

ANALYSING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT IN TURKISH COMPANIES: AN EXPLORATORY CASE TO ACHIEVE UNITED NATION'S SUSTAINABILITY GOAL

DOI: 10.17261/Pressacademia.2023.1745

JMML- V.10-ISS.2-2023(4)-p.85-97

Sena Donmez¹, Asli Tuncay Celikel²

¹Isik University, School of Graduate Studies, Ph.D. Program in Contemporary Management Studies, Istanbul, Turkiye.

22BPHD9001@isik.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0001-8262-0008

²Isik University, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Department of Management, Istanbul, Turkiye

asli.tuncay@isikun.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-2973-5118

Date Received: April 9, 2023

Date Accepted: June 23, 2023



To cite this document

Donmez, S., Tuncay Celikel, A., (2023). Analysing gender equality and empowerment in Turkish companies: an exploratory case to achieve United Nations's sustainability goal. *Journal of Management, Marketing and Logistics (JMML)*, 10(2), 85-97.

Permanent link to this document: <http://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2023.1745>

Copyright: Published by PressAcademia and limited licensed re-use rights only.

ABSTRACT

Purpose- United Nations' Sustainability Goal 5, "Achieving Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls," is a critically important topic in today's sustainability agenda. This exploratory case study aims to delve into the current status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Turkish businesses. Furthermore, it seeks to propose a roadmap with thematic areas that can guide companies in fulfilling Goal 5.

Methodology- For this qualitative research, the study engaged professionals in Türkiye, specifically in the manufacturing and logistics industries in Istanbul. The research employed both preliminary and face-to-face interviews to gather insights from experts in the field of sustainability and those working on SDG 5. The preliminary phase involved two managers, while the subsequent face-to-face interviews involved five key experts. A total of ten open-ended questions were posed to representatives from five companies, comprising sustainability managers and specialists from the manufacturing and logistics sectors.

Findings- Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) literature revealed various themes related to gender equality and empowerment, encompassing gender-neutral decision making, a person's well-being, creating safe spaces, gender equality role in value chain, environmental impact, ethical considerations, awareness, and empowerment linked to leadership. The qualitative research findings were significant to shape a future plan. Based on the research results, ten thematic areas for companies was developed by the authors. Roadmap Thematic Areas for Companies: Breaking gender stereotypes for gender-neutral career, promoting social sustainability through training opportunities, implementing gender-neutral recruitment practices, adopting gender-neutral policies in all decision making processes, establishing an egalitarian environment within the value chain and permissions, addressing global deficiencies in training to eliminate gender prejudices and promoting access to health and medicines, maintaining work-life balance, supporting advancement of employees with trainings, considering benefits of society on environmental impacts and raising public awareness by ensuring ethics.

Conclusion- The development of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) relies heavily on social, economic, and environmental factors, particularly concerning leadership. This case study underscores the need for Turkish companies to prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives, as their efforts will contribute to broader sustainability endeavors within the country. By actively embracing the proposed roadmap's strategies, businesses can pave the way for a more inclusive and sustainable future for all individuals in Türkiye.

Keywords: Gender equality, leadership, sustainability, SDG5 target, workplaces

JEL Codes: M14, Q01, J16

1. INTRODUCTION

Women around the world face significant social, economic, and legal barriers to equality. Compared to men, women are more likely to be unemployed, are more represented in low paying jobs, and hold less entrepreneurial, management, and leadership positions (BluePrint, 2018). According to United Nations, each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) contains specific target that can be both measured and tracked over time. Like a global checklist, these goals allow us to check our progress as we approach to 2030 deadline, which is 7 years ahead. The SDG 5 target is mentioned with the aim of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. There are nine targets under SDG 5; those are; ending discrimination, ending violence, ending harmful practices, recognizing and valuing unpaid work, ensuring full participation in public life, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, ensuring equal economic resources, promoting

women's empowerment through technology, sound policies and legislation, and the time to act is now (UN Women, 2022). This study aims to propose policy implications of companies to advance Goal 5 in leadership by ensuring gender equality (McKinsey, 2022).

This article will begin with detailed literature review highlighting the significant social, economic, and legal barriers that women face globally, which lead to inequalities in employment, representation in high-paying jobs, and access to leadership positions. It will emphasize the importance of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. The article will then outline the nine specific targets under SDG 5, focusing on areas such as ending discrimination and violence, recognizing unpaid work, promoting reproductive health rights, and ensuring equal economic resources.

Afterwards, the study will study the role of companies in advancing Goal 5, particularly in the context of leadership positions. It will propose policy implications and strategies that companies can adopt to foster gender equality within their organizational structures. These may include measures to address unconscious biases in hiring and promotion, implementing flexible work arrangements to support work-life balance, providing leadership training and mentorship opportunities for women, and promoting diversity and inclusion in decision-making processes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment in business terms is defined as "a way to delegate the job from the managers to the employees and make employees more powerful in decision making process within the job they make". Besides, empowerment for societies is defined as the ability to enjoy human rights, assure livelihoods, declining of unpaid work that hinders the enjoyment of rights, and pointed participation as leaders and actors in their communities (Esquivel, 2016). Gender equality and empowerment is worth to discuss. Empowering women is a key area for companies and business schools to promote sustainable growth (McElhane & Mobasseri, 2012). Enhancing women's self-confidence and taking an active part in the answer of problems is ensured by the empowerment of women (Infante & Darmawan, 2022). Urgent action is needed to achieve gender equality by 2030 to eliminate many roots causes of discrimination that continues to limit women's rights in the private and public spheres (Alwis, 2019). Filho et al. (2022) prove that, although the case studies presented show positive interventions for the contribution of SDG5 to SDGs, it remains clearly underpowered. There are other goals as well. Investigating SDG5 relationship with the other 16 SDGs substantiated to be promising and challenging.

