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## WOMEN SHAKING THE CONCEPT OF 'MEN'S WORK' IN TURKEY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE NEWS REPORTS

### TÜRKİYE'DE 'ERKEK İŞİ' ALGISINI SANSAN KADINLAR: GAZETE HABERLERİNİN ELEŞTİREL BİR SÖYLEM ÇÖZÜMLEMESİ

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#### Öz

Bu çalışma Türkiye'de kadınların cinsiyet açısından alışılmamış mesleklere geçişi hakkında dışlayıcı ya da dahil edici söylemleri araştırmak amacıyla, kendilerine özgü göstergibilimsel ve metinsel özellikleri ile betimlenen çevrimiçi haber söylemlerini incelemektedir. Eleştirel Söylem Çözümlemesi ve makro yapısal analiz (van Dijk, 1980) çerçevesinde, çalışmada kadınların erkek egemen mesleklere çalışmaları hakkındaki çevrimiçi gazeteler ve haber portallarından oluşan veri seti, toplum algısını şekillendirmek amacıyla olası ayrımcı ya da destekleyici bir tavır nasıl inşa ettiklerini ortaya koymak amacıyla analiz edilmektedir. Bulgular toplumdaki 'erkek işi' algısının gazete haberlerinde alaycı ve kuşkucu bir tonla sorgulandığını ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Kadınların 'erkek işi' olarak adlandırılan mesleklerdeki başarılarına belirgin bir vurgu yaparak veri setinde yapıcı bir tutum sergilenmektedir. Kadınların cinsiyet olarak alışılmamış mesleklerdeki mevcudiyetleri ile ilgili kendi algılarına gelince, karşılaştıkları bazı zorlukları kabul etseler de anlatılarında kadınsılıklarını koruduklarına dair güçlü bir vurgu ile güçlerine ve azimlerine olan güvenlerini açık olarak ifade ettikleri görülmektedir.

#### Abstract

This study explores online news discourses characterized by their unique semiotic and textual properties to unveil any discursive exclusionary or inclusionary constructions regarding women's movement to gender-atypical occupations in Turkey. Adopting the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and macrostructural analysis of discourse (van Dijk, 1980), the study analyses a dataset of online newspapers and news portals on women working in male-dominated occupations to understand how they construct and proliferate a discriminatory or supportive attitude in shaping public attention. The findings reveal that the concept of 'men's work' is challenged in the news reports by an ironical and disbelieving tone to question the occupational gender segregation. A constructive attitude exists by an apparent focus on women's achievements in so-called 'men's work'. With respect to women's perception of their presence in gender-atypical jobs, though they acknowledge some difficulties they face, their confidence in their strength and perseverance is obvious in their narratives with a strong emphasis on keeping their femininity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Even though proportions of women in a few gender-atypical jobs have increased dramatically in recent years, there still seems to be a very clear division of “men’s work” and “women’s work” in most industrialized countries over the world. This occupational gender segregation is a problem for both men and women but especially for women. Traditionally, it has been thought that women and men are suitable for different jobs, to exemplify, women are often engaged in more nurturing and expressive jobs while men predominate in more technical jobs and in jobs where they will be able to present their decision-making abilities (Parsons & Bales, 1955; Simpson & Simpson, 1993). As highlighted in Williams (1993) since women are usually engaged in female occupations, they are paid less compared to men. Besides, these female jobs are often considered to be less prestigious than male jobs. When men and women move to gender-atypical occupations, they also face some issues. Some examples of the problems women come across when they are engaged in male-dominated professions include discrimination, harassment, glass ceilings, and being excluded from informal networks.

Women who cross over to male-dominated occupations come across some suspicions such as they are not ‘real women’ or they are ‘aberrant’ women as underlined by Spencer and Podmore (1987). Oftentimes, they emphasize their femininity which usually has just a little benefit in so-called ‘men’s work’. However, it should be noted that ‘gendering’ of occupations is a two-way street. Similar problems also arise when men cross over to female-dominated occupations such as nursing or caregiving. They also encounter similar suspicions including that they are not ‘real men’, ‘they are gay or effeminate’ as discussed by Williams (1993). Hence, it is essential to search and analyse the factors that keep women out of male jobs and men out of female jobs.

With the aim of gaining insight into the most recent situation regarding women’s movement to male-dominated occupations in Turkey, this study aims to investigate media discourse, more specifically online newspapers and news portals on the issue. By focalizing on linguistic, semiotic and discursive manifestations of online (in)equality towards women engaged in gender-atypical occupations, the main interests of the present study are any possible inclusionary or exclusionary representations of these women in the news media. Adopting the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, there are three main research questions guiding this study:

(1) How are women working in non-traditional occupations and the reactions of the society portrayed in the news reports with regard to any prejudiced or welcoming expressions?

(2) How the prevalent division of jobs as ‘men’s work’ and ‘women’s work’ is tackled and approached in the news reports?

(3) How do women themselves express their presence in male-dominated occupations and which issues do they bring up?

