

# Gender Communication and Leadership: A Qualitative Research in Managerial Level

Toplumsal Cinsiyet İletişimi ve Liderlik: Yönetim Düzeyinde Nitel Bir Araştırma

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## Abstract

As a result of women's struggles over the years, more women than ever are entering the labor force and taking senior management positions but the representation of women in managerial processes is still limited in almost all countries. Gender stereotypes or the problems that may arise in gender communication can be defined as one of the obstacles in women's career process. In this context, the aim of this study was to discover the communication competencies and barriers among senior managers based on gender communication language, behavioral patterns, and perceptions of male and female leaders toward each other. The study employed qualitative analysis based on semi-structured questions to interpret how female and male executives evaluate each other. Instead of coding only important concepts, a grounded coding process that involved full interviews was permitted to acquire a deeper understanding was applied. After finalizing the coding process, cluster analysis that explores the similarities of the codes was applied, and this enabled a deep understanding of gender differences within large-scale corporate companies in Turkey. Findings show that gender-based roles and gender stereotypes in corporate companies in Turkish society are compatible with the literature, but also reveal new patterns. Although women's awareness of their communication skills has increased, it is seen that there are still some gender stereotypes that they accept.

**Keywords:** Gender Communication, Gender Stereotyping, Gender Inequality, Leadership Styles, Leadership Communication

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## Öz

Kadınlar tarihsel süreç içinde yönetim pozisyonlarında her zamankinden daha fazla görev alsalar da hala dünyanın birçok ülkesinde kadının yönetim süreçlerinde yeterli düzeyde söz sahibi olmadığı görülmektedir. Toplumsal cinsiyet iletişiminde ortaya çıkabilecek sorunlar veya toplumsal cinsiyet konusundaki stereotipler kadınların kariyer gelişimindeki engellerden biri olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın amacı, cinsiyete dayalı iletişim rollerini, davranış kalıplarını, erkek ve kadın liderlerin birbirlerine yönelik algılarına dayalı olarak üst düzey yöneticiler arasındaki iletişim yetkinliklerini ve engellerini keşfetmektedir. Çalışmada, kadın ve erkek yöneticilerin birbirlerini iletişim ve liderlik rolleri anlamında nasıl değerlendirdiklerini yorumlamak amacıyla yarı yapılandırılmış sorulara dayalı nitel analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Yalnızca önemli kavramların kodlanması yerine, daha derin bir anlayış elde etmek için tam görüşmeleri içeren gömülü kodlama sürecini takiben, kodların benzerliklerini araştıran kümeleme analizi uygulanmış ve Türkiye'deki büyük ölçekli kurumsal şirketlerde cinsiyet iletişimi ve farklılıkları derinlemesine irdelenmiştir. Bulgular, Türkiye'deki kurumsal şirketlerde toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı rollerin ve toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı kalıp yargıların literatürle uyumlu olduğunu göstermekle birlikte yeni örüntüleri de ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda kadınların iletişim becerilerine ilişkin farkındalıkları artmış olsa da kabul ettikleri bazı toplumsal cinsiyet kalıplarının varlığını koruduğu ve kabul gördüğü gözlemlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Toplumsal Cinsiyet İletişimi, Cinsiyet Stereotipleri, Cinsiyet Eşitsizliği, Liderlik Tarzları, Lider İletişimi

## Introduction

Women's representation in the labor market is increasingly significant for economic growth and development, both nationally and organizationally; however, while women's roles in business seem to be increasing, the number of women in senior management is far from being equal to men. In 2019, the percentage of women in senior management roles in organizations have risen to 29% globally compared to the year 2018—the highest score ever recorded. In 2020, this percentage remains the same (Grant Thornton, 2020). However, despite this growth, of the largest listed companies in the European Union (EU-28) in 2020, only 19,3% of executives and 7,9% of CEOs are women (European Institute For Gender Equality, n.d.). Even among countries with relatively high educational achievement, women face obstacles in the most dynamic and in-demand professions. Moreover, women are underrepresented in the eight micro clusters with the highest employment growth rate: human and culture, content production, marketing, sales, specialized project managers, data and artificial intelligence, engineering, and cloud computing (Grant Thornton, 2020). According to the Gender Gap Index rankings on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment, Turkey is 130<sup>th</sup> among 153 countries. As for the ranking in women in ministerial positions, Turkey has ranked 138<sup>th</sup> among 190 countries with 11,8 % of women ministers (Bianet, 2020).

Each previous wave of the women's liberation movement contributed positively to women's roles and status in society. The first wave (1920s) was focused on gaining political equality for women by attaining the right to vote (Ginzberg, 2002; Lorber, 2010) while the second wave (early 1960s to the late 1980s) was focused on equal participation of women in the workplace (Lorber, 2020).

The third (and current) wave is concerned with increasing the proportion of females in leadership and managerial positions (Heywood, 2006; Lorber, 2010). Each of these waves helped women attain equality and independence (Merchant, 2012); however, women today still face many issues in the workplace, predominantly the gender wage gap and “glass ceiling” that refers to invisible barriers that prevent women from rising to the top positions in a career (Cotter, Ovadia & Vanneman, 2001).

