

**Challenges for White Collar Women in Production Sector Caused by  
Gender Discrimination in Turkey**

Research dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

**MSc in International Business Management**

Griffith College Dublin

Dissertation Supervisor: **Carla de Tona**

**Student Name: Fatma Naz Donma**

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

## **Candidate Declaration**

Candidate Name: Fatma Naz Donma

I certify that the dissertation entitled:

“Challenges for White Collar Women in Production Sector Caused by Gender Discrimination in Turkey”

submitted for the degree of: MSc in International Business Management is the result of the my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

Candidate signature: Fatma Naz Donma

Date: 03/09/2021

Supervisor Name: Carla de Tona

Supervisor signature:

Date:

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Mentize Donma and my father Mehmet Fatih Donma who always support me, respect my decisions and enable us to overcome all difficulties in life together. Thank you for teaching me how to love the life and showing me there is always hope even in the toughest times. To our family!

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor Carla de Tona for her advice and support. I would also like to thank all my professors who contributed to my university and master education. But first of all, I would like to thank my mother, who took care of me, expanded my vision, and showed me that if you really want something, nothing is impossible in life.

## **Abstract**

### **Challenges for White Collar Women in Production Sector Caused by Gender Discrimination in Turkey**

*Fatma Naz Donma*

This research study aims to analyse and draw attention to the challenges faced by white collar women in production sector in Turkey due to gender discrimination. It also aims to state how white collar women are affected by the gender discrimination in terms of their career and success. Measures taken to prevent gender discrimination in Turkey and organisations were mentioned. This dissertation was written using the qualitative research method. Feminist and interpretive approaches were used since the topic was opinion based and aimed to empower women. The patriarchal structure in Turkey which was the research field, and how this structure affected gender discrimination in the workplaces were investigated. Glass ceiling syndrome, glass cliff concept, queen bee syndrome, and old boy network which cause gender discrimination were also examined. To obtain primary data, 10 interviews with white collar women working in different production sectors, were conducted. As a result of the literature research and the interviews, this research paper confirmed the existence of gender discrimination faced by white collar women in production sector in Turkey.

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Overview**

This dissertation investigates the challenges for white collar women in production sector caused by gender discrimination in Turkey. This discrimination is examined according to the social structure of the country and also the organisations. This section includes research purpose, significance of study, research objective and structure of the study.

## **1.2 Research Purpose**

The research paper analyses the challenges for white collar women in production sector caused by gender discrimination in Turkey. The perception from the past, that men are stronger and successful and women should stay in the background, has also reflected in the business sectors. With the increasing participation of women in the business world, gender discrimination has been increasingly visible. This discrimination can be seen in almost every field in business life. It does not only affect tangible matters such as salary and business opportunities, but also intangible matters such as motivation and pride. While this situation exists all over the world, the impact is more dominant in patriarchal societies like Turkey. Even though it is thought that women should stay one step behind men, and their main job is to do housework and take care of their children; women have started to get higher-level education and made an effort to show their independence to other people. They started to be accepted in corporate companies. However, they are still not fully accepted in the production sector that used to rely more on physical strength, even though most of the production systems have become more autonomous and men power is less needed. Because of this unacceptance, the percentage of women in the production sector is still quite low in Turkey. Women, who somehow have a place in this sector, are not given the value and opportunities they deserve when compared to men in the same position. Unless adequate opportunities are provided, the expected efficiency of female employees may not be achieved. When the expected success is not achieved by women, their work is underestimated and it is emphasized that men are more successful and efficient. As a result, this situation goes round in circles and cannot reach a convincing result. In this paper, in order to draw attention to the difficulties and consequences faced by women in the production sector, the causes of gender discrimination were examined, and the effects on women working in the production sector were analysed in detail.

The underlying causes of gender discrimination, which has an impact on all over the world, were investigated. The reason for the choice of Turkey as a research area is the patriarchal social structure of the country that can be seen the effects of gender discrimination distinctly. As Erdem mentions: “A host of aspects of the culture in Turkey reflect a highly sexist and gendered view... Traditional roles and expectations are likely to impede with women’s likelihood to partake in the work force and limiting their aspirations” (Erdem, 2020, p.44). The reason for choosing the production sector is that it is one of the sectors where men have the dominant power and women have a less employment ratio. As Isbell mentions: “The masculine environment that women encounter in both the training and work environments is a barrier to their advancement in the process manufacturing industry” (Isbell, 2001, p.17).

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Although there are various resources about the challenges experienced by women workers in the production sector around the world, the same condition cannot be said for Turkey. With this research, data collection and analysis, it is aimed to address and analyse this problem from the perspective of Turkey. It is also aimed to be beneficial to people, institutions and organisations that are interested in the employment of women in sexist and unequal working conditions especially in production sector, to be a source for discussions and researches on this subject.

### **1.4 Research Objective**

The objectives of this research are:

- 1) Identifying and analysing the challenges faced by white collar women, especially in the production sector, due to gender discrimination
- 2) Drawing attention to gender discrimination and the need to provide equal rights and fair treatment to all people in the workplace
- 3) Stating how white collar women are affected by the gender discrimination in terms of their career and success
- 4) Analysing the measures and actions taken to avoid gender discrimination in Turkey

## **1.5 Structure of the Study**

This dissertation consists of 5 main headings. All of the headings are used to reach the research objectives and analyse the information and data obtained. The first chapter is the introductory chapter and gives general information about the subject, followed by the research purpose, significance of the study, research objectives and the structure of the study. The second chapter includes a detailed literature review from general to specific. It includes the following titles in order: Gender Discrimination and Presence in Business Life, Gender Discrimination Faced by White Collar Women, Glass Ceiling Syndrome and Presence in Turkey, Glass Cliff Concept, Gender Discrimination in Business Life in Turkey, Effects of Gender Discrimination on Women's Career and Success, Gender Discrimination in Production Sector in Turkey, and Actions Taken against Gender Discrimination in Turkey. Also the conceptual framework of the research is included in this chapter. The third chapter includes the research methodology and design of this thesis. Qualitative research method is used in this dissertation. Also feminist perspective and interpretive perspective are the general concept of this thesis. Chapter four is about the findings of the primary data. It also contains the comparison between the primary data and literature research. And the last chapter is the conclusion part. It includes implications, contributions and limitations of the research, and also recommendations for practice and future research.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Gender Discrimination and Presence in Business Life**

There are many studies and analyses on gender discrimination in the literature. This discrimination issue has not been solved yet and continues to increase day by day. According to Marcum and Perry: “That woman’s physical structure and the performance of maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence is obvious” (Marcum and Perry, 2015, p.112). Apart from intelligence and education, even if it does not affect working efficiency, the fact that women are physically weaker than men gives rise to the idea that they lag behind in the workforce. It is thought that they get tired more and are not as good as men. These prejudices hinder or make it difficult for women to progress in business life. Gender discrimination is not only seen in recruitment, but also in the workplace after being hired. Employers and colleagues also impose gender discrimination on female employees. As Bobbitt-Zeher mentions: “At times, employers explicitly express ideas about women’s assumed traits—traits that would likely be viewed negatively in any job. In these narratives, authority figures draw on traditional stereotypes of women as unintelligent, hormonal, and overly emotional” (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011, p.773). The difference between women’s and men’s thoughts, perspectives, and approaches to problems is considered as a disadvantage for women. This disadvantage they experience only because of their gender also affects their careers. Women trying to advance in their careers face obstacles because of this gender discrimination. Also, the level of this discrimination may vary depending on the circumstances. As Browne mentions: “The industrialized countries of the world clearly vary in their approval of women in leadership positions, the amount of occupational sex segregation, income equality, and legislative protection” (Browne, 1997, p.108). As the development levels of countries and women's rights laws change, discrimination level has also affected.