According to Eurostat (2022), SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of violence, discrimination, and harmful practices against girls and women in both private and public spheres. It also calls for women's equal opportunities and full participation in leadership at all levels of economic and political decision-making. UNStats (2023) confirms that target 5.5 refers to the proportion of females in the total number of persons employed in managerial positions. This indicator proposes using two different measures jointly, including the share of females in middle and senior management, and the share of females in total management. However, relying solely on the share of women in total management is fallacious.

Levin (2021) provides evidence that women's involvement in decision-making is essential for the planet, as there is a clear link between pro-environmental behavior and women's leadership. Seo, Huang & Han (2017) underline that built-in and hidden mechanisms of gender-based social status contribute to the slower advancement of women to senior management compared to men. Rauf (2022) mentions that girls and women still face barriers to making their own choices and shaping the course of their lives.

For instance, Caughey (2021) demonstrates that occupations indeed conceal a great deal of heterogeneity in terms of job descriptions and titles. Blackburn & Jarman (2016) found that women's occupations generally paid less. Freeland & Harnois (2020) provide evidence that cultural sentiments have both indirect and direct effects on real occupational wage differences while controlling for other individual and occupational factors.

According to Kalmaz & Lisaniler (2022), high and persistent occupational gender segregation limits women's mobility between occupations, negatively affecting women's labor force participation and leading to the division of the labor market into male and female occupations. Beckwith (2016) emphasizes that bringing inclusive business high on the agenda is the challenge now. Wach (2012) highlights the point that governments and NGOs should allocate more resources to enable 'Inclusive Business' as a method of managing development goals. More impartial and better-quality assessments are required to determine the effect of business approaches on development. ILO (2022) stresses that equal rights are necessary for all people, and consequently, companies should focus on gender-sensitive programming in the value chain. UNWOMEN (2022) emphasizes that young leaders have stressed the immediate need to prioritize the leadership of young women and adolescent girls at the center of the agenda to ensure their needs, voices, and demands are heard loud and clear."

Companies should make more effort on reaching Goal 5 in leadership and empowerment. Khushk, Zengtian & Hui (2023) mentioned that female CEOs are generally found to be innovative. When CEOs who are female come on board, organizations are more likely engage in activities that are creative. This study also proves that female CEOs who head organizations are more likely engage in environment friendly practices. Kiefner (2022) also proves that SDGs are integrated much deeper and

broader into corporate strategy if there are more female managers because managers who are female show more tendency to have ethical standards, greater stakeholder engagement, and they influence on group decision making. These are requirements for applying the SDGs in strategy that is corporate.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this exploratory research, we used qualitative research methodology 'face-to-face interview' technique to learn the thoughts of the key experts in production and logistics companies and convey how leadership can be developed in ensuring gender equality in the SDG5 target. In accordance with the SDG5 target, it is aimed to expand how gender equality is achieved in companies and provide solutions. The preliminary interview was held with two managers within the field before data collection process. Their feedback helped us to maintain questions to explore the subject manner. Five key experts in the field of sustainability and working on SDG 5 were interviewed. A total of ten semi structured open-ended questions were posed to representatives from five companies of sustainability managers and specialists in the manufacturing and logistics sectors during face-to-face interviews. In the analysis phase, situation determinations were made, and a case study which has the characteristics of exploratory research, was created. In the following Table 1, information of key experts as respondents are shown.

Table 1: Information of Key Experts as Respondents

Age	Gender	Company	Position	Department	Sector	Work Experience in this Company (years)	Total Work Experience (years)
34	F	Borusan Logistics	Standardization and System Development Manager	Standardization System Development	Logistics	7	11
29	F	White Durables Company*	Sustainability Specialist	Sustainability Directorate	Manufacturing	2	2
57	M	Pharmaceutical Company*	Marketing Partner	Human Resources	Manufacturing	22	35
23	F	Energy Providing Company*	Sustainability Analyst	Asset Management & Sustainability	Manufacturing	2	7
33	F	Logistics Company*	Sustainability Strategy Leader	Corporate Sustainability and ESG	Logistics	2	10

*Name of the companies are confidential.

4. FINDINGS

This case explores the perspectives of the business professionals regarding gender equality in leadership and empowerment to reach more sustainable organizations. In this study preliminary interviews were conducted with two managers to gather general information and their answers were informative and supportive for the data collection as mentioned above. According to the key experts in the field of sustainability and working in the province of İstanbul in Türkiye, ten themes were named and conceptualized via analysis of findings as shown below in Table 2. There is no importance of rank order of the themes in the table.

As a general finding, companies' main issue is found to be as the lack of considering and accepting sustainability in a multidimensional way. Therefore in order to create an awareness, it is crucial to conduct research on gender equality and sustainability. Companies that work towards these goals will not only leave a livable environment for the future generations, but will also affect other companies in this direction by building awareness. Thus, in this study, it is aimed not only to increase

the number of female employees in business-life, but also get information from experts in the field, starting from decision making and addressing the value chain, global, and ethical issues. By doing so, it is aimed to set an example for companies in the production and manufacturing sectors, and to raise more awareness.

Ten main themes were named and conceptualized via analysis of findings.