The current study aims to contribute to the existing literature regarding its particular focus on (i) Turkish context where the phenomenon of women getting engaged in male-dominated occupations has become visible and had media coverage only recently, and (ii) representation of the issue in question in media discourse which has a fundamental effect on shaping public attention and social practice.

### 1.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) is utilized as the framework of the current study. Before focalizing on the definition and principles of CDA, it is essential to define the term *discourse*. Discourse is a significant component in research of any communication process such as business, management, or linguistics, hence, it has been defined and referred to in different fields of thought. From a linguistic perspective, discourse has been identified as “language above the sentence or above the clause” (Schiffrin, 1994). Fairclough (1993) indicates that discourse can be written or oral and further adds that visual media such as photographs and non-verbal communication are also different types of discourse.

According to Fowler et al. (1979), CDA emerged from critical linguistics developed at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s. More specifically, CDA is a new way of discourse analysis in which linguistics is regarded as the main body and language analysis as the tool to uncover the complex relationship among language, power, and ideology. van Dijk (2001) defines CDA as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 352). Analysing the dialectical relationship between discourse and ideology is the main objective of CDA. Fairclough (1989) proposes that CDA has three main components: text analysis (description), text production process analysis (interpretation) and discursive event analysis (explanation). Though texts and interactions are the datasets for CDA, they are not the starting point. As Fairclough (2001) highlights, social issues and problems, matters of sociology, political science, and/or cultural studies are the bases of CDA. Evaluating these problems with a critical stance might help the reader challenge the conventions. van Dijk (1997) views CDA as an interdisciplinary method that analyses texts and speeches with a critical stance. CDA can be utilized in circumstances where social inequality is observed as highlighted by the statements of Dijk (1993) below:

*“(...) if immigrants, refugees and (other) minorities suffer from prejudice, discrimination, and racism, and if women continue to be subjected to male dominance, violence or sexual harassment, it will be essential to examine and evaluate such events and their consequences essentially from their point of view.” (p. 253)*

As the main concerns in this paper are any possible biased or impartial attitudes towards women’s movement to non-traditional occupations in news discourse in Turkey, the research interests and practical applications of CDA are congruous with the objectives of this study. More specifically, since this study is mainly concerned with the main themes in news reports regarding women’s presence in male-dominated occupations, macrostructural analysis of discourse is applied in this study. The application of macrostructural analysis especially in mass media research allows the explicit identification of main topics and themes even when they are not expressed in surface structures such as titles, leads, or thematic words and sentences (van Dijk, 1983).

It is not possible to identify global meanings of a discourse without an analysis of semantic macrostructures (van Dijk, 1980). Furthermore, macrostructural interpretation is also required for the identification of microlevel structures. In order to refer to semantic macrostructures of discourse, words such as *theme*, *topic*, *gist* and *upshot* are commonly used. Macrostructures might also be expressed by means of summaries and conclusions. On the other hand, as highlighted by van Dijk (1980), microstructures of discourse are processed at the local level including words, phrases, clauses and sentences.

## **1.2. CDA in Media Discourse**

It is undeniable that media have a substantial role in both reporting the events and shaping and directing public perception. As van Dijk (1988) points out news reports either on TV or in the press represent a particular type of discourse. O’Keeffe (2011) identifies media discourse as written and spoken interactions on a broadcast platform oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer. Based on this identification, media discourse is a public and on-record type of interaction. News discourse is an example of media discourse and with a possible positive or negative effect on societies, economy or business, it is considered to be one of the most significant objects of CDA.

Newspaper articles are assumed to report reality. However, as underlined by Zhang et al. (2021) they also have the possibility of controlling and disseminating rights and ideologies since journalists and reporters have their own values and tendencies which might influence their way of reporting and writing newspaper articles. Therefore, it is backbreaking for a piece of news to

be completely impartial and objective as the materials to be included and opinions of people to be cited all depend on the reporter, not on the events. Domination of content might also occur thanks to the media's opportunities for access to information. Hence, utilizing CDA in media discourse might be useful as it prevents and uncovers any possible misdirection and discrimination in different types of discourse. As Radu and Redien-Collot (2008) underline, media discourse has both descriptive and normative functions in that they inform society about how things are, and also they implicitly convey the message of how things should be and how individuals should behave to be in alignment with general values and social expectations.

### **1.3. Women's Representation in Media**

Considerable attention has been paid to the way women are represented in media discourse by previous research. Power, Rak and Kim (2020) draw attention to the less media coverage of women compared to men. They further note that there are often stereotypes regarding women as media representations usually picture women in their domestic sphere and focus on their appearance and family relations rather than their professional achievements. Adopting a critical approach is necessary with regard to such under representations or misrepresentations of women as media have the power of both reflecting and shaping social practices.

