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## Determining the Difficulties Female Managers Experience in Higher Education and the Factors Supporting Them<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyse managerial process of women managers in higher education institutions. The study was conducted with qualitative research methods and descriptive case study design was used. The study group of the research consists of 15 instructors determined with criterion sampling techniques within purposive sampling methods. The criteria taken into consideration during the determination of the sampling were the instructors to be woman and they should have the managerial positions in higher education. Data of the study were collected by the interview form prepared by the researcher. The participants were reached via telephone or e-mail. The participants answered the open-ended questions prepared in a semi-structured form. Content analysis technique was used in analysing of the data. While conducting content analysis, codes were initially created in accordance with the data. In line with the findings, it was observed that management process of female managers were shaped as the factors effective in becoming manager, sources of motivation, the barriers they encountered in their managerial process, the reflection of management process on their private life, the perceptions and attitudes towards female managers and the precautions to be taken for increasing the effectiveness of female managers.

**Keywords:** *Leadership, female managers, higher education.*

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<sup>i</sup> A part of this research was presented as verbal presentation in The 2nd Internatioanl Higher Education Studies Conference, October 12-14, Antalya.

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## **Introduction**

As in many parts of the World, in Turkey too, it is well known that women encounter with many problems in every aspect of social life. Especially women in business life, due to socio-economic, cultural and traditional characteristics of Turkey, often must perform more compared with men. However, it was underlined in many national and international studies that women encounter with more barriers than men in career development process (Besler and Oruç, 2010; Bedük, 2005; Kalaycıoğlu and Toprak, Kauser and Tlaiss, 2011; Örucü, Kılıç and Kılıç, 2007; Panigrahi, 2013; Tüzel, 2014).

The social and economic structure and cultural factors not only lead women to be excluded from social life, but they have turned into serious problems in labour force participation as well. Many factors such as educational status, number of children, immigration, socio-cultural elements, marital status and wages have influenced with labour force participation of women (World Bank, 2009).

It is also known that besides the difficulties in getting a start in business, women experience many problems after beginning their business. In the studies, it is stated that women should deal with some problems such as education in social and business life and inequality in training programmes, housework and child care, running business and family life together (Kaya, 2009). In working life, the biggest problems awaiting women are low wages, inequality of women and men in wages policy, non-standard forms of employment, (Erkek and Karagöz, 2009), employment, inequality in the process of placement and promotion, sexual and emotional harassment at work, not benefiting from social rights (Kaya, 2009), and the discriminatory attitude practised by the employer (Durmaz, 2016). Additionally, it is expressed that physical and psychological fatigue of women is another problem women in business life encounter with (Kocacık and Gökaya, 2005).

It is emphasized in many studies that in Turkey and in many countries in the world, as well as labour force participation rate of women, their representation rate in senior management is also at low levels (Acar, 1998; Aycan, 2001; Berry and Franks, 2010; Elmuti, Jia, Davis, 2009). The focus point of the discussions about women's involvement into the business life is generally linked with leadership roles and process (Alomair, 2015). It is stressed in the studies about gender and leadership that women are represented inadequately in senior positions of management (Haslam and Ryan, 2008). In 2014, senior management rate of women is detected as 9,4 % (TÜİK, 2015).

## **Conceptual Framework: Women Leadership in Academy and Glass Ceiling**

To get senior positions in business life for women includes in many difficulties (White, 2003). There are many reasons why women cannot get senior managerial positions. Aycan (2004) states that women cannot get senior management positions because of the barriers men determine, the barriers

resulting from female managers and the barriers that are set up by the person himself. Taşkın and Çetin (2012) express that the factors that prevent female managers to get senior positions are based on gender differences and tackled with under three groups; individual factors (playing multiple-roles, personal choices and perception), organizational factors (organizational culture, policy of the organization, atmosphere of the organization, lack of mentorship, equal opportunity deficiencies, unable to join communication networks, the barriers made by male managers, the barriers made by female managers, perceptions about working woman) and social factors (professional discrimination, social prejudice).

The barriers women encounter cause representation rate of women to decrease in managerial position in general and in higher education management in private. There are several studies proving the number of women in higher education management is few (Çalışkan Maya, 2012; Peterson, 2016). In the studies focusing on process of global feminization, it is stated that there is no equality in the number of men and women in higher education management (Peterson, 2016).

When the number of women in managerial positions is fewer than men, it is described as “glass ceiling” effect (Anafarta, Savran and Yapıcı, 2008; Berry and Franks, 2010; Chliwniak, 1997; Davis and Maldonado, 2015; Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017). Glass ceiling effect is regarded as a factor which limits the preferences of women and prevents them from taking charge in top-level leadership positions and in the stages in which they should show high performance while they are progressing in their career (Garrett, 2015). Glass ceiling is also used to explain several implicit and explicit barriers based on cultural and organizational attitudes, which prevents women in their career progress (Luke, 1998).

Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt used “glass ceiling” metaphor for the first time in 1986 and it was described as the barriers women encounter while they are making progress towards top level in institutional hierarchy (Jarmon, 2014). Morrison (1987) who was one of the first users of the metaphor defined glass ceiling as a transparent barrier that kept women from rising above a certain level in corporations (Baxter and Wright, 2000). Cornell University describes glass ceiling as the barriers women encounter after they have reached middle management positions (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2016). According to Cotter et al. (2011), glass ceiling emerges when sex discrimination is the part of something that does not result from business; when a gender inequality occurs in level of income; when a gender inequality occurs in the process of progressing for senior levels and when an increasing gender inequality happens in process of career development.

Griffin (1993) states that the reasons such as slowdown progress in women’s career during bringing up children, the assumption that women are lack of abilities in engineering, management and leadership and the belief that this situation will barrier them to get senior management positions,

women's attempts to balance between work and family, women's lack of work experience for senior management and thinking women's emotional well-being leads them not to get senior management positions are glass ceiling barriers (as cited: Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005).

Preventing sex discrimination in business life depends on overcoming glass ceiling barriers. Yoğun Erçen (2008) states that the strategies to break glass ceiling are raising the level of education, strengthening social relationships and showing high performance; however, Öztürk (2011) underlines the importance of taking help from mentor and Taşkın and Çentin (2012) emphasizes on participating in career development programs. According to Knutson and Schmidgall (1999), in order to overcome glass ceiling barriers, legal rules should be enacted to prevent sex discrimination, equal pay act should be carried out, women should be given equal rights in employment and promotion and women should be guided in the process of professional development (Korkmaz, 2014).

In Turkey, in higher education institutions, several studies were performed to increase in employment of female academics and provide social equality. The policies aggravating employment of female academics in Turkey have been the factors such as the effect of governmental policies, institutional transparency, the growing demand for retirement, the factors decreasing role conflict between home and work, collaboration of the professors among each other (Tahtalıoğlu, 2016; Healy, Özbilgin and Aliefendioğlu, 2005: 259-260). In 2015, Women's Studies Centre was founded under Higher Education Board for the purpose of protecting social gender equality and human rights of women and determining policies about increasing awareness of violence and psychological abuse women are exposed to. Furthermore, the rate of women in higher education institutions in Turkey is higher compared with western countries. However, this is not the case for higher education management. The representation rate of women in higher education management is at quite a low level. according to data of TÜİK (2016), of 112 state universities in Turkey, only 2 was managed by women. The fact that the representation rate of women in these managements is low can only be explained by glass ceiling barrier.

Increasing the representation rate of women in higher education, supporting them in managerial positions and solving the problems they encounter are only possible with removing glass ceiling barriers. In this study, managerial process of female managers, factors supporting them in the process, sources of motivation and the problems they encounter were analysed with an internal point of view and some recommendations were made about empowering women leadership in higher education.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of the study is to analyse managerial process of women managers in higher education institutions.

## METHOD

The study was conducted with qualitative research methods and descriptive case study design was used. Case study is a method of learning about a complex phenomenon through extensive description and analysis of that instance in its contextual settings (Yin, 2005).

### Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 15 instructors determined with criterion sampling techniques within purposive sampling methods. The criteria taken into consideration during the determination of the sampling were the instructors to be woman and they should have the managerial positions in higher education.

**Table 1.** Demographic Data about the Study Group

Manager Code	Age	Seniority	Period of Office in Management	Manegerial Position
M1	29	4	3 Month	Vice Dean
M2	34	5	1	Chief of Department
M3	38	15	7	Vice Dean
M4	38	15	7	Chief of Department
M5	42	19	5	Head of the Department
M6	46	20	17	Vice Principal
M7	50	27	16	Vice Dean
M8	33	9	3	Vice Principal
M9	47	22	14	Chief of Department
M10	52	7	7	Head of the Department
M11	46	20	3	Chief of Department
M12	48	22	12	Vice Dean
M13	38	15	5	Vice Dean
M14	46	21	5	Deputy Dean
M15	37	11	2	Vice Dean

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data of the study were collected by the interview form prepared by the researcher. The participants were reached via telephone or e-mail. The participants answered the open-ended questions prepared in a semi-structured form. The duration of the interviews lasted one hour on average.

