



İstanbul Üniversitesi Kadın Araştırmaları Dergisi Istanbul University Journal of Women's Studies

Submitted/Başvuru: 07.01.2022

Accepted/Kabul: 07.04.2022

RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

Gendered Discourses Produced Within the Corporate Sustainability Context: An Analysis on Türkiye

Kurumsal Sürdürülebilirlik Bağlamında Üretilen Cinsiyetçi Söylemler Üzerine Bir Analiz: Türkiye Örneklemi

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Abstract

The current global political context of women's empowerment is focusing on a sustainable economy and society. Corporate sustainability practices on women's empowerment outgrow the concept of the struggle for gender equality at the workplace. Although women's empowerment is positioned as one of the solutions for sustainability, there is a debate on the results of the corporate-led empowerment agenda, where remains a discursive terrain of such initiatives. The purpose of this research is to analyze the discourses produced by corporate companies in Turkey within the context of women's empowerment for sustainable development and to present an empirical inquiry to bring up whether gendered discourses are produced. This research draws from all the approved corporate sustainability reports of Turkish companies and the findings of this research emerge from the literature review, field research, and theoretical and empirical work all together. Forty two companies out of the analysed 53 have statements on women's empowerment and research findings show that these statements include gendered discourses. Gendered discourses are grouped into 5 groups (according to the idea of gendering) as: discourses produced with gendered biases, discourses reflecting power domination, discourses that include gratuitous premodifiers, discourses othering women, and discourses including gender generic nouns. All groups of discourses are discussed through related theories of gender and power. The research findings provoke new directions for future research problematizing 'doing gender' through language with the new questions it calls over the power politics of gender equality and empowerment of women.

Keywords

Corporate Sustainability, Women Empowerment, Gender Equality, Gendered Discourses, Critical Discourse Analysis

Öz

Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve kadınların güçlenmesinin mevcut küresel siyasi bağlamı sürdürülebilir bir ekonomi ve topluma odaklanmaktadır. Kadınların güçlenmesi amacı ile yürütülen kurumsal sürdürülebilirlik çalışmaları her ne kadar sürdürülebilirlik çözümlerinden biri olarak konumlanırsa da, bu tür girişimlerin söylemsel alanının ürettiği cinsiyetçi yaklaşımlar ihmal edilmemelidir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, sürdürülebilir kalkınma odağında kadınların güçlenmesi bağlamında Türkiye'de kurumsal şirketler tarafından üretilen söylemleri analiz etmek ve cinsiyetçi söylemlerin üretilip üretilmediğini ampirik bir araştırma ile ortaya koymaktır. Araştırma kapsamında Türk şirketleri tarafından halka açık yayınlanan kurumsal sürdürülebilirlik raporları veri seti olarak incelenmiş ve bulgular literatür taraması ile tartışılmıştır. İncelenen 53 şirketten 42'sinin kadınların güçlendirilmesine ilişkin beyanları bulunmaktadır ve araştırma bulguları bu

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Citation: Gul Senkardes, C. (2022). Gendered discourses produced within the corporate sustainability context: an analysis on Türkiye. *Istanbul Üniversitesi Kadın Araştırmaları Dergisi - Istanbul University Journal of Women's Studies*, 24, 183-202.
<https://doi.org/10.26650/iukad.2022.1054148>



beyanların cinsiyetçi söylemler içerdiğini göstermektedir. Cinsiyetçi söylemler, üretildikleri düşüncelere göre 5 gruba ayrılmıştır: cinsiyetli önyargılar ile üretilen söylemler, iktidar tahakkümünü yansıtan söylemler, ön nitelendirici içeren söylemler, kadınları ötekileştiren söylemler, ve cinsiyetçi jenerik isimler içeren söylemler. Tüm söylem grupları, ilgili toplumsal cinsiyet ve iktidar kuramları üzerinden eleştirel söylem analizi ile tartışılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğini yeniden üreten cinsiyetçi söylemler ile güç politikalarını sorunsallaştırarak gelecekteki araştırmalar için yeni yönelimler önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kurumsal Sürdürülebilirlik, Kadınların Güçlenmesi, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği, Cinsiyetçi Söylemler, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi

1. Introduction

The term ‘sustainability’ refers to preserving the economic growth and development for the future while protecting the environment. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) by the United Nations (UN) brings the definition to sustainability as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. (Thomsen, 2013) Sustainability refers to an approach that maximizes the positive environmental protection, supporting social sustainability, and sustains economic production while trying to maintain the balance in between. Sustainability as an interdisciplinary concept calls for a rethink of the economic system for the allocation of scarce resources among alternative competing ends for humanity. Developing such a global entire economics system would require social, psychological, and moral desire with dedication by corporations considering they are the drivers of the economy. The concept of responsibilities of a company for a sustainable world is contextualized as corporate social responsibility (CSR) or corporate sustainability referring to the idea of socially responsible behaviors including the idea of obligations, legal responsibilities and philanthropic actions. The evolution of the CSR construct is parallel to the change in the businesses’ way of thinking. Besides the financial success, companies are focusing on the intangible performances such as ethics, human rights, environmental policies, sustainable contribution to education, and women empowerment and publishing CSR reports according to globally accepted standards to state their strategy and actions on these issues in detail.

