



A Quantitative Approach: Hope Labor Among Turkish Female Bloggers

Türk Kadın Blog Yazarlarında Umut Emegi: Kantitatif Bir Bakış

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Abstract

This study investigates the blogosphere in Turkey from a gendered perspective, focusing on how blogging reshapes women's cultural and social environment. Based on a quantitative approach, a snowballing survey method is conducted, to explore the spaces within which women seek "self-realization," "self-formation" and "publicity" in the digital world, particularly, through the practice of blogging. There are two main questions that undergird this project: "Do women, performing in social media, unintentionally become subjugated to a form of exploitation and alienation, as the literature on digital labor suggests?" "Is hope labor is influential in female bloggers' blog usage and content writing? Research findings demonstrate that these women, while constructing their identities as bloggers, incorporate to the neoliberal restructuring of Turkey via articulation of blogging with the global market system. Although blogs provide employment opportunities and economic gains, main motivation behind women's blogging practices remain to be self-realization and self-fulfillment, leaving hope labor less influential in blog writing. Traditional views like unemployed women participate to public sphere via blogging activities wriggling out of their inherited gender roles also remain to be an over determination since employed women feel more emancipated through blogging.

Keywords: Blogging, hope labor, self-realization, emancipation, self-fulfillment.

Öz

Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki blog dünyasını, blog yazmanın kadınların kültürel ve sosyal çevrelerini yeniden şekillendirme biçimlerine odaklanarak, toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden inceliyor. Kartopu anket çalışması yöntemine dayanan çalışma, blog yazma pratiği doğrultusunda kadınların dijital dünyadaki "kendini gerçekleştirme", "kendini bulma" ve "kamusallık" arayışlarına ışık tutuyor. Çalışmanın iki ana sorusu var: "Sosyal medyada özgürleşme (ekonomik veya sosyal) arayışı içerisinde olan kadınlar, dijital emek literatürünün iddia ettiği gibi sömürü ve yabancılaşmaya maruz kalıyorlar mı?" ve "Kadınların blog yazma ve kullanmalarında umut emegi etkili mi?" Bulgulara göre, kadınlar blog yazarı kimliklerini kurarken aynı zamanda blog yazma sayesinde girdikleri global pazar sistemiyle, Türkiye'nin neoliberal yeniden şekillenmesine de entegre oluyorlar. Bloglar ekonomik kazanç ve iş imkanları sağlasa da kadınların blog yazmasının ardındaki ana motivasyon, umut emegini geride bırakarak kendini gerçekleştirme ve kendini tatmin etme dürtüsü olarak karşımıza çıkıyor. İşsiz kadınların blog yazma aktiviteleri ile içselleştirilmiş toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinden sıyrıldıklarını ve kamusal alana katıldıklarını öngören geleneksel düşünce de iş sahibi kadınların blog yazma sayesinde daha özgür hissettiklerinin ortaya çıkmasıyla bir genellemeden öte gidemiyor.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bloglama, umut emegi, kendini gerçekleştirme, özgürleşme, kendini tatmin-etme.

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Introduction

Recently, web 2.0 and its impacts on socialization processes have been an issue of interest among digital labor scholars. The infrastructure of Web 2.0 has enabled Internet users to interact and collaborate with each other, allowing social media to become one of the most powerful tools with a major impact on our communication styles, socialization and self-formation processes. Interfaces such as blogs, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have become powerful social media tools that can dominate much of our leisure time. Reshaping the borders of the public sphere, blogs are one of the most important features of media making and prosumer culture and serve as a platform where “self” is made and remade.

Blogs are commonly defined as online journals whose entries are displayed in reverse chronological order and updated frequently (Herring et al., 2004). The first blogs were started in the early 1990s, and with the advent of easy-to-use weblog software, the number of blogs has risen to an estimated 133 million – a number that doubles every 200 days (Sifry, 2008). Offering a comprehensive overview of blogging and its evolution over the last decade, Jill W. Rettberg defines a blog as “a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in a reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first” (2008, p.19). Van Dijk asserts that weblogs, as the digital equivalents of diaries, are the “signifiers of cultural change” (2006, p.117), whereas Tunney and Monaghan (2010) explore blogging as a form of participatory media that creates collaboration and connectivity. While blogs provide the opportunity for participation, complex issues of access occur at various levels in terms of digital skills and expertise, computer equipment and internet access, and use opportunities (Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003). Blogosphere has become a promising site which offers to combine storytelling with multimedia content, including lifestyles, daily lives, literature, technology, politics, fashion, health, hobbies and crafts to commercial products. Even establishing a blog’s homepage requires much effort for bloggers since blog is a “digital body” or avatar of the blogger, not only with the content but also with all design elements from the buttons to links, pictures to causes (Vaisman, 2016). One of the things that differentiates blogs from other kinds of writing on the web is that they are imbued ‘with a strong sense of the author’s personality, passions, and point of view’ (Nardi et al., 2004: 42). They reflect the bloggers’ identities and tell the visitors something about them. Blogging on the other hand, refers to writing, photography, and other media that's self-published online. Started as an opportunity for individuals to write diary-style entries, but it has since been incorporated into websites for many businesses. In terms of a blog’s content, daily texts and photo combinations, one can assume that there is a certain amount of time and effort spent in front of the computer. The blogosphere serves as a platform where “self” is represented through various channels, sometimes turning pleasure to profit and sometimes leisure to exploitation.

Existing research points to “‘socially recognized self-realization’ as participants’ primary motivation for online social production” in which people collaborate, both for achieving pleasure and also peer recognition (Arvidsson, 2008, p.332). As Mark Deuze (2007, p.77) suggests, “people seem to be increasingly willing to participate voluntarily in the media making process to achieve what can be called a networked reputation”. This is because of the desire to better position oneself for future employment opportunities (Brabham, 2008). This networked reputation is also closely related to what Marwick calls as “micro-celebrities”- a term used to address being famous within a niche group, either via self-promotion or through the recognition of others (2013a). She (2013a) describes “micro-celebrity” as a fan-based self-presentation technique adopted within social media in order to gain publicity and attention. Thus, on a personal level, achieving self-realization (fulfillment by oneself of the possibilities of one's character or personality) and publicity becomes one of the main concerns of bloggers’ online social production. Additionally, future employment prospects seem to be a common factor in motivating social production, however these processes remain under examined and under-theorized. Female bloggers have a complicated experience between exploitation and pleasure. It is important to see how female bloggers reflect on, represent, construct or reproduce their identities as individuals, content creators, and members of an online community. Blogs appear as a reflexive medium for women to interact and communicate with each other, and also provide the digital spaces through which they reflect on their status in the society (Zareie, 2013). Although blogs are effective in many respects and there is a remarkable blogger power in the marketing

area, one can only accept the fast growth in the usage of other applications like Instagram, Youtube, Tiktok, Pinterest, Snapchat and so on. Contemporary era fastened these blog making process carrying it further, as technological developments pushed bloggers towards synchronizing their content with other platforms as well. Now we are talking about the platformization of the web, studded by the fast pace and temporality, which in turn brings a struggle for these people to survive in the fast competitive market with a precarious and volatile character. Thus, the study questions the motivations of these women who blog about fashion, consumption, child-rearing, cooking or sewing and how female bloggers contribute to the economic system via their digital identity formation. Given the patriarchal nature of Turkey, do women look for emancipation in social media, do they unintentionally become subjects of “free labor”- a term coined by Tiziana Terranova (2000)? Terranova (2004, p. 73) problematizes “what has become a prevalent form of work in the media and cultural industries, and what has a particularly important role online,” that which she calls free labor. Thus, the aim of this study is to approach this already acknowledged impact of social media –mainly blogging- on self-formation practices from the perspective of women in a patriarchal country like Turkey. As the studies of prominent Turkish feminist scholars indicate, patriarchy is embedded in the laws, state institutions and social norms of Turkey, affecting women’s self-formation in private, socio-economic and political life (Kandiyoti, 1991; Kogacioglu, 2004). There are many determining factors of women’s economic empowerment including, the welfare state policies in Turkey, family-oriented care regime- based on the patriarchal male breadwinner model (Ilkcaracan, 2012; Kılıç, 2008) and the confinement of women to traditional gender roles (Dedeoğlu, 2012). Blogs provide a scope for an enormous variety of expressions within a simple, restricted format and women’s use of blogs may result with job opportunities. Yet, the relationship between the rising phenomenon of social media and how it may affect women’s self-formation in patriarchal societies remains to be a vague issue that deserves further attention with particular focus on digital labor and feminist theories. Given the fact that time of life and action of bodies is increasingly overseen and regulated by computational systems of control and regulation, the nature of labor management as well as the production of subjectivities are consequently affected. These theoretical lenses will serve to understand “the self,” its representation as well as the “product” created by the women who are in search for their own emancipation in a patriarchal culture, yet are at the same time the subjects of ‘free labor’.