Theme 1: Identifying Methods to Strengthen Women's Leadership

Women face difficulties in accessing technical and innovative roles. This may reduce job satisfaction (Ashcraft, McLain & Eger, 2016). Currently, there is a digital shift exposed by external circumstances. If leaders and organizations comprehend better the mechanisms behind this will change, it will relieve them to enhance awareness and long-term strategies. That is, it may give positive contribution to environmental and social change (Kuzior et al., 2022). Most companies must take highly targeted, specific steps to rectify their deteriorated digits, so companies need to monitor outcomes to be certain they're fair and eradicate biased aspects of their assessment process. For instance, companies may ensure that they don't simplistically "check the box". That is, low quality programs may be more detrimental than doing nothing at all. Companies should form an estimate of the fairness of benefits of programs (McKinsey, 2022). An inquiry was made about what kind of methods could be developed in the workplace in order to empower women. Almost all of the respondents mentioned that stereotypes hinder the advancement of women. They stated that this situation led to the separation of women's and men's jobs. According to a respondent from Borusan Logistics:

"We gave vocational qualification training to our all employees and some of them started to employ as operator drivers."

A respondent working at another logistics company commented as follows:

"We currently have 7 active female truck drivers, and I am delighted with this situation. I am satisfied those women, especially in this sector, are receiving support. We make it a point to inform our male drivers that women are equally capable of doing the same job as men, such as being chauffeurs, and we ensure that everyone works comfortably together."

The respondent working at a leading company in the energy sector added:

"Because I am an engineer, I become a role model of others."

As observed, respondents believed that eliminating stereotypes would be effective in promoting gender-neutral career choices.

Theme 2: Social Responsibility Perception and Practices in Workplaces

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) includes a range of ways in which companies probe their environmental and social impacts. Companies are gradually addressing the agenda called gender equality. However, there is a shortage in participation of women and skilled labour in workforce (Grosser, 2009). That is, cultural values, economic stability and growth, and social cohesion issues are all considered to be relevant such as health and well-being, and education and services. Encouraging social sustainability may be achieved through an integrative environment that allows socially and culturally diverse groups to live together (Weingaertner & Moberg, 2014).

In another dimension, social sustainability in business includes contributing to promoting gender equality and reducing inequality as the current objective. If organizations proceed to discriminate against women in managerial positions, it cannot be mentioned that social sustainability can be achieved. In other words, gender equality is a key direction for social sustainability such as sustainable leadership (Ramos et al., 2022). Sustainable leadership is a type of leadership that is carried out in the long term and is based on acting ethically and fairly with all stakeholders. Sustainable leadership fosters the exchange of views and ideas, thus nurturing the educational context (Bulmer, Riera & Rodriguez, 2021). Sustainable change can be achieved through women's creative, innovative perspective, leadership attitude, social awareness, and good ability to identify opportunities (Pierli, Murmura & Palazzi, 2022). Conceiving diversity of livelihood may be a fruitful analytical tool for aspects of social sustainability like gender equality, social cohesion, demographics, and inclusion (Segerstedt & Abrahamsson, 2019).

It was concluded above those removing stereotypes is very crucial for gender neutral career. In addition, in the questioning conducted to eliminate gender inequality by ensuring social sustainability, respondents stated that they thought training on gender equality from an early age would be effective in breaking prejudices and that they implemented practices for this purpose. For instance, the respondent at Borusan Logistics expressed her thoughts as follows:

"We, as Borusan Logistics, made the following project; creating an awareness in gender equality via children. The more awareness we can create at children, the more successful it will be for the future, so, for example, we organized a painting

contest. We have prepared a video about gender equality for our children aged 5 to 7, a short video. We asked the children to draw a picture with what they comprehended from this video and what they understood when they said what is gender equality. We also dressed the picture of our winning child on two of our trucks. Therefore, we will see these trucks on the roads in the near future with a project that will tell us how we actually see gender equality on the roads through the eyes of children.”

A respondent working at another logistics company expressed their practice as follows:

“We ensured that our employees learn about gender equality at the Sustainable Life Film Festival.”

The respondent at a pharmaceutical company described their practice as follows:

“For example, we are visiting universities. Personal development training, human resources trainings were given by expert trainers to the students at the universities in the east and southeast of the Black Sea.”

Thus, the participants indicated that incorporating educational opportunities for young people and children is effective in promoting social sustainability.

Theme 3: Importance of Gender-Neutral Recruitment

Evidence indicates that in the short term, quotas can encourage an increase in the number of women as board members. For instance, a 2015 law introduced a 30% quota for women on boards with a deadline of 2016. This resulted in a significant increase in the representation of women on boards, rising from 16% to 35% between 2011 and 2018 (OECD, 2020). In the most prominent listed companies, women held 30.6% of board positions in 2021. However, it is still predominantly men who occupy positions on boards in the largest companies. On the other hand, the data provides compelling evidence. This level of representation has been achieved through a steady increase of 22.4 percent since 2003. It demonstrates that legislative action has a positive effect on women’s representation on boards (Eurostat, 2022).

It was resulted above that the provision of educational opportunities is highly effective in social sustainability. Furthermore, inquiries were made about what kind of recruitment policies are appropriate. Respondents thought that gender neutral recruitment practices were effective. For instance, Borusan Logistics explained its practice as follows:

“We follow a recruitment policy based on equity and inclusiveness, ensuring that the selected candidates are well-suited for the job and align with its requirements.”

The respondent, who works at another logistics company, explained their practice as follows:

“We can contact the drivers, encouraging them with the message that they can do it. We have initiated women's employment here to empower women.”

The respondent, who works at a leading company in the energy sector, added:

“Requiring CVs without applicant photos can be one of the solutions to promote gender equality and diversity inclusion. For example, at our company, we are actively involving people with hearing difficulties by providing sign language training. Our orientations are conducted in sign language to ensure inclusivity.”

As a result, respondents stated that implementing gender-neutral recruitment practices would be effective.