Aiming to put a spotlight on the discourses produced by companies and communicated by their CSR reports, it would be helpful to look at the relationship of sustainability and sustainable development. The term sustainable development is mostly confused with the term ‘sustainability’. Sustainable development is “the process of change leading to the harmonization of the use of natural resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change and to increase the potential of satisfying the human needs of present and future generations”. (UN Sustainable Development, 1987) The global sustainable development agenda contains Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approved by the UN. Mostly referring to the human rights and equality for the survival of the planet, SDGs include 17 independent but interlinked topics that apply generally globally. The UN emphasizes the universality of all SDGs considering the challenges for local adaptations “with a country-specific approach to the global goals.” (Allen et al., 2018 as cited in Mensah, 2019) ‘Goal 5’ of the SDGs by the UN, which has been established with a vision to empower girls and women in order to obtain gender equality, constitutes of 9 sub-goals where the 6 of them are directly related to women’s empowerment for a more sustainable society and economy. The UN (2020) refers to gender equality not only as a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable

world. Women's empowerment philosophy depends on "increasing the capacity of women to make their own choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and results." (Agrawal et al., 2016) Corporate companies' sustainability initiatives for gender equality "most often focus on the economic empowerment of individual women for the outcome of wealth accumulation" (Cornwall et al., 2007; as cited in McCarthy, 2017). The empowerment of women for gender equality is included in the corporate sustainability activities of many companies. Considering the sustainability of the intended social transformation, companies all over the world are investing in this specific topic within their sustainability strategy and communicate their practices through their CSR reports.

Gender roles are learned behaviours in a given society, community or other social group and condition activities, tasks and responsibilities perceived as male or female. (ILO, 2007, p.89) As gender refers to the learned norms depending on social, economic, and cultural factors thus gender is about socially constructed roles for individuals, through this construction, individuals become members by being identified or by identifying themselves. Judith Butler argues the notion of gender in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) and she refers to gender as a performance rather than a noun where she defines gender as a doing. Butler sees nothing about gender as fixed and everything as discourse arguing that what is done to construct gender identity she calls an illusion, grows from the cultural practices of sex lodged in discourse. (p.146) Inspired by the Butlerian perspective, conceptualising gender as a dynamic performance, gender is produced and reproduced as a social practice. This research takes a position to understand and expose whether there is an inequality of power domination on gendering by language through corporate discourses.

There is a pervasive interest among corporations in embracing CSR in Turkey as well, however lack of empirical data and research conducted in this area. This research provides empirical data on the women empowerment initiatives of companies taking part within their sustainability strategy and agenda together with the communicative actions for those initiatives. The main research question is to find out whether gendered discourses are produced by corporate companies within the context of women empowerment. Bringing together gender, communication, and management studies, this research presents a discussion over its sub questions. Sub questions following this main research question will be as follows:

1. How are women represented in corporate discourses?
2. Do the CSR strategies and statements of companies on women's empowerment constitute and produce different (men and women) identities and groups?

2. Methodology

The purpose of this research is to analyze the discourses produced by corporate companies in Turkey within the context of women's empowerment for sustainable development. An empirical inquiry is presented to bring up whether gendered discourses are produced and communicated through the CSR reports of Turkish companies. The discussion presented proceeds in some steps. First, it begins from the recognition that the topic women's empowerment has its place in corporate companies' sustainability agenda. The second step addresses the underlying ideas of the gendered discourses produced and communicated through the sustainability reports of companies. Aiming to find out the gendered discourses together with the ideas they hold on the specific women's empowerment context, this research focuses on the discourses. Thus the methodology for research is selected as a discourse analysis. In a critical approach to discourses, it is also important to examine the ideas and hidden power relations constructed by the use of language in the narratives of corporate sustainability reports, as this leads to the deconstruction of the ideologies of the producers of the texts and highlights the untouched ideas of the companies towards gender equality.