### **2.2 Gender Discrimination Faced by White Collar Women**

Gender discrimination is seen in corporate life as well as in every part of life. Even white collar workers, whose education level is higher than other working environments, encounter this issue. Norms in societies are also reflected in organisations. White collar women are left in the background in business life as well as in social life. According to the research conducted by Aydın and Çam, the reasons why women are less preferred than male candidates in corporate life are emotionality, lack of self-confidence, family getting ahead of work, being touchy, not being able to communicate with blue collars, being indecisive, being weak and staying in the

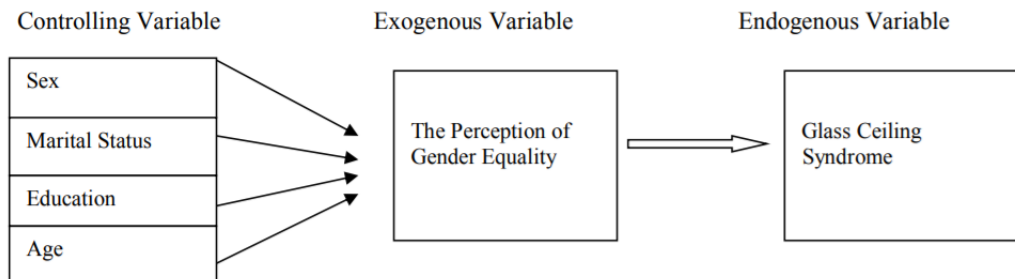
background (Aydin and Çam, 2016). These perspectives hinder the development and success of women in business life. According to Durmaz, instead of evaluating the candidates individually, employers make generalisations and evaluate the candidates according to their belonged groups such as gender, race, colour. The prejudice caused by these generalisations also causes discrimination (Durmaz, 2016, pg.48). At the end, these prejudice and discrimination cause low proportion of female workers in the workplace.

Another problem faced by white-collar workers in business life is mobbing. According to Denenberg and Braverman, mobbing is “vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or groups of employees and concerted effort by a group of employees to isolate a co-worker through ostracism and denigration” (Denenberg and Braverman, 2001, pg.7). Mobbing causes especially psychological damage to employees. This situation poses a problem for female employees as well. According to the research of Yılmaz et al., it is seen that women are exposed to mobbing more than men. The reason for this can be counted as the fact that male employees and managers have numerical superiority over women in workplaces, and women's psychological structures are weaker (Yılmaz *et al.*, 2008). White collar female employees have to struggle with problems in business life due to the issues mentioned above and more. These problems create serious obstacles against women who aim to advance in their careers. The obstacles such as glass ceiling syndrome, glass cliff concept, queen bee syndrome, old boy network which hinder the advancement of white collar women in their careers, and the problems they face at higher levels are examined in the following headings.

### **2.2.1 *Glass Ceiling Syndrome and Presence in Turkey***

It has been found that gender discrimination in business life causes glass ceiling syndrome. The concept of glass ceiling was first seen in Wall Street Journal in the interview of Hymowitz and Schellhardt in 1986. According to the research and analysis of Karakılıç, in management literature, glass ceiling represents one of the reasons why women are not able to reach the upper management levels, and reflects all the obstacles that prevent their progress regardless of their success. There are three main barriers that lead to glass ceiling which consist of gender, age, race, and education etc. discrimination: obstacles by male managers, female managers and self-imposition. The most common one is the obstacles imposed by male managers. However, female managers may also prevent female employees from promoting. In this situation, which is called the queen bee syndrome, the woman manager tries to prevent the development of the women around her, and to break her power and position because she feels threatened by the other women around her (Er and Adigüzel, 2015, p.164). These reasons that prevent the

development and promotion of female employees occur from gender stereotypes and discrimination. Karakılıç sets the research model for the glass ceiling syndrome based on gender discrimination as follows:



*Figure 1: Research Model (Karakılıç, 2019)*

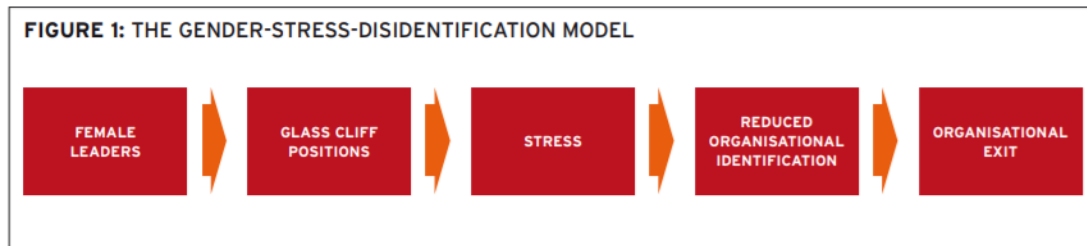
The aim of the research is to measure the relationship between the perception of gender equality and the glass ceiling syndrome by collecting data with a questionnaire. The respondents of the questionnaire are selected from people with different demographics such as gender, age, marital status, education etc. and working in the same company. At the end of the research, a strong correlation between gender discrimination and glass ceiling syndrome is detected (Karakılıç, 2019). This research is conducted on white collar women working in the municipality, and it supports the idea of the great impact of gender discrimination on white collar women in workplace. As stated in the research, some participants commented that "women's place is home". This patriarchal perspective demonstrates the prejudices and challenges against women.

In addition to the research of Karakılıç, Utma mentions in her research that men have a prejudice against women in the organisation they work in; women are subjected to professional discrimination, they cannot enter informal communication networks, and some of the organisational culture and policies are an obstacle to their promotion (Utma, 2019). The system called "Old Boy Network" that men do not allow women to join their "men" group. In old boy network, according to Baumgartner and Schneider's research: "Bonding, for males, was achieved through traditional activities such as golf, football, drinking, and socializing at bars. These activities created feelings of awkwardness and being shunned as women perceived it to be a "closed network" with the mind-set of "don't let the girls in" (Baumgartner and

Schneider, 2010, pg.567). Conditions and systems like this confirm the existence of glass ceiling syndrome. While Karakılıç states three main barriers, which are obstacles by male managers, female managers and self-imposition, that cause glass ceiling syndrome; Utma indicates three more reasons. One of them is individual factors such as being a mother, wife, individual and worker at the same time, and also personal preferences and perceptions. Another reason is organisational factors such as male dominated organisations. And the last additional one is social factors such as stereotypes for women. According to the studies of both Karakılıç and Utma, it can be stated that the underlying causes of glass ceiling syndrome prevent women from advancing to higher levels in business life.

### 2.2.2 *Glass Cliff Concept*

Even women who can overcome the glass ceiling with different strategies continue to have problems in business life. The concept of glass cliff was first mentioned by Ryan and Haslam in 2005 against Judge's article published arguing that female executives are worsening the financial and managerial condition of companies in The Times in 2003. Judge, in her study in UK, stated that companies that appoint women to senior management tend to worsen their performance compared to companies that only have men on the boards of directors (Judge, 2003). Ryan and Haslam conducted a similar study in response to Judge's research. According to their research, companies that appoint men to boards of directors or senior management positions are already stable and growing companies. On the contrary, it has been observed that companies that predominantly appoint women to management positions are less successful and experience financial performance difficulties before promoting women to higher positions. As a result, they state that the financial problems in the companies are not due to the fact that the managers are women, but to the problems of the company from the past, and they demonstrate that this situation is a gender discrimination that women are exposed to. Defining this situation as glass cliff, they draw attention to the problems faced by women who exceeded the glass ceiling (Ryan and Haslam, 2005). Such position assignments do not increase the status and success of women, and cause prejudice and a negative view of women at higher levels. Without examining the financial history of the company, it is thought that the reason for the failure is women managers, and it is concluded with this excuse that women are unsuccessful in business life. Ryan and Haslam, in their further research, defined the progress and effect of the glass cliff concept on female managers with the model in the figure 2 as follows:



*Figure 2: The Gender – Stress – Disidentification Model of Ryan and Haslam (Ryan and Haslam, 2006, p.46)*

As seen in the model, women who are brought to higher positions are exposed to the glass cliff by being forced to work in jobs with risky and negative company performance, and they encounter psychological difficulties in business life by working under stress. Women exposed to stress and pressure, and they are criticised for not doing their jobs well. As a result, the perception that women cannot be a successful executive is created. This situation may cause the female manager to be appointed to lower positions and even to leave the job. The factors causing this situation were examined under two main headings in the research: individual and organisational factors. While women's taking on multiple roles such as motherhood, wife and business woman in society, and the perception of women in society are examined as individual factors; factors such as the perspective towards women in business life, complexity in job requirements, difficult tasks to understand and old boy network are examined as organisational factors (Yıldız *et al.*, 2016). Those who think that women are emotional and have low tolerance for stress, try to create the perception that women are unsuccessful by turning this situation into an excuse.