Considerable research in discourse studies and feminist media focus on the stereotypes and underrepresentation of women in media. As set forth by Gallagher (2005, 2010), women are mentioned less frequently than men in media outlets. Furthermore, Jia et al. (2016) unveil that women are frequently depicted in images rather than being mentioned as the topic of news. These patterns are specifically apparent in portrayals of women working in traditionally male-dominated occupations. In such news reports, women are usually stereotyped, depicted as aberrant women and their capabilities in 'male' pursuits are frequently questioned (McNair et al., 2003; Ross & Byerly, 2004; Rakow & Kranich, 1991).

Achtenagen and Welter (2011) use the concept of 'double burden' to refer to the burden of family and business responsibilities women carry. Similarly, Lee (2005) highlights that women, not men, are depicted as successful only when they are able to balance their family needs and career requirements. Such under-representations or misrepresentations have already been proved to negatively affect women's aspirations and 'expectations and perceptions of women business entrepreneurs held by financiers, clients, suppliers, business partners and other individuals whose actions and decisions directly impact a woman's business success' (Eikhof et al., 2013, p. 549). In order to prevent the detrimental consequences, Happer and Philo (2013) claim that critical evaluations of media discourse is essential as they have the potential to promote gender (in)equality by shaping public attention and understanding.

To name a few examples of women's representation in social media, by an analysis of a Spanish feminist electronic magazine, Rodríguez-Darias and Aguilera-A'vila (2018) identify online gender-based harassment. In the Chinese context, Peng et al. (2023) reveal the stereotypes regarding female PhDs and their sexualised portrayal in the discussions among internet users. Several studies are concerned with women's representation in social media platforms in Turkey. Regarding the idealized body perceptions, Metin Aer (2020) analyses the entries under the titles *Turkish male body* and *Turkish female body* in 'Ekşi Sözlük'. The findings reveal that the Turkish female body was belittled and associated with 'traditionalism'. On the other hand, the Turkish male body was considered to be more well-groomed compared to the Turkish female body. In a similar vein, employing content analysis to investigate the entries under the title of *the guy who is in a relationship with a fat girl* in 'Ekşi Sözlük', Bilgin Ülken and Yüce (2020) show that the entries under this title are heavily negative with appearance-based judgments regarding women.

## 2. DATA COLLECTION

This qualitative study follows and adopts the framework of CDA and more specifically macrostructural analysis of discourse (van Dijk, 1980) particularly for the investigation of social discrimination and gender inequality. With this aim, a purpose-built corpus was utilized as the dataset. Consisting of 33 online articles from newspapers and news portals and a total of 16,686 words, a small corpus was formed on women working in male-dominated occupations in Turkey between the years 2016-2021. As underlined by Page et al. (2014), this relatively small size data is favourable as it allows an elaborated qualitative analysis. A preliminary search of newspapers and news portals showed that articles on women in non-traditional occupations became wider starting from 2016 and were especially frequent in 2021. The time span of the years 2016-2021 was consciously selected as this paper is focused on the most recent and the latest situation in Turkey regarding the issue. Articles were sourced from the online news repository and all Turkish national newspapers and news portals were searched for articles on women engaged in traditionally male-dominated pursuits. As the number of the articles was convenient for an elaborated qualitative analysis, to get an overall picture of the situation in Turkey, all the news reports between the specified time span were analysed. To find out the data, search words 'women in male-dominated occupations' and 'men's work' (Tur: '*erkek egemen mesleklerde kadınlar*' and '*erkek işi*') were used. After the corpus was formed, macrostructural discourse analysis was employed to identify the main themes regarding women's movement to male-dominated occupations in Turkey. At this point, it is also significant to note the potential and strength of online

news. Thanks to the rise of the Internet, options through which people get access to the news have been proliferated, which in turn has a significant effect on shaping the society's perspectives on any topic.

### 3. ANALYSIS and DISCUSSION

This article is predominantly concerned with macro-propositions, rather than with the micro-organization of news discourse. It aims at identifying the main themes of the news reports regarding women in non-traditional occupations. After forming the relevant corpus, all the articles were meticulously analysed by the author for identifying any possible positive or negative assumptions, representations and portrayals regarding women's entity in occupations frequently associated with men. Macrostructural analysis of the data is carried out by application of three macro-rules: (1) deletion, (2) generalization and (3) (re)construction. First, to get to the bottom of the issue, irrelevant information was deleted from the news reports. In the second stage, sequences were generalized and specific codes were formed. In the last phase, global propositions, in other words, themes were formed based on the content. At the end of the analysis, 2 main themes and 10 sub-themes have been identified by the author. The online articles included both the reports of the journalists and the narratives of women in male-dominated occupations. According to the analysis, the articles had two main themes which are society's perspective and women's perspective related to the situation in Turkey, which will be discussed with their sub-themes in detail in sections to come.