Foucault (1988) being a decisive influence, sees discourse analysis as "the analysis of statements", which he formulates as verbal performances and has a different approach to the concept of linguistic analysis. Taking the definition of discourse put by Foucault (1988) as "the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualized group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements", corporate sustainability report contents are considered to be corporate discourses within this research. With a Foucauldian view, in terms of social practices, these discourses have a role in sustaining the hegemonic construction of the social and economic empowerment of women within the scope of corporate sustainability practices. Beyond initiatives taken by the corporate companies on women's empowerment, CSR reports represent the performances of companies related to sustainability in written form. Their knowledge is constructed by the discourses produced within those reports. The interdisciplinary nature of discourse analysis will help to find out both the socially and ideologically constructed knowledge by the companies through the discourses on their reports. Considering discourse together with its social context, critical discourse analysis (CDA) offers a more powerful and persuasive discussion with its detailed processes. "Critical research on discourse focuses primarily on social problems and political issues rather than the mere study of discourse structures outside their social and political contexts." (van Dijk, 1997) Parallel to the Foucauldian view, discourse analysis to be applied to the statements published and open to the public by corporate companies, will include the texts in the context of sustainability and the empowerment of women within this context beyond the linguistics.

Norman Fairclough (1995) sees language as a social practice and suggests analysing texts from a perspective that is covering social and cultural practices. This research is performed with a qualitative perspective based on Fairclough's three dimensional critical discourse analysis. Within this framework the first level of analysis focuses on the properties of texts. Fairclough (1992) refers to discourse stating that it "contributes to the construction of social identities and subject positions" and at this level of analysis the cultural and social backgrounds of the texts are considered besides the linguistic properties. The second level of analysis is concerned with 'discourse practices'. Understanding how the discourses in the corporate sustainability reports are produced requires finding out the levels of production of the texts. The last and third level of Fairclough's CDA analysis is called 'social analysis'. At this level the "objective of analysis is to explain why social actors, events and organizations are represented and arguments are constructed in a specific way". (Merkl-Davies et al, 2012, p.105) In the specific case of this research Fairclough's theory allows the exploration of the discourses from the aspects of language as well as the social structures that challenge them. Analysing the corporate narratives considering language together with social context will help to get insights into ideas held within this world.

2.1 Data Collection

Ballou and Heitger (2005) defines the aim of CSR reporting as "reporting non-financial and financial information to a broader set of stakeholders than only the shareholders". According to the independent research conducted as a survey on CSR reporting by KPMG, 93% of the world's largest 250 corporations are publish sustainability reports and communicate them transparently and openly to the public. (KPMG, 2017) CSR reporting is performed voluntarily as well as the CSR investment by socially responsible companies. The content of the CSR reports includes companies' strategies, vision, and plans for the future for sustainability management. Since the year 2000, non-profit organization Global Compact International (GRI) has been informing corporations on sustainability management and reporting standards. GRI standards provide a necessary framework for reliable reports on environmental, social and economical sustainability management of corporations. CSR reporting standards prepared by GRI are used in many countries and in Turkey. Since the release of these standards the number of reports released by companies all over the world is increasing. This attention to sustainability reporting with standards has triggered the funds based on sustainability. Sustainability indexes in the capital markets had started to be established by 1999. Following the global developments, the Istanbul Stock Exchange (BIST) launched the Sustainability Index in Turkey by the year 2014. Constituents for each Index period starting from 2014 till 2019 determined by the BIST Sustainability Index are selected for the data source of this research. The names of the companies were collected online from the BIST Sustainability Index web site. The CSR reports of

these companies are available for public consumption and collected from their websites. The data used are open to the public and do not contain any private information. There are defined criteria for the selection of companies. Companies who have published a CSR report at least 2 or more times are selected to be included in the data of the analysis. Some of the companies' reports have not been reached but instead information on their sustainability initiatives have been found on their web sites. Companies that have not published a report, instead shared information about their CSR policies on different sources with limited details are excluded from the research data. The list of the 53 companies showing the breakdown of the reports by the publication years and company codes is given in detail in Appendix 1.

Reports of the companies having statements and including content on women empowerment are selected as the set of data to be used. Forty two companies out of the 53 analysed and selected to be the data source are shown in Appendix 2. The remaining 11 companies have no specific statements on the women's empowerment topic, so are excluded from the research data.

1. Findings

The first level of analysis includes a detailed reading of the selected discourses communicated by 42 companies. In total 20 gendered discourses are collected from the reports. There are recurring statements of companies with the same texts that include gendered discourses which are published in different years. One sample from each is included in the research data. There are also similar narratives in terms of the ideas they hold on gender, however similar discourses by different companies are also not included in the research data.