### **2.3 Gender Discrimination in Business Life in Turkey**

Turkey is one of the countries where gender discrimination can be seen dominantly. According to the latest researches, although almost half of Turkey is made of women, the female labor participation rate is 34.5%, while it is 71.8% for men (ILO [Online], 2021). The prejudice about women that they should take care of their children and do housework rather than a successful career is quite evident in Turkey as well as all over the world. According to Bulut and Kızıldağ, in Turkey, because of the patriarchal perception of the society, the priority task of women is being "wife and mother". Gender is the most obvious obstacle for women to exist in business life (Kizildag and Bulut, 2017). Another reason why women do not participate in the workforce is that their husbands, fathers or some other family members do not give permission. According

to the research of Kuzgun and Sevim, men think that in order to be a successful woman, housework should not be disrupted. Women are defined with traditional role expectations such as good wives, good housewives and good mothers (Kuzgun and Sevim, 2004). According to the research of İlkkaracan, the reasons for not allowing them to work are stated as it is not appropriate for women to work outside; if the income of the family is sufficient, the woman does not need to work; and women have to take care of their children and the housework (İlkkaracan, 2012). Men may see women as inadequate for professional life and think that they should take care of housework instead of working.

The perception of successful women in the economically and socially underdeveloped segment of society is very different, they think success of women is not measured by work and career, but by their duties in society such as being mother, housewife. In the more educated and developed part of the society, this view can still show its effects, even if it is replaced by the idea that women can work. Despite Turkey's patriarchal structure, women who want to work may also have difficulties in finding a job and also in business life. Working conditions offered in Turkey may make it difficult for women to participate in the workforce. Factors such as long and difficult working hours when necessary, family responsibilities, work insurance, and salary gap can be obstacles for women in Turkey that has a patriarchal structure. According to Buğra and Yakut-Cakar: “The characteristics of working life in Turkey both limit the supply of female labour and inform the likely decision of employers against hiring a woman should a woman apply for a job with long and loosely defined working hours” (Buğra and Yakut-Cakar, 2010, p.529). This perception towards women causes them to have problems in business life in Turkey. As Yılmaz mentions, this negative perception is practically discrimination based on gender in business life and causes some problems such as wage and arbitrary termination of work relationship, dealing with questions about privacy and also sexual harassment (Yılmaz, 2013). With the effect of these factors, women have difficulty in reaching executive positions, and this situation makes it possible for them to be withdrawn from their positions. Thus, there is a low proportion of women in executive positions. According to the TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute) research conducted by Giray and Aydın, while the proportion of female managers is 16.7%, male managers' ratio is 83.3% in Turkey (Giray and Aydın, 2019). As it can be seen in data, ratio of male managers is far above than the female managers' ratio. This situation shows that women are discriminated against in executive positions and cannot access these positions on an equal basis with men.

## 2.4 Effects of Gender Discrimination on Women’s Career and Success

There are many studies on the existence of gender discrimination and its impact on women's business life. An analysis about the effects of gender discrimination on women's work life in Turkey is conducted by Erdem. The research is based on the statistical analysis of an item pool and consists of three different factors which are gender discrimination, patriarchal values and work environment. These three factors have been evaluated in nine different items that are as follows:

Latent variables	Observed variables
Gender Discrimination	Due to their biological cycles (menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, menapous etc.) women cannot be productive in the work force. Women are not resilient to long and hard work conditions. Woman cannot tolerate pressures at work as much as men.
Patriarchal Values	Women should only work at jobs that suitable for women. Since men are breadwinners they should be given priority in hiring. Domestic work is more suitable for women.
Work Environment	Presence of women at work places will decrease overall productivity. Women’s use of their femininity for personal gain will cause unfair conditions at work. Men should be preferred for administrative position.

*Figure 3: The Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for the Three Factor Attitude Toward Women’s Working Scale (Erdem, 2020)*

Reviews from both men and women for these nine items are provided. By the Chi-square test, significant and positive correlations are detected between the each of the factors (Erdem, 2020). These strong correlations prove these ideas:

- Patriarchal structure of Turkey increases the impact of gender discrimination on women.
- There is an existence of gender discrimination in business life for women.
- Women are seen as less successful and productive than men in work environment.

As a result of these proven ideas, it can be said that women feel under pressure due to gender discrimination and may be adversely affected by this situation they are exposed to. These results support the idea of this paper that gender discrimination affects women, and also the prejudice of people, because of the patriarchal structure, is an obstacle to solve this issue in Turkey.

According to the research of Alparslan et al., women are more in the lower ranks of the hierarchy in the workplace, they are less in the upper positions related to decision making and management; and they more often work in monotonous and repetitive jobs that require low qualifications in the production of goods and services. Depending on the gender factor, there are five main problems faced by women in business life: inequality in education and vocational training, inequality in employment and promotion, inequality in remuneration, inequality in benefiting from social rights, and sexual harassment (Alparslan *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, gender discrimination against women is not only an obstacle to be successful in their work but also an obstacle to have a career. Another study that supports research results of Erdem is conducted by Karaçuka. According to his research, the most common reason for women not to participate in the workforce seems to be being busy with housework. 58% of unemployed women do not participate in the labor force for this reason (Karaçuka, 2018). Unless it is accepted that women are an individual outside of their home, the rate of female employees in the country cannot be expected to increase. Also, most of the women who have the opportunity to work face problems such as the patriarchal social structure or glass ceiling syndrome that are mentioned earlier.

## **2.5 Gender Discrimination in Production Sector in Turkey**

The proportion of female employees in the production sector is much lower in Turkey. According to the research of Toksöz, only 14% of women with university degrees working at executive positions prefer the production and related sectors (Toksöz, 2014). Also, apart from women's preferences, some employers feel that women are not suitable for the production sector. It is thought that women cause loss of production in working life due to the conditions such as pregnancy, childbirth, childcare etc. (Tuskan, 2012). This sector, which is actively male oriented today, has some threats for women. Some of the reasons are employer discrimination, harassment from coworkers and even the potential harassment. Another issue is employing informal workers. Women and child workers are most affected by this situation. Reasons such as high labor taxes, expensive energy, bureaucracy and wrong incentive policies lead especially small and medium-sized companies to employ informal workers. This situation causes women working informally to not benefit from social and public rights as much as they should (Kayhan, 2005). Therefore, they have problems in their working life and cannot guarantee their permanency in the work place. While informal working reduces women's wages, it also takes away the opportunity to benefit from retirement rights since they do not have social security

(Azaklı, 2009). As a result, working informally affects women negatively both financially and morally.

Additionally, women are paid less than men doing the same manufacturing work and they are exposed to the stereotypes that women are not suitable for manufacturing (Isbell, 2001). However, this inequality affects the economy as well as women because employers reduce the workforce in the sector by not seeing women suitable for the production sector and not hiring them. The importance of women's employment is also emphasized in Turkey's future development plans. According to Turkey's development plan for 2019-2023, women's participation in the workforce makes a significant contribution to the country's economy in terms of increasing household welfare, reducing poverty, and accelerating development (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development, 2018). As a result, employment of women should be increased, especially in sectors that number of female workers are low. Additionally, according to Karabıyık, for individual and social development, it is necessary to bring the elements of production to the economy. Also, at this point, it is extremely important to follow policies to include female workforce effectively and efficiently in the development of the country and in increasing individual and social welfare (Karabıyık, 2012). This dissertation aims to contribute to the literature about the white collar women in the production sector.

## **2.6 Actions to be Taken against Gender Discrimination in Turkey**

In this section of the dissertation, the measures taken by companies and the government for gender discrimination against women were examined. Turkey accepts and respects the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) Convention as a member of the United Nations (United Nations Human Rights, 2021). This convention and its committee work to prevent gender discrimination against women. In addition, 45 countries and the European Union signed the Istanbul Convention to prevent all forms of violence and discrimination against women. Turkey used to be one of these countries. However, Turkey withdrew from this contract with a presidential decree in 2021. UN Special Reporter mentions about this withdrawal that: "It will only weaken laws which provide women protection and helps keep them safe, and leaves them at further risk at a time when violence against women is surging all over the world" (UN News [Online], 2021). While women and their rights must be defended for the development of the country, such steps taken backwards hinder the development of women and also an obstacle to increase the welfare level of the country.

Turkey has also signed the Revised European Social Charter. This agreement aims social and economic development and to protect human rights and freedoms. It also contains subjects that support and protect women's rights in business life. It states in detail that women should not be discriminated against during pregnancy and postpartum period. Also, it emphasizes that women should work on equal terms and receive equal salaries with men (Council of Europe, 2021). Turkey has also signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that belongs to the United Nations. It is expected that women and men should benefit equally from all economic, social and cultural rights in the countries that have signed this convention. In addition, women are expected to work on equal conditions with men and be paid without any discrimination (OHCHR, 2021).