From past to present, women’s careers are interrupted in different ways: Zhao and Lord (2016) pointed out that marital status and motherhood can put women at a disadvantage in terms of career progression. Naldini, Pavolini and Solera (2016) expressed that career interruptions change by country and case, by organizations and mid-level managers face career interruptions when they care for their parents.

These interruptions block women’s mobility into mid-level management positions in the late career stage, as they may need a career break to care for their families. Accordingly, women have to choose between family and business throughout their career path. Furthermore, the number of women leaders and bosses in the media, public relations, and communication consultancy are higher compared to many other professions (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). Choosing career based on gender stereotypes emerge as the result of prejudice toward women concerning which area they are considered able to succeed in. These prejudices may be effective in creating a barrier between women and growing sectors, such as data and artificial intelligence, because of their opinions about themselves. In this sense, gender stereotypes appear to generalize the attributes of men and women in terms of processing information, which is then used to justify barriers to certain social roles (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996). Finally, gender communication styles in the workplace present barriers for women. Traditionally, behaviors and discourses associated with effective leadership have been associated with masculinity, while relational practices and focusing on processes (considered feminine traits) have been undervalued (Mullany & Yoong, 2017). Although these attributes are similar to some of the characteristics that organizations seek for efficiency and success (due to changes in approaches to management), women continue to be evaluated according to “rigorous preparation, warmth of manner, humor, acceptance of being teased, forms of politeness such as apology” (Baxter, 2008, p. 217) and if they are successful, their authority may be evaluated as “motherly” (Mullany & Yoong, 2017). This means that the role of language still causes a glass ceiling. In this frame, the starting point of this study is to reveal the existing barriers to the promotion of women and to contribute to this field by focusing on women and men managers’ communication styles and perception in corporate companies in Turkey. Today, although civic efforts to increase the representation of women at the management level have come to the fore with their awareness-raising projects (eg., Turkish Board of Directors Women’s Association, UNWomen, we stand by you), all kinds of contributions continue to be needed in this field. This study examines the obstacles faced by women in managerial positions using the framework of gender communication barriers and stereotyping. This study analyzes the participants’ narratives based on 20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both male and female senior managers in Turkey. Respondents were interviewed to examine the corporate communication language, behavioral patterns, and perceptions of male and female leaders toward each other to determine communication competencies and barriers of the two groups of leaders (male and female).

Different from other qualitative research in this field, the way that male and female executives evaluate each other provides a deep understanding of patterns relating to gender communication differences and stereotypings among large-scale corporate companies.

### **Theoretical Background**

Throughout history, women have struggled to justify their place in society. Onay and Heptazeler (2014) suggest that the process has been longer and more difficult for women to take part in working life, and both historically and economically, entering into management positions has been even more difficult. Wilkins and Anderson (1991) stated that the existence of male and female leadership differences has been accepted when some women were finally appointed to management positions by the 1970s. In early studies (Chapman, 1975; Gray, 1992; Tannen, 1990) that compared leadership styles, it was found that women in leadership positions exhibit more relationship-oriented behaviors than their male colleagues, probably due to social conditioning regarding gender-based social expectations. Recent studies generally focus on women's management skills, leadership characteristics, communication competence, and comparisons with male managers (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Foldy, 2003; Grisoni & Beeby, 2007; Staub, 2017).

They are some researches that reveal women's advantage in terms of leadership characteristics, such as Grisoni and Beeby (2007) mentioned that the differences in leadership behaviors and characteristics, finding that women's characteristics included empathizing, evaluating employees, listening, motivating others, forming teams, interviewing, negotiating, leading change, managing conflict, conducting meetings, and counsel others. Male leaders excelled at interviewing staff, disciplining, managing conflict, counselling others, making decisions, solving problems, negotiating, and conducting meetings. In a study on primary leadership behaviors, Foldy (2003) observed that for women, managing, facilitating, and influencing attitudes and for men, exploration, interaction, and processing attitudes were the characteristics that stood out.

Contrary to the researches that focus women and men leaders differences, there are some research findings show that there is no difference between men and women leaders. Eagly, Karau and Makhijani (1995) found that male and female leaders showed similar effectiveness in their leadership, but men were more successful in jobs defined as more masculine, while women were more successful in jobs defined as less masculine. Meanwhile, Thompson (2000) found that men and women showed no differences in their leadership styles, and there was no gender difference in leadership.

Despite the continued struggle for gender equality over recent years, the number of women managers in the business in the world generally and in Turkey specifically is increasing rather slowly. Onay (2013) states that it is difficult for women to reach higher positions in work environments where they work alone in the workplace, they are in a male-dominated environment, the work has a masculine structure, or the hierarchical structure is sharply defined (p. 217).