All of the selected 20 discourses are grouped according to the ideas they hold in the way they are determined to be gendered. The 20 discourses collected, and the grouping of these discourses according to these ideas presented above are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Gendered Discourses Collected From CSR Reports And Grouped According To The Ideas They Hold

| | | |
|--|-----|--|
| 1- Discourses produced with 'gendered biases' | 1.1 | One of the workshops we offer especially to our women employees is the programmes for a better life training at the Turkcell Academy. In this context, we provide contents such as Successful Child Raising, Work and private Life Balance, The Place of Women in Business and private Life, The Art of Being a Parent, Birth Preparation and Breathing Studies, and Being a Working Mother. |
| | 1.2 | One of the main selection criteria for us while selecting our service provider companies is social competencies such as nursery opportunities provided for supporting women's empowerment, and investment in social development projects. |
| | 1.3 | The aim of this programme is to reveal the leadership archetypes that also exist in women and support women to have them used in the business environment. |
| 2- Discourses reflecting 'power domination' | 2.1 | In addition to providing global financing opportunities to our women entrepreneurs, we continue supporting by allocating approximately 600 mio TL from company resources in 2016. |
| | 2.2 | This year we have participated in HeForShe initiative in order to strengthen women's labor both in our company and throughout the business world, to provide women with equal opportunities in business life and to support women taking more places in top level management roles. |
| | 2.3 | In 2015, VakıfBank European Bank for Reconstruction and development (EBRD), the European Delegation to Turkey, Labor and Social Security Ministry and Turkey jointly launched by the Business Association "Women Business to Finance and Consultancy Support Programme" is aimed to increase its role in the economy of women entrepreneurs in Turkey. |
| | 2.4 | Supporting those who trust the power of women, TSKB offers loans to women-friendly companies' investment projects with a 100 million Euro loan obtained from the French Development Agency (AFD) at the end of 2016. |
| | 2.5 | Women-Friendly Companies: Capital magazine conducted a study to emphasize women's employment and encourage woman friendly companies in Turkey. The selected companies were awarded as women-friendly companies. |
| 3- Discourses that include 'gratuitous premodifiers' | 3.1 | In addition to providing foreign financing opportunities to our women entrepreneurs, we continued our support by allocating approximately 600 million TL from our own resources in 2016. |
| | 3.2 | As a result of our observations and studies on gender inequality in our country, we aim to create a pioneering and transformative effect for both our company and the automotive industry by developing a project for the employment of women engineers. |
| | 3.3 | With our special products we develop for women farmers, tradesmen and businesses, we provide financing for women entrepreneurs to bring their ideas to life, and we reach out to women in villages, towns and villages to increase women's entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas, and support their participation in education and workforce. In this context, we have provided more than 204 million TL of financing to approximately 4,000 women entrepreneurs with the works we have done within the scope of women's banking in the last year. |
| | 3.4 | The company is steadily increasing the number of female managers and female employees, and voluntarily participates in global initiatives in the field of gender equality. |

| | | |
|--|-----|--|
| 4- Discourses 'othering women' | 4.1 | We care about offering equal opportunities to all segments of society, and we take initiatives for women, disabled people and disadvantaged communities to participate in economic life as self-sufficient and happy individuals. |
| | 4.2 | Communication technologies play an important role in reaching and mobilizing disadvantaged groups in terms of easy accessibility, budget-friendly and access capacity. Financial support to our women entrepreneurs within the framework of activating information and communication technologies, which is one of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development in ensuring gender equality. |
| | 4.3 | Internet-easy life programme provided by our company aims to contribute to the digital transformation of the country. We will offer trainings for all adults over 35 years starting with women as our priority group to develop their skills. |
| | 4.4 | As of the end of 2014, the loans we provided to women entrepreneurs, whom we see as a special customer segment in our SME Banking platform, reached 2.1 billion TL. |
| | 4.5 | As in previous years, we continued to support SMEs and women entrepreneurs in 2017, while financing large-scale projects that are the basis for the development of the country with infrastructure loans. |
| | 4.6 | With special development programs such as "Design your favorite job / life", "Safe driving techniques", coaching support and volunteer mentoring, a work environment that preserves work-family life balance is created for women employees in Brisa. |
| 5- Discourses including 'gender generic nouns' | 5.1 | In 2016, within the scope of the "I Support Gender Equality for My Country" project, we focused on the "Miracles of the sprouts" social responsibility project, which we created with the belief that women in the sectors where TürkTraktör operates, that is, can create miracles, to raise awareness in the areas we do business and support gender equality. |
| | 5.2 | From this point of view, Garanti bank has been supporting 12" Giant Men" (A National Men's Basketball Team), "Fairies of the Pot" (A National Women's Basketball Team), ... since 2005. |

4. Discussion

Focusing on the text and the context of women empowerment, the ideas underlying the collected gendered discourses are discussed through related theories and perspectives. Theories on gender, discourse and power relations, and empowerment are used to classify and discuss the selected discourses. Discussions will be presented accordingly with the groups of ideas assigned to discourses as shown in Table 1.

