Career Barriers Faced by Turkish Women Academics: Support for What?

Türk kadın akademisyenlerin karşılaştığı kariyer engelleri

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Özet

Bu araştırmanın amacı kamu üniversitelerinde çalışan Türk kadın akademisyenlerin kariyerlerinde ilerleme süreçlerinde karşılaştıkları engelleri incelemektir. Araştırma nitel desende oluşturulmuştur. Araştırmada veri toplama tekniği bireysel görüşmedir. Bireysel görüşmelerde, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırmaya dokuz profesör, bir yardımcı doçent, iki doktor ve sekiz öğretim görevlisi olmak üzere farklı disiplinlerden toplamda 20 kadın akademisyen katılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizinden yararlanılmıştır. Analiz sonucu ortaya çıkan temalar şunlardır: "Destek", "Kariyere Verilen Ara" ve "Sosyal Faktörler: Özgüven, Önyargılar ve Rol Çatışması". Temalar katılımcıların cevaplarından alınan direkt alıntılarla desteklenmiştir. Çalışma sonunda bulgular doğrultusunda önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: Kadın akademisyenler, kariyer, kariyer engelleri, yükseköğretim.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the barriers Turkish women academics working in state universities face throughout their career progression. The research was formed in qualitative research design. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with a semi-structured interview form. 20 women academics in total including nine professors, one assistant professor, two doctors and eight instructors from a variety of disciplines participated in the research. Content analysis was conducted and the themes that emerged as a result of the data analysis were "Support", "Career Breaks", and "Social Factors: Self-Confidence, Prejudice, and Role Conflict". The themes were supported by direct quotations from the participants' responses. Recommendations were made related to the findings of the research.

Keywords: Career, career barriers, higher education, women academics.

omen face many obstacles limiting and complicating their career options and thus their career development. These obstacles may affect both their professional and private lives (Banks, 2006; Coogan & Chen, 2007). People's planning their career in their 30's (O'Dorchai, 2006) and women's body clock following the same chronological order for childbearing influence women's career development process. Both women and men want to start a family and follow other interests during this prolific period. Unfortunately, these coinciding professional and private plans function as a form of punishment for women and impede their career progression (Mavriplis, Heller, Beil, & Dam, 2010).

Social cognitive career theory supports the notion that women encounter obstacles throughout their career development process (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). According to this theory, financial or social status; or aptitude for specific jobs and self-sufficiency can limit women's career choices (Murtagh, Lopes, & Lyons, 2007). However, it is possible to overcome problems that women experience during their career pursuit (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

Women Academics and their Career Barriers from a Global Perspective

While career displays a linear improvement for some people, it may mean plains, blind alleys and interruptions for others

(Bakioglu, 1996). The latter is the case for women academics in their career development process. The idioms 'glass ceiling', which indicates an invisible but impenetrable obstacle preventing women from developing their career, 'sticky floor', and 'concrete wall' have been used to describe barriers hindering women's career development at workplaces (Burke & Vinnicombe, 2005; Cook, Heppner, & O'Brien, 2002). Similarly, 'Queen Bee' syndrome describes how administrative women restrict other women so as to highlight their own qualifications at workplace (Hamel, 2009).

One of the most common barriers women face during their career development process is career breaks. According to Mavriplis and others (2010), a career break can be defined as women's inability to work full-time for a while during the process of their career development willingly (childbearing or sparing time for their interests) or unwillingly (unemployment or illness). A study carried out by O'Brien and Hapgood (2012) revealed that landing a teaching and academic position after a substantial career break is unlikely and unappealing because the restart phase is quite challenging.

Being married and having children also lead to a disadvantage in securing a position as an academician (Tanenbaum & Upton, 2014; Wolfinger, Mason, & Goulden, 2008). Extant literature indicates that having children is the reason for majority of perceived career delays (Evers & Sieverding, 2014; Fox, Fonseca & Bao, 2011; Hunter & Leahey, 2010; Juraqulova, Byington, & Kmec, 2015; Mavriplis et al., 2010; Ozbilgin & Healy, 2004; Tanenbaum & Upton, 2014; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Wolfinger et al., 2008). According to Wolfinger and others (2008), the presence of children under six accounts for the gender difference in obtaining tenure-track positions. Irrespective of marriage and children, women remain less likely to get tenure and less likely to be promoted to full professor.