Why female blogosphere?

No one can deny the role played by female bloggers on the burst of blogs in 2000s. There are many studies pointing out blog writers are mainly women and blogging has a feminine language with its emotional, fragmented and inspiring nature (Bowen 2004; Hayton 2009; Hookway 2008, in Depeli, 2015, p.274). Besides these, the main reason to put particular emphasis on the female blogosphere depends on the feminist perspectives which emphasize the gendered history of invisible work, pointing out the women’s work in digital platforms represent an extension of women’s labor exploitation in domestic life (Jarrett 2014, 2016; Arcy, 2016). Much of the digital labor debate is based on Marxist grounds as domestic work is seen as a free labor and exploited and, it continues in digital platforms as well. Digital labor debate, which focuses on a “male-centric conception of work and social struggle” (Federici, 2012, p.89) needs to be critically evaluated from a gendered perspective. This flourishing phenomenon needs a new interdisciplinary approach as it grows and changes rapidly.

Studies into the reasons why people blog have found that individuals have a desire to document their own life, express their opinions, have an outlet for catharsis, inspire their own creative juices and participate in a community forum (Nardi et al., 2004). Based on her interviews with fifty women, Sarah Pedersen came to the conclusion that female users' motivation to blog, is the need for approval of their experiences, lives, and thoughts (Pedersen, 2007) as well as for socialization aspects (Pedersen and Macafee, 2007). According to Pedersen (2007), blogs offer women a safe place to explore their lives and communicate with like-minded people. The nature of blogging and the motivations behind show differences based on the demographics, geography, politics and culture of various countries. There are many studies considering blogging as an empowering tool for women in non-Western contexts (Zareie 2013, Eltantawy 2013, Pahwa 2014, Jurkewicz 2018) where historically affected from the interplay between digital media and activism, struggle

for their own hopes via this medium. In Turkey, we are not talking about a social media activism on blogs but more an individualistic entrepreneurship either for monetary rewards, career opportunities or for self-fulfillment and self-realization.

Given its integration into the neoliberal economic system, Turkey and its female blogosphere constitutes a good starting point to investigate the complicated articulation of blogging with the global market system via the representation of identities online. In this framework, the study questions whether women, performing in social media, unintentionally become subjugated to a form of exploitation and alienation, as the literature on digital labor suggests, or whether a more complicated materiality –such as career development and job opportunities- exists with respect to formation of identity. The main question that undergirds this project is if hope labor is influential in female bloggers' blog usage and content writing? Thus, I aim to investigate how these women, while constructing their identities as bloggers, incorporate to the neoliberal restructuring of Turkey via articulation of blogging with the global market system.

Therefore, the outline of the paper is as follows: section one reviews the existing debates on participation and exploitation within social media while section two gives a background information of the motivations of the field research along with an overview of literature on blogging. Section three explains the methodology of the study in detail. Results are discussed in the fourth section and finally concluding remarks are presented.

Section One: Participation versus Exploitation

Much has been written about blogging from a variety of perspectives. In her qualitative study, Tara Chittenden uses fashion in order to examine the identity construction process of ten teenage female bloggers, while Minh-ha Pham evaluates the political limits and possibilities of fashion-themed blogs (in Marwick, 2013b). Sarah Banet-Weiser (2011) draws attention to “self-disclosure” in the context of a post-feminist era wherein young women are encouraged to use social media to brand themselves. The blogosphere stands as a critical platform where user participation becomes a particular form of labor for promoting various products including self-made and corporational brands. Along these lines, Marwick argues that bloggers constitute the promoters of neoliberal capitalism as enabling self-actualization through entrepreneurial blogging where cultural labor turns into a capitalist business practice (2013b). Women turn to digital media to “be social”. By foregrounding their creative aspirations above all, bloggers are able to reconcile internal motivations with expected demands of audiences and advertisers. Jefferson Pooley explains a concept of “calculated authenticity,” manifested in “carefully curated identities” and the strategic performance of the self as brand (2010, p. 72-83).

Scholars, such as Henry Jenkins (2006), have emphasized the co-creativity aspects of social media where fans are empowered by being involved in cultural production. Social media platforms have materially broadened the access and ease of production, inviting users to co-create content and value (Jenkins, 2006; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nevertheless, Jenkins was criticized for his tendency to overstate the creativity of users and neglect processes of exploitation. For instance, Christian Fuchs (2014) draws attention to extraction of surplus value within spaces such as Facebook and Google. Similarly, Mark Andrejevic (2011) argues that user participation in social network sites is a form of exploitation and alienation since users' time and energies have been utilized as an unpaid form of work, known as “free labor”. For Andrejevic, either voluntarily given or used for data creation, this “free labor” is exploited since this data becomes the property of corporations like Facebook. On the other hand, David Hesmondhalgh argues that it is unconvincing and incoherent to frequently pair “the term ‘free labor’ with the concept of exploitation” (2010, p. 267). According to Hesmondhalgh (2010), many critics, including Dallas Smythe's “audience commodity” concept, lack the lived experiences and political paradigms regarding creative labor and cultural production. Claiming that we perform many different tasks to maintain our lives and we cannot expect all to be paid, he says, “we cannot define labor in terms of whether it is paid or unpaid, or whether an employment relation is involved, because it is clear that a great deal of the labor that goes into sustaining and enhancing life in modern societies is unpaid” (Hesmondhalgh, 2010, p.276).

“User generated” content has also been analyzed through the notion of immaterial labor defined by Maurizio Lazzarato as something that “produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” (1996, p.133). While Terranova’s notion of free labor implies something “simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited” (2000, p.33), immaterial labor has been described as producing “a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion” (Hardt& and Negri, 2000, p.108) or shaping “tastes and opinion” (Lazzarato, 1996, p.33). Regarding the motivations for social media participation, Kuehn and Corrigan (2013) coined the term “hope labor” to address the dynamics of “un- or under-compensated work” carried out in the present, often for experience or exposure, in the hope that future employment opportunities may follow.

Distinguishing hope labor from other forms of free labor, the authors emphasize “the temporal relationship between present and future work—a relationship that shifts costs and risks onto the individual”. In the neoliberal and post-industrialist societies, hope labor is naturalized and normalized under the name of self-investment for upcoming future employment opportunities. According to Kuehn and Corrigan (2013), hope labour term is the expansion of free labour debate as it emphasizes the individual as a subject who is driven by future orientations for investment opportunities. This labor production dreaming of future rewards is criticized by many creative labor scholars (Duffy, 2017; Mackenzie and McKinlay, 2020; Neff, 2012) who stress the cruelty of hope in digital labor production. The normalization of the not-yet in creative industries seen as a self-exploitative and subjugating work experience (Alacovska, 2018). Mackenzie and McKinlay, 2020; illustrates an ambivalent mixture of competitive, conflicting and contradictory relations to self in the constitution of entrepreneurial subjectivity. Rearticulating the term “hope labor”, Brooke Erin Duffy (2018) coins up “aspirational labor” that accounts for the gendered nature of blogging specifically. She describes “content creators’ belief that their (mostly) unpaid work, motivated by passion and the infectious rhetoric of entrepreneurialism, will eventually provide respectable income and rewarding careers” (Duffy, 2017:15).