4.1 Discourses produced with 'gendered biases'

The first group of discourses are produced with ideas built on cultural codes and biased roles assigned to women. These discourses are constructed with assumptions and ideas about the behavior of women and men that are defined as stereotypes. Stereotypical representations are un verbalized assumptions and perceptions about the behavior of women and men. Gender stereotypes assigned to women as the supporter of the family and the house, where the woman is given the role as the one who cares for the family are reflected within these discourses. Including nursery services within women empowerment strategy by companies, also has the idea of assigning the role

of childcare to women. However such an initiative is assumed to support parents for their work life and private life balance, considering this service for women only is a similar way of gendering as discussed with the previous example.

Educational programmes offered by corporate companies to their employees which have the aim of supporting their social life and work life balancing and parenthood perfection can be considered within the social dimension of sustainable development. Thus, designing and offering such educational programmes for women only is a discriminatory approach basing on the genders of the employees. Besides investing in improving the parental abilities of women and assigning the role of perfection to women in motherhood is a reflection of patriarchal ideas and culture and this reinforces the stereotypes.

The stereotypical representation and the social construct that defines men as the 'norm' in the workforce has its reflection in discourse 1.3. It refers to the idea which regards leadership as an ability of businessmen. Highlighting that men are the norm and women can also achieve this level of leadership skill with support, is a gendered assumption. Referring to my discussion in Chapter 2 on the theory of Judith Butler (1990) that defines gendering as a performance, such gendered discourses disempowers women by privileging men over women in the corporate business system. Considering discourse above the sentence as a social practice and reproducing gendered roles in language and communicating them continuously causes gender to operate "as a set of hierarchically arranged roles in modern society which makes the masculine half of the equation positive and the feminine negative". (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003)

Discourses produced with the stereotypical ideas as in this first group, reinforce such ideas by communicating them. Sexist statements that are regarded as "representing women and men unequally" (Wareing, 2006, p.76) by corporations, reproduce the gendering of business people according to their sexes. Communication of such gendered discourses also reproduces the stereotypes and bias which has the potential to enlarge the gender inequality gap between women and men in business organizations. According to my discussion in Chapter 2 over the arguments of van Dijk (1993), when we perceive others we tend not to see what we have in common but exaggerate the differences which distinguish us and this may result in overlooking their positive aspects. Stereotypes work through relationships of power and dominance, and stereotyping creates an imaginary community where different ones are pushed away. Whereas some aspects of the CSR practices communicated by these discourses are designed to empower business women, reflections of the biases reproduce the gendered roles which in the end may result in disempowering women as businesspeople.

4.2 Discourses reflecting ‘power domination’

The second group of discourses are produced with a language which dominates empowerment instead of emancipation. Considering the unequal status of women in the male dominated workplace, it is important that corporations build the necessary strategies and take actions to support women on the way to reaching the desired level of equality. Corporate companies investing in sustainability include women’s empowerment initiatives within their agendas to challenge this situation. The aim of women’s empowerment initiatives of companies are mostly defined in the CSR reports as providing women the necessary support in order to help them gain equality with men. Focusing on the second group of gendered discourses, this aim of companies has the potential risk of two issues related to power. The first one arises from the misinterpretation of the term empowerment and the second one is the power domination over the initiatives and discourses. The term empowerment stands for giving power however the conceptualization of empowerment with a feminist lens focuses on the individual and developing the inner power for emancipation. Considering the demand side of the empowerment activity as well as focusing on emancipation of the individual is the proposed way of sustainable empowerment for equality. The critical strategy in order not to turn the concept of empowerment to a controlled mechanism of action would be the focus on emancipation rather than a dominant source power. The second discussion over the power issue is by implementing the concept of ‘doing power’ argued by Foucault discussed at the previous Chapters of this study. The idea of power being created and recreated as an action is reflected in the strategies and discourses on the women’s empowerment initiatives. The idea which the second group of discourses include and communicate is constructed with a controlling approach instead of giving women the freedom to bring the intended social transformation using the strength developed within. Taking Foucault’s approach to freedom as discussed in Chapter 2, empowerment considered from his perception of freedom is far from the concept of the given power from an outside authority. Thus empowerment strategies should not include domination for freedom. The potential of the CSR strategies for the desired change should take the power and freedom concepts into consideration. As well, necessary attention should be paid not to position women as the object that is being empowered through the CSR initiatives and programmes of companies. Questioning women’s empowerment within the sustainability context with a Foucauldian approach to power and freedom, the concepts and communication of the support provided by companies presented in the discourses of the second group fails through the idea behind empowerment which is domination. All three discourses 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 within this group are produced with an idea that presents the power domination over women by patronizing them as a group to be protected by an outside power. The discourses 2.5. and 2.6 holds and reproduces the patronization by men. Interpreting the discourses in the second group, the traditional gender ideology dictating a kind of