The data was transcribed before data analysis. Content analysis technique was used in analysing of the data. Content analysis can be used to scrutinize written material and recorded communication and thereby used in number of fields such as ethnography and cultural studies, marketing and media studies, in literature and public speaking, sociology and political science (Kulatunga, Amaratunga&Haigh, 2007). Content analysis as any kind of qualitative data reduction and interpretation attempt in order to determine the basic differences and meanings by identifying voluminous qualitative materials (Patton, 2014). While conducting content analysis, codes were initially created in accordance with the data. Creating the codes facilitated summarizing and analysing the data. Subsequently, themes were created according to the codes.

### **Validity and Reliability Studies**

Creswell (2009) used concepts of persuasiveness, transmissibility, consistency and confirmability while describing validity and reliability process in qualitative researches. In the context of validity (internal validity) of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted and experts' opinions were taken. Additionally, results obtained from data analysis were sent to 5 managers within the participants of the study and feedbacks were taken to see whether the results reflect their opinions. In order to provide transmissibility (external validity), all the stages of the study such as determining the participants, data collection and analysis were described in detail. Moreover, direct quotations were taken from the participants. In order to provide consistency (internal reliability) and confirmability (external reliability), raw data based on the interviews and the themes made up as a result of analyses were asked the experts' opinions.

### **FINDINGS**

In this chapter, the findings about leadership process of female managers in higher education were given. The findings obtained from data analysis were shown as themes, sub-themes and codes. In line with the findings, it was observed that management process of female managers were shaped as the factors effective in becoming manager, sources of motivation, the barriers they encountered in their managerial process, the reflection of management process on their private life, the perceptions and attitudes towards female managers and the precautions to be taken for increasing the effectiveness of female managers.

#### **The Effective Factors in the Process of Becoming a Manager**

The effective factors for women in the process of becoming a manager depend on some personal elements such as communication skills, academic success, open to innovations, organizational commitment and sense of responsibility and support of colleagues and senior management, and some managerial elements such as organizational skills, ability of problem solving, being solution-oriented and business follow-up. M4, who assessed the effective factors in the process

of becoming a manager in the context of personal elements, stated that “Characteristically, I like communicating with people, listening them, solving their problems, guiding them. I mean, I think I am an over-social person and most of the time, this becomes an advantage for me, when both our dean and other managers supported me, I found myself as a manager. M9, who are in charge of managing the head of the department, underlined that he became a manager because of the qualifications he had and stated “...coming to the faculty earlier and staying there for long hours are among the things making me happy. The question how I can contribute more to the faculty is always in my mind, it was so before I became the head of the department. Because I loved my job and still love it...”

### **Sources of Motivation**

Female managers stated that they were motivated by internal and external sources during managerial process. They defined they were motivated by internal sources such as solving problems, managing decision-taking process, having the right to comment, having prestige and developing business networks, and by some external sources such as providing a healthy work atmosphere for the shareholders, providing a healthy work atmosphere for the students, being rewarded in return for doing right things. M13 (Vice Dean) stated “...I would think the management had a different air even when I studied at the university, I found it prestigious, I think what is important is this, to choose the difficult one, I also thought that if someone would be there, why not me?”.

### **The barriers Encountered in the Process of Management**

In the study, the female managers encountered with glass ceiling barriers in managerial process. The female managers expressed that they had to handle both their private and work life together, which can be explained with glass ceiling metaphor and depending on this, they experienced feeling of inadequacy. Besides, they added they had to cope with the barriers based on organizational culture, the barriers out by colleagues and managers and social prejudices; therefore, they were hesitant to desire for managerial positions and they just wanted to keep their position. M5, who emphasized on the pressures put by the colleagues and managers, stated that “Maybe I would think to become the head of the department, but in these circumstances, I was daunted. As you know, the position of head of the department has not so many responsibilities, but nevertheless, some friends in the department especially male ones can make a fuss about this, while scheduling the classes, a prejudiced attitude can be shown, not just for schedule, I can tell that I have similar feelings in every moment I demand something from them”.

Other barriers that female managers encounter can be categorized under organizational barriers such as bureaucracy, lack of finance and lack of mentor. M1, indicating that she has difficulty in finding a female manager in the university who will guide and help her in some way, stated that “I don’t have much work experience, and I have almost no experience in management. I profoundly feel



the lack of this, I try to do my best, but I don't think it is adequate. My colleagues who manages in the same position as me are mostly males, whenever I talk to them about a problem that I have encountered, they assess the situation in men's eyes and direct me accordingly. I don't want to make a sex discrimination but I often feel that I am not understood, in that case I say to myself if a female manager were my guide, it would be better...".