Women academics are also disadvantaged in terms of productivity and professional involvement as children require intensive time commitments that potentially reduce time spent doing scholarly activities (Juraqulova et al., 2015). Research indicates that women academics, especially those at or above median time in rank, often find themselves in a reactive stance to a power structure that largely hinders their advancement (Terosky, O'Meara, & Campbell, 2014). This is one of the prominent causes of holding positions of lower status in academic labour market hierarchy (Perna, 2001). As highlighted by Carvalho and Santiago (2010), despite formal selection processes depending on merit-based principles, there are hidden forms of discrimination for women to get into and advance in their academic career and this mainly stems from informal networks dominated by men.

Another point to be considered regarding women academics' disadvantages in terms of career advancement is that generally women earn less compared to their male counterparts. This is mostly because they prefer to get part time jobs to start a family (Hamel, 2009). In addition, mothers are perceived as less competent and committed to paid work than non-mothers and thus, discriminated against mothers when making hiring and salary decisions, which may be considered a penalty for working mothers. Fathers do not experience such discrimination (Cornell, Benard, & Paik, 2007). As Cook and others (2002) explained, regardless of the reason, earning less makes it difficult for women to meet their needs like grooming expenses, transportation, and clothes. Furthermore, being paid less doing the same job as their male counterparts leads to disappointment and depression in women.

It is a fact that the society holds prejudices related to the roles men and women are supposed to have. Although career choices do not always reflect personal interests, it is reassuring for people to evaluate and pursue a career alternative suitable to their socially accepted role (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Rhyne and Shireman (1998) stated that normative behaviour expectations determined by the society are seriously affected by gender. This gender-role framework indicates that certain behaviours, attitudes, and abilities belong to only one gender. With regard to differences in gender, women are more gifted in terms of their leadership styles and influences, and women academics are more qualified and selective in virtue of their skills and educational talents (Fox, 2001). However, still, such gendered structures and cultures lead women scientists to engage in practices that reproduce inequality. Women scientists' distancing practices support and reproduce gendered structures and cultures that contribute to gendered barriers for women (Rhoton, 2011).

Self-confidence is another important factor in women's career pursuit. Due to their low self-belief in their self-sufficiency, women may eliminate untraditional career chances, thereby limiting the opportunities where they can derive professional satisfaction and earn a fair amount of money (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Only 5% of women will adhere to their career plans if they encounter an obstacle during their career development (Hamel, 2009) and women do not even ask for a promotion considering the impediments. Furthermore, exposure to mobbing behaviours by male colleagues may have a negative influence on women academics' self-confidence (Baker, 2010).

In addition to potential barriers at workplaces, women also usually have to undertake most of the family responsibilities, which reduces their chances to progress in their professional

careers (Coogan & Chen, 2007). It will be possible to achieve gender equality in the division of domestic labour only if women contribute more to the family income than men (Tower & Alkadry, 2008). This situation stands as a proof that there is an inverse relationship between the responsibilities women have to bear at home and their income. According to Walsch and Osipow (1994), there are not any socially-constructed policies providing equal rights for women at work and at the same time enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities at home. Therefore, women at universities report high teaching and service loads in addition to their caring responsibilities at home, which causes them to have insufficient time and energy to pursue new research or writing projects at work (Baker, 2010).

Apart from household tasks for which women assume almost all the responsibility, childbearing is another obstacle to women's career path. Women want to have a baby and pursue their career; however, it is challenging to achieve both at the same time (Wood & Newton, 2006). Accordingly, most women consider children as a wall preventing them from achieving their career goals. Many women are inclined to postpone their marriage plans as they have concerns about handling motherhood and career together (Mavriplis et al., 2010). A study conducted by Tower and Alkadry (2008) revealed that male school principals and superiors are more likely to have babies than females. Particularly, for women in upper administrative positions, the possibility of not having babies at all is higher compared to men's.

