

# Why are the cook chefs always male: Research on the cook chefs who works at hotel cuisines

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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons; "why are chefs always male" in the kitchens of hotels. Food cultures of countries, cooking techniques, eating styles are some of the subjects in the study area of gastronomy science. Chefs are one of the primary elements that contribute to the development of food culture. Cook chefs are at the center of the present study. The scientific discipline "Workforce in Working Life" continues to do research about Cook Chefs. In this study, the gender and reasons of chefs working in the kitchens of 4 and 5 star hotels serving in the field of tourism in the world were researched demographically. Four continents, five countries from each continent, two cities from each country and ten international 4 and 5 star chain hotels in each city were selected. In the first section of the study, it was observed that most of the chefs working in hotels were male. In the second section, the reasons why most of the chefs are male were examined scientifically. As a result, it was determined that the working conditions of chefs are difficult for women hence the high number of male chefs.

## 1. Introduction

The gastronomy cultures of these civilizations have been transferred to each other for generations in the historical process and reached the present day and have also influenced the gastronomy of today's countries by spreading over the various geographies of the world. In conclusion, the science of gastronomy is the branch of science that examines the relationship between culture and food (Oktay, 2018). In this study, we examined the cooks who use the creative arts in the kitchen, one of the basic factors of gastronomy.

Professional kitchens have been male dominant nowadays and in the past. As it was stated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of military history, the male-dominated understanding in the kitchen was caused by the fact that military men cooked. The understanding in the past has turned into a military-style hierarchical structure in today's professional kitchens. The executive chef, who is at the top of the kitchen hierarchy, has been adapted from the military hierarchy. This "machismo" concept has kept its place nowadays in professional kitchens. Machismo was derived from the Spanish word "Macho". It describes the oppressive situation of male domination (Bilmes, 2007).

Nowadays, researchers emphasize the importance of women to take more places in social areas (Hurley, 1999). New organizational theories emphasize that men and

women are equally productive. These theories state that gender should be examined as a moderate variable and that the organizational level factors affect the results of success (Orser & Leck, 2010).

Researchers claim that unequal gender distribution in professions is caused by the fact that promotion criteria in professions are gender-sensitive (Rouhanizadeh & Kermanshachi, 2021).


It is stated that women are opposed to their rise to higher levels in the professional hierarchy and that there is a "resistance against women's leadership and there is a leadership problem for women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In addition, it is known that women face more difficulties in managing the balance of work life and home life, and that the cultural and gender understanding of societies in national identity structures are important in the choice of profession.

It is suggested that gender relations affect the processes of projects in business life and that international works often involve the concepts of masculinity and femininity (Yuval-Davis, 1997). This opinion was introduced and discussed in many scientific women's studies (McClintock, 1991; McElroy, 2002; Nagel, 1998, 2005; Sharp, 1996). This basic idea expresses the necessity to reconstruct the definitions of the masculinity and femininity concepts which are included in the nations' ideas of gender.

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Research paper

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Gender is a relational structuring dictated by social practice. It is based on the institutionalized relationship between the female group and the male group (Connell, 2005). For this reason, for the institutionalization of gender, social relations and social actions should be accepted as a shared experience, implemented and should not be reduced only to a discursive position (McNay, 2004).

The general belief about the concept of gender that has existed in societies for centuries is that it is the duty of men to make money, to offer a comfortable life to the family and to contribute to economic production, while the duties of women are to care for the family, to protect the home, to give birth to and to take care of children. Structured functions such as these are important points to consider when making gender definitions in professions (McElroy, 2002).

In the concept of “traditional womanhood”, it is referred to the notion of a sexual division of labor, in which women are primarily responsible for free domestic and childcare tasks (DeVault, 1991; Hochschild, 1989). At the same time, it is stated that women are precious for evolution because of their sexuality (Gill, 2007). Nowadays, the idea of “hegemonic masculinity” corresponds to money, bread, power, control and heterosexuality characteristics for men (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2003).