### **Effects of Management Process on Private Life**

Data of the study shows that the effects of management process on private life are one of the reasons why females do not prefer managerial positions. The position of management was described as a duty requiring extra time by female managers. Effects of management process on private life were formed in the framework of time. About this, M14 stated "... when you become an instructor, you should participate in some meetings also, but not so frequent as that of a manager; almost every day you have meetings to participate in, these meetings force you to work extensively, preparations before the meetings require extra time, you need much more time, there are some days that you should sacrifice your family on, you should reduce the time you separated not only for family but also close friends, relatives and your academic studies also...".

### **Perceptions and Attitudes towards Female Managers**

Data of the study show that the attitudes towards female managers are an important factor affecting the management process of females. It was described by female managers that protective instinct, self-sacrifice and wish to establish the authority imposed by men lead to lack of self-confidence and need of acceptance. Additionally, these feelings and attitudes were assessed as establishing authority culturally and "male-dominant" aspect of this culture was underlined. The feelings/attitudes such as greed, jealousy and competition imposed by female colleagues were described as feelings and attitudes causing energy loss. M15 stated about this "Surely, it is difficult to say all female or male colleagues are of the same attitude. Women can sometimes be overwhelmed their ambition, or they act unfavourable attitude assuming others as rivals, on the other hand men generally act with protective instinct, I mean they are using some expressions such as, you go, I can handle it, if something bad happens, tell us or assign us about this.

### **Measures about Increasing Effectiveness of Female Managers**

Data of the study includes some measures to increase effectiveness of female managers. While talking about management process, the women especially put emphasis on this and they stated they could increase their potentials by top level with these measurements. Female managers found necessary to take measures against behaviours such as mobbing and intimidation, to take encouraging measures to increase the representation rate of women in management positions and to develop mentorship system for female managers. M3, who made some suggestions about increasing

representation rate of women in management positions stated her opinion as such “the number of female managers are few, rather few and the statistics always indicate this number. Though there are several reasons, but for me, the most important one is that their work load increases since the profit is too little and the idea that they have no need. I think there is no profit for women to become a manager, so the women perceive the management as trouble, fatigue and extra-time. The women will be more ambitious, when they are supported. How can they support? By considering about collaborative mechanisms, working hours and providing flexibility”.

### **Discussion, Conclusion & Recommendations**

According to the results of the study, factors encouraging females to become managers are collected under personal and organizational factors. When the literature is reviewed, it is observed that the personal characteristics are emphasized in the studies about the reasons why women are preferred for senior management positions. For instance, Özmutaf, Aktekin, Ergani and Çıta, (2015) points out that women’s distinctive characteristics, innovative ideas and insights are known to facilitate the management process. According to Eagly and Carli (2007), women’s personal characteristics such as being democratic and giving importance to participation are among the reasons why they are preferred (as cited: Rincon, Gonzalez, Barrero, 2017). Besides, regulations about leadership practices are assessed as an effective factor for women to become managers (Eagly Carli, 2003). There are also some researches claiming that women are more advantageous for academic leadership positions. Effective factors for women to become managers can be attributed as their success in organizing and motivating, their effectiveness in thinking and observation process and thus having a powerful creativity, being more reliable and developing (Zulu, 2007). However, their success in the process to increase their level of performance to a greater degree (Adams and Funk, 2012) being more liable to meet others’ needs (Eagly and Carli, 2007) can be regarded as two of the reasons why they are preferred as managers. Sally Helgesen (1995) studied women during the process of decision-taking, collecting information and dissemination, decentralization, restructuring the organizations and motivating staff. In her study, she concluded they put more emphasis on relations and share in leadership process.

In our study, it is reached a conclusion that women are motivated by internal sources of motivation such as problem solving, managing decision-taking process, having the right to comment, having prestige and developing business networks, and external sources such as providing a healthy work atmosphere for shareholders, providing a healthy educational atmosphere for students and being rewarded in return for doing right things. While female managers are talking about the factors motivating them, they emphasized mostly on individual factors, but they don’t mention about the supports taken from family, colleagues and environment. When the factors motivating or supporting female managers are reviewed in literature, it is encountered with some emphasis on inter-personal

relationships and support groups. For instance, in their studies about the factors making women successful in the leadership of higher education, Shahtalebi, Yarmohammedian and Ajami (2011) determines the factors as being decisive, being social, making effort in reaching aims, having a supportive family, having a supportive partner, having good relationships with sub-groups and colleagues and opening to collaborations. Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak and White (2015) concludes in their study that the factors supporting women in higher education are formal development experiences, early leadership experiences and having a role model.