Theme 4: Elimination of Prejudices in Decision Making

Corporate cultures, traditional gender roles, and lack of support for balancing care responsibilities in work are some of the reasons why women are underrepresented in decision making processes (Eurostat, 2022). One key to addressing the gender-environment nexus is environmental justice. That is, women and youth, involving those in indigenous societies, are frequently not justly represented nor involving in environmental policy making and decision-making processes. An environmental rights-based approach is essential to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Despite young people’s awareness of climate change and inequalities, they seldom involved in decision making (OECD, 2021).

Above, it was concluded that recruitment would be effective when considered regardless of gender. Moreover, in order to ensure equal opportunities in leadership, inquiries were made about what kind of practices can be implemented in the decision-making process. Respondents generally stated that creating values in an egalitarian way and increasing the number of female employees can be effective. For instance, the respondent at Borusan Logistics added:

“Borusan is a very well-established company with various initiatives, such as 'Borusan Equals' and 'Gender Glasses.' These programs have now become an integral part of the company's culture. In the event of an incident that violates the principles and values of equality outlined in the "Orange Book," it can be assessed by the Ethical Committees. Therefore, while our culture

is being created, people are given a lot of training, we have many trainings related to the leadership faculty or specific to individual leaders."

A respondent working at a leading company in the energy sector emphasized the significance of wellbeing and conveyed her thoughts as follows:

"Well-being is also crucial. For example, when woman worker is ill, they can take leave and go".

The respondent, working at a pharmaceutical company, talked about the appointments at the point of decision making and conveyed his thoughts as follows:

"It is possible for everyone involved to have a say in decisions related to appointments, salaries, and rotations for all individuals within the decision-making bodies."

In conclusion, they mentioned the necessity of adopting a gender-neutral approach in all decision making processes.

Theme 5: The Role of the Value Chain in Achieving Gender Equality

Businesses and economic activities are conceptualized by the value chain. That is value chain is part of chains, systems of different linked production and exchange activities, holistic networks, and managing in unlike geographical areas such as national, local, and international, not as separate units or functions. The main aim is, for instance, to increase profits for certain stakeholders, improving working conditions, and women's access to the market. Gender inequalities are vital to addressing and comprehending the weakest links within value chain. However, gender analysis predominantly the weakest point in most value chain analyses. Gender analysis mostly ignored in most value chain manuals. Gender analysis ensures a starting point for more correct poverty, motivations, and power relations. Comprehending and conceptualizing these dimensions are critical not only for gender, but also sustainable pro- poor growth and advancement strategies themselves. Procuring that analysis is able to determine and encourage the strongest links. For this reason, it requires the aggregation of gender analysis at all levels. Converting this analysis into the strongest advancement process also requires the fair and full participation of women as well as men. Participation is required not only in design, but also in monitoring and practice (ILO, 2007). For instance, women's participation in food security and biodiversity may be made possible by implementing gender smart solutions. That is, small scale farming in agricultural value chains may enhance women's participation. This has positive effects on health, poverty reduction, and food security (OECD, 2021).

It was concluded above that a gender-neutral approach should be adopted in all decision-making processes. An inquiry was made about what kind of steps can be taken to procure gender equality in the value chain. Respondents mostly thought that providing more comfortable spaces in the value chain, rewards, leaves, and fringe benefits could positively affect women's employment. For instance, a respondent working at Borusan Logistics explained their implementations as follows:

"We have a driver's manual here that outlines a set of rules to be followed. This manual is of utmost importance because every individual representing our company, including employees, suppliers, or their suppliers, must adhere to these guidelines. Looking at the international and external aspects, we have dedicated supplier development teams to accurately assess the suppliers' expectations. These teams work continuously to add value and contribute to our suppliers, while also constantly analyzing their performance. For instance, we conduct periodic evaluations through a process called 'Voice of the Supplier,' where we actively seek feedback from our suppliers about their experience with us."

The respondent, who works at another logistics company, expressed the system they use as follows:

"The safety of all drivers is important for us. With our vehicle's location reporting device, we can be in contact and track the driver's whereabouts at any time, ensuring prompt assistance in case of any problems."

In addition to the other participants, the manufacturing company developed a solution proposal as follows:

"Supply chain is also a part of the ecosystem. Therefore, a gender equality index based on global reporting standards can be created and the score of the supplier can be calculated based on the performance of the supplier".

The respondent, who works at a leading company in the energy sector, made the following additions by referring to the awareness of gaining a profession:

"Your human competencies should also be given from childhood. The concept of assigning gender-based traits like "lion son" or "delicate daughter" should be eliminated from the value chain. For instance, we take care to buy our suppliers from women. When we do these, other companies want to do them as well. Gaining awareness of this is a big point. If we change together in sustainability, then we will make progress".

As a result, the respondents stated that the elimination of prejudices along with the provision of comfortable spaces, permits and fringe benefits can create an egalitarian environment in the value chain.

Theme 6: Comprehending Gender Based Leadership Barriers

It is essential to comprehend the present status of women leaders to understand gender-based leadership barriers and challenges. Despite significant progress in several areas, women in CEO positions in companies around the world still are in the minority. Across the globe, women hold fewer than 5 % of CEO positions in grand corporations. The proportion of top women leaders was found to be the highest in Central Asia and Eastern Europe at 8 %. This was followed by Southeast Asia with 8 % and North Africa and Middle East with 7 %. Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa were ranked at 5 %. Europe, North America, and Oceania each had 4 %. Latin America and East Asia were the two regions with the lowest percentage of female CEOs with %3 (Goryunova, Scribner & Madsen, 2017).

Support for solutions and strategies to bridge the gender gap should come not only from activists, civil society, and the gender equality community, but also from female leaders from private sector (UN Foundations, Nowrojee, 2022). We are all need to comprehending unconscious bias, listen more, and calling it out when it is seen. (Barry et al., 2017).