When committed to their jobs, women may find it quite challenging to balance time to be allocated for their jobs and families. This undoubtedly leads to a conflict between personal and professional roles (Coogan & Chen, 2007; Cook et al., 2002; Hunter & Leahey, 2010; Morley, 2014; Rosser, 2006; Roth, 2004; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Wood & Newton, 2006). It is important to acknowledge these various role conflicts concerning women's career pursuit as they assume all the responsibility for home and child care (Coogan & Chen, 2007). Fox and others (2011) indicated that the presence of children under the age of six years and of children aged 6–18 years significantly increases the probability of family interference with work and specifically for women scientists, holding a senior academic rank increases the likelihood of family interference with work.

In brief, someone apart from the working partner is expected to assume the responsibilities at home so that this person will not hinder the work of the earning partner. The person implied by 'someone' is generally women. Under the circumstances, complying with the requirements of various roles is a highly challenging task (Cook et al., 2002). For example, male man-

agers are able to handle easily role conflict that stems from being both a parent and a manager. However, female managers claim that they will have difficulty in balancing between their profession and motherhood properly (Wood & Newton, 2006). Another striking example is STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) mothers' obligation to work harder than all fathers, even when they have similar institutional tenure and rank, equivalent perceived job demands, similar family responsibilities. They also devote similar amount of time to professional and domestic tasks (Kmec, 2013).

As most of the literature in the field is focused on analyses of specific obstacles encountered throughout career progression and gendered nature of career advancement, this study fills a gap in the literature by elaborating on career barriers faced by Turkish women academics from a broader perspective. To that end, we ask in this study *"What kind of barriers are encountered by Turkish women academics throughout their career development process?"* and *"How do perceived barriers influence women academics in shaping their career paths?"* Using data collected from women academics in a variety of disciplines at two state universities in Turkey, we seek to identify the likely challenges impeding women's career development. The intent is to listen to the voices of Turkish women academics as they describe their personal and professional lives within the context of Turkish culture.

Methodology

The aim of this research was to investigate the career barriers faced by Turkish women academics in higher education institutions and how women academics shape their career development in response to those challenges. To better understand the experiences and perspectives of women academics, the research was conducted in qualitative research design. The participants were selected using purposive sampling and women academics who have been married were involved in the study. The study group was comprised of 20 women academics in total from a variety of fields in two state universities in Turkey. In the selection process, 27 academics were contacted either by e-mail or phone by means of faculty contacts in two state universities and the ones who agreed to participate were included in the study group. 11 of the academics in the study group were from one state university and the remaining nine from the other state university in Turkey. All the academics in the study were married, except for one who had divorced during her career development process and 17 academics had at least one child. Demographic data regarding the study group is summarized in ▉ Table 1.

The primary tool used during the data collection process was the semi-structured interview. 20 participants were

Table 1. Demographic data of the study group.

Participants	Age	Title	Number of children	Discipline
Participant 1	40–45	Professor	1	Fashion Design
Participant 2	45–50	Professor	1	Chemistry
Participant 3	45–50	Professor	1	Environmental Sciences
Participant 4	35–40	Assis. Prof.	1	Environmental Sciences
Participant 5	45–50	Professor	1	Civil Engineering
Participant 6	45–50	Professor	1	Environmental Sciences
Participant 7	40–45	Professor	2	Civil Engineering
Participant 8	45–50	Professor	-	Management
Participant 9	45–50	Professor	2	Chemistry
Participant 10	45–50	Professor	1	Chemistry
Participant 11	35–40	Instructor	1	EFL
Participant 12	35–40	Instructor	-	Women Studies
Participant 13	45–50	Instructor	1	EFL
Participant 14	25–30	Instructor	-	Political Sciences
Participant 15	35–40	Instructor	1	EFL
Participant 16	35–40	Doctor	1	Educational Sciences
Participant 17	30–35	Instructor	1	Educational Sciences
Participant 18	45–50	Doctor	1	Educational Sciences
Participant 19	40–45	Instructor	1	EFL
Participant 20	40–45	Instructor	1	EFL