Additionally, Howe-Walsh and Turnbull (2016) found that gendered practices and men's networks dominate daily work practices, especially the existence of a "men's club" approach in the field of science and technology. The authors also found that male-dominated culture frightened women,

leading them to consider leaving the organization (p. 423). In Turkey, male-dominated culture mainly perceive women's priority as family and child. Conducted research on the obstacles preventing women from reaching leadership positions broadly identified them as gender-based corporate culture, formal and informal gendered practices, and home/family/child caring responsibilities (Adamo, 2013; Fisher, 2007; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016). Moreover, Mason (2008) and Correll, Benard and In (2007) found that women candidates are discriminated against if they have children or pregnant, a situation that has a profound effect on their career advancement opportunities. Moreover, Eagly and Carli (2003) state that women are disadvantaged as leaders because established gender bias often limits the effectiveness of women's leadership. Livingstone, Pollock and Raykov (2014) conducted studies in Canada found that housework is considered the primary responsibility of women, with aspirations of attaining high-level leading roles decreasing over time, as they are exposed to a "glass ceiling effect". So, male-dominated work culture and unchanging gender roles remain the biggest obstacles for women to overcome. Evans and Maley's (2020) research on senior executives also revealed a number of concerns; Both genders are conditioned to their roles, women's skills are not evaluated in the same way as men, prejudice exists against women who are mothers, women have to work harder than men for success and are excluded from the "men's club," and cannot find a role model for themselves due to a lack of female managers at senior levels.

In addition, because men have held many leadership positions in society for a very long time, the concept of leadership is also stereotypically defined according to masculine traits, such as aggression, determination, willingness to enter conflict, and power. Studies have shown that women typically adopt male leadership styles and act decisively, swiftly and in coordination, which is a necessity for authoritarian leadership (Kolehmainen, Brennan, Filut, Isaac & Carnes, 2014). Most female managers who were interviewed in this research believed that they should be as strong as men to be successful and advance in their careers.

### **Gender Communication and Leadership**

Despite decades of research (Orser, 1994; Elsaid & Elsaid, 2012; Berkery, Morley & Tiernan, 2013) workplace gender inequality remains a worldwide problem. Women's underrepresentation in leadership roles, their unpaid labor and unequal wages compared to men constitute the most common issues in gender inequality. In addition, there is evidence that women who are rewarded less for the same performance on the job are less likely to be promoted (Bowles, Babcock & Lai, 2007; Sarsons, 2017; Hengel, 2018).

Segregation in the labour market reinforces the gender wage gap and segregation is frequently linked to stereotypes. Gender Wage Gap is 15.6% in Turkey (International Labour Organization, 2020). Gender stereotypes describe certain behaviors and characteristics, which are expected by the society from women as a group and men as a group and still being the most crucial barrier on career progressions of women in management. Gender stereotypes limit the other party's self-expression in interpersonal communication by providing descriptive prescriptions about men and women. Learned social construct since early childhood and stereotypical gender roles act as guide

for workplace conduct as they subconsciously dictate how a person is to communicate and act based on their gender (Merchant, 2012).

Early studies on gender communication styles demonstrate how barriers to women's promotion in organizations occur, based on misunderstandings between men and women at work. Tannen (1990) with her work 'You Just Don't Understand', argued that women and men differ in communication styles whereby women are described as more relationship oriented and more concerned with creating and maintaining intimacy, while men are described as more instrumental, task-oriented, and concerned with gathering information, or with establishing and maintaining social status or power (Gray, 1992; Tannen, 1990). The most crucial aspect of gender differences is to communicate the sense of self. For men, the sense of self is defined through an ability to achieve results; however, for women, the sense of self is defined through feelings and the quality of relationships Gray (1992). Female communication is more indirect, emotional and detailed, whereas masculine communication is more direct, succinct, and instrumental (Mulac, James & Gibbons, 2001). Women's communication style can help to encourage other people but can include lack of authority (Lindsey & Zakahi, 2006). Stereotypically masculine characteristics, such as self-confidence, provide an indicator of power and effective leadership (Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002) and can result in women being considered less competent (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004). More problematically, gender stereotypes not only affect how women are evaluated by others but also how women evaluate themselves. Research has demonstrated that women's self-characterizations largely parallel those of women in general (Hentschel, Heilman & Peus, 2013), leading to a belief that they are emotional and less self-confident than men. These preconceptions because of gender stereotyping can prevent women from advancing in their career and may lead to a failure to develop their own communication language in leadership. Again, the assumption that women are successful in relational and social areas, while men are more successful in math or technology can lead to negative performance expectations. This perception is likely to affect women's career choices. Conversely, men may be perceived as powerful, aggressive, self-confident, unemotional and rational (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Thus, the stereotype threat influences women's communication style, while masculine stereotype of leadership is foregrounded.

According to communication-based leadership communication is emphasized as being at the center of all leadership functions, being especially crucial for motivating, encouraging, and directing subordinates (Schnurr, 2008). Some researchers claim that effective leadership depends on a leader's communication competence (Barrett, 2006). If male communication style is dominant in the workplace, this can be disadvantage for women's communication competence.

### **Research Design**

Gender stereotypes and the problems that may arise in gender communication can be defined as one of the obstacles in women's career process. In this context, the main aim of this study was to discover the communication competencies and barriers among senior managers based on gender communication language and stereotyping. As gender stereotypes not only affect how women are

evaluated by others but also how women evaluate themselves, this research focuses on perceptions of how women evaluate themselves and how male and women managers perceive each other as well. This was achieved within a framework of gender communication based on 20 semi-structured interviews with men and women in managerial positions in different sectors in Istanbul, Turkey (see Table 1). This research aims to contribute to the existing literature by revealing deep understanding of gender differences within large-scale corporate companies in Turkey.