It was concluded above that elimination prejudices, providing comfortable spaces, permits, and fringe benefits can create an equitable environment in the value chain. In addition to this, an inquiry was made about what the global challenges could be while achieving gender equality. They stated that the problems faced by companies globally could be access to health, medicines and education. As a solution to this, they thought that beneficial results could be obtained by providing trainings to eliminate prejudices. Borusan Logistics conveyed their practice as follows:

“For instance, Borusan Logistics, which carries out significant works in the field of social responsibility, payed attention to a sincere and small solidarity wishes of a village teacher from Anatolia in 2011. Borusan cared so much that. It embraced all the problems of Atmaca Village Primary School in the Kızıltepe district of Mardin. We still are in solidarity with book donations and so on.”

A respondent, who works in a leading company in the energy sector, expressed her thoughts as follows:

“The significance thing is to make a good risk assessment. Continuously reading global reports. It is essential to comprehend their impact on our business and our environment”.

As a result, they stated that there might be a global lack of training programs aimed at eradicating prejudice and implementing practices that ensure equal access to health and medicines.

Theme 7: Work Life Balance in Leadership

Active leadership is required to enhance a vision and shared company values for the future, construct concurrence around that vision, and then build and practice strategies to procure it. This type of leadership is significant for sustainability as it provides that everyone is working together towards the identical target and covetable consequences are achieved. In terms of sustainability, this means engaging in eco-friendly and ethical implementations as part of individual lifestyle and being at the foreground of company’s sustainability problem. That is, communication is key. For instance, actively interacting keeps everyone on the same page and working towards the same target, cutting down any complication around the company’s sustainability exertions. The active inclusion of company senior management and CEOs in sustainability initiatives increases the likelihood that employees will be motivated to the same. Creativity also permits leaders to contact their vision for sustainability giving inspiring a call to action (Long, 2022). For instance, Teknosa that wants to support its women employees in their career paths, continues to make a difference with the “Teknosa’s Mother Mentors” project, which is introduced in 2020 to enable them to learn from each other’s experiences. The project is proposed to assist women, working mothers especially, to transmit their experience in how to strike a work-private life balance. Thus, female colleagues are assisted to benefit from the mentoring tool (Teknosa, Annual Report, 2021).

Furthermore, an inquiry was made about what companies can do to achieve gender equality in work life balance. Most of the companies stated that ensuring work life balance during working hours is their corporate culture. For instance, a respondent who works at a leading company in the energy sector explained the practice they do about well-being in addition to working hours as follows:

“We have the opportunity to come together in the game room for our well-being. While you may enjoy working hard, sometimes you might feel drained of energy. That’s why we have common living areas here, recognizing the importance of employee happiness. I feel part of this family. Our leaders are also committed to enhancing their skills and doing what they love even better. For instance, our company supports postgraduate education by covering the fees. We believe in constantly

improving ourselves in various areas, and the more training and development you pursue, the more valuable you become to the company. Here, personal growth and professional development are highly valued and rewarded”.

As a result, respondents emphasized the importance of maintaining a work-life balance during working hours.

Theme 8: The Importance of Equal Right, and Equal Pay in Leadership

Despite the increasing integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their business strategies, only a few organizations accurately measure their contributions to the SDGs and communicate about it. According to a recent research report by KPMG, 75% of the world's 250 largest companies discuss their impact on SDGs, and 39% refer to SDGs in their CEO/Presidents' messages. However, it is crucial for organizations to be transparent and accountable regarding their contributions to the SDGs, including their indicators and objectives. Setting clear and explicit goals aligned with the SDG goals and targets allows organizations to better track their sustainability performance over time and reaffirm their priorities related to the SDGs (Junior, Fien & Horne, 2019).

For instance, providing women with socio-economic opportunities and access to life-enhancing services that help address inequality are supported by Vodafone. It has a number of commitments to improve the lives of 50 million women living in emerging markets and to connect them mobile by 2025. These commitments are as follows:

*Assisting skills and education,

*Enhancing wellbeing and health,

*Facilitating economic empowerment,

By 2025, their aim is to be the best employer for women worldwide (Vodafone Group Plc, 2019).

Under the guidance of its Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy, Anadolu Efes company in Turkey (EU's 5th largest brewer) provides equality to all its employees, from recruitment to all human resources procedures including salary, career, training, and financial opportunities. Anadolu Efes' Human Resources Policies help them build a diverse and inclusive talent base with global view. With the vision presented by this policy, they promote inclusive leadership and contribute to the improvement of their employees by providing equal opportunities to everyone. Anadolu Efes has been saying “professions do not have a gender”, since the day it was founded and advocates equal opportunities for everyone. They collaborated with universities in 2021 to break the gender-based prejudices of young people about job descriptions. In order to introduce role model women to the business world and to provide mentoring and coaching to female students, especially female colleagues in the sales and production departments, visited the campuses of different universities (Anadolu Efes, Sustainability Report, 2021).

It was concluded above that it is crucial to maintain work life balance during working hours. Furthermore, an inquiry was made on how the SDG 5 target could be developed in leadership. Respondents generally emphasized the significance of enabling equal rights at all levels. They thought it was effective for individuals within the company to internalize it. Manufacturing company commented as follows:

“All relevant KPIs (Key Performance Indicator) needs to be measured, targets set, and internally adapted and disclosed to public in companies' reporting. As it often quoted: 'You cannot manage what you cannot measure'.”

A respondent at a pharmaceutical company referred to the trainings and conveyed their practice as follows:

“We offer training opportunities even if their position advances. We provide personal development, leadership, and coaching trainings. It doesn't matter if it's a man or a woman”.