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

recruited through faculty and staff contacts. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants on pre-arranged dates using a semi-structured interview form. The semi-structured interview form was comprised of 13 open-ended questions. While developing the interview form, first of all, a comprehensive literature review was conducted. Three academics were asked to check clarity and comprehensibility of the open-ended questions that were formed based on the literature. Then, the questions were reviewed and necessary modifications were made in accordance with academics' recommendations and expert advice and opinion. The interviews lasted 45 to 75 minutes. 15 interviews were recorded in accordance with consent of the participants. For data analysis, the collected data was categorized under thematic codes using content analysis. To assure reliability, themes were supported by direct quotations from participants' responses. Data was then interpreted in comparison with related literature.

Findings and Discussion

Career barriers women academics face throughout their career development process are discussed below.

Support

In planning and developing a career, support from workplace and partner is of particular importance. At the workplace, the support could be in the form of formal or informal mentoring (Perriton, 2006). Women academics encounter many difficulties in terms of their mentoring relationships and support from their mentors at workplace (Rosser, 2006). According to Coleman (1996), male teachers are more likely to receive mentoring support from their male colleagues than women. Similarly, a study conducted by Ragins and Cotton (1991) concluded that women face more obstacles in obtaining mentors than men and even if they have mentoring relationships, this does not have a positive influence on women's research productivity (Muschallik & Pull, 2016), which is a key in the promotion process (Baker, 2010). As a systematic and formal mentoring process is not implemented in higher education institutions in Turkey, the findings of this research are based on informal mentoring relationships between academics and their mentors. In the research, the participants who did not receive informal mentorship support during their career development process based this lack of support on the male-dominant atmosphere in academia. Another point emphasized in the research with regard to support from workplace was that women do not totally trust other women in the workplace, which may be considered an indicator of 'Queen Bee' syndrome restricting women's career progression (Hamel, 2009). Majority of participants not receiving sufficient amount of support from their workplace (65%) highlighted the difficulty of lack of support throughout career progression.

- *"I paved my way by myself but it was really hard for me. We sometimes face the situation in which women hinder other women more frequently".* [3]

- *"If you can't find your way here, there is nobody to guide you; it means, there is no system to frame your career planning. I had to do it all by myself".* [5]

- *"I have never received any moral or material support. I have been pushed to my limits throughout my career advancement process. I did not receive salary appropriate for the associate professor rank for seven years although I had deserved it. Now I am here thanks to my patience and determination".* [10]

Although comparatively fewer in number, some of the participants appreciated the support they received from their workplace during their career development process.

- *"My advisor provided a lot of support to help me advance academically. I can honestly say that I owe my academic progression to him. He was always very motivating and supportive. For example, he always wanted us to be the first author on research articles".* [1]

- *"I went to the USA by means of a scholarship provided by the university. I stayed there for six months and that contributed a lot to my career. Career advancement is supported here; for example, the university provides compensation to all its academic staff for participating in an international congress every year".* [16]

In addition to support provided by the workplace, it is acknowledged by many that familial support is of great value in women's career development. Research by Ozbilgin and Healy (2004) revealed that both the parental family and the partners play a significant role in supporting or obstructing the career choices of academic women. At home, women definitely have more household responsibilities than their partners (Tower & Alkadry, 2008) and many women do not have the support of their partners in terms of the division of responsibilities regarding household chores (Cook et al., 2002). The responsibilities at home affect women's career pursuit unless they are supported by their partners and families (Kaparou & Bush, 2007). Majority of participants with children (71%) emphasized that the amount of support they received from their partners decreased after the birth of the baby, thereby increasing the number of responsibilities of women at home.