The mixed methods and qualitative data analysis software QDA Miner was used for the coding process and to help analyze relational interactions and struggles. While this research is qualitative, using this particular software enabled cluster analysis to be conducted to help understand how codes go together. A grounded coding process was applied to acquire tangible clusters, which are integral to thematic qualitative analysis. This method enabled the researchers to identify the barriers to women's progress in management. The following research questions (RQs) guided the research process:

RQ1: Do men and women differ in terms of gender differences in their communication styles?

RQ2: How do women and men describe each other at the managerial level in terms of leadership characteristics and communication styles?

RQ3: What are the main barriers in women promotion in terms of gender stereotyping?

**Table 1.** Informant Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Position	Company
Dilek	F	48	Global Project Manager	International Oil Company
Taner	M	50	Planning and Purchasing Manager	International FMCG
Tamer	M	47	Plant Manager	Multinational Corporation
Sinan	M	38	Advertising, PR Manager	Multinational Electronics Co.
Sarp	M	44	Country Sales Manager	Multinational Sport Co.
Ozgur	M	46	Owner of Law Firm	Banking and Finance
Nurcan	F	45	General Manager	Project Company
Mine	F	43	Legal Consultant	National Company
Gökmen	M	44	Sales Director	International Industry Co.
Güçlü	M	45	Deputy General Manager	Banking and Finance
Duru	F	56	CEO	International Co.
Cansu	F	44	Owner	Event Management Co.
Banu	F	46	Sales Director	Industrial Co.
Burç	M	50	General Manager	International FMCG Co.
Alp	M	47	Editor	Media
Levent	M	52	General Manager	Media
Nevra	F	47	Public Relations Manager	Software Co.
Sevim	F	50	Director	International Co.
Kağan	M	53	General Manager	Media
Figen	F	47	Editor	Media

## Data Collection

The interviews (with 20 senior-level managers) (see Table 1) were carried out both face-to-face (n = 11) and by telephone (n = 9) between November 2, 2020 and January 25, 2021 using semi-structured questioning. Not all interviews could be recorded; however, detailed notes were taken

during the interviews, which helped facilitate the analysis. All interviewees were aged 43–56 years, except for one who was 38 years old. All the senior managers included in the sample were chosen from corporations with more than 250 employees (a large enterprise) operating in Istanbul. A snowball sampling methodology (widely used in qualitative sociological research) was used to recruit the participants. We started with a small number of initial contacts who matched the research criteria and were, therefore, invited to take part. Those who agreed were then asked to recommend other contacts who also matched the research criteria and who might potentially be willing to take part.

The first interview was conducted as a pilot interview intended to improve the interview process. To ensure the validity of the gathered data, the authors verified their interpretation of the information with the interviewees.

### **Methodology**

Labelling was applied to all texts obtained from the interviews after reading all field notes several times to gain a sense of the interview data. However, this was not a simple process, with data analysis characterized as the most complex phase of qualitative research (Thorne, 2000). First, a grounded coding process was applied to attain tangible sociologic clusters. All the texts were examined, and the applied codes were checked in terms of consistency of interpretation. The labelling of the texts was completed using the QDA Miner software tool, which enabled easy segmentation of the texts (a code word was assigned for each segment and terms from the literature were used as much as possible). Each case was coded and combined, and new codes were developed where necessary. Finally, all the codes were grouped into seven categories: “Expectations From Work Life,” “Leadership,” “How Women Managers Describe Men Managers,” “How Men Managers Describe Women Managers,” “Women Communication Style,” “Men Communication Style” and “Inequality and Gender Discrimination.” Although this research was not quantitative, thematic analysis and a coding frame was formed by combining the codes that emerged that were similar. After, cluster analysis was carried out to assess which codes belonged together. This enabled us to interpret how codes under the categories differed based on the structure.

### **Limitations**

Interviews were conducted with 20 managers in corporate companies operating in Istanbul. Although this research is qualitative and cannot be generalized, senior level managers who work in reputable corporate companies in Istanbul provide a deep overview of gender communication barriers in large corporate companies in Turkey, from which the patterns that emerged can be used for further research.

### **Findings and Analysis**

The main category that was revealed (Expectations From Work Life) shows that both female and male managers have similar expectations. They expect their economic interests (including salaries) to be protected to enable them to live comfortably both in the present and after their retirement.

Another common expectation that came to the fore was to work under equal conditions in a fair work environment. A topic that female managers focused on (in contrast to male managers) was the expectation of a work environment that would allow a proper work-life balance. It was mentioned that successful female managers were more disciplined and systematic in their professional life, and even worked harder to be able to keep their position in the business world. They had to demonstrate greater performance with respect to the balance between their family relations and social life. It is evident from the literature that, for women, the demands of management (and other high commitment careers) are often difficult to combine with family and work responsibilities (Ezzedeem & Ritchey, 2009), and work-life balance appears to be one of the expectations of women in high-commitment roles.

Within the Leadership category, leaders' being fair, valuing merit, and being respectable and respectful constituted the main features leadership. In particular, treating subordinates in a just and fair manner emerged as conduct that is expected of leaders (see Table 2). Understanding leadership with strong communication skills and empathy, whilst also being capable of displaying flexibility, were also among the qualities mentioned. The participants emphasized that a leader's gender was unimportant and underlined the fact that intelligence, the ability to apply flexible management models, and character were necessary. While male managers focused mostly on fairness, women considered a leader to be someone who is respectful and who has empathy.