The respondent, who works at a leading company in the energy sector, stated that gender equality starts with language and commented as follows:

“Primarily, gender equality starts with language. In our company, these issues are taken care of in HR applications. However, it's important to acknowledge that the greatest need in some places might be access to health and education. This may require collaboration with various groups. It's also essential to consider that the audience in Norway differs from the audience in Turkey, and thus, approaches to gender equality may need to be tailored accordingly.”

A respondent working at a logistics company expressed their implementation as follows:

“There is an institution that is conducting a social responsibility project. Through this initiative, the goal is to encourage young girls to pursue football, promoting gender equality. The aim is to challenge the perception that certain careers, such as football, truck driving, and civil engineering, are exclusively for men.”

As a result, they emphasized the importance of supporting employees' advancement through training and development opportunities.

Theme 9: Reflection of Environmental Factors on the Business World

Environmental factors disproportionately affect women around the world such as deforestation, desertification, climate change, inquire sanitation, growing water scarcity, and other infrastructure. This is particularly the case in rural communities and developing countries, where women have more restricted access to natural resources. Out of 231 none such indicators in the SDG framework, 114 are related to the environment, of which only 20 are gender specific and/or sex disaggregation, making up only 9% of the total. Across OECD countries, women incommensurably bear the burden of caring and unpaid domestic work. Around the world, almost 94% of agricultural workers are in informal employment. Women are overrepresented in part time jobs or low paid seasonal and unpaid jobs are therefore likely to be excluded from social protection systems (OECD, 2021). As 2017-2021 data explains, women are less likely to own a mobile phone than men in 52 of the 80 countries and territories (UNStats, 2022).

It was above conclusion that the significance of supporting the advancement of the employees with training. In addition, an inquiry was made about what kind of challenges were encountered in the sustainability process. Respondents mostly thought that taking the environmental factor into account while achieving the goals had an equalizing effect on leadership. For instance, the respondent from Borusan Logistics shared their business conduct and then expressed their thoughts on the problems that companies may face globally:

"Climate, people, innovation" issues have become a part of our business conduct. Accordingly, the targets were given. In fact, our top management team has Sustainability goals in their own performances. Globally, companies are experiencing a difficulty as follows; you have a business goal, you have a profitability goal that you need to achieve, you have a target of turnover, you have a customer target. In addition to these goals, we have to say, protect the environment, protect the society, or digitize your workplace and create efficiency and protect the society and environment here, along with this efficiency. Therefore, after achieving their business goals, many companies may say; I've already achieved my business goal, why should I do these, why should I have to do it. As long as we proceed without this awareness, we are actually heading towards an abyss."

A manufacturing company talked about the ethical line and expressed its thoughts as follows:

"Companies should report transparently about the confirmed cases, reported through ethical line with all confidentiality. Furthermore, while implementing company policies and making employee engagement surveys, employees can be asked about what kind of culture and approach the company has towards gender equality and what can be improved."

A respondent working in the energy sector emphasized the importance of informing the society and expressed her thoughts and practices as follows:

"For instance, when working in the field of climate across all sectors, it is crucial to raise awareness within society about this issue. In the energy sector, we often focus solely on professional deficiencies, but it is important to recognize that climate change will likely impact women the most, affecting their access to water and hygiene products, among other things. We need to prioritize clean energy sources. As a company, we support green energy, and by using green energy, we contribute to a cleaner environment and a more sustainable future indirectly."

As a result, they talked about the significance of acting by considering the environmental factor while developing the targets and considering how the benefits will affect the society.

Theme 10: Raising Awareness and Giving Importance to Ethics

Proactive, harmonious, and conscious efforts of all stakeholders are needed in order to achieve gender equality in workplace and to achieve the associated economic and social benefits. That is governments, in advisory with employers' and workers' organizations, women's organizations and other key partners, play a significant role in making gender equality a reality in the workplace (ILO, 2021). However, many companies are faced with reduced productivity as a consequence of losing talented female staff. This problem becomes worse when the manager loses women in the ranks leading to leadership positions. Solutions to this problem in implementation involve mentoring, flexible working policies, and more engagement. Research also displays that both women and men employees are less willing to switch jobs if they have a positive sense of an organization's "diversity climate" (Deloitte, 2018).

Providing significant economic and welfare benefits to society may be achieved by mainstreaming gender into climate action and other environmental policies. Environmental justice has been recognized by the global community as a fundamental

human right. However, the environmental rights, intersectionality of women, the rights of indigenous women and youth need to be examined with more attention. Enhancing the attendance of women in green innovation may create high skilled jobs and boost entire productivity. Sustainable infrastructure such as energy, water, transport, etc. Plan with women's requirements in mind may increase women's labour force participation and economic empowerment, and increase wellbeing for whole population (OECD, 2021). Furthermore, enabling women's well-being and restraining more job loss must involve cutting down on their stress at work. This can be achieved through development, recognition, communication, incentives, events, rules, and guidelines.

- Development: Involve well-being goals in personal development.
- Recognition: Celebrate and share wellbeing achievement.
- Communication: Generate messaging that represents the beliefs of a high performing and net growing culture.
- Incentives: Prop participation in activities that bring results.
- Events: Raise awareness of net thriving culture and alter behaviors.
- Rules and Guidelines: In the five elements, arrange policies toward wellbeing.
- Facilities: Make a design of facilities for mental and physical health, socialization, and collaboration (GALLUP, Gandhi & Robison, 2021).

