

*Deinstitutionalized Careers: Intersectionality of Gender Pay Gap among Women Knowledge Workers**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore women knowledge workers' experiences of the intersectionality of the gender pay gap and to scrutinize the reasons behind gender pay gap. The study problematizes the gender pay gap phenomenon by using intersectionality theory. The study describes how the gender pay gap varies based on ethnical differences besides being women and reveals how this situation deinstitutionalizes women's careers. The study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design employing thematic analysis conducted in Germany and Türkiye with a purposively selected sample of participants. The study's empirical material was generated through semi-structured interviews with women knowledge workers who differ in ethnicity and generally work in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The study's findings indicated that ethnicity should be considered among other intersectional factors to analyze the gender pay gap comprehensively. The reasons behind the gender pay gap are found to be the lack of transparency in the workplace, gender-based occupational segregation, culture, the glass ceiling, the existence of male-dominated informal communication channels, and the fact that women workers are more easily preferred in organizational downsizing initiatives.

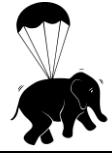
Keywords: gender pay gap, intersectionality theory, women knowledge workers, Germany, Türkiye

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* The data-gathering protocol for this study was designed in 2019 and implemented between 2019 and 2020, therefore, it is exempt from ethics committee approval.

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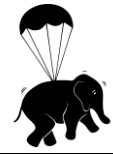


Kariyer Çözülmesi: Kadın Bilgi Çalışanlarında Cinsiyete Dayalı Ücret Eşitsizliğinin Kesişimselliği

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı kadın bilgi çalışanlarının cinsiyete dayalı ücret eşitsizliğinin kesişimselliğine ilişkin deneyimlerin keşfedilmesi ve cinsiyete dayalı ücret eşitsizliğinin sebeplerinin sorgulanmasıdır. Çalışma, cinsiyete dayalı ücret eşitsizliği olgusunu kesişimsellik teorisi bağlamında sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Çalışmada ücret eşitsizliğinin kadın olmanın yanında etnik köken farklılıkları açısından nasıl değiştiği ve kadınların kariyerlerinde nasıl bir çözülmeye neden olduğu betimlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Betimsel nitel tasarımın kullanıldığı çalışma tematik analize dayalı olarak Almanya ve Türkiye’de amaçlı olarak seçilen katılımcılarla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın görgül materyalini etnik köken açısından farklılık gösteren, genelde bilim, teknoloji, mühendislik ve matematik alanlarında çalışan bilgi çalışanı kadınlarla yapılan yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma sonuçları cinsiyete dayalı ücret eşitsizliğinin kapsamlı analizinde etnik kökenin diğer kesişimsel faktörlerle birlikte ele alınması gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Cinsiyete dayalı ücret eşitsizliğinin nedenleri arasında ise işyerinde şeffaflığın olmayışı, cinsiyete dayalı mesleki ayrımcılık, kültür, cam tavan, erkek egemen biçimsel olmayan iletişim kanallarının varlığı ve kadın çalışanların örgütsel küçülme girişimlerinde daha kolay tercih edilebilmeleri sıralanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: cinsiyete dayalı ücret eşitsizliği, kesişimsellik teorisi, kadın bilgi çalışanları, Almanya, Türkiye



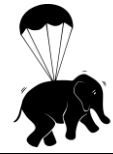
1. INTRODUCTION

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has awarded the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 2023 to Claudia Goldin ([The Swedish Academy of Sciences, 2023](#)). Claudia Goldin has been recognized for her contributions to our understanding of women's labor market outcomes (see [Goldin, 1990](#)). With this award, the issue of the gender pay gap has come into the spotlight once again. Numerous studies have been conducted to explore the gender pay gap and explained the factors that contribute to it ([Bishu and Alkadry, 2017](#); [Acker, 2012](#)). According to these studies, men tend to earn more than women in all kinds of organizations, whether they are female-dominated, male-dominated, or gender-balanced ([Budig, 2002](#)). Furthermore, the gender pay gap demonstrates that even if the job-related characteristics of men and women were the same, they would still receive different wages across the wage distribution ([Arulampalam et al., 2007](#)).

Recent Pew Research findings suggest that the gender pay gap, which has barely improved in the past twenty years, has stalled, and remains unchanged, even for college graduates ([Kochhar, 2023](#)). Efforts are being made to diminish gender pay gap. Despite the progress made so far, it is not happening as quickly as it should, and more efforts are needed to achieve significant change ([Bishu and Alkadry, 2017](#); [Alkadry and Tower, 2013](#); [Jarrell and Stanley, 2004](#); [Weichselbaumer and Winter-Ebmer, 2005](#)). Even countries like Iceland ([Henshall, 2018](#)), benchmarked for combating the gender pay gap, struggle with addressing the issue ([Vock, 2023](#)).

The gender pay gap can have devastating consequences for one's career, since organizational wage-setting processes can create gendered subcultures through identity work, interactions, and acculturation ([Acker, 2012](#)). Arthur and Rousseau ([1996, p.3](#)) define a career as a series of work experiences over time, and they discuss a shift from traditional organizational careers to boundaryless careers. Over three decades ago, people started to experience fragmented careers, according to Arthur and Rousseau ([1996](#)). Fragmentation resulting from flexibility increases career and retirement risks ([Settersten, 2006](#)). Similarly, women often experience career disadvantages, leading to fragmented and discontinuous careers for various reasons ([Cohen and Duberley, 2020](#)). Deinstitutionalization is a term that refers to the disruption of an institution, which can lead to the erosion or discontinuity of an institutionalized organizational activity or practice ([Oliver, 1992, p.564](#)). However, studies on deinstitutionalization are rare, as noted by Maguire and Hardy ([2009](#)). If we consider career as an institution, it is argued in this study that the gender pay gap has led to the deinstitutionalization of careers for women.