International analyses have demonstrated that education, age, marital status, and the number of children are essential determinants of women’s participation in the labor force (Dayioğlu & Kırdar, 2010). According to the general acceptance in the literature, there is generally a negative relationship between birth rates and rates of participation in the labor force (Sundström & Stafford, 1992). Women’s participation in employment does not reduce their burden on the family and society but instead increases their burdens while not changing their positions (Onder, 2013).

Nowadays, it is stated that women enter the world of professional cooking more and that the most significant factor here is the popular cooking programs broadcast on television. It is argued that such programs increase the interest of young men and women in the kitchen (Hollows, 2003; Swinbank, 2002). Some professional researchers criticize them by stating that such television programs do not provide any benefit to gender discrimination (Naccarato & LeBesco, 2012).

However, many studies state that gender discrimination in the kitchen profession decreases, the participation of women in the working life in the kitchen increases and that this is a significant development (Cruz, 2013). Here, details should be added to the subject. While examining these studies, the increase in women’s participation in working in the kitchen in the professional sense should be proportional to the question in which types of kitchens they work. It is also understood as a result of this study that the participation of women in the labor force of professional

kitchens nowadays is realized through the small restaurants, cafes and pastry shops they own.

Female chefs are encouraged “to find ways of complying with the current occupational regulations” under nowadays’ market conditions (Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Female chefs are directed to follow workplace rules such as “working for long hours”, “managing home and work life”, “learning to avoid feminine emotive demonstrations” and to display their physical and mental strengths without being contrary to the masculine culture. However, these integration strategies generally reproduce gender inequality (Harris & Giuffre, 2015; Heilman & Haynes, 2005).

Against the intense and long working hours of male chefs, in order to achieve success in the kitchen area, female chefs have to sacrifice their social life and duties at home, to have passion for cooking, to be mentor for her family, to be ambitious, and to focus to work (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996). Interestingly, these criteria are not considered sufficient. Because it is only seen as a desire to take risks (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996).

In the studies on the dominance of males in occupation categories, it is stated that the reason for the predominance of males in professional kitchens is not gender discrimination; instead, it is that women’s working conditions are limited in inappropriate working environments (Harris & Giuffre, 2010). While studies do not address the issue of the marginalization of women in professional kitchens, they argue that women are not excluded from the professional chef status. For example, in the mapping of male and female chefs, the recognition of Lidia Bastianich, who is a highly successful female food professional, as a “homemade chef” and “a great chef”, is a point displaying that women are not excluded in this sector (Druckman, 2010).

In the area of Haute Cuisine in France, female cooks need to overcome the difficult working conditions in the kitchen to become a chef, and to balance the work and family against long and tiring working hours, which are becoming more difficult especially in Michelin-starred restaurants (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; O’Brien, 2010). At the same time, it is stated that overcoming difficulties protects the motivations of working people and ensures that they become successful (Martin & Bernard, 2013).

In response to the hypothesis which argues that female chefs do not do household chores, delay childbirth or leave the kitchen work due to their responsibilities to the household, they have to revise the importance of their personal and professional preferences for work and family duties, in order to harmonize their dual roles (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Harris & Giuffre, 2010).

In order to increase female employees in professional kitchens; Promotion and incentive models are an important factor (Harris & Giuffre, 2015). At the macro level, opportunities such as the James Beard Foundation or the

Michelin Guide can be regarded as good examples of increasing the recognition of female chefs (Bartholomew & Garey, 1996; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). From another aspect, as an example of the use of recognition as an incentive in the professional kitchen area, the best female chef awards in the United States of America demonstrate the advanced social gender culture (Childers & Kryza, 2015).

## 2. Materials and Methods

In order to determine the research population, a similar sample of subjects was used, which can be summarized as a “survey”. This method is not applied to the total targeted mass, which has the desired characteristics in the population, but to the subjects selected from within the mass according to similar characteristics. This system, called sampling, is based on the fact that a whole can be represented by a smaller segment. Sampling; since the total number of rooms in the scope of the survey is nearly 105.000, it is aimed to reach at least 384 hotels in the survey so that the results can be corrected at a high rate. There are 400 hotels in the survey.