In the above sections, significance of acting by considering the environmental factor while developing the targets and considering how the benefits will affect the society was mentioned. Moreover, inquiries were made about how the problems that emerged during the implementation process could be solved. Respondents mostly thought that it would be beneficial to give significance to ethics and raise awareness about sustainability awareness to the society. A respondent working at Borusan Logistics gave an example of their implementation as follows:

"We shall increase communication as much as possible and get feedback from our stakeholders. How do we achieve this? We have such practices as possible regarding the culture of giving feedback. Here we work together with the 'Sustainable Development Association'. We're involved in their 'Be Sensible' project. Again, this year, we are organizing the 'Green Children's Festival'. In many of our locations, we will be organizing festivals this year, where our employees and suppliers, together with their children, will have workshops, theatres, and educational activities to raise awareness of sustainability with them, where they can also have fun. We have a project called 'Love Begins with Language'. Love is in the language in the beginning, there were stickers everywhere, on glasses etc."

A respondent working at another logistics company expressed their practice as follows:

"According to feedback from our female truck drivers, we are working on how to improve this. We attach great importance to R&D. We continue our efforts to improve these, relying on technology and R&D, evaluating the feedback from our employees, looking at other works done by people in the world, at looking at what we can add to it."

A respondent at the manufacturing company expressed her thoughts as follows:

"Developing an equal workplace and society is contingent upon education and awareness. Gender equality-based trainings can foster empathy and raise awareness by illustrating the daily challenges women face. In addition to the general lack of awareness regarding gender equality, Africa faces a persistent issue where access to water is limited. People, particularly women, have to walk many kilometers each day to collect water for their families. This burden prevents women from fully participating in life and hinders their leadership opportunities, especially in such regions."

A respondent, working at a local pharmaceutical company, emphasized the significance of improvement works, and expressed his thoughts as follows:

"The problems that arise in practice should be identified and addressed. For example, the proposed improvement works by the plot group and any decisions to be made are submitted to senior management as proposals. These practices aim to be both ethical and impactful on business results."

A respondent who works in a leading company in the energy sector, expressed her thoughts as follows:

"I think social impact analyzes are valuable."

As a result, respondents emphasized the significance of giving importance to ethics and raising awareness of the society.

Table 2: Summary of Findings

Themes	Key Experts' Perspective And Evaluation
Theme 1: Identifying Methods to Strengthen Women's Leadership	Removing stereotypes would be effective for gender-neutral career choice.
Theme 2: Social Responsibility Perception and Practices in Workplaces	Effective to include training opportunities for young people and children to ensure social sustainability.
Theme 3: Importance of Gender-Neutral Recruitment	Realization of recruitment would be effective considering gender neutrality.
Theme 4: Elimination of Prejudices in Decision Making	The necessity of adopting a gender neutral approach in all decision making processes.
Theme 5: The Role of the Value Chain in Achieving Gender Equality	Elimination of prejudices along with the provision of comfortable spaces, permissions, and fringe benefits can create and egalitarian environment in the value chain.
Theme 6: Comprehending Gender Based Leadership Barriers	There may be a global deficiency in trainings to eliminate prejudice, practices that support access to health and medicines.
Theme 7: Work Life Balance in Leadership	The importance of maintaining work life balance during working hours.
Theme 8: The Importance of Equal Right, and Equal Pay in Leadership	The significance of supporting the advancement of the employees with training.
Theme 9: Reflection of Environmental Factors on the Business World	The importance of acting by considering the environmental factor while developing the targets and considering how the benefits will have an impact on the society.
Theme 10: Raising Awareness and Giving Importance to Ethics	The importance of ensuring ethics and raising public awareness.

5. CONCLUSION

It is seen that progress in leading against gender discrimination in the manufacturing and logistics companies provides more benefits to both the environment and the society. Women leaders are keen on social sustainable projects in business life a lot. In addition to increasing women's participation in management positions; leadership plays an important role in promoting gender equality and advancing the SDG5 target.

Achieving this can only be possible by adopting gender equality in the corporate culture and developing appropriate technologies. If companies want to achieve environmental, social, and economic success with SDG5 goal, they need to raise awareness in the entire corporate culture, training should be developed. Neutral career choice and decision making process should be implemented. They should be aware about global deficiencies. Well-being is another issue that companies care about in the interviews. It is crucial to ensure provision of comfortable spaces, permission, and fringe benefits to create egalitarian environment in the value chain. Work life balance is a significant issue, companies achieved this with organizing working hours. Furthermore, companies thought that when they implemented any action, environmental factor need be considered on this. They all provide standards because those companies' experts working on sustainability issues. Another significant dimension is ethics, as all the companies interviewed adhere to ethical standards, fostering a more gender-equal culture within their organizations.

In this study, qualitative research method was used and thus face-to-face interviews were held in Istanbul/Türkiye. In future studies, high rate of respondents can be reached by using the survey method. One of limitation of this research was the sample size, which was restricted due to the exploratory nature of the case study and the qualitative research analysis. In future studies, number of employees/managers to be interviewed can be increased and in-depth interview method can be used. Additionally, this study focused on manufacturing and logistics sector companies, and future studies could incorporate the service sector as well.