- *"I do not think my partner is more supportive than the days when we did not have a baby. My partner thinks working and caring home are my responsibilities. Therefore, he does not help me".* [17]
- *"My partner provided sufficient amount of support till the birth of the baby. However, after the birth of our baby, my mother-in-law helped us and as a result my partner started not to pay attention to things once he did. I used to get 50% from my partner before the baby, which is now around 20%. This certainly influences my career in a negative way".* [19]

Aycan and Eskin (2005) indicated that spousal support was strongly related to psychological well-being and marital satisfaction and it was the most important source of support in reducing family to work conflict for women. Also, women feel distressed and dissatisfied with their mothering when their work performance is lower than expected. It is possible that when performance at work suffers due to family demands, women feel unaccomplished both at home and at work, which lowers their psychological well-being. According to Koyuncu, Burke and Fiksenbaum (2006), Turkish female professors reported higher levels of psychosomatic symptoms compared to male academics. Also, increasing demands of family roles often tend to reduce Turkish women academics' work performance (Ozkanli & White, 2008), which may be considered a reason why Turkish female academics fail to challenge the work cultures that disadvantage them to contin-

ue to assume more important roles in the domestic sphere (Ozbilgin & Healy, 2004).

Due to the nature of work division at home, the participants who shared responsibilities at home perceived themselves to be more fortunate than those who did not. Support from partner is prominent both materially and morally. Women who are supported by their partners especially emphasized they would not have achieved their position if it had not been for the support of their partners. The women who performed the same job as their partners received comparatively less support than the other women whose partners had different professions, as mentioned by participants whose partners were also academicians. It was also observed that not being hindered by their partners was considered support by those experiencing it.

- *"My partner does not support me as necessary but at least he does not hinder me. He does not expect what a typical Turkish man expects from his partner regarding household tasks and this helps me concentrate more on my studies".* [2]
- *"He is working very hard on a variety of projects and I am focusing on my own studies. Although he does not provide extra help for home or children, he does not expect me to do everything perfectly".* [9]

Career Breaks

Career breaks are a detrimental factor to the career success of both men and women, and they are mostly preferred by women with children (Evers & Sieverding, 2014). As also highlighted by Ozbilgin and Healy (2004), marriage and child care constitute two important barriers to women's career development. In Turkey, female academics are less likely to be married, are in shorter marriages and have fewer children (Koyuncu et al., 2006). In the current research, more than half of the participants stated that various reasons that force them to have a break in their careers, the most prominent one was childbirth. After childbirth, most of the participants with children (65%) had a career break to spend more time with their new-born babies.

- *"I had a six-month leave after childbirth. Without tenure-track positions, we are not state officials and after getting back to work, I had some adjustment issues as well as issues with publications and support in general. According to new law, women academics are allowed to take one-year of leave after childbirth. I think being away from academic life for one year will cause women academics to fall behind others".* [5]
- *"I had a leave of nine months after the birth of my daughter. During that time, I had the chance to achieve multiple duties. I completed my academic studies while at the same time taking care of my daughter. I can say I turned this situation into an advantage for my career".* [2]

Although some of the participants did not take career breaks after childbirth, they had breaks of six months to one year to provide support with their education. They paid such prices as loss of income, extension of retirement age, attrition of the foreign language due to lack of practice and adaptation difficulties after career breaks. According to Pagnan and MacDermid Wadsworth (2015), when women are penalized for being mothers, their commitment to their careers decreases, pushing them to opt out of their careers and to opt to stay home.

Women postpone their career plans on the grounds that pursuing a career is a barrier to having a child (Coogan & Chen, 2007). On the contrary, the current research demonstrated that women academics delayed childbirth deliberately in order not to interrupt their career development. Moreover, they did not apply for an extension of maternity leave and preferred to have shorter career breaks after childbirth. The reason behind preference of shorter career breaks, according to Aycan and Eskin (2005), is that majority of parents in Turkey prefer to utilize family networks for childcare because it is almost free and more reliable. Regarding postponement of career plans, a recent study by Pagnan and MacDermid Wadsworth (2015) revealed that students in female dominated programs believed they need to put their career responsibilities before their family responsibilities and spend less time with their families so as to be successful in their careers.