Thus, female bloggers engage in the consumption and promotion of various brands which is the labor production process of digitally mediated hope in a rival market. Furthermore, companies expect online personalities to work for free motivated by future promises. Either they are serving this process for free or paid, self-branding performances of bloggers require a certain digital labor production. Therefore, I anticipate bloggers produce a level of “hope labor” writing or acting mainly to gain a sense of belonging in return along with economic benefits. Online and offline labor produced by the female bloggers harbors some kind of hope behind the scenes in all the creative works done: hope to move forward, hope for better future possibilities, hope to gain economic or social capital in return, hope to relate to something, actually a hope for life.

Thus, these debates on social media participation versus exploitation are necessary for a political-economic understanding of the blogosphere and motivations of female bloggers in Turkey, given the parallel rise of bloggers’ contribution – voluntary and non-voluntary- to the advertising industry in the country and the opportunities they gain through their blogging activities.

Section Two: Blogging as a Trend in Turkey

As for the use of social media in Turkey, it is reported that Turkey is one of the largest users of Internet in the world with over 51 million active social media users which constitutes 63% of the population, with 42% of them are females (Wearesocial.com 2018). Although, Yıldırım (2015:520) investigates the relationship between the blog writers and readers claiming that blog writing is a male-dominated performance based on his survey sample of 99 bloggers (81% of it was attended by male bloggers), since there is no specific study about the number of bloggers in Turkey, it is hard to imagine how many of the bloggers are women. The fact that this research is carried out in a changing and rapidly developing medium, one can assume that the number of bloggers (men and women) is constantly growing despite the popping of other social media interfaces.

Studies about blogging in Turkey generally evolve around thematic blogging, focusing on specific fields, including news blogs (Atikkan and Tunç, 2011), academic blogs (Günseli Bayraktutan-Sütçü, 2010),

food blogs (Funda Cantek, 2011) and mommy blogs (Parmaksız Yelsalı, 2012). Sarıkaya (2011) discusses the definition of blogging evaluating blogger experiences along with their motivations while Depeli (2015) analyzes female literariness in blogs through the textual and discourse analysis. Saka (2008) considers blogging as a research tool for ethnographic fieldwork, whereas Bakla and Arıkan (2011) explore language learning through blogging. This research on the other hand, not considering only a specific genre but concentrating on women who blog about various themes including fashion, child-rearing, cooking, sewing, DIY (do-it-yourself), beauty, and travel, adopts a wider perspective. Thus, it focuses on women as producers and consumers, as content-creators and influencers, as writers and readers, in sum as main users of blogs and the main players of blogosphere.

Despite rival market conditions in the blogosphere, bloggers support each other by using various strategies like giving backlinks, tagging, hashtag usage and also a bit outdated but still a movement called “mim”. Being a form of poking and challenging, mim requires asking questions with a snowballing method as a way of showing support, which in turn helps to be discovered and recognized. Leaving feedbacks to posts, promoting each other in their own writings or showing each other’s blogs as banners are also other forms of support and social activity among bloggers.

Groups and communities are formed, as same bloggers are invited to sponsored events. It is hard to enter into these informally tied gatherings. Many of the blogger events-mostly participated by women bloggers- take place in a vicious circle. These events can be defined as various kinds of occasions to which either bloggers are invited by companies for product launchings or popular bloggers invite other bloggers with the help of sponsor companies to establish networks or gain reciprocal benefits. Along with the rising demand from various multinational companies such as Unilever and Procter&Gamble to work with bloggers for viral advertising strategies, forming a bridge between virtual and the physical worlds, blogger meetings and events have become very popular among female bloggers in Turkey. These events create the opportunity to give an embodiment to online connections letting to the establishment of physical conversations, collaboration and friendships. Drawing on face-to-face interviews with many bloggers, it is seen that participation to a blogger event is a “fancy”, “cool” and “desirable” thing among bloggers and if a blogger is not invited, the implication is that the blogger is not a very good blogger. There are two kinds of blogger meetings; one is through taking an invitation from a certain company or brand for their product promotions and the other is an invitation from a blogger herself to unite with other bloggers for a cause like a baby shower, a summer welcome party, mothers’ day etc. which are also sponsored by related companies. So, blogger events are important sites to have a better understanding of the different kinds of interactions and communications among bloggers both with each other and also with the brands. For this reason, many survey questions are related to the bloggers’ participation to these events.

Section Three: Methodology

Hypotheses and Theoretical Expectations

As far as the labor produced in blogs concerned, firstly I anticipate respondents produce a level of “hope labor” in their blogs and write mainly to gain future employment opportunities. Previous research¹ also demonstrates that bloggers of fashion, diy (do it yourself), sewing blogs generally reference and promote their self-made products with the aim of selling them. By promoting their own or other brands, bloggers make profits from their blogs via sharing advertisements, press releases or promotions. Many different motivations behind female blogging such as self-realization, networked reputation, emancipation, peer recognition and achieving pleasure, also lead to a main idea of gaining job opportunities or earning money from blogging activities. Therefore, I formulate my hypothesis as follows:

¹Textual content analysis data from Sim, M. A. (2017). Unveiling The Secret Stories: Conservative Female Blogosphere in Turkey. *İleti-ş-im, Galatasaray University Journal of Communication*, 26, 39-63. DOI: 10.16878/gsuilet.324191.

Hypothesis 1. Gaining future employment opportunities is a more likely motivation for female bloggers than self-realization, networked reputation, and emancipation.

As digital labor scholars still debate on participation versus exploitation issue, female bloggers, generally writing from home, develop their web-based application usage skills like how to Photoshop or frame their photographs, how to build better blog pages or appear in Google. They do these by attending to workshops, blogger events and continuously researching. There is a certain time and effort spend on these subjects with the hope of building better relations or gaining job opportunities with their better blogs. Thus, I propose another hypothesis to test for a better understanding of female bloggers' main motivations for blogging as well as the nature of labor produced in these blogs. I formulate my hypothesis as follows:

Hypothesis 2. There is a correlation between obtaining jobs via blogs and self-development and labor produced in blog writing causes self-development opportunities.

Western scholarship has long been dominated by the orientalist view that social media participation of women in Muslim societies emancipates women from their religious and patriarchal ties where they are generally "oppressed" (Eltantawy, 2013; Kasana, 2014). But, is that really so? Do women wriggle out their patriarchal roots and inherited gender roles via blog writing? In the case of other motivations, on the other hand, I anticipate respondents vary depending on their social statuses and their employment situations. The relationship between advertising industry and blogging in Turkey has deepened within the context of neoliberal economic restructuring. Women with no jobs also start to benefit from the practice of blog writing. There is a growing number of bloggers who are housewives and gain economic benefits from their blogs. Therefore, I formulate my two last hypotheses as:

Hypothesis 3. It is more likely that housewives feel more emancipated while writing blogs than employed women.

Hypothesis 4. Compared to bloggers who are paid or earn money/advantages from their blogs, bloggers with no economic benefits have a stronger feeling of satisfaction in terms of self-fulfillment.

Conceptualization and Variables

For the hypothesis 1, what I mean by future employment opportunities is the likelihood of gaining a job out of the work done in blogs. Women write blogs with different motivations and achieve pleasure. So the effort and labor given for writing gives back as self-realization -fulfillment by oneself of the possibilities of one's character or personality-, networked reputation-gaining a celebration and recognition through their online performances. Thus, to measure these concepts, I focus on the relationship between variables. Writing blogs is the most important independent variable and achieving self-realization and/or job opportunities are the variables that depend to it. This relationship is measured by asking women about their frequency of writing, their writing styles and environments, and their feelings about writing. Given the labor produced in blogs, as mentioned in the literature above, I use Kuehn and Corrigan (2013)'s concept of hope labor, which is the labor produced in blogs with the aim of having future employment opportunities. These variables are related to each other and bloggers' own search for sponsor companies, their attending to blogger events for networking opportunities, and publishing free commercials are some of the indicators of these variables' relation. They do these to gain recognition and economic benefits. Earning money from blogs is also a cause for them to see blogging as a career. The survey questions ask whether these women see blogging as a career and whether they want to earn money from their blogs and continue writing as a job. The other admissibility questions vary like, "With what kind of motivations did you start your blog?", "Has blog writing provided you job opportunities?", "Have you ever gained any money or other economic benefits from your blog?", "Have you published any commercials? If not, would you like to?" and "Have you had any attempts to earn money from your blog?" Response options are given in dichotomous format (1=yes, 2=no).