REFERENCES

- A Practical Guide to Mainstreaming Gender Analysis in Value Chain Development. (2007). ILO: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_emp/--emp_ent/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_106538.pdf
- Alwis, R. (2019). End All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Girls with Disabilities and Enhance the Participation of Women with Disabilities in Inclusive Innovation. UN.
- Barry, M., Jowell, A., Thompson, K., Moyer, C., Burke, K., Larson, H., & Talib, Z. (2017). A New Vision for Leadership in Global Health, 390(10112), 2536-2537.
- Beckwith, N. (2016). OECD. Inclusive business can help solve the sustainability equation: <https://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/inclusive-business-sustainability-equation.htm>
- Blackburn, R., & Jarman, J. (2006). Gendered occupations- exploring the relationship between gender. *International Sociology*, 21(2), 289-315.
- BluePrint for Business Leadership on the SDGs. (2018). UN Global Compact: <https://blueprint.unglobalcompact.org/sdgs/sdg05/>
- Building the Evidence Base and Advancing Policy Actions to Achieve The SDGs. (2021). OECD: <https://www.oecd.org/environment/Policy-Highlights-Gender-and-Environment-Evidence-Base-and-Policy-Actions-to-Achieve-the-SDGs.pdf>
- Bulmer, E.; Riera, M.; Rodríguez, R. (2021). The importance of sustainable leadership amongst female managers in the spanish logistics industry: a cultural, ethical and legal perspective. *Sustainability* 2021, 13(12), 6841.
- Caughey, A. (2021). What's in an occupation? investigating within occupation variation and gendersegregation using job titles and task descriptions. *American Sociological Review*, 86(5), 960-999.
- Esquivel, V. (2016). Power and the sustainable development goals: a feminist analysis. *Gender & Development*, 24(1), 9-23.
- Eurostat. (2022). Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=SDG_5_-_Gender_equality
- Explainer: Sustainable Development Goal 5. (2022). UN Women: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/09/explainer-sustainable-development-goal-five>
- Freeland, R., & Harnois, C. (2020). Bridging the gender wage gap: gendered cultural sentiments, sex segregation, and occupation level wages. *American Sociological Association*, 83(2), 129-151.
- Gandhi, V. & Robison, J. (2021). Gallup Workplace. Wellbeing Stats for Women in the Workplace Show a Need for Change: <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/352529/wellbeing-stats-women-workplace-show-need-change.aspx>
- Gender-Sensitive Approaches To Value Chain Development: A Complementary Guide. (2022). ILO.
- Goryunova, E., Scribner, R., & Madsen, S. (2017). The Current Status of Women Leaders Worldwide. *Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership*.
- Grosser, K. (2009). Corporate social responsibility and gender equality: women as stakeholders and the European Union sustainability strategy. *Business Ethics: European Review*, 18(3), 290-307.
- Infante, A., & Darmawan, D. (2022). Gender equality: women's involvement in human resource management practices. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(1), 27-30.
- Junior, R., Fien, J., & Horne, R. (2019). Implementing the UN SDGs in universities: challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned. *Sustainability: The Journal of Record*, 12(2), 129-133.
- Kalmaz, D., & Lisaniler, F. (2019). Occupational segregation and labour force participation of women: case of North Cyprus. *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi*, 14(1), 1-26.
- Khushk, A., Zengtian, Z., & Hui, Y. (2023). Role of female leadership in corporate innovation: a systematic literature review. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 38(3), 287-304.
- Kiefner, V. (2022). Women leaders increase company action on the SDGs. *Network For Business Sustainability*: <https://nbs.net/women-leaders-increase-company-action-on-the-sdgs/>
- Kuzior, A., Kettler, K., & Rab, L. (2022). Digitalization of work and human resources processes as a way to create a sustainable and ethical organization. *Energies*, 15(1), 172.
- Leal Filho, W., Kovaleva, M., Tsani, S. et al. (2022). Promoting gender equality across the sustainable development goals. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 15, 1-22.

- Levin, M. (2021). Why female leadership is crucial to tackling climate change and other crises. UNFCCC: <https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/why-female-leadership-is-crucial-to-tackling-climate-change-and-other-crises/>
- Long, S. (2022). The benefits of active leadership in sustainability. <https://greenbusinessbureau.com/topics/green-culture/the-benefits-of-active-leadership-in-sustainability/>
- McElhane, K., & Mobasser, S. (2012). Women Create a Sustainable Future. UC Berkeley Haas School of Business.
- Nowrojee, S. (2022). United Nations Foundations. Crises, Consequences, and a Call For Women to Lead: Three Takeaways From the 2022 Reykjavik Global Forum: <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/crises-consequences-and-a-call-for-women-to-lead-three-takeaways-from-the-2022-reykjavik-global-forum/>
- Our Contribution to the UN SDGs. (2019). Vodafone: <https://www.vodafone.com/content/dam/vodacom/sustainability/pdfs/sdgs.pdf>
- Pierli G, Murmura F and Palazzi F (2022) Women and leadership: how do women leaders contribute to companies' sustainable choices? *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 3, 930116.
- Policies and Practices to Promote Women in Leadership Roles in the Private Sector. (2020). OECD.
- Progress on Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot, (2022). UNStats.
- Ramos, A.; Latorre, F.; Tomás, I.; Ramos, J. (2022). Women's promotion to management and unfairness perceptions—a challenge to the social sustainability of the organizations and beyond. *Sustainability*, 14(2), 788.
- Rauf, S. (2022). Women empowerment in pakistan: dissection of paradoxical depth. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 24(1), 30-41.
- SDG indicator metadata. (2023). UNStats: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-05-05-02.pdf>
- Segerstedt, E., & Abrahamsson, L. (2019). Diversity of livelihoods and social sustainability in established mining communities. *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 6(2), 610-619.
- Seo, G., Huang, W., & Han, S. (2017). Conceptual review of underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions from a perspective of gendered social status in workplace: implication for HRD research and practice. *Human Resource Development Review*, 16(1), 35-39.
- Sustainable Development Goals A Business Perspective. (2018). Deloitte.
- Wach, E. (2012). Measuring the inclusivity of inclusive business. *Institute of Development Studies Brighton*, 2012(9), 01-30.
- We Add Value to Life With Technology. (2021). <https://yatirimci.teknosa.com/Content/Files/tknfrae2021uyg10.pdf>
- We Brew to Create Sustainable Value. (2021). Anadolu Efes 2021 Sustainability Report.
- Weingaertner, C., & Moberg, Å. (2014). Exploring social sustainability: learning from perspectives on urban development and companies and products. *Sustainable Development*, 22(2), 122-133.
- Women in the Workplace 2022. (2022). McKinsey & Company: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>