- *"I got 40 days unpaid-leave. I had to start working again when my two children were only two months old. I got only a five day-break when I got married. I worked until there was one week before the delivery. At university, a six month-break equals to a one year-break and if you devote yourself to your children, it is harder to leave them".* [7]
- *"Although I got married at an early age, I postponed having a baby till I completed my doctorate and post-doctoral study abroad. I thought having a child would be a barrier for my career. You work very hard during the doctoral study and having a baby during that period would somehow influence my concentration adversely".* [10]

Social Factors

Social factors were categorized as self-confidence, prejudice and role conflict.

Self-Confidence

According to Baker (2010), Hamel (2009), Coleman (1996), and Murtagh and others (2007), women academics do not have sufficient self-confidence throughout their career development process, which is one of the factors that influences the number of women academics in academia. However, in contrast to

research on women academics' self-confidence throughout career advancement, majority of women academics involved in the current research (85%) touched upon the significance of self-confidence while developing academic career. By means of their self-confidence, women academics were able to fulfil their desires despite the obstacles they encountered. They emphasized how their self- confidence contributed to their creativity and ambitions.

- *"I always believed in myself in my academic life. Whenever I look back and see what I have achieved so far, I feel very proud of myself because despite all the obstacles, I never gave up and motivated myself considering this as a form of independence. And this certainly influenced my career development in a positive way".* [9]
- *"I come from a family where the father is the dominant figure. The major contribution of academic career to my life is helping improve my self-confidence. You see you can achieve things. You complete your master's and doctorate degrees successfully and you get your associate professorship without the help of others".* [3]

It was observed that the participants with self-confidence sometimes faced cases where they did not feel sufficiently confident; however, they mentioned sparing extra time and working harder to compensate their lack of knowledge.

- *"If I had not had self-confidence, I would not be here. You must be determined and must not give up. I always motivated myself by thinking that institutions are permanent but people are temporary. Now, I am here thanks to my self-confidence although I was emotionally spent all through my career process".* [6]

Prejudice

Gender identity is an important factor that determines one's career and what is socially "acceptable" related to jobs men and women are supposed to have. It is true that gender based biases of the society about professions are among the factors shaping women's career decisions (Coogan & Chen, 2007; O'Dorchai, 2006; Rhyne & Shireman, 1998; Tower & Alkadry, 2008). Ozbilgin and Healy (2004) the traditional family ideology in Turkey assigns carer and domestic roles to women and breadwinner roles to men. Majority of participants in the current research (65%) asserted that job stereotyping by gender was prevalent in Turkish society but this did not influence their career plans.

- *"I felt the prejudice while carrying out projects with public sector. Being a woman may cause others to look at you differently. Maybe they thought I did not have sufficient knowledge, expertise or experience. I had a lot of difficulties. There were some research projects that I could not get involved in easily".* [1]
- *"There is certainly prejudice regarding jobs men and women are supposed to have. I personally did not limit myself and did*

everything I could do. The widespread prejudice did not hinder my career plans. If I had acted based on stereotyping and prejudice, I would not be where I am now". [4]

As for the prejudice about appropriateness of academia for women, a few participants stated that they wished they had been born a man. Since men do not have to take career breaks, they are more likely to be recruited. According to popular belief, it is easier for men to achieve in their professions than women; therefore, men are deemed well fitted to advance their careers.

- *"Women are not totally trusted in academia; they may get pregnant and have career breaks. The responsibilities framed by the society for women academics are too many to be fulfilled. Men leave the responsibilities to women. In case of promotion, men are preferred more as they are more convenient in terms of their responsibilities outside of the workplace".* [8]

Role Conflict

Coogan and Chen (2007), Roth (2004), Cook and others (2002), and Rosser (2006) indicated that resulting from the demands of home and work, role conflict has a potential to negatively influence women's career. Sometimes women's tendency to be sentimental makes it difficult for them to maintain a balance between their work life and family duties. It was emphasized in the research that generally an emotional connection is developed while building up relationships, and experience is imperative to learn how to control this connection.