#### *Figure 1. Themes and Sub-themes Derived from the Data*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <u>1. Society's Perspective</u>                | <u>2. Women's Perspective</u>                   |
| 1.1. Frequent Use of 'Men's Work'              | 2.1. Encouraging Other Women                    |
| 1.2. Reactions of the Society                  | 2.2. Strengths of Being a Women in 'Men's Work' |
| 1.3. Change in Men's Attitudes                 | 2.3. Acknowledging the Challenges               |
| 1.4. Woman's Touch                             | 2.4. Keeping Their Femininity                   |
| 1.5. Support of the Kinspeople                 |   |
| 1.6. 'Both Babysitting and Extinguishing Fire' |   |

#### 3.1. Society's Perspective

Based on the analysis, the first theme that was identified in the articles is related to the society's perspective on women's movement to male-dominated occupations. The first main theme, society's perspective, has six sub-themes.

### 3.1.1. Frequent Use of 'Men's Work'

In news reports that were analysed for this study, the expression 'men's work' was very commonly used both by the reporters and the women within the news sources, that is, the women who are interviewed by the reporters. The frequent use of this expression implies that gendering of occupations still exists in Turkey. The language in news reports related to women in non-traditional occupations implies that the concept of *jobs* is still not genderless.

Excerpt 1 is related to the first women firefighters in İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality and Excerpt 2 is related to a woman who is doing inlay work using mother-of-pearl in spite of all the criticisms and stereotypes of the society. Expressions in the quotation marks, *this is men's work, you can't do it*, express the prejudices against women who are working as firefighters and who do inlay work using mother-of-pearl. After referring to these exclusionary statements, the reporters add that women were able to break down these prejudices thanks to their perseverance, portraying the situation in favour of women. In Excerpt 1, the expression *just to spite* implies a supportive tone regarding the women's entity in fire departments whilst it expresses an antagonist attitude towards people with prejudices. Similarly, in Excerpt 2, the ironical use of the exclamation mark specifically calls readers' attention to the widespread prejudice and the use of the adjective *determined* to portray the woman also shadows forth a positive attitude towards women.

(1) "Bu iş erkek işi, sen yapamazsın" diyenlere inat itfaiyecilik mesleğini seçen ve İstanbul'da bir buçuk ay önce göreve başlayan 37 kadın var. (Saltık, 2021)

(*Just to spite people who say "this is men's work, you can't do it", there are 37 women who chose firefighting and started their work one and a half months ago in İstanbul.*)

(2) "Bu erkek işi sen yapamazsın" dediler! Azimli kadının ürünlerine şimdi dünyanın her yerinden sipariş yağıyor. ("Bu erkek işi", 2021)

(*They said "this is men's work, you can't do it"! Orders are coming from all around the world to the productions of the determined woman.*)

In several of the articles, the term 'men's work' was used within quotation marks implying an irony for the common belief of the society. By means of this sarcastic and disbelieving tone, this concept is challenged and revisited by providing examples of women who have become successful in so-called 'men's work' in Turkey. Excerpt 3 is about two women who have been driving garbage trucks for over 10 years, an occupation which is commonly associated with men. In this excerpt, the ironical tone is intensified with the use of the biased expression 'with the pulp of their hand' in quotation marks. In addition, the use of the expression *very skilfully* denotes

a positive and inclusionary attitude towards women while refuting the previous assumptions regarding women's effectivity in so-called 'men's work'.

(3) Onlar, toplumun 'erkek işi' dediği işleri, 'elinin hamuru' ile büyük bir ustalıkla yapan, milyonlarca kadınlardan sadece ikisi. (Lodos, 2021)

*(They are just two of the millions of women who do the so-called 'men's work' in society very skilfully 'with the pulp of their hand')*

### 3.1.2. Reactions of the Society

Women interviewed also provide the reactions of the society regarding the issue of their presence in non-traditional occupations in articles. According to their statements, these reactions are twofold: positive and negative. However, their common point is that people get used to these *strange* and *aberrant women* after a while even if they react negatively and get stumped in the first place. The following example is a reaction of the society regarding female firefighters in Antalya Metropolitan Municipality. These sentences belong to a woman who has become a firefighter willingly as she has always been impressed by siren sound.

(4) Olay yerinde kadın olduğumuzu görüp garip bakanlar, elimizden hortumu almaya çalışanlar oluyor, yardım etmeye çalışıyorlar. Yaptığımızı görünce de çekiliyorlar. (Özdemir Tosun, 2021)

*(There are people who look at us strangely, try to take the hose, and try to help us when they see we are women. When they see we can do it, they withdraw.)*

Some narratives of women unfold the ironical expressions used by the society when they see women in male-dominated occupations. Excerpt 5 is also related to the first women firefighters in İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, who have left their families in another city and come to İstanbul to become firefighters. In this excerpt, a woman working as a firefighter indicates that she came across with expressions such as "don't interfere with men's work with the dough on your hands" and "ay, did your nail polish get deformed?". These quoted expressions present examples of some of the most prevalent biased and vernaculous sentences used by the society regarding the issue in question.