**Materials:** In order to increase the reliability of the results in this study, systematic sampling and purposeful sampling methods representing the research population of 400 5-star and 4-star hotels were collected. The segmentation of star rated hotels has a strong symmetrical structure. Particularly striking is the strong growth of the 4-star and 5-star segment, counting nearly 105,000 hotels worldwide. Worldwide 5-star hotels' count data of the global hotel industry is available on [www.delta-check.com/sc](http://www.delta-check.com/sc).

We have researched the gender and primary reasons of the chefs working in world 4- and 5-star hotels. For our study we have selected 4 continents. From each continent we have selected 5 countries and from each country we have selected two cities. From each city we have looked at 10 international 5-star chain hotels (Table 1).

**Methods:** Reliability analysis was performed before the study, and the data obtained were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 24.0 program (Statistical package for the social sciences). According to the gender, the meaning of the employees was tested through chi square. Gender is a qualitative variant of two categories that can take values as both male and female. The descriptive study researched the frequency of be of the gender variant and revealed the importance ratings of the variant. Descriptive research summarizes and presents the information contained in a data set using numerical and graphical methods. Due to the descriptive nature of this study, no hypothesis was required.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study consist of four parts. In the first part, the demographic characteristics of chefs revealed as a result of the study were researched (Table 2). While in the second part the gender differences of chefs were revealed (Table 3), in the third part, the gender distribution of chefs

**Table 1: Surveyed Cities and Continents**

Surveyed Cities	Continents
1 Nice, France	Europe
2 Paris, France	Europe
3 Barcelona, Spain	Europe
4 Madrid, Spain	Europe
5 Milano, Italy	Europe
6 Rome, Italy	Europe
7 London, United Kingdom	Europe
8 Birmingham, United Kingdom	Europe
9 Athens, Greece	Europe
10 Thessaloniki, Greece	Europe
19 Toronto, Canada	America
20 Montreal, Canada	America
11 Los Angeles, United States	America
12 Miami, United States	America
13 New York City, United States	America
14 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	America
15 Havana, Cuba	America
16 Port au Prince, Haiti, Caribbean	America
17 Lima, Peru	America
18 Buenos Aires, Argentina	America
21 Tokyo, Japan	Asia
30 Seoul, South Korea	Asia
22 Bali, Indonesia	Asia
23 Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	Asia
24 Hong Kong, People's Republic of China	Asia
29 Beijing, People's Republic of China	Asia
25 Singapore, Singapore	Asia
26 Moscow, Russia	Asia
27 New Delhi, India	Asia
28 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Asia
31 Istanbul, Turkey	Middle East & Africa
32 Antalya, Turkey	Middle East & Africa
33 Cairo, Egypt	Middle East & Africa
34 Sharm El Sheik, Egypt	Middle East & Africa
35 Casablanca, Morocco	Middle East & Africa
36 Marrakesh, Morocco	Middle East & Africa
37 Cape Town, Republic of South Africa	Middle East & Africa
38 Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa	Middle East & Africa
39 Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Middle East & Africa
40 Amman, Jordan	Middle East & Africa

Source: Global Accommodation Reference Database (GARD, 2021)

by the continents was presented (Table 4). In the last part of the study, the professional seniority and education levels of the participants were compared (Table 5).

### *The research population and demographic characteristics of the survey participants*

The chefs who participated in the study are chefs working in 4 and 5-star hotels on four continents. 25% of the participants were from America, 25% from the Middle East and Africa, 25.2% from Europe, and 24.8% from Asia. As a result, it was understood that 98.5% of the chefs were male, and 1.5% were female. When the ages of the chefs were examined in the table formed at the end of the study, it was observed that 14.5% of the chefs were in the 20-30 age groups, 48.5% were in the 31-40 age groups, and 37% were in the age group of 41 years and above. It is observed that 26% of the chefs in the study are primary school graduates, 42.3% are high school graduates, and 31.8%

have undergraduate and above education. When their working durations in the profession are examined, it is understood that 28% have worked for 1-19 years, 32.8% have worked for 20-29 years, and 39.3% have worked for 30 years and above (Table 2).

