı ile alt sıralarda yer almaktadır (Bayar, 2021). OECD'ye göre Türkiye'de kadınların istihdama katılım oranı üye ülkeler arasında son sırada yer almaktadır. İzlanda'da yüzde 77, Almanya'da yüzde 73 ve OECD ortalamasında yüzde 59 iken bu oran Türkiye'de sadece yüzde 26-29 civarındadır (OECD Data Bank,2021). Dünya Bankası verilerine göre Türkiye, 2019 yılında 200 ülke arasında kadınların işgücüne katılım oranının en düşük olduğu 25 ülke arasında yer almaktadır. Kadınların işgücüne katılım oranı %30-32, istihdam oranı %26-29 ve işsizlik oranı %11-16 civarında dalgalanmaktadır. Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü'ne (ILO) göre kadın ve erkek istihdam oranları arasındaki farka bakıldığında, kadınların istihdam oranının erkeklerinkinin yarısından az olduğu (yaklaşık yüzde 47) belirtilmektedir (Dünya Bankası. (2021a). Ayrıca Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü (ILO) İşveren Faaliyetleri Bürosu 'nun raporuna göre, özellikle üst düzey yönetimde olmak üzere gerçek anlamda toplumsal cinsiyet çeşitliliğine sahip işletmeler, önemli ölçüde kar artışı da dahil daha iyi performans göstermektedir.

Araştırma çerçevesinde yedi kadın yönetici ile görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu tez çalışması, büyük ölçekli şirketlerde kadınların bireysel algılarını ve deneyimlerini inceleyen yapılandırılmış görüşmelere dayalı nitel araştırma stratejilerini izlemiştir. Tez, kadın yöneticilerin şirketleri tarafından benimsenen toplumsal cinsiyet politikalarını nasıl etkilediğine odaklanmaktadır. Büyük ölçekli ve Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren firmalar örnekleminden yola çıkılarak hazırlanan tezde araştırma sorusuna cevap aranmaya çalışılmıştır. Toplumsal cinsiyet politikalarına geniş bir bakış açısına sahip ve bu konuda ciddi çaba sarf eden yedi kadın yönetici ile yapılan görüşmelerin çıktıları ile araştırma sorusuna cevap aranmıştır.

Araştırma sürecindeki ana öncelik, kadın yöneticilerin toplumsal cinsiyet politikalarına ve uygulamalarına bakış açılarını dinlemek, anlamak ve açıklamaya çalışmaktır. Kadın yöneticilerin çalışma süreleri boyunca karşılaştıkları kültürel ve

kurumsal engeller, işyerinde cinsiyet eşitliğinin ayrılmaz bir unsuru olduğu ve şirketlerdeki dinamikleri ve süreçleri anlamamıza yardımcı olduğu için analize dahil edildi. Cinsiyet kalıp yargıları nedeniyle karşılaştıkları sorunlarla nasıl mücadele ettiklerini sordum. Bu tür problemlerin nasıl çözüleceğine dair önerilerini sorarak bu araştırmanın faydasını arttırmayı amaçladım. Dolayısıyla bu çerçevede Türkiye'den kadınların deneyimleri ve görüşleri merkeze alınmaktadır. Ayrıca tez, Türkiye'de faaliyet gösteren büyük uluslararası şirketlere ve bunların toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine yönelik projelerine odaklanmaktadır.

Araştırmaya göre, kadın yöneticiler, kadın karar vericilerin başarılı profillerine güçlü bir şekilde inanmaktadırlar. Hayatlarına dokunan kadın figürlerini örnek almaya ve her alanda toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanmasının gerekliliğine vurgu yaparak, iş hayatında kadın karar vericilerin sayısını artırmak için attıkları adımları dile getirmektedirler. Tezin teorik çerçevesi, yapılan ikili görüşmeler ve literatür taraması sonucunda kadın yöneticilerin iş hayatında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin iyileştirilmesinde rol oynadığı görülmektedir. Araştırma sonuçlarına bağlı olarak gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalara yönelik önerilere de çalışmada yer verilmiştir. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen sonuçlardan hareketle, bu bulguların daha geniş araştırma alanına sahip benzer çalışmalara yol gösterir nitelikte olabileceği düşünülmektedir.

Bu çalışmada, kadın yöneticilerin şirketlerinde yürüttükleri toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikalarına olası katkıları değerlendirilmektedir. Yönetici pozisyonuna gelene kadar geçen süreç göz önünde bulundurularak değerli değerlendirmeleri uygulandı. Çalışma hayatlarında karşılaştıkları sorunlar ve engeller sorulmuş, kadın çalışanlarla kurdukları bağ ve geçmiş deneyimleri incelenmiştir. Bu araştırma, özellikle görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgularla kadın yöneticilerin iş hayatındaki toplumsal cinsiyet duyarlılığını ölçmektedir. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen sonuçlara dayalı olarak, bu bulguların daha geniş araştırma alanına sahip benzer çalışmalara yol açabileceği düşünülmektedir.

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