(5) D... K..., kendilerine "Elinin hamuru ile karışma bu işe", "Ay ojen mi bozuldu?" gibi çok sayıda söylemlerde bulunulduğunu söylüyor. (Saltık, 2021)

*(D... K... said that there were many people saying "Don't interfere with men's work with the dough on your hands" or "Ay, did your nail polish get deformed?")*

Several women focus on the positive reactions of the society. The narrative of the woman driving a garbage truck in Excerpt 6 is especially striking as she indicated that a couple appreciating her job gave her a bouquet of flowers. In this excerpt, the exclamation ‘A woman who is driving a lorry!’ is especially noteworthy as it shows how the couple is astonished by this specific circumstance. Additionally, the sentence ‘You deserve these flowers more than I do’ unveils the importance the couple attaches to the woman’s success in a ‘men’s work’.

(6) Aydın’dan gelen bir çift vardı. Çiftin elinde de bir buket çiçek vardı. Beni görünce ‘Kamyon kullanan kadın!’ diyerek çok şaşırdılar. Sonra yanıma geldiler, ‘Biz hiç kamyon kullanan kadın görmedik’ dediler. Sonra kadının içinden geldi, elindeki çiçeği ‘Siz benden daha çok hak ediyorsunuz, bu bukete size vermek istiyorum’ diye, bana verdi. O zaman yaptığım meslekle bir kez daha gurur duymuştum.” (Lodos, 2021)

*(There was a couple coming from Aydın. They had a bouquet of flowers. When they saw me, they got very surprised saying ‘A woman who is driving a lorry!’. And then they came next to me and said ‘We have never seen a woman who drives a lorry’. Then the woman gave the flowers to me and said ‘you deserve these flowers more than I do, I want to give them to you.’ At that moment, I felt proud of my job once again.)*

As already highlighted, some reactions are biased and exclusionary. To exemplify another striking instance, in Excerpt 7, a woman working as a driver of a garbage truck shares some specific examples of negative reactions such as putting pressure in traffic and shouting. The expressions ‘compared to men’ and ‘as we are women’ indicate that the woman is also aware why they face such discriminatory demeanours. However, she also adds that these instances are very rare and people usually approach them positively with a smiling face.

(7) Trafikte, bir erkeğe kıyasla daha çok sıkıştırmaya çalışıyorlar. Olmadık yerde park etmiş araçlar oluyor. Çekmesini istediğiniz zaman sorun çıkartıyorlar. Kadın olduğumuz için biraz daha ses tonları yükselebiliyor. Ama bu anlattıklarım binde bir. Bize gülümseyerek yaklaşan insan daha çok. (“Odunpazarı’nda çöp kamyonu”, 2021)

*(In traffic, they try to put pressure on us more compared to men. Sometimes there are cars that are parked in improper places. When we ask them to pull their cars, they create trouble. As we are women, they sometimes shout at us. But these happen very rarely. There are more people who approach us smiling.)*

### 3.1.3. Change in Men's Attitudes

Contrary to the common belief that men do not want women in their workplace, the thematic analysis of the articles reveals a change in men's attitudes after women started to work in male-dominated occupations. According to the analysis, as they did not have female colleagues previously, men used to breeze out in their workplace. However, when women also joined these mostly male work crews, men had to adjust their attitudes which resulted in a more comfortable and harassment-free workplace for women. Excerpt 8 is related to women firefighters in İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and Excerpt 9 is related to women firefighters in İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, who have become firefighters in spite of all the prejudices of the society. In Excerpt 8, the sensitivity of men regarding their speech when there are women around is highlighted and underlined. In Excerpt 9, the statement '*This is a male-dominated occupation, of course*' is a direct manifestation of the woman's clean acceptance of the fact that it is not a genderless occupation, specifically with the expression '*of course*'. However, the subsequent expressions are an attempt to portray the situation more positively, in favour of women.

(8) Kadın itfaiyeci sayısı arttıkça erkek itfaiyecilerin tavırları değişmeye başlamış. Özellikle konuşurken kelimelere dikkat eder hale gelmişler. ("İzmir'in kadın itfaiyecileri", 2016)

*(As the number of female firefighters increased, male firefighters' attitudes have started to change. Especially when they are talking, they started to be more careful with their words.)*

(9) Erkek egemen bir meslek tabii ki. Uzun zamandır istasyonlarda sadece erkekler olduğu için daha rahat hareket ediyorlarmış. Duşa girmek vs gibi. Şimdi odaları bize göre düzenlediler, tuvalet, banyomuz odamızda. Şu ana kadar sıkıntı yaşamadık. (Fıstık, 2021)

*(This is a male-dominated occupation, of course. As there were only men in the station for a long time, they could breeze out such as taking a shower. Now, they arranged the rooms to suit us and our toilet and bath are in the room. We have had no problem so far.)*

### 3.1.4. 'Woman's Touch'

Analysis in the current study unveils a specific positive attitude regarding women in male-dominated occupations. Frequent use of the expression *woman's touch* indicates an inclusionary and supportive tone for the issue underlining that woman's touch beautifies and colours every place they are working in. Excerpt 10 is about a woman firefighter in Gaziantep and Excerpt 11 is about another woman firefighter in Burdur. The following two examples also focalize on the concrete manifestations of *woman's touch* in fire departments and rail transportation by paying specific attention to women's positive and advantageous qualities including being meticulous

and neat. In these excerpts, the words ‘beautifies’, ‘difference’, ‘meticulous’ and ‘blossoms out’ emphasize the favourable and constructive effects of women’s movement to male-dominated occupations.