For the 2nd hypothesis, I anticipated that there is also another important relationship between hope labor and self-development process. What I mean by self-development here refers to enhancement of one's own skills and proceed in their ways compared to former self-status. Since not all the bloggers have similar access to economic advantages or network areas, some bloggers continuously publish and produce in order to achieve a similar kind of reputation as the professional bloggers. In this process, they develop their computer using skills, they attend to content writing workshops and they continuously research. These indicators is also measured by the online survey conducted asking a multiple choice question: "Which of the following steps have you taken for improvement of yourself and your blog?" Response options included developing SEO applications, attending web-design courses, content-writing workshops, researching from Internet and various sources, learning Photoshop skills. Measurement level of the questions varied but mainly nominal measurement is conducted with some exceptions of ordinal measurement.

As for 3rd and 4th hypotheses, self-branding, self-development and emancipation are various forms of satisfaction feelings apart from the economic advantages. What I mean by self-branding is some kind of labelling one's self through routine practices in online social platforms. Cyberspace gives women the opportunity to prioritize their names, styles, and works via promoting so a peer-recognition process starts. Emancipation on the other hand, here refers to wriggle out inherited gender roles. Even writing from home, women feel more free and standing on their own feet since they gain reputation, recognition, enhancement and economic freedom. Therefore, again, as a cause for emancipation, or certain kinds of satisfaction which are dependent variables, employment status of women stands here as an independent variable. This relationship is measured by asking questions like; "Do you feel you are away from your home/mother/wife/daughter responsibilities while writing?" "Do you feel free/independent/strong while writing?", "Do people know you on the street?", "Do you take a lot of feedbacks?"...etc. Response options are given in dichotomous format (0=reject, 1=approve).

To test the reliability and validity of this research, face validity is used in survey answers. These surveys can also be retaken after a certain period of time in order to see if the results will be the same again.

Data

Since the topic of the research encompasses female bloggers' online labor and motivations for blogging, the survey targets only female bloggers. So, the survey was sent only to women with the first question starting whether they have blogs or not. If they are blog writers, then they could proceed to the next questions. Online survey consisted of 44 multiple choice, single choice, short answer text and checkbox questions and formed as a google-form format. It was shared publicly in social media sites and blogging groups from Facebook, Google Plus and via personal e-mails such as "women bloggers", "bloggers share", "Turkish blog writers" and "blog journals" with a snowballing method.

Data is obtained from 902 random respondents aged between 18 and 56 (mean: 30.50, median: 31.74, mode: 30, range: 38). Their education and occupation levels vary but the results indicated that bloggers are generally well-educated. 66% of the participants are university/college graduates while 16% of them have Masters/PhD degrees. There are 21 housewives but 7 of them are self-defined bloggers and although they are not working in a waged work but are at home, they prefer to call themselves as "blogger" rather than "housewife". Job occupations were coded under 7 categories: housewives, self-defined bloggers, experts (architects/engineers/doctors/lawyers/designers), academics (lecturers/research assistants/teachers), media specialists (editors/journalists/content writers, authors, graphic editors), public relations (PR) specialists (advertisers/sales representatives/media consultants) and students. As shown in Table 1, 34.4% of the participants were coded as experts, followed by housewives with 15.6%. When self-defined bloggers included –who are at the same time housewives- the percentage of housewives increases to 23.1%, which is still the highest second rate.

² Demographics of respondents is given after the references section in Appendix 1.

Table 1. Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Academic	11	12.2	12.2	12.2
	Blogger	7	7.8	7.8	20.0
	Housewife	14	15.6	15.6	35.6
	Media	9	10.0	10.0	45.6
	Student	13	14.4	14.4	60.0
	PR	5	5.6	5.6	65.6
	Expert	31	34.4	34.4	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

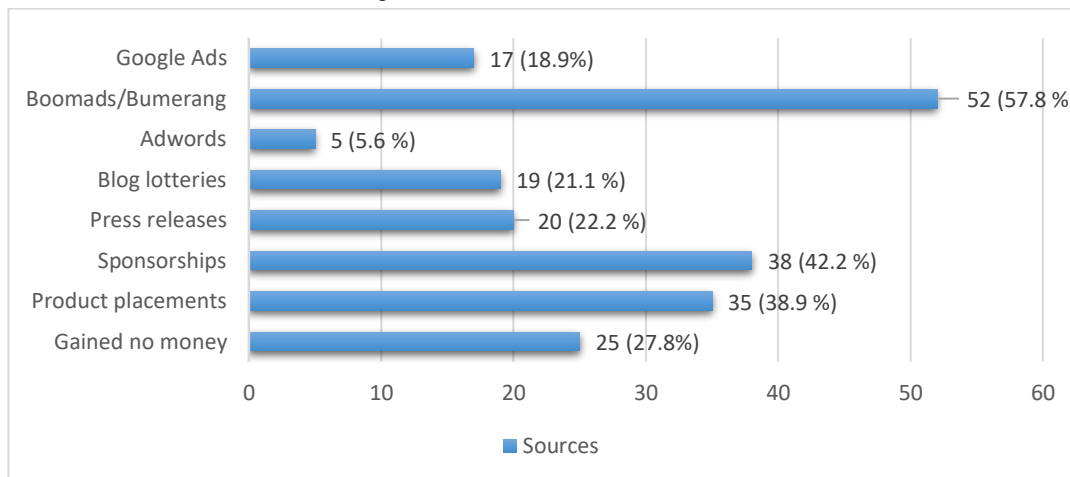
In terms of their blogging practices, it is seen that 72.2% of the respondents have been writing blogs for more than 4 years. This number is followed by 21.1% of them writing between 2 and 4 years. 36% of the respondents declared that they write frequently and 14% of them said they write very frequently to their blogs out of a five point scale (very frequently=1, rarely: 5). Thus, the bloggers studied are an experienced and professionalized group that spent much time and effort on their blogs.

Section 4: Results and Discussion

Main Motivation is Self-Realization

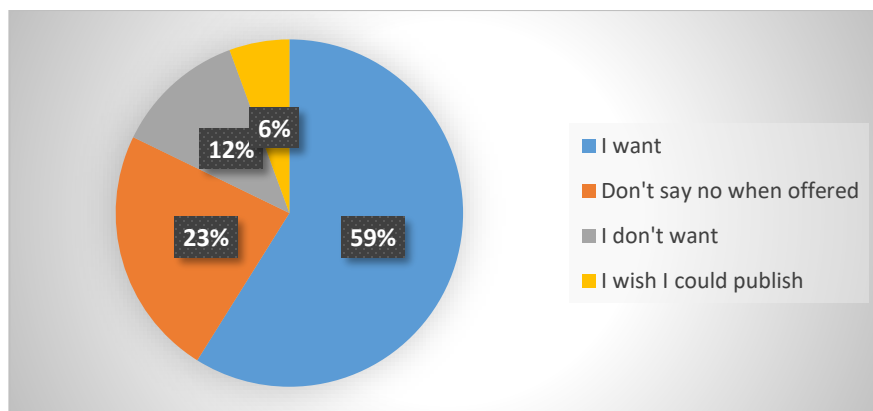
Given the effort and time spent in blogs, there is a certain labor produced which I had assumed to be “hope labor” developed unconsciously with the aim of economic gains or future employment opportunities. It is very common for bloggers to have jobs via their blogging activities as 57% of the respondents approved that blog writing provided them with jobs and blogging improves their budgets. Survey results revealed that only 27.8% of the respondents never gained any money from their blogs, but the rest of them has economically benefited through advertisements, lotteries, sponsorships or gift exchanges (Figure 1). Additionally, 78% of them admitted that they gained money, presents or products from their blogs.