While Duru expressed this, saying, "I believe leadership is beyond gender and that it is a matter of soul," Kağan stated, "each individual has areas in which they are successful or unsuccessful—it is not dependent on gender". Savaş said, "not gender, but individuals' characters and their being in control of the work are the most important variables." These quotes indicate that factors such as character, ways of working, self-development, and intelligence are crucial, rather than the leader's gender. Although they think that leadership is not gendered, Sevim mentions that men are still luckier and tend to be preferred for a senior position in work life.

**Table 2.** Coding Frequency of Leadership

	MALE	FEMALE
Leader		
• Fair	2	2
• Respectful	1	2
• Considerate		1
• Low communication skills can be barrier		1
• Offers equal opportunities		1
• Doesn't matter men or women	2	1
• Empathy		2
• Balance between business and life		1
• Leadership is beyond gender and that it is matter of soul		1
• Intelligence, creativity and own unique style		1
• Sophisticated and refined perspective in every sphere of life		1
• Successful man leader must be consistent, fair and straight and respectful and respected by everyone	1	
• Women leader is someone who never do gender discrimination	1	
• women leder is someone who never mention their emotional part	2	
• Strong		1
• Women are more intelligent because they are multitasking		1
• Flexible	1	1
• Team Communication		1
• Women are good at to support the leader	1	
• Focus to process		1

The belief that women should put sentimentality aside emerges as a topic mentioned by male managers (see Table 2). The belief that women are more sentimental compared to men appears as a strong gender stereotype in Western cultures (Shields, 2002). The criticisms women receive when they reflect their emotions in their work life also causes them to think that the ability to conceal one’s feelings is important in work life. In this sense, being sentimental translates into an inability to control one’s feelings in work life, which in turn is perceived as a sign of weakness. Even today, substantial headway has been made in understanding the structural and psychological barriers that women face in achieving and retaining leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman & Eagly, 2008), controlling feelings still being a barrier in women’s careers.

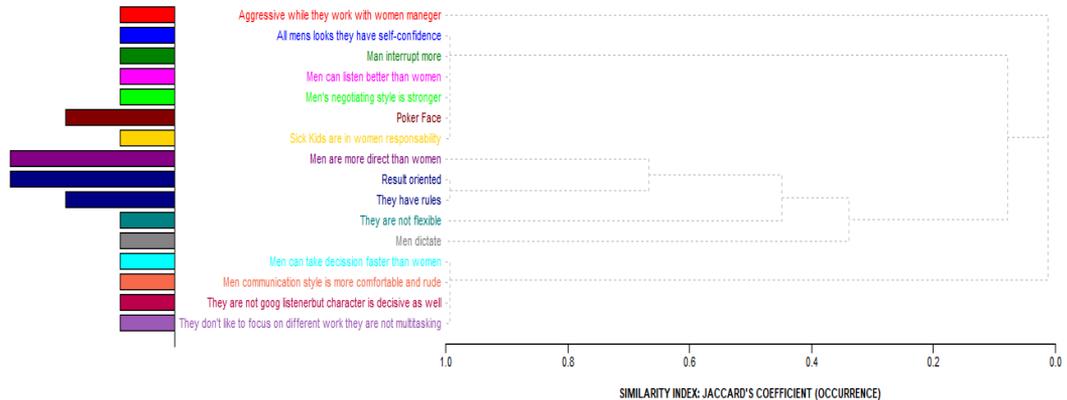
Cansu said, “At each phase, women have to prove that they can play the ‘game’ as tough as men. But men are only expected to be men”, by which she equated women’s survival in the business world with their use of the same language as men. Male managers think that “a female leader is someone who never mentions their emotional part” (see Table 2), proving that there is a bias against women’s emotionality. Although the participants emphasized that gender does not play a key role in leadership, they indicated that they expected women to be tough like men and even display male attitudes in work life with respect to leadership conduct and communication.

Jaccard similarity coefficient is a statistic used in understanding the similarities between sample sets and also inform about the size of similarities. As shown in Figure 1, the codes were thus grouped into six clusters according to Jaccard’s coefficient. Colors shows the similarities, and the size of bars mention the size of codes. When examining the similarity index of “success” of the codes the managers associate with success (see Figure 1), the similarity that emerges is that women need to adapt unwritten business rules for success by placing family in second place and protecting self-interest and the need to work hard. Figure 1 shows that one of the keys identified as being successful is strongly related to being a good communicator. There are two different, significant approaches in terms of women’s communication style. One is that “women need to use men’s communication style,” and the other is that “women can be successful by using their own language.” There is also some bias that successful women can be dominant and raunchy by male managers. While men think that women need to work hard to be successful, it has been observed that there are both female and male managers who agree that men and women are successful in different professions.



Figure 1. Similarity Index: Jaccard's Coefficient (How Success Comes in Business Life)

In the “How Women Managers Describe Men Managers”, (see Figure 2) when interpreting the major differences in male managers’ communication styles, appear to consider men as “poker faced” (that is, not revealing their feelings and thoughts). They consider this an advantage in work life, although they do not approve of it. Female managers mentioned that it was difficult to mask their feelings and thoughts and that they even had to practice doing this. Male managers’ ability to mask their feelings emerges as a critical characteristic that female managers find crucial to their promotion.