(10) Bayan elinin değdiği her yerde farklılık ve güzellik oluyor. (Beyer, 2017)

*(Woman’s touch beautifies everything and makes a difference.)*

(11) Kadın itfaiyecilerin başarılarını gördükçe, diğer itfaiyeler de kadın personel alıyorlar. Kadınlar, çok dikkatli. Kadının elinin değdiği her şey güzelleşiyor. (Konur Usta, 2018)

*(As they see women’s success, other fire departments are also hiring female staff. Women are so meticulous. Everything women touch blossoms out.)*

### 3.1.5. Support of the Kinspeople

News reports also highlight support of families and friends for women in the process of joining in so-called ‘men’s work’. The reports indicate that kinspeople of these women feel proud and approach this issue in a positive way. Excerpt 12 narrates the story of a woman firefighter in İstanbul and Excerpt 13 is related to another woman firefighter in Antalya. They display examples of the support women got from their father and family in the challenging process of becoming a firefighter.

(12) Bu konuda en çok babasından destek gördüğünü ifade eden S..., itfaiye eri olabilmek için babasının evde parkur kurduğunu ve sınavlara öyle hazırlandığını anlattı. (“İBB’de 37 kadın”, 2021)

*(S... says that she got the most support from her father and she also adds that her father set a racetrack at home and she prepared for the exams in that way.)*

(13) Ailem itfaiyeci olmak istediğimi söylediğimde bana çok destek oldu. Onların desteğiyle bu zamana geldim. (Laleli, 2021)

*(When I said I wanted to be a firefighter, my family supported me a lot. I became successful thanks to their support.)*

### 3.1.6. ‘Both Babysitting and Extinguishing Fire’

Statements in one article about women firefighters in İstanbul, as displayed in Excerpts 14 and 15, were especially striking as these reports appraised women stating that they can both babysit and extinguish fire, implicitly carrying stereotypes regarding ‘men’s and women’s work’ in Tur-

key. Babysitting is directly associated with women in these reports and it is implicitly taken as a default duty of women. These implications draw a similar picture to the concept of *double burden* proposed by Achtenagen and Welter (2011) to refer to family and business requirements. Besides, in agreement with Lee (2005), women are depicted as successful only when they are able to balance their family needs and career requirements.

(14) Kadın itfaiyeciler iş başında! Çocuk da bakıyorlar yangın da söndürüyorlar. (“Kadın itfaiyeciler”, 2021)

*(Female firefighters are on the go! They are both babysitting and extinguishing fire.)*

(15) Çocuk da bakıyorlar yangın da söndürüyorlar. Hepsi nasıl bir sorumluluk altına girdiklerinin farkında. (“Kadın itfaiyeciler”, 2021)

*(They are both babysitting and extinguishing fire. They are all aware of how big the responsibility they are taking.)*

### 3.2. Women's Perspective

The second main theme inferred from the examination of articles is women’s perspective regarding their presence in male-dominated workplaces as the articles also included the narratives of women themselves. This theme has four sub-themes to be discussed in the upcoming section.

#### 3.2.1. Encouraging Other Women

In almost all reports analysed for this study, women encourage their fellows to consider working in male-dominated occupations to break down the barriers of segregation. They directly state that women can achieve anything as long as they desire and draw attention to women’s strength and perseverance. In Excerpt 16, a female mechanic of electrical breakdown working in a team consisting of 80 men for 6 years in Erzurum, encourages other women to work in traditionally male-dominated careers. In this specific example, even though the woman sounds encouraging and motivating towards other women, the statement ‘*As a woman, this is a challenging job*’ implies an acknowledgement of the difficulty of the situation.

(16) Bir kadın olarak zor bir meslek ama bunu yaptığım için çok mutluyum. Mesleğimi gerçekten çok seviyorum ve diğer kadın arkadaşlarıma öncü olmak istiyorum. (“Erkek işi algısını”, 2021)

*(As a woman, this is a challenging job but I am so glad to do it. I really love my job and I wish to be a pioneer for my female friends.)*

In Excerpt 17, a female firefighter working in İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality shares her experiences and feels proud that she is able to hearten other women and girls. She further underlines the fact that women do not necessarily have to be nurses or teachers.