Figure 1. Sources of Economic Gains



Besides the economic gains and employment opportunities provided by blogs, there are other indicators of “hope labor” including attending to blogger events, cooperating with third parties and taking some initiatives for gaining money from blogs like acting as advertisement agents. One of the most important indicator of showing “hope labor” is to use blogs as commercial sites and publish ads in blogs. While 51% of the respondents admit that they use their blogs as commercial sites, results indicated that 72% of them published advertisements (press releases, product placements, advertorials... etc.) in their blogs, and when they are asked whether they want to publish ads or not, only 12.2% of them said they don’t want, while 59% of the respondents declared they want, 23.3% admitted “they wouldn’t say no if they are offered” and 5.6% of them wished they were able to publish ads (Figure 2). Based on this tendency, it is not surprising that 53.3% of them revealed that they had taken steps in order to gain money from their blogs. But, 64.4% of them explained that companies find them for making them publish their commercials. Thus, they do not show much effort searching for companies but more developing their blogs so that companies can find them.

Figure 2. Publishing Ads



Another important indicator of “hope labor” can be seen in attending to blogger events. Given the subjects of this study are bloggers, their blogging activities mainly take place in virtual world in the blogosphere, the connections and acquaintances incur via exchange of messages and they found their embodiment in the form of blogger events. In return, these events quickly go viral across social media with hashtags which allow bloggers to file their comments about the brand, event and other bloggers. Based on the results, it is seen that respondents attend mainly-52.2%- to blogger events organized by other bloggers. These may include baby showers, birthdays, new-year celebrations and so on, where all the party is sponsored by certain companies and a lot of gifts or new products are given to attendees so that they would mention and promote them in their blogs. As Figure 3 shows, these events are followed by those which are organized by the companies themselves for product launchings by 49%. Also, when bloggers are asked with what kind of expectations they attend to blogger events (a multiple choice question), they mostly say for networking opportunities by 71%, which is followed by “to become more social” by 43% (Figure 3). But still, %41 of the respondents admit they go to the events to meet company officials and 24% of them to find sponsorships.

Figure 3. Participated Blogger Events

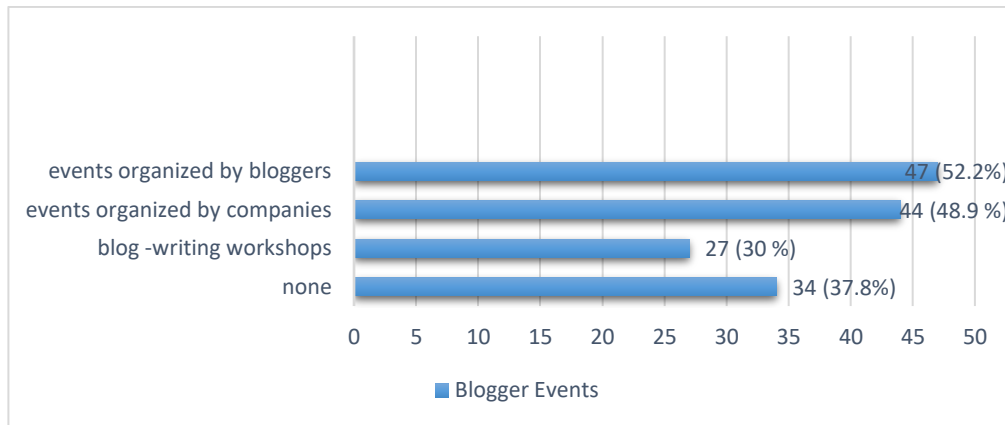
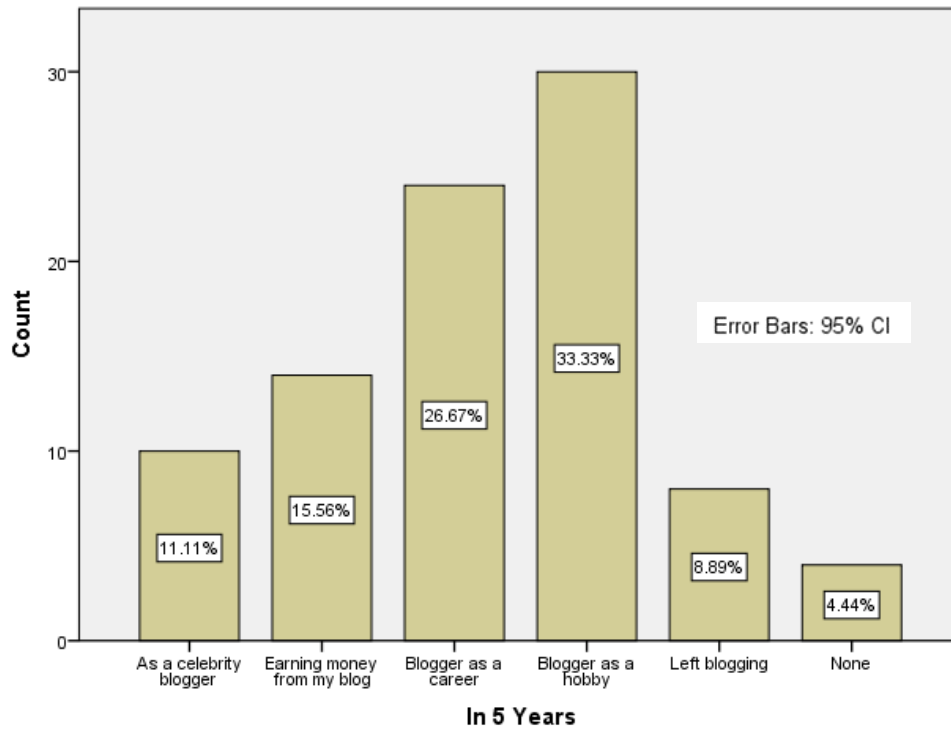


Table 2. Expectations from blogger events

	Expectations from blogger events-networking	Expectations from blogger events-to be more social	Expectations from blogger events-meeting company officials	Expectations from blogger events-find sponsorships	Expectations from blogger events-sense of belonging
Mean	.71	.43	.41	.24	.32
N	90	90	90	90	90
Std. Deviation	.456	.498	.495	.432	.470

Despite the fact that 58% of respondents see being a blogger as a career and take steps for gaining money out of it, either by publishing commercials or attending to blogger events, when they are asked about their future expectations, 33.3% of them declare that they want to continue blogging as a hobby while 26.7% of them want to pursue a blogging career, and 15.6% of the respondents want to continue gaining money from their blogs (Figure 4). So, future employment opportunities is left behind the will of achieving pleasure from blog writing and self-fulfillment by pursuing blogging as a hobby.

Figure 4. Future expectations



In addition, 60% of the respondents declared that they did not have any idea of gaining economic benefits or employment opportunities when they first established their blogs, so the labor they produce and the final products they gain from blogging activity might be different than their first intentions. Table 3 presents the standardized mean scores for blogging motivations of women, where higher scores indicate higher levels of approval and lower scores represent less influential motivations. As the main motivation of writing blogs is asked by a single choice question, the answers revealed that with a percentage of 77, main motivation of female blogging is to find one's self/self-fulfillment, which is followed by 30% of emancipation. Establishing a social network (mean 21) and receiving economic gains (mean 22) remain lower compared to self-realization. Achieving a certain kind of celebrity status is the least expected motivation from bloggers in this study.