There are local and international associations to prevent gender discrimination faced by women in business life. Women's Association in Business World is one of these associations that co-funded by both European Union and Republic of Turkey. The aim is to include women in the workforce, to remove barriers and to increase the proportion of women in sectors where women are less. It actively carries out projects, supports women in all sectors and provides opportunities for women who are unemployed (Women's Association in Business World, 2021). Another programme is called "More and Better Jobs for Women Programme – Phase II" and it is conducted by ILO Turkey and funded by SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The aim of the program is to find jobs for unemployed women and to provide working women gender equality in the workplace. It aims to prevent problems such as harassment, bullying, salary gap, different working conditions they encounter in business life. The project started in 2019 and will continue until the end of 2022 (ILO, 2019).

## 2.7 Conceptual Framework

The subheadings examined in this research are indicated in Figure 3 with a Venn diagram. The literature research starts with the most general concept, gender discrimination, and then it is narrowed down to challenges for white collar women in production sector caused by gender discrimination in Turkey, which is the subject of this dissertation. Additionally, the factors affecting the research subject are indicated in the diagram. The literature research, which indicated in the diagram below, was used to reach the objectives of this research paper. Also, it guided the questions asked in the interviews.

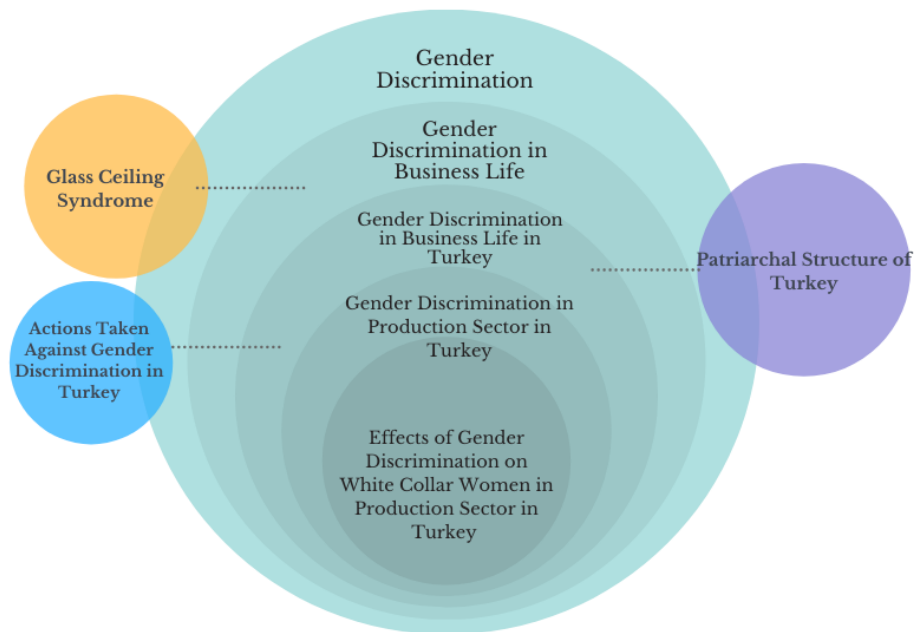


Figure 4: Venn Diagram of the Subjects Examined in the Research Paper

The research model of Karakılıç was used to examine the information obtained through the content of the diagram, and the results obtained through the interviews.

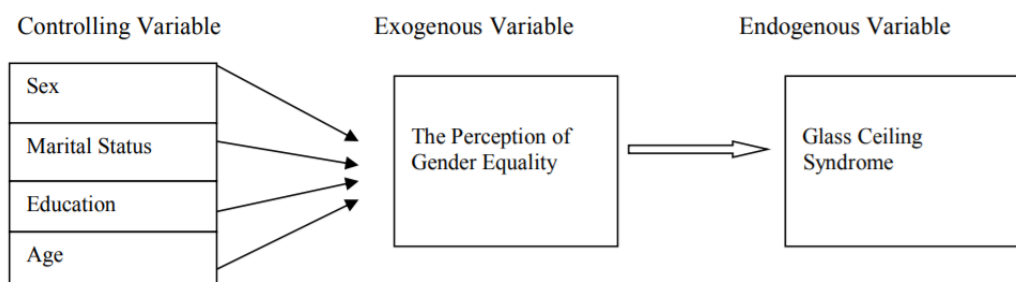


Figure 5: Research Model (Karakılıç, 2019)

Karakılıç's model is about glass ceiling syndrome, which is one of the topics that this research paper examines, and the content of the model and the research is explained in the glass ceiling syndrome section of this paper. In addition to the literature review, data were collected with the interviews. The interviews were conducted with women, so one of the controlling variables was gender. Another variable was education level since this research paper examined the challenges for white collar women. The last controlling variable was the sector since the production sector was analysed. The exogenous variable was the perception of gender discrimination, and the endogenous variable was the challenges for white collar women in production sector. In the results of the model, the views of women were evaluated and analysed to get results for the objectives of this paper. The data obtained as a result of the Venn diagram and the model were analysed, combined and compared.

### **3 Methodology and Research Design**

This chapter includes the research methodology, design, strategy, collection of primary data that includes the sources of the primary data collection, access and ethical issues related to the collection of data, and how to analyse the data.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach**

##### **3.1.1 *Feminist Approach***

Gender discrimination is seen all over the world, and its level varies with factors such as culture, development level, education level, family structure of the societies. Since the definition, type, form and subject of gender discrimination may vary according to the social and economic structures of the societies and organisations, the results of the interviews were analysed with respect to these circumstances. The results were unique to the area of research studied as this research paper examines the challenges faced by women because of gender discrimination. This dissertation supports the idea of feminist research perspective. According to Gelling: “Feminist research focuses on the experiences of women in natural social settings, where the aim is to make women visible, raise their consciousness and empower them” (Gelling, 2013, pg.6). Thanks to the interviews conducted for this thesis, the experiences of female employees in the workplace were examined and attention was drawn to gender discrimination. Since the feminist approach is based on women's experiences, the experiences that the participant has and shares formed the center of the research. In this dissertation, an effort made to raise awareness by drawing attention to gender discrimination, the situations and experiences shared by the interview participants were internalised and analysed, ethical rules were adhered to and it was pointed out that women's presence in business life should be strengthened.

##### **3.1.2 *Qualitative Research Method***

“Qualitative methods are used to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. These data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring” (Hammarberg *et al.*, 2016, pg.499). The most suitable research method for this dissertation is the qualitative research method because most of the information depends on the opinions of the people, and it is not possible to count or measure the thoughts. Also, it allows the researcher to understand the subject more deeply with her research. According to Ronald *et al.*: “The qualitative researcher relies on the participants to offer in-depth responses to questions about how they have constructed or understood their experience” (Ronald *et al.*,

2007, pg.23). The qualitative research method is the most appropriate research method to understand the effects and dimensions of gender discrimination.

### 3.1.3 *Interpretive Approach*

Since the thesis is written with a feminist approach, the results of the analysis are based on the experiences of women. Definite limits or definitions cannot be used when analysing the data because experiences vary according to the culture and structure of the environment. Therefore, a more interpretive perspective should be used for the analysis of the obtained data. According to Ryan: “Interpretivism argues that truth and knowledge are subjective, as well as culturally and historically situated, based on people’s experiences and their understanding of them” (Ryan, 2018, pg.8). Also, he adds that researchers cannot deny the thoughts they value, and these thoughts will affect the way they analyse their data. According to Alharahsheh and Pius: “The interpretive paradigm... enable researchers to consider different factors such as behavioural aspects based on participants’ experiences, and this would help to describe reality given the assumptions and beliefs of the interpretivist researcher” (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020, pg.42). With the effects of these elements, interpretive approach is the most appropriate approach for a deeper understanding and analysis of the subject of this thesis.

## 3.2 **Research Strategy**

Interview and literature review were used for the research. It was aimed to obtain data from women about the problems they face in their own workplace. In the literature review, theories about gender discrimination and the results obtained from past researches were examined. Some of the information obtained through literature research was also subjective, as the surveys and interviews conducted in the past researches depend on people's experiences and opinions. The information obtained was analysed with an interpretive perspective by the author while achieving the objectives.