**Table 2: Demographic characteristics of chefs**

		Number of Chefs	%
Continent	Europe	101	25.3
	America	100	25.0
	Asia	99	24.8
	The Middle East and Africa	100	25.0
	Total	400	100.0
Gender	Male	394	98.5
	Female	6	1.5
	Total	400	100.0
Age	20-30	58	14.5
	31-40	194	48.5
	41 and above	148	37.0
	Total	400	100.0
Education	Primary school	104	26.0
	High school	169	42.3
	Undergraduate and above	127	31.8
	Total	400	100.0
Professional seniority	1-19 years	112	28.0
	20-29 years	131	32.8
	30 years and above	157	39.3
	Total	400	100.0

Source: Authors

When cooks in the chef position in 400 hotels in total were asked about the gender of their chef, it was determined that the chef was a male in 394 hotels and a female in 6 hotels. There was a significant difference between the distributions of the chefs according to their gender ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was observed that the chefs were male rather than female. The Chi-square value of the analysis was confirmed to be 376.360 (Table 3).

**Table 3: Distribution by gender**

	Observed	Chi-Square	p
Male	394	376.360	.000
Female	6		
Total	400		

Source: Authors

There was no significant difference between the gender distributions of chefs working in hotels according to the continents ( $p > 0.05$ ). On the continents researched in the study, male chefs working in hotels are higher in number than female chefs. The chefs were male in 98 of the 101 hotels on the European continent and female in 3 hotels. The chefs were male in 99 of the 100 hotels on the American continent and female in 1 hotel. The chefs were male in 98 of the 99 hotels on the Asian continent and female in 1 hotel. The chefs were male in 99 of the 100 hotels in the Middle East and Africa and female in 1 hotel. In 394 of the 400 hotels on four continents included in the study population, the chefs were male and in 6 hotels, the

chefs were female. The Chi-square value of the analysis was calculated as 1.977 (Table 4).

**Table 4: Gender distribution of chefs by continents**

		n	Continent				Total
			Europe	America	Asia	Middle East Africa	
Gender	Male	98	99	98	99	394	
	%	24.9%	25.1%	24.9%	25.1%	100.0%	
	Female	3	1	1	1	6	
	%	50.0%	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	100.0%	
Total	n	101	100	99	100	400	
	%	25.3%	25.0%	24.8%	25.0%	100.0%	

Chi-square value=1.977 p=0.577

Source: Authors

When Table 5 is examined, it is observed that those professional working years, namely, senioritis, differ according to the education status of chefs. The Chi-square value of the analysis is 101.234. It is observed that the level of education decreases as professional seniority increases. In the same way, as the level of education increases, the duration of professional seniority decreases. It was determined that the education level of 78% of the participants with professional seniority of 30 years and above was primary school. On the other hand, it is observed that the education level of 61% of the participants who have less professional seniority (1-19 years) was undergraduate and above. According to this result, the chefs who have higher education level gain easier promotion and position, whereas the chefs with a low level of education seem to have gained competence by working overtime (Table 5).

**Table 5: Comparison of professional seniority and education**

		n	Education			Total
			Primary school	High school	Undergraduate and above	
Professional seniority	1-19 years	14	37	61	112	
	%	12.5%	33.0%	54.5%	100.0%	
	20-29 years	12	73	46	131	
	%	9.2%	55.7%	35.1%	100.0%	
	30 years and above	78	59	20	157	
	%	49.7%	37.6%	12.7%	100.0%	
Total	n	104	169	127	400	
	%	26.0%	42.3%	31.8%	100.0%	

Chi-square value=101.234 p=000

Source: Authors

#### 4. Conclusion

Many studies aim to reveal the role of women in society and the reasons for gender differences in professions. Furthermore, researchers carry out studies on the importance of gender variables and feminine approaches in social sciences.