**Figure 2.** Similarity Index: Jaccard's Coefficient (Category: How Women Managers Describe Men Managers)

Dilek, 48, who works as the Global Project Manager of international company, and who is responsible for the projects of many countries, shares her experience as follows:

“Unfortunately, I reveal my feelings too much, and I still try to control myself. I am a very direct and outspoken person whose feelings/thoughts can be immediately read in her face. In such cases, men’s ability to conceal their feelings is always advantageous to them.”

Another feature that female managers consider different from male managers is that men have a more direct communication language. This means that they are able to communicate their wishes more directly, listen more actively and provide their feedback clearly. Being result-oriented and making no compromises about rules also emerged as key features from the analysis. In fact, this indicates that male managers also foreground strength in their communication language. Women use communication as a tool to enhance social connections and relationships, while men use language to exert dominance and achieve concrete results.

The in-depth interviews revealed that women think they use more inclusive and supportive language as well as being capable of greater empathy, while male managers choose to manage using a result-oriented communication language that is focused and uncompromising. Banu (a sales director in an industrial company) believes men are more result oriented and can focus more on their business than their relationships, while women always know all the details. According to Banu, this sometimes causes women to miss what they really need to focus on, resulting in serious problems regarding their advancement.

Nevertheless, it has been observed that the advantages and disadvantages of direct and indirect communication may change according to sector. Nurcan (general manager of a communications company) explains this situation as follows:

“Women are more relationship oriented, but men are result-oriented. Women mostly focus on the relationship process, and they spend more time trying to understand the person who they are communicating with. For this reason, in our company, consumer relations managers are mostly women, and they are really successful.”

As Nurcan mentions, her company uses this tool to its advantage.

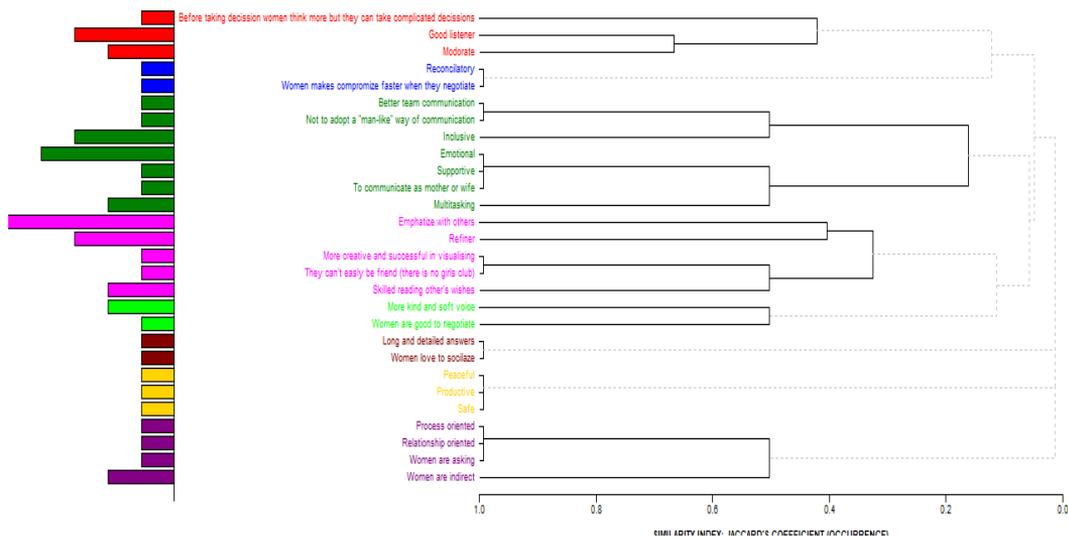


Figure 3. Similarity Index: Jaccard's Coefficient (How Men Managers Describe Women Managers)

In the category “How Men Managers Describe Women Managers”, there appears to be a consensus that women managers are able to show greater empathy towards both customers and employees but act emotionally in their work life (see Figure 3). Women who employ more inclusive language sometimes also appear to be good listeners. Men have provided positive remarks on women’s soft communication language, and the advantages of this language for the organization in general. Women cannot easily adapt to a man-like way of communication, women are multitasking, indirect communication, and good in communication are higher scores.

The characteristics regarding women’s dominant language of communication, on which both male and female managers agree under the “Women Communication Style” category are presented in Table 3 together with their frequencies. Here, there are few characteristics on which women and men agree (see Table 5); however, as shown in Table 3, women are more aware of their communication skills. For example, they see multitasking in a positive manner, they think that they can understand other people’s wishes easily, and they are process-oriented. Moreover, thanks to their supportive approach they can be good team players.