(17) Yolda görünce bizi seviniyorlar. Kızlar, 'İtfaiye artık erkek mesleği değilmiş' diyorlar. Bu güzel bir şey. Kadınları temsil ediyorsun, kız çocukları cesaretlendiriyorsun. Kadınlar illa hemşire, öğretmen olmak zorunda değil. (Fıstık, 2021)

*(They are happy when they see us on the road. Girls say 'Firefighting is not a men's work anymore.' That is something good. You represent women and you encourage girls. Women do not necessarily have to be nurses or teachers.)*

### 3.2.2. Strengths of Being a Women in 'Men's Work'

Strengths of women while doing jobs that are commonly associated with men are also referred to in articles by an apparent focus on their strong features which might complement men in the workplace. In Excerpt 18, a female firefighter working in Antalya Metropolitan Municipality indicates that they do the same things as men without a women-men discrimination in fire departments.

(18) Erkek arkadaşlarımız ne yapıyorsa aynısını yapıyoruz, eğitimde, sınavlarda, mülakatlarda ve şu anki görevlerde de aynı şekilde. (Özdemir Tosun, 2021)

*(We do the same things as our male friends in trainings, interviews and current tasks.)*

Several specific qualities of women are mentioned in Excerpts 19 and 20 which are examples of a female underwater rugby trainer whose team has won 13 cups in 13 years in İzmir and a garbage truck driver who has started this job thanks to a man working for women's development in business life. Being more responsible, more disciplined and focusing on details are attributed to women. The expressions '*we are always...*' '*nonrivalness of our team*' and '*as women we are better at cleaning*' unveil women's confidence in their abilities.

(19) Kadınlar her zaman daha sorumluluk sahibi, daha disiplinli. Ben takımımızın uzun süredir rakipsizliğini de bu başarıya bağlıyorum. ("13 sezon", 2018)

*(Women are always more responsible and more disciplined. I think nonrivalness of our team for a long time is also related to this.)*

(20) Mesela bir kadın olarak, hiçbir şeyi es geçmeyiz. Üstünde durmamazlık yapmayız. Her zaman için daha detaycıyız. O sebepten dolayı temizlikte, kadınlar olarak daha iyiyiz. (Lodos, 2021)

*(For example, as women, we never skip anything. We never take something in stride. We are always more focused on details. That is why, as women we are better at cleaning.)*

In Excerpt 21, a female courier working in Eskişehir, who has chosen this job thanks to her interest in riding motorcycles, pays specific attention to the issue that the job started to become more institutional and gain respect thanks to women's entity. The statement 'As women, we can do everything that men do' is a reflection of women's trust in their abilities. Similarly, in Excerpt 22, which is related to a woman who has come in third in world championship and who has come in first in Europe championship in welding, reporters underline women's unifying role in every field of life. In this excerpt, the expression 'They fit like a glove for welding' specifically emphasizes the supportive tone regarding women's presence in male-dominated occupations.

(21) Kadınlar da bu işte olduğu için iş biraz daha kurumsal olmaya başladı, herkes tarafından daha saygı duyulmaya başlandı. Bu iş erkek işi değil bana göre. Erkeğin yaptığı her işi yapabiliriz kadınlar olarak. ("Erkek işi algısını", 2021)

*(As women are also in this job, it started to become more institutional and everybody started to show respect. I think this job is not men's work. As women, we can do everything that men do.)*

(22) Kadınlar her alanda birleştirici rol üstleniyor. Bu nedenle kaynak işi için biçilmiş kaptanlar. (Öztürk, 2021)

*(Women have a unifying role in every field of life. So they fit like a glove for welding.)*

The following example pays attention to concrete achievements of women working as welders including Europe and World championships and being successful worldwide. It is further claimed that women are becoming rivals to men in male-dominated occupations, challenging the assumption that it is difficult for women to get ahead in so-called 'men's work'.

(23) Türkiye'de 'erkek işi' olarak görülen mesleklerde kadın girişimcilerin ağırlığı artıyor. Altı yıllık kaynak ustası A... P..., Japonya'da yapılan dünya şampiyonasında üçüncü, Avrupa'da birinci oldu. (Öztürk, 2021)

*(Women are getting more dominant in jobs that are seen as men's work in Turkey. A... P..., who is working as a welder for 6 years, came in third in the World championship that took place in Japan and came in first in Europe.)*

### 3.2.3. Acknowledging the Challenges

Analysis of the reports set forth that women working in jobs associated with men often acknowledge the challenge of these jobs as a woman. In Excerpts 24 and 25, a female blacksmith who is

the only woman doing this job in Turkey with a great love for horses and a female firefighter who has completed her 5-month-training to become a firefighter also highlight the physical difficulties they are having. Even so, they add that they will overcome it if they try. In these excerpts, the expressions ‘lack masculine power’, ‘challenging process’ and ‘physically slogging on’ draw attention to the gender differences.