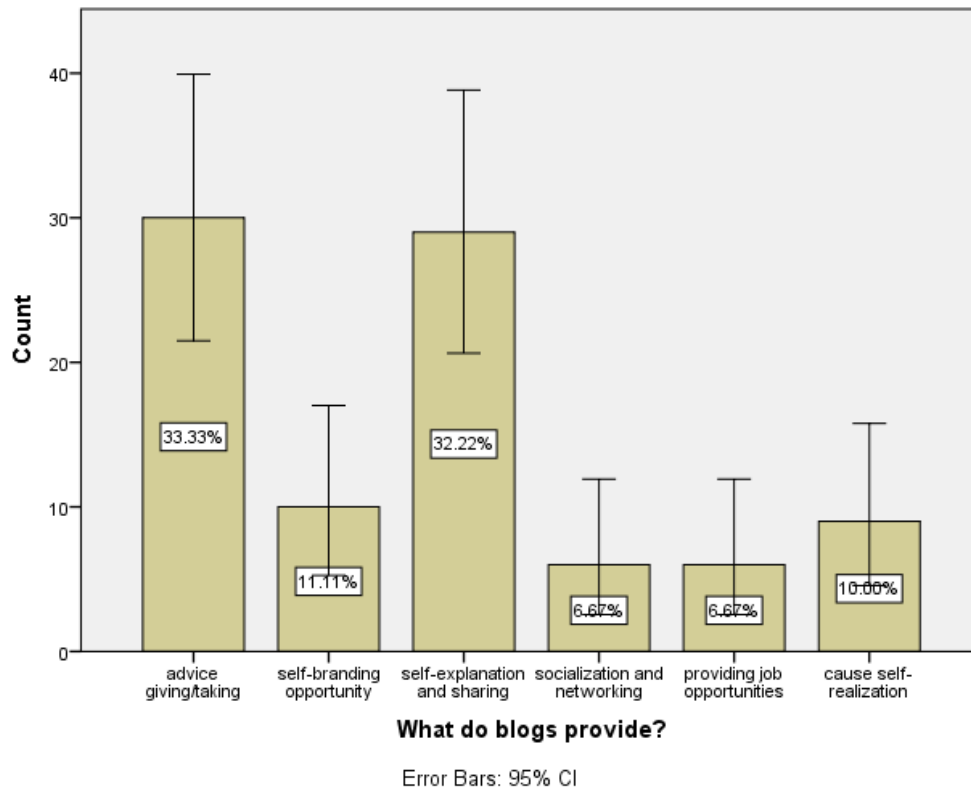
Table 3. Mean scores for motivations

	Reason for blogging-fame	Reason for blogging-financial gains	Reason for blogging-socialization	Reason for blogging-emancipation	Reason for blogging-self-realization	Reason for blogging-other
Mean	.11	.22	.21	.30	.77	.18
N	90	90	90	90	90	90
Std. Deviation	.316	.418	.410	.461	.425	.384

When it comes to how bloggers see blogs, Figure 5 also tells us 33.3% of the respondents consider blogs as advice giving/taking mediums based on the reciprocal relationship between the bloggers and their followers. Feedbacks from the readers are important and this attitude create a lively atmosphere where bloggers can open their inner worlds to public and share their feelings. This idea is supported by the 32.2% of the bloggers. 10% of the respondents directly said that blogs cause self-realization. However, blogs providing job opportunities remained at a lower level (6.6%) than expected although 57% of the respondents

admitted that they gained jobs through blogging as mentioned earlier in a direct question asking whether “have you gained any job opportunities via blogging?”

Figure 5. Providings of blogs



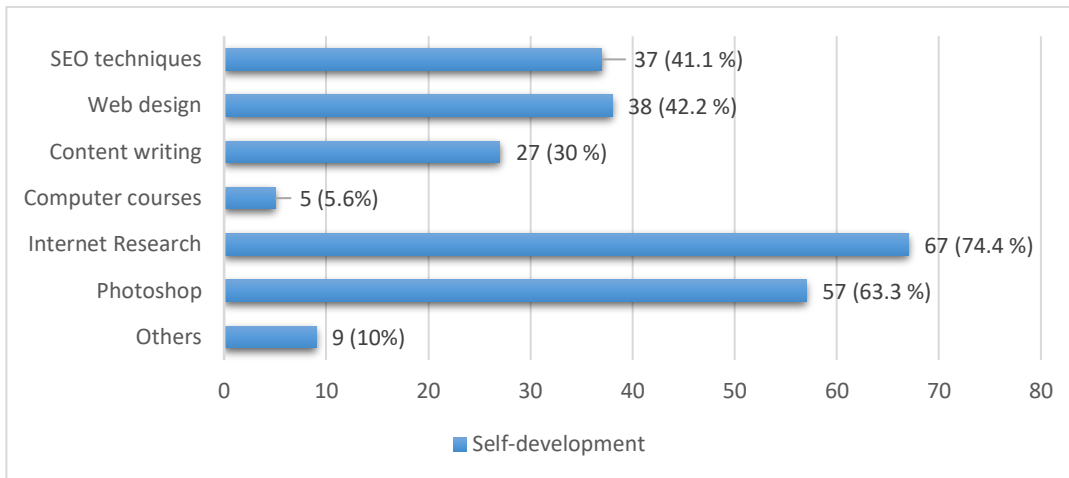
Thus, contrary to my first hypothesis, results indicated that gaining future employment opportunities/economic benefits is not the main motivation for bloggers but self-realization is. Also, they don't feel alienated or exploited since the labor produced online is not a free one but generally a paid one. Rather than feeling estranged to themselves, we see that they realize themselves and feel some sort of emotional satisfaction.

Employment Opportunities Add to Self-Development Process

In my 2nd hypothesis, I had assumed that there is a significant correlation between self-development and blogs' providing of job opportunities and economic benefits. Job opportunities and economic gains can be regarded as same since both variables are approved by %57 of the respondents and they refer to a similar meaning.

I had assumed that self-development occurs as a result of the expectation of providing a better blog charming for third parties so that they could gain more reputation, so job opportunities and economic gains. However, there is also the other side of the coin. As long as they write and gain money from blogs, they feel the urge to be better for their followers and have better looking blogs serving to their reputation. This also leads way to fully developed selves. As Figure 6 illustrates, 74% of the bloggers continuously research through Internet for developing their blogs, 63% of them learn Photoshop applications, 42% of them attend to web-design courses, 41% of them learn SEO (search engine optimization) techniques while 30% of them participate to content writing workshops.

Figure 6. Self-development



In order to test the correlations between blogs providing job opportunities and economic gains, seven variables in Figure 6 (SEO, web-design, content-writing, computer courses, Internet research, Photoshop and other categories) are recoded under the variable name “self-development”. Table 4 illustrates that there is a significant correlation between self-development and blogs providing job opportunities with a significance level of 0.001 lower than 0.01 level and Table 5 also indicates a significant correlation between self-development and economic gains with a significance level of 0³.

Table 4. Self-development & job opportunities

		Self-development	Gaining job opportunities via blogging
Self-development	Pearson Correlation	1	-.339**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	90	90

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5. Self-development & economic gains

		Self-development	Obtaining economic gains via blogging
Self-development	Pearson Correlation	1	-.404**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	90	90

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To have a better understanding of these relationships between two variables, I needed to check the effect of a test variable, namely blogging as a career. As Table 6 indicates, seeing blogging as a career (by

³ Since response options were coded as 1=yes, 2=no, correlation values are minus and correlation values are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

58%) has significant effects on self-development & job opportunities and economic gains given the significance levels of 0.002 and 0.

Table 6. Partial correlations

Control Variables			Self-development	Obtaining jobs via blogging
Being blogger as a career	Self-development	Correlation	1.000	-.317
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.002
		df	0	87

Control Variables			Self-development	Obtaining economic benefits via blogging
Being blogger as a career	Self-development	Correlation	1.000	-.383
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000
		df	0	87

Thus, based on these correlations, my second hypothesis about the significant correlation between obtaining jobs via blogs and self-development and labor produced in blog writing causes self-development opportunities, is supported.

Employment Status Does Not Have a Certain Effect on Emancipation

Reshaping the borders of private and public spheres, I assumed that blogosphere provides some sort of emancipation to housewives either socially, economically or culturally. Housewives generally write their blogs from home and open their private lives to public sphere and my 3rd hypothesis was formed as: “it is more likely that housewives feel more emancipated while writing blogs than employed women”.

Out of 90 bloggers, 56 of them are officially employed meaning they are on wage (Figure 7). Those who are housewives and students were coded under unemployed status at first. However, since students participate to public life in a more different manner than housewives and some of them do volunteer, part-time or project-based jobs, the variable is recoded and divided as housewives and the rest (employed including students). Those who do not work but define their occupation as “blogger” rather than housewife were coded into the housewives category as well.