**Table 3.** Coding Frequency by Cases: “Women Communication Style” That Both Women and Men Managers Describe

	MALE	FEMALE
🌈 Communication style of women		
• Multitasking		2
• Inclusive		3
• Emotional	3	4
• Supportive		1
• To communicate as mother or wife		1
• Safe	1	
• Peaceful	1	
• Productive	1	
• Not to adopt a "man-like" way of communication		1
• Skilled reading other's wishes		2
• Better team communication		1
• Emphatize with others	2	6
• Refiner	2	3
• More creative and successful in visualising		1
• They can't easily be friend (there is no girls club)		1
• Good listener	1	2
• Women makes compromize faster when they negotiate		1
• Reconciliatory		1
• Modorate	1	1
• Before taking decission women think more but they can take complicated decisions		1
• More kind and soft voice	1	1
• Women are good to negotiate		1
• Long and detailed answers		1
• Women love to socialize		1
• Relationship oriented		1
• Process oriented		1
• Women are asking		1
• Women are indirect	1	1

The category “Men Communication Style” shows (see Table 4) that men’s aggressive behavior in achieving results makes it difficult to make headway in matters that require mutual agreement. It was mentioned that senior male managers in particular expect the other party to take a step towards them in such settings, as they do not make compromises on their position. Güçlü, who is a manager in the finance sector, explains this situation by saying:

“When the issue is management, managers usually want things to proceed according to their wishes and expect the other party to approach them when agreement is required. They expect the same of their subordinate teams too. Also, a finance CEO must be knowledgeable on law and IT; for instance, the understanding of management requires this.”

Male managers want others to adopt their way of thinking to achieve agreement, for which reason they always expect the other party to make concessions. It is seen that male managers assert their power by employing a more dominant attitude in contrast to female managers’ approaches that seek a more conciliatory approach in meeting halfway.

**Table 4.** Coding Frequency by Cases: “Men Communication Style” That Both Women and Man Managers Describe

	MALE	FEMALE
Communication style of men		
• Strong Negotiation	1	3
• Short answers		2
• Self-control at work		2
• Men are more result and money oriented	4	
• Men have their own communication language		2
• They can easily become buddy (boys club)		1
• Impatient and superficial as a listener		1
• men are more aggressive so it takes long to compromise while they negotiate	2	1
• Men are not good listener	1	
• Men's persuasion method is "it happens when I say" and they use loud voice		1
• No means no	1	2
• Men can set forth one's final opinion in scathing term	1	
• Men want to dominate while negotiate		1
• Prefer email instead of face to face communication		1
• They love to talk on finance, football men kind things		1
• Men focus on instant solution while negotiating	1	
• Facts and result oriented but they can miss the details	1	3
• Under stress men can be tough	1	1
• Men are more direct	1	3

Table 5 shows that both women and men managers agree on their communication skills. It is evident that men have limited awareness of women's communication skills and women are more aware about their communication style, which they use as an advantage in their business life.

**Table 5.** Summary of Significant Characteristics of Both Women and Men

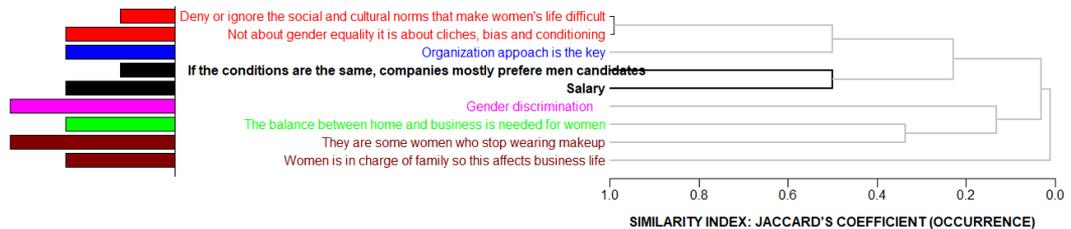
Women Communication Style	Men Communication Style
Emotional	Strong negotiation skills
Empathy	More aggressive in negotiations
Detailer	Result oriented but they can miss the details
Good listener	No means no
Kind and soft tone	Under stress they can be tough
Indirect communication	Direct Communication

Under the Gender inequality and gender discrimination category, it is observed that gender inequality in corporate life is part of a corporation's own culture. Taner, who occupies a managerial position in a multinational company, explains this situation, as follows:

“I'm working at an international company, and our senior management team comprises six persons, three of whom are women. Our CEO is also a woman. In our company, almost all female communication is close to that of the men. I think when women do not have sufficient experience in their business lives, gender communication can be a problem for their promotion. If

they have experience, they learn how to communicate and how to be promoted. To minimize any misunderstanding during communication is important for companies' profit also."

The conduct and culture of corporations are important factors in relation to gender inequality. Timmers, Willemsen and Tijdens (2010) found that organizational structures characterized by high degrees of centralization versus decentralization were conducive to the implementation of gender equality. Cacace, Balahur, Bleijenbergh, Falcinelli, Friedrich and Schmidt (2015) assumed that organizational size also influences the degree of action aimed at inequality. However, creating a common language (that is, learning the corporate language) and the individual's adaptation to this language regardless of gender is also particularly crucial, and in fact has an impact on the corporation's success.



**Figure 4.** Similarity Index: Jaccard's Coefficient (Category: Gender Inequality and Discrimination)

Similarity index shows (see Figure 4) that general opinion is observed regarding inequality related to salary, and choices mostly being made in favor of male candidates among individuals with similar experience and characteristics vying for a position. Moreover, although inequality does not exist in communication language, it is recognized in certain corporate practices. Duru, who has been the CEO of a multinational FMCG company, offers the following remarks on the matter: "The real problem lies in failing to understand the human psyche and ignoring all the scientific findings about human nature, and therefore not considering applying all this valuable knowledge to the field of management."