patronage, socially orders women as a disadvantaged group and initiates a support by power over them. The interpretation made about companies' attributes and communication of resources allocated for women's empowerment reinforces the gendering. Clustering companies as "woman friendly" in a patronising manner strengthens the ongoing gendering process through patronization, which can be considered a misuse of power referring to my discussion within this section. Taking the power and freedom equation into consideration, discourses which include patronizing ideas continuously reproduce the misuse of power. This results in reproducing the wrong assumptions of the concept of women's empowerment and moving it away from the idea of individual emancipation to rather a dominance by power.

4.3 Discourses That Include 'gratuitous premodifiers'

Discourses within the third group all include gratuitous premodifiers to mark the occupations of individuals. Each of the 5 discourses includes 'women' and/or 'female' premodifiers together with the occupation. Gender marking by the use of gratuitous premodifiers to occupational terms is connected with sexist language. Gratuitous premodifiers reflects the unequal assumptions of occupations with a non-inclusive perspective. The third group of discourses are produced with a similar way of construction on the representation of businesspeople according to their gender. Wareing (2004) states that "sexist language represents women and men unequally, as if members of one sex were somehow less completely human and less complex and had fewer rights than members of the other sex". (p.67) Sexist statements by corporate companies reproduce the gendering of professions according to their sex. Litosseliti (2006) highlights the traditional assumption of occupational terms assigned to man, arguing the reason as "the use of a female marker being adopted for instance in lady or female doctor". (p.14) The same way as Litosseliti marks, all the discourses in the third group include the gratuitous premodifier 'woman' used to mark the gender of the occupations. Samples from the discourses are 'women entrepreneurs', 'women engineers', 'women farmers', and 'female managers'. It is assumed by those groups of discourses that an engineer, an entrepreneur, a manager, or a farmer is a man, therefore women in that occupation needs to be marked. Anker's (1997) studies related to the gendering of the occupations refers to the common stereotypical assumption of the abilities of women to have its reflection in occupational segregation. "Technical occupations tend to be perceived as 'masculine', whereas caring occupations are often labelled as 'feminine'." (Ginevra & Nota, 2015)

Gender stereotyping with respect to occupations is one of the most pervasive biases that cuts across countries and age groups. (Madaan et al., 2018). Discourses within this third group reinforce prevailing gender ideologies of companies. This justifies gender hierarchies as natural within those companies. As well as holding the idea that

occupations are gendered, by disclosing their idea, companies reproduce the gendering of professions. Such gendered discourses can also be discussed over the idea of grouping individuals according to genders. Communication of such a grouping is an other way of gendering. The communicative events through CSR reports which are open to the public, expand the idea of gendered occupations and this comes with the challenge of not negatively affecting the gender equality messages given to society in general.

Interpreting the strategies of companies through the discourses within this group the gendered discourses are complementary to their ideas and the discriminative perspective they own. Women who hold occupations that are socially constructed to be masculine are selected by companies to provide extra support. This strategy has its reflections by the gendered use of language. However this type of gendering by the use of a sexist language reproduces the gendering of occupations and reinforces the grouping of women with unequal assumptions on professions. Reinforcing such stereotypes related to professions tends to resist the desired transformation for the equality of genders in the workforce. Thus the inequitable representations of men and women are constructed by the continuous communication with gendered discourses like the ones within this third group.

4.4 Discourses ‘othering’ Women

The fourth group of discourses are produced with an idea which is othering women as a group. Throughout history in different times women have become subject to othering in different contexts and othering has found a place within many scholars’ works. Simone de Beauvoir, being the first woman to write publicly about the concept of othering by sex, argues on the representation of women in relation to men. The concept of “Othering” as a construction is defined by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in *The Second Sex* as follows:

Man thinks himself without woman....Woman is determined and differentiated in relation to man. He is the Subject, She is the Other. The Subjects posits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object. (De Beauvoir, 1949, p.42,43).

De Beauvoir argues the idea that othering holds as a representation based on genders where the identity of men is constructed as powerful. According to van Dijk (1993) when we perceive others we tend not to see what we have in common but exaggerate the differences which distinguish us. During their evaluation we emphasise our good qualities and their negative features, and by contrast we overlook our negative aspects and their merits. (Van Dijk, T. A., 1993, p.251) Power is concentrated in the representation of the other which is created as a construction through the use of language and is reproduced in gendered discourses. Gendered discourses othering women socially

reproduce the stereotypical representations of men as the “norm” in the workforce and constructs the identity of women as the ‘other’. Othering women with unequal assumptions and inclusion of women together with disadvantaged groups is an idea which is far from empowering women. Discourses produced by organisations with an idea of othering women and grouping them as disadvantaged, tends to see the differences with negative aspects.