According to the results of the study, the barriers female managers encounter with are mostly those which can only be explained with glass ceiling metaphor. In the study, it is concluded that women encounter with barriers put by their colleagues and managers, and some problems such as managing the work and family life together, feeling of inadequacy and social prejudices. Women state that they encounter with individual, social and institutional barriers. When the literature about the barriers female managers encountered in the process of management is reviewed, it is proved that similar results are obtained. For instance, Diehl (2014) states that the barriers women encounter in leadership process are at social, individual and institutional levels. According to Keohane (2004), the first barrier women encounter in leadership process results from role conflicts about family and home. For almost all societies, women are responsible for child care and house works. Without an egalitarian husband, managing the responsibilities for children, house and powerful leadership together causes a deterrent effect on women. House works based on gender, gender clichés (such as women should be well-groomed and sexy, a strengthening belief with the effect of popular culture) and lack of mentor are the barriers for women (Keohane). Şiyve (2004) states that glass-ceiling barriers for women are those resulting from themselves and environmental factors. Özbey (2004) who analysed the factors preventing women from reaching senior management positions emphasized social prejudices and inequality of opportunity as well. It is stated in Higher Education Women's Leadership Workshop (2012) that female managers encounter with several problems in higher education management caused by academic culture/work atmosphere, lack of legal regulations, socio-cultural factors and personal characteristics. In the study describing about the problems female managers encounter and factors supporting them, Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak and White (2015) concludes that the barriers female managers encountered are lack of leadership experiences, deprivation of some various opportunities and supports, discouragement and sabotage and different expectations from men and women. In literature, there are some studies not only emphasizing on the barriers female managers encounter but also negative aspects of being a female manager. For instance, Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak and White (2015) in their study reaches the conclusion that the negative aspects of senior management role are broad scope of the job, isolation, not fitting in-not being heard, pressure of ultimate accountability, scrutiny and criticism, and time demands of the job.

In our study, it is understood that the reflection of management process to private life is one of the reasons why women do not prefer management positions. Management position is regarded as a time demanding job by female managers. Similarly, Çetin (2011) states that women in Turkish society performing multiple roles such as mother, wife and working woman encounter with lots of tension resulting from conflicting of roles with time-based pressures and different expectations of each role. It is also stated in the literature that the most difficult stage for female leaders are to build balance between private life and their careers. However, one of the results of the study indicates that some women who wish to get senior management positions do not want to have children (Näsman and Hyvönen, 2016). In some studies, it is observed that the reflection of private life into management process is discussed. Wood and Newton (2006) points out that responsibilities for family and children can be a barrier for women to reach senior management positions. Malovi (2014) states that women can realize their professional dreams only after they perform their cultural roles.

It is concluded in the study that attitudes and perceptions against female managers are reflected differently by man and women colleagues. Male colleagues have attitudes such as protective instinct, self-sacrifice and providing authority, yet it is defined that these attitudes have negative effects on female managers. The attitudes/feelings such as greed, jealousy and competition are described as the emotions causing loss of energy. In literature, it is possible to come across similar results with our study. For example, Omar (1996) states that when women work under a female manager, this can sometimes turn into jealousy. In literature, there are some studies indicating negative attitudes against female managers while there are some studies including neutral attitudes. Ali, Khan and Munaf (2013) concludes in their study that the attitudes against female managers are neutral. However, Preko (2012) points out that male colleagues do not want to work with female managers and they have negative attitudes against them.

In the study, it was concluded that some precautions should be taken against the behaviours like mobbing and intimidation to increase the effectiveness of female managers, some promoting measures should be taken for women to increase the representation rate in top management and mentorship system should be developed. Empowering female managers depend on removing the barriers before them. Therefore, the barriers should be removed. The barriers preventing women from empowering are described as change of male dominant workplace culture (Mizrahi and Aracı, 2010), the misfortune of women about role-model since the number of females working in senior positions are fewer than males (Özünü, 2013), stereotypes and perceptions, mentorship and communication networks, discrimination, private life issues (Cai and Kleiner, 1999), social prejudices, responsibilities within family, lack of equality of opportunity (Aksu, Çek and Şenol, 2013). It can be said that the effectiveness of female managers will be increased by removing these barriers.

Based on the results of the study, some recommendations could be given to policy-makers, practitioners and researchers. It was observed in the study that no legal basis exists about increasing effectiveness and number of female managers in senior positions in higher education. In this point, the policies to empower women can be adopted. It is considered necessary that notably the administrative level should encourage the woman at low level positions for senior management positions and in this process, they should adopt a supportive approach instead of protective one. This study was conducted with female academics in managerial positions in higher education. A similar research could be performed with male managers and instructors.

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