Table 7. Employment status

				Frequency	Percent			Frequency	Percent
Valid	Unemployed	34	37.8	Valid	Housewife	21	23.3		
	Employed	56	62.2		Employed	69	76.7		
	Total	90	100.0		Total	90	100.0		

Although housewives start blogging more motivated than employed women in terms of emancipation reasons with 38% housewives versus 27% employed women (Figure 7), situation changes when it comes to how they feel during the whole process is experienced. Figure 8 illustrates that 58% of employed women feel emancipated when they are blogging, where we see a very similar value as 57% of housewives feel some sort of emancipation via blogging.

Figure 7. Emancipation as motivation for blogging

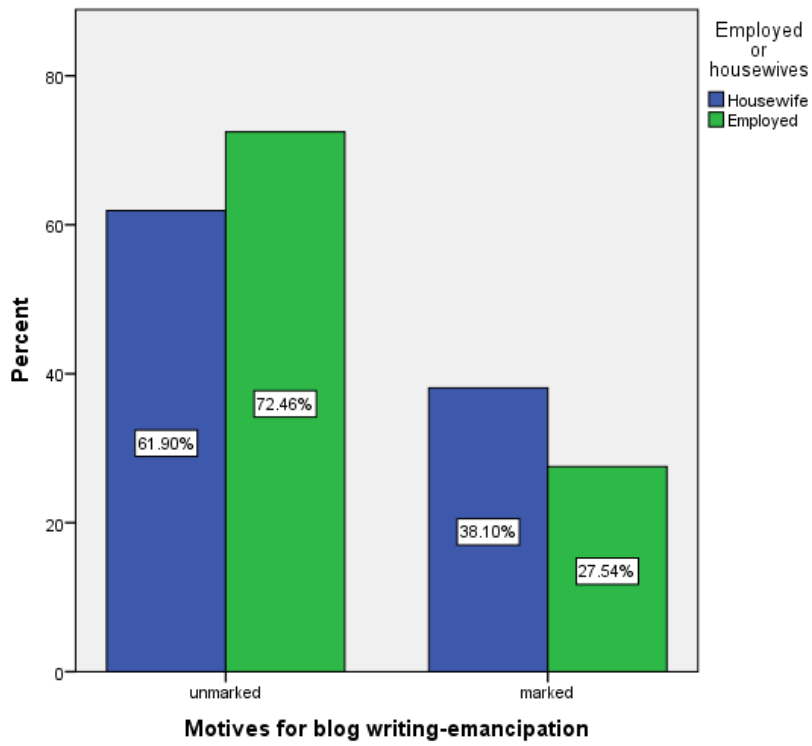


Figure 8. Emancipation as feeling caused by blogging

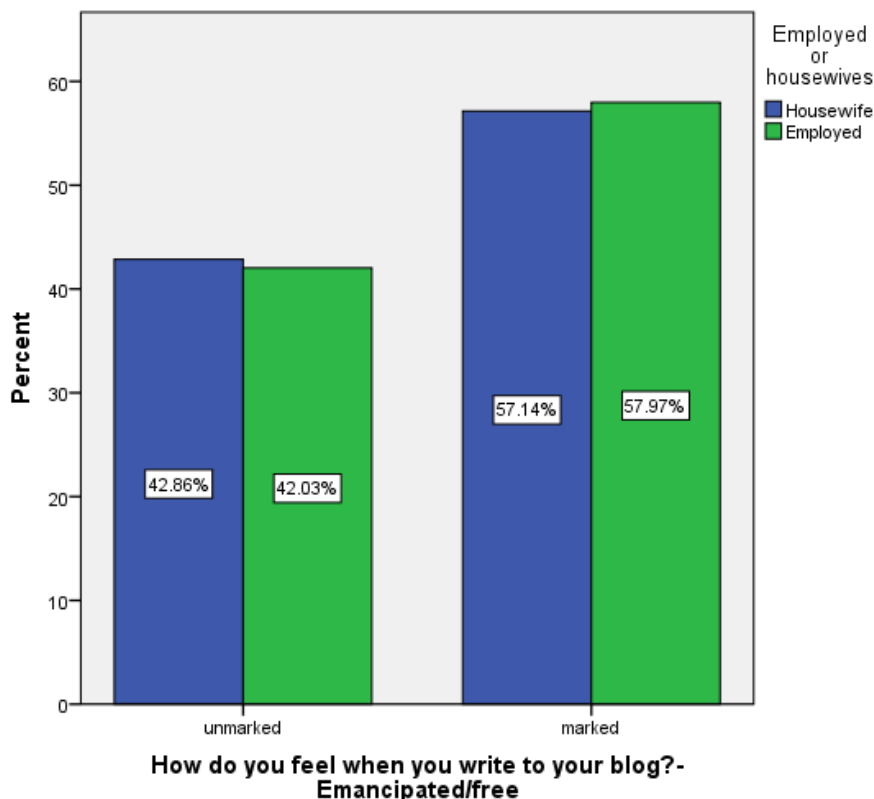


Table 8. Employed or housewives crosstabulation chi-square tests

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.005 ^a	1	.946		
Continuity Correction ^b	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.005	1	.946		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.570
Linear-by-Linear Association	.004	1	.947		
N of Valid Cases	90				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.87.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

In order to understand the relation between emancipation and occupation statuses of women, crosstabulation is conducted, where the dependent variable is the feeling of emancipation and independent variable is the occupation of bloggers. My analysis falsified my bivariate hypothesis, since the expectation that housewives feel more emancipated than employed women is challenged by the same number of experts or higher number of students who feel emancipated. Checking the chi-square values (0.946), it is seen that observed relationship between these two variables is not statistically significant meaning that my variables are not interrelated. If the null hypothesis 'there is no relationship between my variables' is rejected, the likelihood of being mistaken is more than 5% as Table 8 illustrates.

Contrary to traditional views that unemployed women -in our study housewives- feel more emancipated while writing blogs wriggling out their domestic gender roles, more employed women expressed that they feel emancipated and free than their unemployed counterparts with a low level of difference. They see this process as a liberating experience from their routine and daily works as housewives also experience a similar kind of feeling. Thus, my 3rd hypothesis is not supported and employment status does not have a certain effect on emancipation feeling.

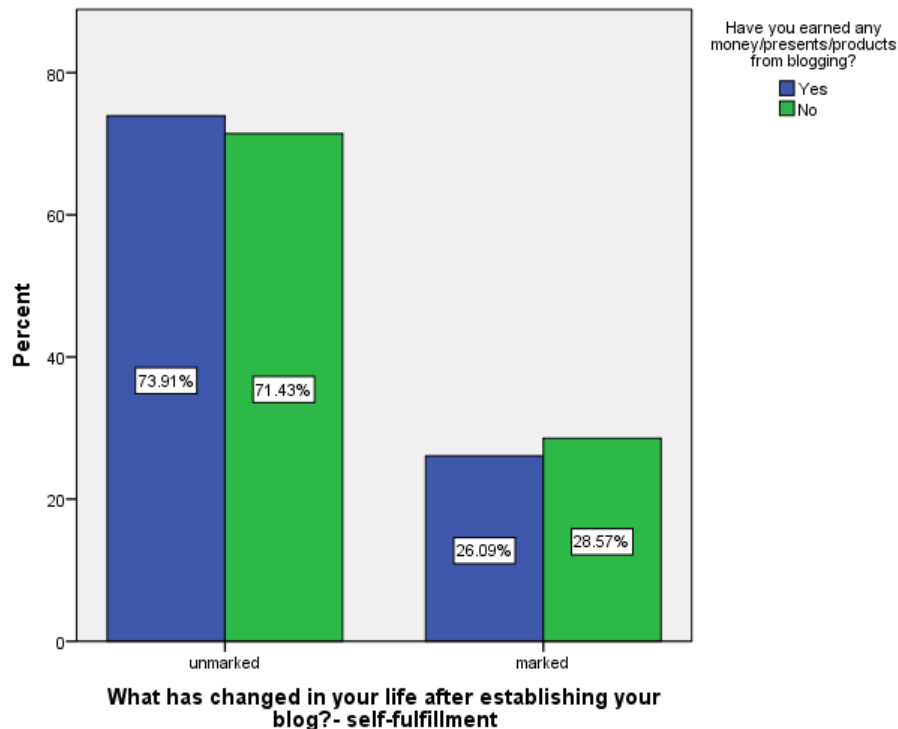
Economic Benefits do not have an Important Impact on Self-Fulfillment

The initial assumption in my 4th hypothesis was that bloggers who do not earn money or other benefits from their blogs compared to their more professional counterparts, feel more satisfied in terms of self-fulfillment so that they continue writing. A certain kind of pleasure is achieved via blogging and they feel that they are fulfilled.