From a Foucauldian perspective ‘othering’ also has its relation with stereotypes. Stereotyping is a practice of Foucault’s power-knowledge, which classifies people according to norms and constructs excluded ones as the ‘others’. Stereotypes work through relationships of power and dominance and stereotyping creates an imaginary community where different ones are pushed away. The others are used as a tool for determining ourselves that happens through their symbolic exclusion. The social construct that defines men as normal and the differences of the others from normal are naturalised and confirmed by the repetition of this othering in discourses. Constructed meanings and social identities produce different groups resulting in a practice of othering.

Corporate reports are social constructs communicating the ideas and initiatives related to these ideas. Analysing corporate discourses from this perspective, discourses within this group that are othering women as a group with the assumption of men as the norm. These discourses reflect the construct of the differences between gendered groups. Discourses in that group include the assumption of women as the other. Women are grouped with the disabled and disadvantaged communities. As well, women are seen as a group and their skills are seen as in need of development of specific subjects like technology, digital capabilities, and driving skills. In addition, all of these discourses do not include information on the reason why not men, but women are seen in need of this kind of support and development. This can be discussed through the lens of socially and culturally constructed beliefs about women and men. However the initiative taken by the companies that are discussed by these discourses may lead to a sustainable economy and society, discourses reproducing the gendered groups and differences is an obstacle for equal opportunities and the desired transformation.

4.5 Discourses Including ‘gender generic nouns’

Gendered discourses within the fifth group includes a language that reinforces stereotyped images of women. The gendering is done by choosing names that consist of gender generic nouns related to the image of women according to the stereotypical assumptions and bias. All of the discourses in this group includes stereotyped representations of women. Teresa de Lauretis (1987) regards gender construction as a process which is held socially by individuals and argues that gender is “a representation and the representation of gender is its construction”. Representations of women through such gender generic nouns are based on “beliefs about how males and females typically act,

as well as beliefs about how males and females should act.” (Koenig, 2018) Commonly used generic noun phrases for women within the research data are; gentle, touchy, weak, and fragile. Those gendered nouns are also similar to the stereotypical masculine and feminine traits according to “Bem Sex-Role Inventory” developed by Sandra Bem. Twenty feminine nouns that are presented on the inventory are: “affectionate, cheerful, childlike, compassionate, does not use harsh language, eager to soothe hurt feelings, feminine, flatterable, gentle, gullible, loves children, loyal, sensitive to the needs of others, shy, soft-spoken, sympathetic, tender, understanding, warm, and yielding”. (Prentice & Carranza, 2002) Gendered discourses often constitute such gender generic nouns without considering that there might be overlaps between genders and within gender variabilities. Burges and Borgida (1999) discuss the classification, grouping, and discrimination basing on the gendered stereotypes and argues on the equal engagement of both women and men equally however discrimination “is more likely to be perpetrated by men, because this type of discrimination serves to maintain power inequities in society that favor men”. They comment on the discrimination based on stereotypes as follows:

“The descriptive component of stereotypes is posited to lead to discrimination when stereotypes of women are associated with the attribution of traits, abilities, and roles to the target that influence the way in which business women are evaluated and treated in business life. Women who behave in an autocratic manner or who occupy traditionally male occupations are particularly likely to be negatively sanctioned.” (Burgess & Borgida, 1999)

So as in the discourse referenced as 5.2, men are represented by ‘strength’ where women are by ‘supportive and fragile’. Although both men and women referred to in the same discourse are holding the same positions in relation to their occupations and success, the chosen names are the reflections of the stereotypical assumptions by the use of gender generic nouns. Naming men as ‘giants’ and women as ‘fairies’ is a typical example of gendering by the use of gender generic nouns and grouping according to bias. Discourses within this group hand their statement which reproduces the meaning that women are in need of external support to perform. Women are viewed more in need of support as a result of continuous reproduction of the stereotyped generic nouns in discourses. Constructions of gendered discourses as in this group, might lead to the devaluation and discrimination of women who perform in male-dominated professions. Such reproductions of stereotypes that are commonly used for characteristics and physical properties of women, reinforces the ideas that are the roots of the unequal assumptions based on gender.

2. Conclusion

This research provides empirical data on the women empowerment initiatives and the discursive terrain of them. Research findings highlight the importance given to women's empowerment within the sustainability agenda of corporate companies. Quantitative data provided by this research regards women's empowerment as one of the topics which most of the companies account for on their sustainability agenda and strategy on the way to sustainable development. This discussion and analysis through a feminist Foucauldian approach to power and freedom contributes to exploration of the meaning of empowerment for a sustainable economy and the unforeseen negative outcomes of the current practices of othering and grouping women with the disadvantaged. Thus there are valuable initiatives by companies on women's empowerment on the way to gender equality that should be considered.