Conducting interviews is the most appropriate research strategy for this dissertation. Since the subject is gender discrimination, it is not an issue that a definite judgement or conclusion can be reached. As Mukhopadhyay and Gupta mention: “Where research questions need to be contextualized, and the researcher wants to use experience/ perspectives of the different individuals in that particular organization or phenomenon” (Mukhopadhyay and Gupta, 2014, pg.117). The purpose of this research paper is to make an inference that emerged from the collection of the experiences of women working in the production sector in Turkey. Also, the most appropriate way is to conduct semi-structured interviews. The general format of the

questions asked in the semi-structured interview was prepared before; the course of the interview was shaped according to the answers of the respondents, and then new questions were added. According to Gill et al.: “The flexibility of this approach... allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent by the research team” (Gill *et al.*, 2008, pg.291). This type of interview allows the researcher to notice if there is a situation or thought missed about the subject.

The aim was to reach the saturation level while doing the interviews. The obtained data started to have similar points after a while. As Mason mentions: “New data will always add something new, but there are diminishing returns, and the cut off between adding to emerging findings and not adding, might be considered inevitably arbitrary” (Mason, 2010, pg.16). Although everyone's experiences are unique, the answers evolved into similar themes at some point. Therefore, instead of determining a certain number of participants, it was planned to end the research after reaching the saturation level. At the end, 10 participants were interviewed.

### **3.3 Collection Primary Data**

#### **3.3.1 Sources of Data**

To collect the primary data, interviews were conducted with white collar women working in the production sector. Women were asked about their own experiences. Respondent had the opportunity to mention their unique experiences. The interviews were conducted anonymously to avoid future problems for the participants. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher chatted with the participant about 15-20 minutes, and these parts were not recorded.

Interview Questions:

- 1- Which production sector do you work in and what is your position in the company?
- 2- What do you think about the proportion of women and men employees in your department?
- 3- Do you think you get the reward you deserve for your work?
- 4- Do you think you work under the same conditions and have the same opportunities as male employees?
- 5- Do you think you would be more successful in your career if you were treated equally with male employees?
- 6- Have you experienced or observed a problem because of gender discrimination in your workplace?  
(Questions were shaped according to the answer for Q7)
- 7- Has your manager had any negative behaving towards you just because of your gender?
- 8- Are you doing anything to prevent gender discrimination issues in your workplace?

- 9- What measures does your company take to prevent gender discrimination in the organization?
- 10- What measures do you think should be taken to prevent gender discrimination in your workplace?

### 3.3.2 *Access and Ethical Issues*

In order to conduct the interviews, the participants were reached via e-mail, phone call and message. Participants approved the consent form, but they did not want their names to appear in the signature part. They were afraid of having problems with the company they work for in the future. As a result, all participants accepted the consent form to be interviewed, but they did not sign the form. The consent form can be seen in Appendix A. Interviews were conducted via phone call or Zoom, and all of them were recorded. Participants were not asked personal questions or information about company to avoid privacy issues.

### 3.4 **Approach to Data Analysis**

Since this thesis is a qualitative research, the analysis of the accessed data was done accordingly. The collected data by interviews were categorised according their subjects. The categorisation was made according to the similarities of the answers given rather than the order of the interview questions. Additionally, the data were grouped and analysed according to the theories mentioned in the literature research. While conducting interviews and analysing data, the path specified in the conceptual framework was followed. As it is mentioned in the Research Philosophy and Approach heading, feminist and interpretive approaches were used to analyse the data. The topics mentioned in the literature review chapter were supported by the data obtained by the interviews.

## **4 Findings and Discussion**

In this chapter, the findings from the conducted interviews are presented. Findings were analysed, and compared with the literature research. The aim is to examine whether the primary data meets the research objectives of this thesis. It includes introduction to interviews and analysis, proportion of female and male employees in workplaces, reward policies, attitudes towards women and glass ceiling syndrome, pregnancy, maternity leave and kindergarten, and at last measures taken and should be taken against gender discrimination. The participants were chosen according to the controlling variables defined in the conceptual framework which are gender, education level, and working sector. They were interviewed by the effect of the exogenous variable which is gender discrimination. The data collected through the interviews were explained and analysed in this chapter, and presented as challenges for white collar women in production sector, which is the endogenous variable as mentioned in the conceptual framework. Also, the collected data were compared with the literature research.

### **4.1 Introduction to Interviews and Analysis**

The interviews were conducted with 10 white collar women. All participants asked to remain anonymous to avoid problems in the future. Therefore, the participants were coded with the letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, and K. While mentioning the participants; their age, the production industry they work at, and their title were be indicated in parentheses for better understanding.

4 of the participants are in the age range of 22-25, 3 of them 25-30, 2 of them 30-40, and 1 of them 40+. The minimum age of the participants in the study is 23 and the maximum is 50. Interviews were made with white collar female employees from 6 different production sectors, and participant C and D are working in the same automotive company, and participants E and J are working in the same major appliances company. Interviewing female employees working in the different departments of the same company was an opportunity to examine the challenges faced by women within the company depending on the department, and also to analyse how these issues are reflected. In addition, female employees working in the same production sector but different companies, such as F - G and C, D - K, were interviewed and it was a chance to make cross company comparisons. Also, while the other participants are white collars working in departments directly connected to production, to better understand the gender discrimination against women and the situations they are exposed to, E was also interviewed, a human

resources specialist who conducted recruitment interviews in the production industry. The first question of the interview was in which production sector the participants work and what their positions are. The table prepared with the answers given is as follows:

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Title</b>
A	Automotive Supply	26	Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer
B	Textile	50	Product Manager
C	Automotive	24	Process Engineer
D	Automotive	23	Production Engineer
E	Major Appliances	32	Human Resources Specialist
F	Arms	24	Delivery Management Engineer
G	Arms	26	Project Engineer
H	Food	24	Production Manager Candidate
J	Major Appliances	29	Material Planning Specialist
K	Automotive	40	Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager

*Table 1: Participants' Age, Production Sector They Work and Their Titles*

## 4.2 Proportion of Female and Male Employees in Workplaces

Participant	Numerically Dominant Gender (White Collar)	Percentage of White Collar Female Employees
A	Male	20%
B	Female	-
C	Male	36%
D	Equal	50%
E	Equal	50%
F	Male	8%
G	Male	25%
H	Male	28%
J	Male	20%
K	Equal	50%

*Table 2: the Rate of White Collar Female Employees in the Companies Where the Participants Work at*

According to the interviews, 6 participants said their workplace is male dominant, 3 of them said the proportion of women and men white collars are equal, only participant B (50, Textile, Production Manager) said that number of female employees is more than male employees. However, she indicated that this situation is valid for the entire company, if the case is only manufacturing department, there are more employees than women. Also, she does not know the exact number of female employees in her company. She stated that higher number of female employees are common in the textile sector. In companies where other participants work at, this rate is generally quite low. According to the data given by the participants, Participant F (24, Arms, Delivery Management Engineer) has the lowest women ratio in her workplace which is 8%, and she is the only women employee in her department. All of the participants, who said the rate of female employees is lower than men, said that they want the number of female employees to be increased in their departments.

## 4.3 Reward Policies

Half of the participants do not think they get the reward they deserve financially. Also, 60% of the participants does not think they get the reward they deserve morally to be motivated and

feel successful. Most of the participants have the same answers for the financial and moral rewards. However, while participant G (26, Arms, Project Engineer) think that she gets the financial reward she deserves, but does not get the moral reward; there is no participant who thinks that she gets the moral reward she deserves, but does not get the financial reward. Participants C (24, Automotive, Process Engineer) , E (32, Major Appliances, Human Resources Specialist), F (24, Arms, Delivery Management Engineer), and H (24, Food, Production Manager Candidate) think that they get both financial and moral reward they deserve with the help of their company policies, relationship with their colleagues, and the behaviours of the executives towards the employees. According to participants A (26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer), B (50, Textile, Product Manager), and K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager), the reason why they do not get what they deserve is not related to the company, everyone in the world and in Turkey has this problem. According to participant D (23, Automotive, Production Engineer), no one gets enough reward for their work in production sector. According to participant G (26, Arms, Project Engineer), the reason for her to not get the reward morally is her education background. She is an industrial engineer and works in the army sector. In her opinion, her department is more related to mechanical engineering field, so she does not feel herself adequate to process her work. According to J (29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist), while only the top management gets the salary they deserve, no other employee gets enough paid for their work. Also, for the moral reward for her work, she mentioned:

*“Since we are in the production sector, we can work even on weekends because production continues 24/7. We are a company that breaks production records. Even a "well done" would be enough to motivate us, but they constantly push us to do better.”*

*J [29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist]*

As can be seen from J's comment, while it may be enough for employees to be appreciated, there is a situation where employees in the production sector are constantly forced to work harder and do better. The point is participants J (29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist) and E (32, Major Appliances, Human Resources Specialist) work in the same major appliances company. While E said that she is totally satisfied with her financial and moral rewards, participant J thinks that her work is not rewarded any aspect. Participant E works in the human resources department, and J works in a department directly connected to the production. This situation may occur due to three reasons. The first reason is the differences between departments; according to participant D, H, and J, the production department is more dynamic, stressful and working 24/7, so employees may think that they are not getting enough

for their efforts. The other reason is that the human resources department does not want to reflect the problems in the company to the outside because this department makes the recruitments and tries to protect the company's reputation. According to Schultz and Werner: "The HR department should play a leading and monitoring role in the management of corporate reputation... by offering guidelines for the development of a holistic reputation management strategy" (Schultz and Werner, 2005, p.12). Thus, participant E may have tried to protect the company's reputation by not mentioning the problems in the workplace. The third reason is that even if the participant remains anonymous, she may be afraid of the company knowing her answers.

On the reward basis, all of the participants mentioned that not getting the reward they deserve is not related to gender discrimination. This situation depends on the social and economic structures and policies of the companies, the country or even the world. According to their responses, all employees are treated equally, especially about financial rewards.

#### **4.4 Attitudes towards Women and Glass Ceiling Syndrome**

About working under the same conditions and have the same opportunities with male employees, participants C (24, Automotive, Process Engineer), D (23, Automotive, Production Engineer), E (32, Major Appliances, Human Resources Specialist), and H (24, Food, Production Manager Candidate) said they have exactly same conditions and opportunities without doubt. Although participants A (26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer), G (26, Arms, Project Engineer), J (29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist), and K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager) said that they have equal conditions at first, they talked about the problems in this subject in the later parts of the interview. Participant B (50, Textile, Production Manager) said women have better opportunities than men in textile industry, but after that she made statements on the contrary. Participant F (24, Arms, Delivery Management Engineer) told her problems directly about this subject.

Participants A (26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer) and J (29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist) mentioned that even though you work hard as a woman at work, you are treated differently than a man. Participant J said that there is discrimination in promotion. According to her, it is possible to see many female employees at the specialist, senior specialist positions but the rate of the female employees decreases as the seniority level increases. Also, participant B who is a production manager said that only men

are at important and critical positions in their company. According to her, women are not qualified enough for these positions. She mentioned:

*“Woman employees cannot reach to positions such as production manager or factory manager. The main reason is women are stuck in details, they cannot see the big picture, and they cannot manage the process. Women can’t make quick decisions and they can’t be successful like men employees in these positions.”*

*B (50, Textile, Product Manager)*

Participant B made such a comment about women even though she is also a woman and a production manager. When it was asked how she became a manager as a woman, she said it is because of her character. She stated that she does not have any extra responsibility since she is a single woman with no children. She said women who get married and have children continue to work at home after work, and they are not as comfortable as men, therefore they cannot be productive in business life. This situation is an example of the glass ceiling syndrome stated in the literature research. According to Utma, especially due to the traditional social role expected from women, they are stuck between their family and career. This situation makes it difficult for them to progress in their career. Women's place in society is determined primarily as a wife and mother. Thus, women cannot come to managerial positions due to their gender; in some cases by their own choice, and in some cases by social pressure (Utma, 2019). As a result, although female employees work hard and have sufficient skills, male employees are brought to the executive positions because of the nature and responsibilities of women. This attitude of Participant B may be due to one of the factors causing the glass ceiling syndrome, which is called queen bee syndrome, as stated in the literature review. According to Faniko et al.: “The QB effect refers to the phenomenon that women who have been successful in male-dominated organizations sometimes behave in ways that impede rather than help the advancement of other women” (Faniko *et al.*, 2016, p.903). Although participant B is in an executive position in the male-dominated production sector, she thinks that other women cannot be sufficient or successful in this manner; as a result, this situation may be a proof that she has a queen bee syndrome.

Participant J (29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist) also mentioned the company sometimes promotes inexperienced or insufficient women to senior positions to be able to announce that they care about women. However, this situation causes difficulties for women employees and damages the reputation of female employees in the workplace. She expressed her opinion on this matter as follows:

*“This situation can also lead to the promotion of female employees who can't be a team leader, who cannot rise to higher positions. Advertising the number of female employees creates an uncomfortable situations for the female employees at the specialist positions.”*

*J [29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist]*

Participant F (24, Arms, Delivery Management Engineer), who works in the arms industry, mentioned she is the only women in her department. She said that there are long term two-person jobs in her department and other employees want to work with people of the same gender. Since she is the only female employee in her department, she mentioned this situation creates some problems and prevents her from developing in her career. She stated she believes there is gender discrimination in the production sector. She said that she sends about forty emails during the day, and she is the only woman in at least 25% of them. Additionally, participant G (26, Arms, Project Engineer), who also works in arms industry, said that men proportion is too high, and sometimes she is the only woman at the company meetings. She stated that the men talk and swear to each other as if she is not there. She said she cannot object because she is the only woman among 8-9 men. This situation shows the possibility of having an old boy network mentioned in the literature research in the company where G works at. According to Baumgartner and Schneider: “The problem with the Old Boy... network is the negative attitudes that some men have toward women and the actions these men will take to prevent women from breaking the glass ceiling” (Baumgartner and Schneider, 2010, pg.560). Male employees ignore participant G, and communicate among themselves. This attitude affects G in a negative way in terms of her relations in the company and her career.

Participant K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unite Manager) mentioned although she had problems in the past, she does not experience any of them currently. However, according to her, there is still gender discrimination in other departments of the company. She said that some departments only evaluate the CVs of men in their recruitment processes because they see women as inadequate. They do not even invite female candidates for an interview. She said that in addition to the recruitment process, there are managers who discriminate against women in terms of promotion. She stated as:

*“I remember a woman who was being promoted was asked if she had a pregnancy plan. She was very upset about this situation. That's why she was promoted a year later. It is not a company policy, but some department managers have such an attitude about promotion based on women's pregnancy status and plans.”*

*K [40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unite Manager]*

This situation shows that the female employee is exposed to gender discrimination in business life due to her individual decisions in her private life. This case is an example of the glass ceiling syndrome. According to Özen and Can, women who deserve to be promoted at work are delayed or completely prevented from being promoted because of the thought that they will take maternity leave and be away from working life due to becoming mothers, or they will not attend education and business trips in order not to neglect their family (Özen and Can, 2018). The female employee cannot progress in her career due to individual factors, which is one of the causes of the glass ceiling syndrome.

Another problem white collar women facing is the attitude of blue collar employees towards them. Since most of the departments in the production sector work together with the blue collar employees, communication between them is inevitable. Participants C (24, Automotive, Process Engineer) and D (23, Automotive, Production Engineer), who work in the same automotive company, said that blue collar workers are judgmental towards them. They stated that blue collar workers constantly test the knowledge of female white collar workers. While they do not show such an attitude towards men, they do not trust the knowledge of women and question their intervention in the operations. Participant C mentioned:

*“When the blue collar employees work with male engineers, they can trust their opinions without thinking too much. However, when they work with female engineers they try to test the female engineers by pushing their limits.”*

*C [24, Automotive, Process Engineer]*

This situation shows the gender discrimination applied to women by blue collar workers, who work in a male-dominated field and have low education level. The thought coming from old traditions that the production sector is a male-dominated field, makes blue collar workers be prejudiced against women. According to Sar, only 15.6% of the employees are women in the production sector (Sar, 2021). This low rate causes blue-collar male employees having negative attitudes towards women. Participant K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unite Manager) also had problems with blue collar workers in the past. She was the first female

employee in her department, where she started working 15 years ago. She said taking orders from a woman instead of a man made blue collar workers feel different. She also added that this situation changed when the number of female employees in the department increased, and she became a manager. She said that being a manager made her life easier, and it became simpler to establish authority in both blue and white collars. Contrary to this situations, participant G (26, Arms, Project Engineer) who works in arms industry is treated differently from blue-collar workers. She said when female white collars have a request from blue collars, they are kinder than responding the requests of male employees, and they try to find solutions. Therefore, white collar men also asks to women to tell their problems or requests to blue collars. In fact, in this case, it can be seen that there is positive discrimination. As a result of these research and interviews, it is not possible to make generalisation about the attitude of the blue collar employees towards white collar female employees in the production sector in Turkey.