While there are women in many corporate fields today and that while the representation of women is generally considered, women who were successful or who were able to continue with their career have had to make sacrifices. For example, today, not only in Turkey, but in many places in the world, many women working in the field of engineering could only sustain permanence in their work life by suppressing their gendered characteristics. Tamer, an engineer and manager in an international company, summarizes this situation, saying:

"Women engineers do not wear make-up, and they prefer to wear clothing that could almost be considered masculine in order to better communicate in the company. If women are successful communicators, they need to know that other employees give them nicknames and call them "brother". In our sector, given the choice, I'm sure nobody would want to receive orders from women—not even I."

The gender roles in business life emerge as reflections of being a woman or a man in Turkey and display parallelisms with daily life. Women's social position (their social role) also impacts their business life. Özgür, who manages the law department in a finance company, explains this situation:

“Actually, it is usually women who unite and manage the family. I believe that women’s specific weight is greater than that of their fathers in this region. While positioning a woman in this manner in the family, we cannot position her properly outside the family.”

Levent, 52, who works as a manager in a company, guides female managers who wish to advance, saying: “Do not forget that you live in a male-dominant world, and if possible, work under a male manager; if your manager is a woman, the male candidates who are your alternatives will drive a wedge between you”. This situation as explained by Levent, can also be seen as an indicator of the fact that the communication and unwritten rules established among men in business life have not been established among women. Most female managers who were interviewed believed that they should be as strong as men if they want to be successful and advance in their careers, “although exceptions are, of course, rapidly increasing in number.”

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore grounded categories. “Expectations from Work Life,” “Leadership,” “How Women Managers Describe Men Managers,” “How Men Managers Describe Women Managers,” “Women Communication Style,” “Men Communication Style” and “Inequality and Gender Discrimination” were emerged as exploratory categories. Through these categories, our findings demonstrate that gender stereotyping in the workplace occurs in parallel with that framed in the literature. Although male and female managers share a common point of view on these categories, they dissociate while they evaluate each other.

This study identified that women are more emotional than men as the strongest gender stereotyping. Female managers think that hiding their emotions is crucial in business life and perceive emotionality as a sign of weakness. Women describe men as “*poker faced*” and consider this an advantage in business life. Conversely, male managers who were interviewed stated that some female managers who were completely free from their emotions become very tough and stressful, and they find this situation unpleasant and repellent.

Another difficulty in communication for women managers is to difficulty to say no and women find this critical for communication. In line with this approach, it was stated that female managers find male managers more self-confident and thereby clearer in their decisions and principles: “no is no.” Moreover, it was found that women do not see themselves as competent in taking up management positions, i.e., they lack self-confidence. However, it is a striking finding that women strive to improve themselves in this field.

Another pattern identified in this study is that the boundaries of gender roles within Turkish society are reflected in corporate companies. These stereotypes are problematic, as they diminish women’s self-confidence, which can have very damaging effects; for example, they may lack the ability to seize opportunities, to present themselves with confidence, or to take risks. In this study, it was accepted by both women and men that female managers could be more successful in some sectors and women need to work more if they want to achieve promotion. Even this can also be corrosive for organizations, these statements reflect female and male managers’ general approaches.

Corporate culture remains a barrier, although its role and importance in overcoming gender roles appears to be acknowledged. However, it is observed that male employees of a company with a female CEO demonstrate no gender stereotyping, and it is promising that the corporate culture is focused on leaving aside gender-based stereotyping and can be effective in ensuring gender equality.

Participants stated that even though success is not due to gender, men are preferred when someone is to be selected to a higher position among those with similar qualifications, and that working under female managers is generally not preferred. For women to advance to top positions, keep their positions, and gain the approval of other male managers, it seems that they must act like men and prove that work comes first. However, some female participants mentioned that women can be successful by using their own language; moreover, it has been identified that women managers are very aware (in a positive way) of their skills as “team player, empathetic, inclusive, multitasking, social and flexible.”

While male managers have stated that women are obsessed with details (which could sometimes be an advantage and sometimes a disadvantage), it has been observed that women who are aware of this factor, also improve themselves to become more result oriented. Women’s flexibility and rapid adaptation in the face of changing conditions are also considered an advantage by men. In terms of communicative language, both male and female managers find female leaders empathetic, emotional, good listeners, polite, humble, and capable of multitasking; however, they consider male leaders to be result-oriented and money-minded with more aggressive and sharper communicative language. Another crucial pattern is that women think they are more successful as their experiences increase and they learn what kind of communicative language to use in the face of various events.

Today, because of their empathy skills, soft communicative languages, embrative and inclusive understanding, and even multitasking abilities, female managers and prospective managers are able to find a place in the changing world more easily. Compassionate leadership plays a crucial role, especially in times of crisis, and is particularly pertinent to the current COVID-19 pandemic (Maak, Pless & Wohlgezogen, 2021). According to Frost (2003), reading emotional cues in oneself and others and anticipating their effects, empathizing, and listening with respect appear to be characteristic signs of compassionate behavior. Women with natural reflexes would be more fortunate with respect to compassionate leadership. Further research is clearly needed in Turkey on gender communication and stereotyping because of changing environments and managerial approaches. In this sense, the patterns obtained on women’s awareness of their strengths and how they turn them into advantage, and the ways in which female managers express themselves and how male managers interpret them offer a guide to further research. Patterns relating to women’s awareness of their strengths (and how they turn them into an advantage), and how female managers express themselves and how male managers interpret them may offer a guide to further research.

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