(24) Erkek kuvveti olmadığı için onlar 60 yaşına kadar yaparsa ben 40-45’e kadar yapabilirim. (“Bu işi yapan”, 2020)

*(Since I lack masculine power, if men can do this job until they are 60, I can do it until I am 40-45.)*

(25) Biraz zorlu bir süreç ama üstesinden gelmeye çalışıyoruz. Fiziksel olarak çok zorlanıyoruz. (“5 aylık süreç”, 2021)

*(It is a challenging process but we are trying to overcome it. We are physically slogging on.)*

### 3.2.4. Keeping Their Femininity

An implication of the reports that warrants specific attention is the fact that women explicitly emphasize their effort to keep their femininity even if they are working in male-dominated occupations. They particularly underline that even if they choose a non-traditional occupation, they might still look feminine. In Excerpt 26, it is specifically underlined that women try to be well-groomed and they do not ignore their femininity even if they are working as blacksmiths and firefighters.

(26) Mesleğini severek yapan Ş... K..., erkek işi yapıyor olmasının yanı sıra kadınlığını da unutmadığını söyledi. (“Bu işi yapan”, 2020)

*(Ş... K..., who is doing her job willingly, said that she did not forget her femininity when doing a men’s work.)*

In Excerpts 27 and 28, women working as a blacksmith and as a courier provide some specific examples of how they keep their femininity when they are working such as painting their nails, applying lipstick and foundation cream, having their hair done and going to beauty parlours.

(27) Bir yandan kadınlığımı korumam gerektiğini düşünüyorum. İşe yönelik bir asimilasyon yaşarsam kadın kimliğimi bir tarafta bırakmış olacağım. Ama ikisini dengeli şekilde tutuyorum. İş yaparken ojelerim, rujum, fondöten, saçlarımı yapıyorum. (“Bu işi yapan”, 2020)

*(I think I need to keep my femininity as well. If I experience assimilation related to the job, I will be putting aside my feminine identity. But I am balancing both. I am coming to work with my nails polished, lipstick, foundation cream and with my hair done.)*

(28) Ojeli elleri, makyajlı yüzü, fönlü saçlarıyla mesleğe gönül veren Ş... K..., hocalarının da desteğiyle Türkiye'nin tek kadın nalbantı oldu. ("Bu işi yapan", 2020)

*(With her polished nails, makeup, set hair, Ş... K... has become the only female blacksmith in Turkey with the help of her trainers.)*

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has attempted to investigate any possible exclusionary or inclusionary discourses towards women getting employed in male-dominated occupations in Turkey. The analysis of the selected online articles on this topic aimed to provide an overall understanding of how women in non-traditional occupations and reactions of the society are portrayed and how these women themselves picture their presence in so-called 'men's work'. The findings have unfolded that the frequent use of the expression 'men's work' in quotation marks implies an ironical and disbelieving tone in the articles to make the public question the occupational gender segregation. Positive and constructive comments regarding women's success in these gender-atypical jobs might also be considered to be an attempt to break down the prevalent prejudices in the society. The way the society's reactions to women's cross over to these jobs is dealt with in the articles also presents a positive and supportive attitude towards women.

In the articles analysed for this study, the specific attention paid to the concept of 'woman's touch' beautifying and colouring anything and any place is another manifestation of inclusionary discourses regarding women's visibility in predominantly male jobs in Turkey. The salient focus on the support of family and the change in men's attitudes after women started to appear in male-dominated occupations might also be regarded as an attempt to shape public attention and understanding positively towards the issue in question. The only biased attitude that was noticed by the author in the news reports is the use of the expression "Women are both babysitting and extinguishing fires", which presents an implicit association of *babysitting* and *women* and implies that babysitting is a default responsibility of women.

With regard to the society's perspective and reactions, as discussed earlier, they are both positive and negative. One group displays supportive and appreciative attitudes whereas the other group adopts a discriminatory, exclusionary and vernaculous manner even though the second group is in minority based on the narratives of the women. The common point in soci-

ety's reactions is the final acceptance and acclimature of women's presence in non-traditional occupations.

In respect to how women picture their presence in gender-atypical jobs, in the first place, they acknowledge possible challenges and difficulties they face due to the difference between men and women. Nevertheless, their trust in their perseverance and abilities is also obvious in their narratives, by which they believe they will be able to overcome any challenges. Additionally, women's apparent focus on their strengths in male-dominated occupations might be regarded as an attempt to persuade the public to question women's competency and efficiency. A very striking finding in women's narratives is their strong emphasis on their femininity. They underline that even if they are working in predominantly male occupations, they do not ignore or forget their femininity. This finding is also in alignment with the prevalent assumption of the society that women doing 'men's work' are not 'real women' as highlighted by Spencer & Podmore (1987). With an apparent focus on their femininity, these women are presumably addressing such possible prejudices of the society.

As a final word, this study has shown that a predominantly inclusionary and supportive attitude is present in news discourse regarding women's presence in non-traditional occupations in Turkey. This study is focused on Turkish context; however, based on the review of literature, the issue in question seems to be a worldwide phenomenon, though the level of exclusionary or inclusionary discourses might change depending on each country. The findings in this study set forth remarkable progress in breaking down the prejudices about gender segregation in Turkey. However, there still seems to be a long way for Turkey as even the existence of such news implies that occupations are not genderless yet.

#### **ETHICAL DECLARATION**

Ethical approval is not required for this study.

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