Regardless of the existence of gender discrimination, participants A (26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer) and B (50, Textile, Production Manager) said that their success in business life is related to their personal characteristics. Women are trying to earn their place in the production sector by hiding their feminine features and characteristics. According to Bastalich et al.: “We live in a world in which a ‘woman engineer’ is an oxymoron; in which women engineers might understandably wish to avoid any association with femininity” (Bastalich *et al.*, 2007, pg.389). Participant A said that she tried not to come to the fore with her gender. She mentioned:

*“If you want to exist in this workplace, you need to get rid of your physical conditions as a woman. You have to put your personal needs in the background, I have become masculine. If I had such concerns I would have problems, because my work place is very open to this kind of discriminations.”*

*A [26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer]*

She said she does not request a break when she is in her period. Also, she does not wear a mini skirt because she works with two thousand men in her company. Participant B also said she has been working for this company for a very long time and she does not even wear a sleeveless blouse because the environment is not suitable. While she, as a manager, discriminates against her employees because of their gender, she attributes her success to such attitudes of herself.

Participant B, who is a production manager, told one of the situations in which gender discrimination was most evident in all of the interviews, although she claims that there is no

gender discrimination in the textile sector she works in. She said that there are sometimes romantic relationships between employees in the company. She mentioned:

*“When a man who has a higher position in factory has a relationship with a woman who has a lower position, we have to fire the woman. This happened a few times.”*

*B [50, Textile, Production Manager]*

This attitude of the company does not respect women’s right to work. Although the relationship is between two people, the punishment is given only to the woman. Since it is thought that women cannot not be as successful as men in the textile company where Participant B works, such a policy is implemented. In this case it is obvious that women are subject to gender discrimination.

#### **4.5 Pregnancy, Maternity Leave and Kindergarten**

Apart from the questions asked in the interview, the topic most mentioned by the participants was pregnancy, maternity leave and kindergarten. Most of the participants said that this issue creates a lot of problems during the recruitment process or working period. Participant A (26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer) mentioned that in some departments of the company, some women employees could not find anybody to take care of their children, and their company did not provide a kindergarten. When they wanted to take their annual leave to take care of their children until finding someone; their managers did not accept their requests even if it was their legal rights and said they had to come to work no matter what. Participant A also mentioned that female employees are entitled to compensation if they quit their job within one year after marriage. According to Özdemir, if a woman voluntarily terminates her employment within one year from the date of marriage, severance pay is paid to that female employee. The right to terminate the employment contract due to marriage is only given to the female workers (Özdemir, 2015, p.159). Although this right seems to be a privilege granted to women at first sight, it actually encourages female employees to quit their job when they get married. It shows that women should quit the job in case of marriage as the same right is not granted to male employees. Also participant A said about this situation as follows:

*“In my opinion, this shows that women cannot do their responsibilities at home while working at the same time; but these responsibilities do not belong to only women. Maybe, if all employees who have a baby, can leave instead of a maternity leave, not only female employees but also men employees can look after their kids too.”*

*A [26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer]*

Additionally, Participant B said that she used to enter the final job interviews, she did not even prefer female employees, especially women who are planning to marry or having kids, as a woman. She mentioned women usually marry and after having kids, they take their maternity leave and cannot work for months. In her opinion, production sector is not suitable to handle such situations. This perspective prevents women from progressing in business life, and forces them to choose one of their work or private life.

#### **4.6 Measures Taken and should be Taken against Gender Discrimination**

Ensuring gender equality in the workplace is an important requirement for both the company and the employees. According to Demir, achieving gender equality is accepted as a key factor for the competitiveness and growth of an organisation in today's dynamic business environment (Demir, 2019). Thus, the measures taken to prevent gender discrimination in the company are important for both the company and the employees. To prevent gender discrimination in the workplace, the automotive company where participant C (24, Automotive, Process Engineer) and D (23, Automotive, Production Engineer) work at, organises international webinars and diversity weeks for employees to share their thoughts and to provide an equal work environment. Participant H (24, Food, Production Manager Candidate) who works in the food industry also said that the company she works for prepares diversity weeks to avoid gender discrimination. Participant K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager) said that the automotive company she works for organise seminars to be treated all employees equally. Also, the major appliances company where E and J work, provides training to all employees for equal work environment during the orientation period. However, participant J thinks that the company uses this situation as a marketing tool. She said:

*“The company I work for takes some actions to prevent gender discrimination. However, I think there are mistakes during the application. Using this situation as an advertisement material make the female employees uncomfortable. Female employees think that the company see them as a proportion.”*

*J [29, Major Appliances, Material Planning Specialist]*

With this comment of participant J, the importance of how the measures are taken apart from what they are, is seen. Other participants said that their companies do not have any policy to prevent gender discrimination in their workplace.

To prevent gender discrimination, most of the participants think that the number of female employees should be increased. In their opinion, it is one of the most important way to change

the male-dominated production environment. As different recommendations, participant A (26, Automotive Supply, Senior Material Requirement Planning Engineer) said that rights such as maternity leave should also be given to men. Thus, an equal working environment is provided for all employees. According to participants A and G (26, Arms, Project Engineer), if women can take leave during their menstrual period or adjust their working hours accordingly, the productivity of the female employee will increase and a more equal work environment will be provided. Participants A and D (23, Automotive, Production Engineer) said that it should not be asked questions about private life such as marriage, pregnancy etc. in the job interviews. These kind of questions are disrespectful to the private life and preferences of women, and causes discrimination. As it is mentioned in the United Nations Development Programme in Turkey, human resources department is directly responsible for implementing the strategies determined by the board of the company to ensure gender equality (UNDP Turkey, 2020). According to participant K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager), human resources should identify and intervene gender discrimination in the departments, and investigate the causes in departments which are male dominant.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

As a result of the data obtained from the interviews, it was observed that the participants were exposed to gender discrimination and even participant B (50, Textile, Production Manager) applied gender discrimination to her employees as a manager. In the answers, experiences supporting some theories stated in the literature research such as glass ceiling syndrome, queen bee syndrome, and the old boy network were determined. However, no experience has been found that directly supports or refutes the glass cliff concept.

As a result of the analysis of the primary data, the most common problems experienced by the participants are not being able to get a job or being fired due to marriage, pregnancy and maternity leave, the attitudes of blue collars, promotion issues, and not being seen as successful as male employees. One of the problems specific to the production sector is the attitude of blue collar workers towards white collar female employees. Communication between the two groups is inevitable for the continuity and smooth progress of production. The low level of education of blue-collar workers and the high proportion of male employees in their working area cause a prejudice against white collar women. In other sectors, there is no need to communicate with blue collar workers, even if it is a necessity, it is not as often as the production sector. Thus, this kind of gender discrimination is not common in the other sectors. Another common

problem in the production sector is the problems experienced due to pregnancy and maternity leave. Since production is a constantly ongoing and stressful department, it is seen as a disadvantage that female employees take a leave from work due to their private lives which are their legal rights. The situation mentioned by participant K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager) that the promotion of the white collar woman was postponed due to pregnancy planning is an example for this issue. As a result of the examples and analyses given, it was aimed to draw attention to the problems experienced by white collar women working in the production sector in Turkey, and the existence of gender discrimination in the work environment was supported by the data obtained.

## **5 Conclusion**

### **5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Objectives**

The aim of this research was to analyse the challenges for white collar women in different production sectors in Turkey due to gender discrimination, and also state how white collar women are affected by the gender discrimination in terms of their career and success. While analysing the challenges, literature research was conducted, and Turkey's patriarchal structure, glass ceiling syndrome, queen bee syndrome, old boy network and glass cliff concept were taken into consideration. It has been seen that the patriarchal structure of Turkey is an obstacle to the advancement of women in business life. According to Erdem: "A host of aspects of the culture in Turkey reflect a highly sexist and gendered view... Traditional roles and expectations are likely to impede with women's likelihood to partake in the work force and limiting their aspirations" (Erdem, 2020, pg.44). As a result of the interviews, it has been determined that this perspective is also reflected in the organisational cultures, and the development of women in business life is hindered due to their roles in social life. Participant K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager) mentioned that the promotion of her colleague was postponed due to her pregnancy plan. Also, participant B (50, Textile, Production Manager) mentioned that she did not prefer female employees to hire, especially the ones planning marriage or having children. She said production sector is a continuous sector, and not suitable to handle the maternity leave period of a woman. As a result, the patriarchal perspective in Turkey and organisations hinder women to progress in their business life and creates a challenge.