- *"As a mother and wife, my feelings sometimes surpass my mind. I try not to do this but sometimes I really have some difficulties. I do not have any problems at home because I can set my job apart from my private life".* [7]
- *"You are a mother and a wife at home, so there is emotional control here. It provides me with a great advantage while communicating with my students or friends in terms of understanding each other. Being a mother, I observed that I can understand my students much better. And you feel kind of obliged to think what you would do if your child were in the same situation".* [15]

However, some of the participants (35%) stated that it is hard to handle difficulties from both sides, which has an adverse effect on their career development.

- *"There are times when I need to help my children with their homework while at the same time I have to finish editing my article before the deadline so that it is published. Having to choose either one makes me feel totally frustrated".* [18]

Women experiencing role conflict emphasized that they were forced to choose between family and work and they were expected to make self-sacrifice. Requirements of conflicting roles make women feel strained. It is highly beneficial

for women to be able to accomplish multiple tasks simultaneously. As also asserted by some of the participants, this situation is generally experienced by women who aspire to excel at their jobs.

The study conducted by Aycan and Eskin (2005) revealed that Turkish women academics experienced more work to family conflict than men. This is because Turkish cultural values historically support women's family and home responsibilities (Koyuncu et al., 2006). Taking care of changes in roles of academic women in their non-work life and changing opinions according to titles is considered to be closely related to role conflict. This also influences women academics adversely while making decisions to compete for senior management positions (Ozkanli & White, 2008).

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is a fact that academic women around the world have similar concerns. Regarding Turkish women academics specifically, it may be concluded as a result of the study that Turkish women academics do not get sufficient informal mentorship support at the workplace and their partners at home. Their professional careers are hindered by the expectations of their roles as wives and mothers. In addition, having career breaks particularly for childbirth is a significant factor in slowing down their career progression. Also, prejudice regarding jobs men and women are supposed to have, and role-conflict leading to self-sacrifice are prominent factors shaping Turkish women's career decisions. In accordance with factors influencing Turkish women academics' career paths, the findings of the research help us understand the hindering factors for Turkish women academics' career development and thus the difficulties they may face throughout their career progression from their perspectives, which in turn enhances our understanding of realities of lives within the scope of Turkish cultural context.

With these discussion points around the construct of factors hindering women academics' career progression and societal factors in mind, we next share recommendations for practice from an institutional level. It is suggested based on the findings of this research that there should be affirmative action towards women academics, particularly the ones with children under six years old at workplace, which may come in the form of reviewing criteria for promotion to full-time tenured faculty positions.

According to the findings of the research, having children accounts for the majority of perceived career impediments and therefore such measures as providing better opportunities especially for the time spent during and after the career break, and improving conditions and criteria for existing day

care centers should be taken so as to facilitate women academics' career development process. It is obvious that academic staff would benefit from such institutional efforts that support women faculty in managing work and family roles.

Due to recent changes in faculty demographics and increasing concerns about how to balance work and family, it is now a requisite for academic institutions to reconsider their policies about the integration of work and family in accordance with potential factors that may hinder women academics' career progression. Understanding the experiences of women academics and catering for their needs will inarguably pay off the effort in getting in return for the investment made by academic institutions in their faculty.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

There are some limitations about this study. First, data was collected from only two state universities in Turkey. Second, the state universities where the study was conducted were located in a single city in Turkey. Finally, all findings are based on perceptions of Turkish women academics. Therefore, it is not claimed that these findings may be generalized to the whole population of women academics in Turkey.

It is important for further research to examine whether the results presented in this study also apply to women academics working in other state universities in Turkey. Such a technique would demand larger sample sizes, which in turn would contribute to the generalization of the results of this study. Furthermore, the sample could be enriched by including women academics working in private universities to see whether they face similar issues. Finally, future research would benefit from devising a scale based on the findings of this study to be implemented on a larger scale at various measurement levels.

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