For a better understanding of the relationship between self-fulfillment and economic gains, the answers to questions, “Do you feel fulfilled via blogging?” and “Have you gained any money/present/product from your blog?” are compared. Results indicated that there is no correlation between self-fulfillment and economic gains as Pearson correlation is 0.024 and significance test (2-tailed) is 0.824 which is higher than the p value of 0.01. Thus, there is no significant relation between two variables. It is also tested by cross tabulation, where chi square values indicated a 0.822 value meaning that these two variables are not interrelated.

When we look at the grand total, it is seen that only 27% of the respondents said they are satisfied from blog writing in terms of self-fulfillment. As the total number is divided into two categories: bloggers who have economic benefits from blogs and those who don't have, the results show that 28.57% of women who answered as they are fulfilled by blogging practices, do not earn any money/presents/products from blogging. 26% of women on the other hand, feel fulfilled and also have economic gains by the help of their blogging activities (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Self-fulfillment and economic gains



Thus, bloggers who have no economic benefits from their blogs, have a little stronger feeling of satisfaction in terms of self-fulfillment which also supports my last hypothesis. But still, since the difference between the two percentages is very little and the two variables -self-fulfillment and economic gains- are not necessarily interrelated, we can conclude that gaining economic benefits from blogging does not have an important impact on self-fulfillment process.

Conclusion

This study investigates the blogging practices in Turkey from a gendered and digital labor perspective, focusing on how female bloggers locate and represent their self-consciousness in the blogosphere. While the study explores female blogging in Turkey and its relationship with the labor market, it also reveals the motivations of the female bloggers and how they negotiate their online identities in an age of extreme self-display.

There is a mutual relationship between the female bloggers and advertising industry, and I had assumed that bloggers enjoy from the efforts they give voluntarily, in the hope that they can create their own brands or they can gain job opportunities in the future. Thus, the labor practiced in these blogs is regarded as “hope labor” (Kuehn and Corrigan, 2013) which is analyzed broadly in the research. Based on the quantitative approach adopted, an online survey is conducted with 90 female bloggers- aged between 18 and 56- from various cities of Turkey. As a result, two of my initial hypotheses are not supported while two of them are.

I aimed to explore future employment opportunities along with the hope-labor produced in blogs, however, although blogs provide employment opportunities and economic gains, “socially recognized self-realization” (Arvidsson, 2008) remained to be the main motivation for blog writing, leaving hope labor less influential in this process (Hypothesis 1). Contrary to the debated views in the literature, the assumption that women who are in search for their own emancipation in a patriarchal culture, yet are at the same time the subjects of ‘free labor’ is also challenged. Based on the results, we see that most of the women are paid for when they cooperate with third parties and they do not feel alienated or exploited as many digital labor theories suggest, but their labor is somehow rewarded in return. So, this hope labour may turn into human capital, valuable ‘experiences’ for exposure and reputation, self-managing ‘risk strategies’, creativity and autonomy (Mackenzie & McKinley, 2020). In her research about the hope labour in volunteering, Kori Allan (2019) also claims that volunteer positions do not necessarily lead to paid work. But, the unpaid work done in volunteering allow people to fill their resumes and chase opportunities being prominent forms of neoliberal risk management in contingent and competitive labour markets (Allan, 2019, p.66). Therefore, these rewards and experiences are welcomed by the women bloggers submitting to the level and nature of labor production in blogs.

Mackenzie and McKinley (2020) argue the practice of hope labour involves a competitive relationship with oneself (Binkley, 2011; Butler, 1997) as well as with others. Thus, as long as they economically benefit from blogging, women feel the need to develop themselves as well as their blogs, so they search for self-development opportunities and participate various courses, workshops and so on (Hypothesis 2). Even if there is no economic gain from the blogs, blogging improves the lives of women in terms of other satisfaction channels like achieving self-fulfillment, emancipation, celebration and recognition. Yet, the feeling of emancipation has also nothing to do with the unemployed status and housewives are not necessarily women who needs to be “survived” from their daily lives, rather it is seen that employed women feel more emancipated through blogging (Hypothesis 3). So, views like unemployed women participate to public sphere via blogging activities wriggling out of their inherited gender roles also remain to be an over determination. On the other hand, self-fulfillment is another type of satisfaction and the results demonstrated that economic gains do not have a positive effect on this feeling as bloggers feel more fulfilled by blog writing even if they do not earn anything from their blogs (Hypothesis 4).

This study adds to the literature on representation of self and self-branding techniques in cyberspace (Marwick, 2013a; Banet-Weiser, 2011) and the critical digital labor studies from a gendered perspective. As this study is limited to an online survey, further research would definitely benefit from a mixed method

approach where quantitative analysis is supported with a qualitative approach. An ethnographic study, where in depth interviews are supported with participant observation to blogger events, would be an asset in order to have a better understanding of the motivations behind female blogging, the opportunities they gain through the blogosphere and how it improves their lives.

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Appendix 1

First name	Age	Occupation
Duygu	30	Chemist
Burcu	30	Housewife
Esin	39	Nurse
Özlem	20	Student
Gizem	26	Academic
Melike	35	Graduate Student
Asya	35	Student
Mandy	34	Editor
Salyangoz	32	Housewife
Hayriye	39	News Editor
Aytül	42	Unemployed
Anonim	28	PR specialist
Funda	42	Consultant
Özge	24	Student
Tuba	28	Student
Sevgi	22	Social Media Specialist
Berru	19	Student
Banu	46	Student Affairs Director
Birgül	56	Retired
İnci	56	Housewife
Nazan	38	Personnel and administrative affairs officer
Deniz	37	Self-Employed
Gül	28	Executive Assistant
Nermin	30	Government official
Tuçe	35	Housewife
Yasemin	31	Author
Hale	37	Actress
Özlem	55	Retired
Emine	21	Student
Zehra	29	Housewife
Merve	24	Designer
Gizem	31	Housewife
Yeşim	46	Housewife/Self-employed
Ece	41	Housewife

Sevil	37	Brand Executive
Nilay	36	Blogger
İpek	42	Housewife
Derya	38	Blogger
Aslı	35	PR specialist
Güneş	38	Marketing Manager
Tülin	39	Lecturer
Alev	36	Designer
Jülide E.	23	Graphic designer
Buse	22	English Teacher
Jülide	23	Student
Seda	27	Housewife
Tuğçe	22	Student
Ezgi	19	Student
Aslıhan	18	Student
Gizem	25	Statistics Advisor
Didem	25	Graphic designer
Burçin	30	PR specialist
Gülseven	34	undefined
Anonymous	43	Self-Employed
Yeşim	28	Author
Cansu	22	Student
Yasmin	21	Student
Nilüfer	41	Nurse
Jale	43	English Teacher
Emine	37	Secretary
Nila	20	Designer
Ayça	25	Psychological Consultant
Nazmiye	22	Teacher
Nurten	31	Clerk
Çilek	35	Housewife
Serpil	32	Nutritionist
Seyma	24	Shift manager
Naz	26	Content Editor
Bahar	35	Lawyer
Gülen	32	Graphic designer
Güzel	40	Clerk
Necla	41	Health technician
Kerime	26	Data preparation and control operator
İrem	30	Architect
Aslı V.	34	Agricultural engineer
Ayşe	34	Housewife
Hilal	24	Teacher
Senem	27	Self-Employed
Eda	30	Architect

Aslıhan	23	Student
Zerrin	26	Sales Expert
Burçin	32	Food engineer
Seda	26	Beauty expert
Berrak	28	Translator
Özlem	33	Teacher
Duygu	23	Teacher
Burcu	30	Business manager
Esin	30	Accountant
Burcu T.	37	Teacher