Glass ceiling syndrome is one of the theories which was researched in the literature review and the existence was supported with the primary data. According to Karakılıç, glass ceiling syndrome represents the obstacles which hinder women to progress in business life and prevent reaching the upper management level. Karakılıç conducted a survey to find the relationship between gender discrimination and glass ceiling syndrome, and as a result, a strong correlation was found between the two (Karakılıç, 2019). Also in the interviews made in this thesis, it has been determined that white collar women are exposed to the glass ceiling syndrome. Participant B (50, Textile, Production Manager) mentioned that since women have extra responsibilities at their home, they cannot be productive in business life, and they cannot be a manager in production sector. This situation was an example of glass ceiling syndrome, and also an example of queen bee syndrome which causes glass ceiling. Participant B (50, Textile,

Production Manager) was a woman production manager, but in her opinion women cannot be a manager. According to Faniko et al.: “The QB effect refers to the phenomenon that women who have been successful in male-dominated organizations sometimes behave in ways that impede rather than help the advancement of other women” (Faniko *et al.*, 2016, p.903). Another theory is old boy network which also causes glass ceiling syndrome. According to Baumgartner and Schneider: “The problem with the Old Boy... network is the negative attitudes that some men have toward women and the actions these men will take to prevent women from breaking the glass ceiling” (Baumgartner and Schneider, 2010, p.560). Participant G (26, Arms, Project Engineer) mentioned that she was the only women in some of the company meetings, and men employees ignored her and communicated between each other as she was not there.

Other objectives of this research were to draw attention to gender discrimination and the need to provide equal rights and fair treatment to all people in the workplace and analyse the measures and actions taken to avoid gender discrimination in Turkey. The measures taken to prevent gender discrimination in Turkey mentioned in the literature research. Turkey accepts Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Revised European Social Charter (OHCHR, 2021) to prevent gender discrimination against women in social and business life. There are also associations and programmes to empower women in business life such as Women's Association in Business World (Women's Association in Business World, 2021). and More and Better Jobs for Women Programme – Phase II (ILO, 2019). The aim of these projects is to increase the women employment and provide gender equality in the workplaces. Besides the measures taken in Turkey which were also mentioned in the literature research, some of the company policies were also obtained from the interviews. Participants C (24, Automotive Supply, Process Engineer), D (23, Automotive, Production Engineer), H (24, Food, Production Manager Candidate), and K (40, Automotive, Logistics Warehouse Planning Unit Manager) said that the companies they work for organise diversity weeks and seminars to prevent gender discrimination in their workplaces. Additionally, the company which participants E and J work for provides training to all employees in their orientation period to avoid gender discrimination.

In order to achieve these objectives, qualitative research method was used since most of the information depends on the opinions of the people, and it is not possible to count or measure the thoughts. Also, qualitative research method allowed the researcher to understand the concepts such as glass ceiling syndrome, queen bee syndrome, old boy network, patriarchal structure etc. more deeply. To analyse the obtained data, feminist and interpretive approaches

were used. Feminist approach focuses on the experience of woman and aims to empower them. In this dissertation, the results were unique since the type or form of the gender discrimination changes according to the conditions of a society or an organisations. Interpretive approach was also used because in this research, it was not possible to use definite limits or definitions while analysing the data. Every culture, every society and even every individual has a different perspective on gender discrimination. Thus, this subject could be analysed without strict limits by interpreting the data collected. To collect data, a total of 10 white collar women from different sectors of production were interviewed. In order to increase the diversity; participants working in the different companies, same companies in different departments, and different seniority levels were selected.

## **5.2 Contributions and Limitations of the Research**

This research aimed to draw attention and analyse the challenges for white collar women in different production sectors in Turkey due to gender discrimination. According to the literature research and the primary data, the most common issues were identified as not being able to get a job or being fired due to marriage, pregnancy and maternity leave, the attitudes of blue collars, promotion issues, and not being seen as successful as male employees. While most of the problems mentioned were problems that white collar women in different sectors may encounter, it has been observed that situations such as the behavior of blue-collar workers, pregnancy and maternity leave cause more serious problems in the production sector than in other sectors. Since the production sector used to be based on more physical strength in the past, it was thought to be more suitable for men, and this perspective have shown its effect to the present. By the increase in the level of education and the development of technology, women have started to take part in this sector. This research tried to show that women can also be successful in the production sector. With the help of the literature research and the experiences of the participants, it was aimed to draw attention to the problems they face on the way to their success, and to support them in overcoming these problems and providing equal opportunities to all employees in the workplaces. Although there are various resources about the challenges for white collar women, women in production sector or women in Turkey, there is a lack of qualitative research recently that examines the problems faced by white-collar female workers working in production sector in Turkey. This dissertation aims to address these issue from the perspective of Turkey. It is also aimed to be beneficial to people, institutions and organisations that are interested in the employment of women in sexist and unequal working conditions especially in production sector, to be a source for discussions and researches on this subject.

Limited number of participants from different companies and production sectors were interviewed in order to have diversity and to see the situation in different sectors of production in the research conducted. Therefore, while this thesis gives a general idea about gender discrimination in the production sector, it was not able to identify problems in specific production sectors. Since gender discrimination is a sensitive issue, some people reached did not want to participate the interview due to the fear of having problems in the future, even if it was stated that they would remain anonymous. When I reached out to a company executive, he said that they do not allow the employees to participate in interviews and surveys as a company policy. Therefore, a limited number of participants were interviewed, and it was not possible to generalise the results for all women working in the production sector in Turkey.

### **5.3 Recommendations for Practice**

The challenges identified as a result of the research are not problems that cannot be prevented. Companies also play a vital role in preventing gender discrimination. Company policies are one of the most important supports of women employees. Having a female employee in the business environment should not be seen as the success of that person. A woman deserves just as much as a man deserves to be successful and have a career. Therefore, women's employment should be increased in workplaces, especially in the production sector where the rate is low. White collar female employees should not accept barriers based on gender discrimination such as glass ceiling syndrome, queen bee syndrome, old boy network which were mentioned in the research, and they should strive to overcome these problems.

### **5.4 Recommendations for Future Research**

Conducting future research with more participants will make the results more realistic. In this study, generalisation could not be made because the number of participant that could be reached was limited, and if the number of participants increases, the possibility of generalisation will increase. Also, the future research to be conducted on certain production sectors will better reflect the problems experienced in that sector. Making detailed studies in each production sector and examining the problems in those sectors in detail helps to generalise the common results in the production sector.

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## Appendix A- Informed Consent Form

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**I. Research Study Title:** Challenges for White Collar Women in Production Sector Caused by Gender Discrimination in Turkey

University: Griffith College, Graduate Business School.

Principal Investigator: Dr Garrett Ryan.

Researcher Name: Fatma Naz Donma

Email: nazdonma@gmail.com

### II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

The aim of this research is to understand the challenges for white collar woman in production sector caused by gender discrimination in Turkey. Furthermore, through a combination your participation and the latest research into Challenges for White Collar Women in Production Sector Caused by Gender Discrimination in Turkey, this research will add to body of academic understanding of Challenges for White Collar Women in Production Sector Caused by Gender Discrimination in Turkey.

### III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

This project involves taking part in completion of an interview. The interviews responses will be recorded, and seek to gather information on your experience of the work life in production sector as a woman. Questions are directed towards your thoughts on challenges in production sector as a woman. I estimate the interviews will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

**Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)**

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement

Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided?

Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?

Yes/No

Are you aware that interviews will be audiotaped?

Yes/No

#### **IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary**

Involvement in this Research Study is voluntary. Participants who decide to take part may withdraw from the Research Study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study are complete..

#### **V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations**

Every effort is made to ensure the confidentiality of the participant. Participant names will not be recorded, as all participants will be assigned a code. Where used, recorded interviews data will be downloaded to a password-controlled computer, typed transcripts results are held within password-controlled documents. Participant biographical details and or mention of other persons will be omitted in the final report. Confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

**VI. Participant Signature:**

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project

**Participants Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_