General studies demonstrate that there is a gender-based problem in the food preparation sector. Although cooking

is related to the female profile, it is under male dominance as a profession (Cairns & Johnston, 2015; Fürst, 1997).

These gender descriptions of male and female appear in many areas of professional business life. When the subject is examined as the cooking profession in the professional kitchen, it is observed that proportionally the dominant personality is occupied by male chefs (Kimmel, 2003).

From the past to the present, a hierarchical order is still maintaining its existence in many professional kitchens. This hierarchical order reveals that workers in the kitchen are promoted over time. Since the work tempo is intense and working hours are long, chef cookery in the kitchens of hotels has been a male-dominated profession. It was revealed that women do not prefer or cannot prefer to work in environments which require high tempo and heavy work, such as professional kitchens, because of their responsibilities in society and the duties they carry. Women do not prefer this sector because they should work intensely and for long hours for many years in order to increase their position in the kitchen and reach the chef cook position, and this causes them to neglect their home and social responsibilities.

The present study was carried out in the kitchens of 4 and 5-star hotels on four continents and revealed that the majority of chefs working in this sector were male. No difference was observed in the gender distribution of the chefs working in the hotels and participating in the study between the continents. The gender ratio of chefs in hotels on each continent is approximately the same. The research supports the literature in this respect.

Another important result of the study is the significant difference between the chefs' education levels according to their age. It has been found out that young chefs have higher education levels. As the chefs' age increases, their education level decreases.

As the professional seniority of chefs in the hotels participating in the study increased, their education level decreased. This suggests that chefs, who have lower professional seniority, have higher levels of education. In particular, chefs who received education in their field were understood to be promoted more quickly in the profession.

Men and women may not have the same social qualities to develop themselves (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Similarly, another opinion defends that men can use social qualities to introduce and to improve themselves and that women cannot use them because of a male-dominated culture even if they have status and competence (Heilman & Haynes, 2005).

In order to encourage more women to join the profession, additional social policies should be adopted at the government level (Guerrina, 2002; Harris & Giuffre, 2015). Based on the findings which draw attention to the fact that male-dominated business areas have become better thanks to women by providing flexibility in socially

gender-based working environments, the increase in the presence of women in professional kitchens will lead to more rational working environments (Glauber, 2011).

The first of the ideas put forward to correct the situation in favor of women is that "female chefs should guide other female cooks". Second, "It is a change of male gender understanding in the field of gastronomy". Third; Mentors in the commercial area should play an active role in the dissolution of gender inequality. And fourth should be the change of norms and subcultures (Harris & Giuffre, 2015).

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**INFO PAGE**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to determine the reasons; "why are chefs always male" in the kitchens of hotels. Food cultures of countries, cooking techniques, eating styles are some of the subjects in the study area of gastronomy science. Chefs are one of the primary elements that contribute to the development of food culture. Cook chefs are at the center of the present study. The scientific discipline "Workforce in Working Life" continues to do research about Cook Chefs. In this study, the gender and reasons of chefs working in the kitchens of 4 and 5 star hotels serving in the field of tourism in the world were researched demographically. Four continents, five countries from each continent, two cities from each country and ten international 4 and 5 star chain hotels in each city were selected. In the first section of the study, it was observed that most of the chefs working in hotels were male. In the second section, the reasons why most of the chefs are male were examined scientifically. As a result, it was determined that the working conditions of chefs are difficult for women hence the high number of male chefs.

**Keywords:** Gastronomy, Cook Chef, Hotel Kitchen Chefs, Male Cook Chef, Female Cook Chef, Successful Cook Chefs

**Authors**

Full Name	Author contribution roles	Contribution rate
<b>Serdar Oktay:</b>	Conceptualism, Methodology, Software, Validation, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision, Project administration	50%
<b>Nafiya Güden:</b>	Conceptualism, Methodology, Software, Validation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision, Project administration	50%

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**Ethics Committee Satatement:** Ethics committee report is available for this research and it has been documented to the journal.

**Ethics committee:** Final International University School of Tourism and Culinary Arts

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