How power and patriarchal culture manifests in the construction of the identities and corporate sustainability strategies needs attention on the way to long-term, sustainable, efficient, and measurable women's empowerment initiatives. Taking the power and freedom equation into consideration, the CSR programmes heading to equality for women at the workplace and society in general, should focus on the emancipation of the individual rather than domination. Encouraging gender sensitive use of language may lead to a step in the right direction for gender equality.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research critically examines the discourses produced by the Turkish corporations focusing on the communicative actions of companies on women's empowerment. The scope of the research is the registered corporate sustainability reports of Turkish corporations which are rated and listed by the Borsa Istanbul Sustainability Index. This scope of the study is one of the limits of the research. Thus it opens new doors and provides data driven ideas for future research. A future study to find out whether companies produce gendered discourses for communicating their women's empowerment initiatives through digital or social media communication would be complementary for this research.

Within the scope and aim of this project, discourses addressed to women are analysed. Discourses are analysed with an approach to gender dealing with 'men' and 'women' only, however besides gender constitutes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. Considering this limitation over the findings, a direction for future research would be to analyse the gender perception of corporate companies which have initiatives on gender equality. This would open new doors for investigating the initiatives on inclusive gender equality by corporate companies.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Grant Support: The author declared that this study has received no financial support.

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: Dış bağımsız.

Çıkar Çatışması: Yazar çıkar çatışması bildirmemiştir.

Finansal Destek: Yazar bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.

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APPENDIX 1: Listed companies on BIST Sustainability Index by Company Codes

| No | Company Name |
|----|--------------|
| 1 | ADEL |
| 2 | AKBNK |
| 3 | AKENR |
| 4 | AKSA |
| 5 | ANACM |
| 6 | AEFES |
| 7 | ANELE |
| 8 | ARCLK |
| 9 | ASELS |
| 10 | AYGAZ |
| 11 | BRISA |
| 12 | CIMSA |
| 13 | COLLA |
| 14 | DOHOL |
| 15 | DOAS |
| 16 | EREGL |
| 17 | FROTO |
| 18 | GLYHO |
| 19 | SAHOL |
| 20 | ISGMY |
| 21 | KCHOL |
| 22 | KORDS |
| 23 | LOGO |
| 24 | MGROS |
| 25 | NETAS |
| 26 | OTKAR |
| 27 | PEGSUS |
| 28 | PETKM |
| 29 | POLHO |
| 30 | SAFGY |
| 31 | SKBNK |
| 32 | SODA |
| 33 | TATGD |
| 34 | TAVHL |
| 35 | TKFEN |
| 36 | TOASO |
| 37 | THYAO |
| 38 | TTKOM |
| 39 | TTRAK |
| 40 | TCELL |
| 41 | GARAN |
| 42 | HALKB |
| 43 | ISCTR |
| 44 | TUPRS |
| 45 | TSKB |
| 46 | SISE |
| 47 | VAKBN |
| 48 | ULKER |
| 49 | VESBE |
| 50 | VESTLE |
| 51 | VESTL |
| 52 | YKBNK |
| 53 | ZOREN |

APPENDIX 2: CSR reporting companies having statements about women empowerment initiatives

| | |
|----|-------|
| 1 | AKENR |
| 2 | AKBNK |
| 3 | ANACM |
| 4 | AEFES |
| 5 | ARCLK |
| 6 | AYGAZ |
| 7 | BRISA |
| 8 | CIMSA |
| 9 | CCOLA |
| 10 | DOHOL |
| 11 | DOAS |
| 12 | FROTO |
| 13 | GARAN |
| 14 | GLYHO |
| 15 | ISCTR |
| 16 | KCHOL |
| 17 | KORDS |
| 18 | LOGO |
| 19 | MGROS |
| 20 | OTKAR |
| 21 | POLHO |
| 22 | SAHOL |
| 23 | SKBNK |
| 24 | SISE |
| 25 | SODA |
| 26 | HALKB |
| 27 | TSKB |
| 28 | TATGD |
| 29 | TAVHL |
| 30 | TKFEN |
| 31 | TOASO |
| 32 | TUPRS |
| 33 | THYAO |
| 34 | TTKOM |
| 35 | TTRAK |
| 36 | TCELL |
| 37 | ULKER |
| 38 | VAKBN |
| 39 | VESTL |
| 40 | VESBE |
| 41 | YKBNK |
| 42 | ZOREN |