It is self-evident that gender inequalities still exist across nations, with varying degrees of reduction ([Acker, 2012](#)). In addition to cross-national differences, global immigration adds another dimension, making understanding the dynamics of the gender pay gap even more complicated within national borders. For this reason, it is important to understand the career struggles of women through an intersectional lens ([Crenshaw, 1991](#)) that considers their cultural



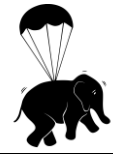
background, in addition to their gender. Intersectionality is a framework that has been widely used by social justice advocates and scholars who are socially conscious (Tomlinson, 2013). The power web that surrounds human beings in multiple ways can be deconstructed by fine-tuning the intersectionality lens (Özbilgin et al., 2011). Moreover, it is argued that intersectionality can overcome single-axis thinking, thus enhance social justice (Cho et al., 2013). Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the intersectionality of the gender pay gap among women, most of them are employed within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers, in Germany and Türkiye inquiring how gender pay gap is deinstitutionalizing women's careers. Our utmost objective with this study is to investigate the gender pay gap's impact on women's work experience and explore how intersectional this phenomenon is. The article will proceed as follows: Firstly, the theoretical background of the study will be introduced, which includes the gender pay gap and intersectionality theory. Secondly, the methodological approach used in the study will be elaborated. Thirdly, the empirical findings of the study will be described. Lastly, the article will be concluded with the discussion of the findings.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap, also known as the gender wage gap, refers to the unequal payment between male and female employees, regardless of their performance, competence, and knowledge. This pay gap adversely affects the performance and motivation of women, and prevents them from having equal opportunities for hiring, promotion, and career advancement. Rubery and Koukiadaki (2016) observed that women have made significant progress in the workforce by becoming more continuous members and receiving better education, diversifying their university subjects, taking dual breadwinner roles, and joining trade unions. In fact, women join trade unions as frequently as men when they work in organized sectors. Moreover, social policy support for women's employment has grown with an increase in state-paid leave and childcare support. However, the gender pay gap persists across all demographics and earnings definitions (Roos and Gatta, 1999). Moreover, according to Acker (2012) organizations perpetuate gender inequalities through embedded gender assumptions about femininity and masculinity.

Parenthood, age, industrial characteristics, and occupational gender segregation contribute to the gender pay gap (Kochhar, 2023). The gender pay gap and gender discrimination go against modern societies' values and disrupt social order. International corporations are increasingly supporting movements like "HeForShe" to boost the number of women in various roles, including hiring and promotion (UN Women, 2024). But what causes the gender pay gap? According to Blau and Kahn (2017), the gender pay gap can be attributed to two main factors: human capital and gender segregation. The human capital factor is related to the education and training opportunities available to women, which affects their performance and wages. In contrast, discrimination plays a role in limiting women's presence in the workplace and their



advancement to higher organizational levels. Explanation of the causes are also bifurcated. The gender pay gap can be explained through two different theories: individualist and institutionalist. Individualist theories suggest that the gender pay gap exists because of certain “attitudes, preferences or qualifications” that make women less productive than men. On the other hand, institutionalist theories argue that the gender pay gap is a result of “the competitive market breaking down, creating constraints and limitations that restrict women’s choices” (Roos and Gatta, 1999, p.106-110).

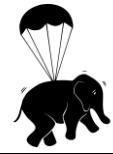
Social world is constructed on the multiple grounds therefore our analysis should be capable of engulfing these various identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Although there are theoretical attempts to explain gender pay gap, there is still ambiguity on what causes the gender pay gap, thus making the phenomenon more complicated to overcome. For instance, according to Klode et al. (2017), the gender pay gap among human resources managers in Germany may be caused by invisible factors. Moreover, Chevalier (2007) states that a significant part of the difference in earnings between genders remains unexplained, contributing to the gender pay gap. Research suggests that women’s attitudes towards competition and performance-based contracts explain only a small portion of the gender wage gap (Manning and Saidi, 2010). It is still interestingly unclear what portion of the gender pay gap can be attributed to personality traits or social norms. (Roethlisberger et al., 2023).

It has been argued that simply analyzing gender alone is not sufficient to fully understand and address inequalities related to the gender pay gap. Acker (2012) suggests that intersectionalities play a crucial role in their reproduction. Recent research has highlighted that the gender pay gap varies depending on race and ethnicity (Kochhar, 2023; Woodhams et al., 2021). Therefore, it becomes necessary to adjust our approach to the gender pay gap by utilizing the intersectionality theory.

2.2. Intersectionality Theory

This study uses intersectionality theory to explain the gender pay gap, utilizing its analytic sensibility to illuminate contextual power dynamics (Cho et al., 2013). Intersectionality theory has gained prominence in recent years, and it has been interpreted in two main ways. For some, it is seen as a result of the “postmodern turn” in academia and aims to explain the perceived fragmentation of identities within political movements in the late twentieth century. However, for others, intersectionality provides a set of tools for complicating our understanding of the systems and processes that define society. It is a method for examining how inequality is reproduced within institutions such as the state, family, or legal structures (Grabham et al., 2009). Intersectionality has been found to be a productive concept for many disciplines including organizational studies (Cho et al., 2013).

The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a leading authority in civil rights, Black feminist legal theory, and race, racism, and the law. In her groundbreaking work titled “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of

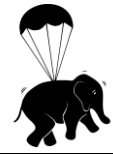


Color,” Crenshaw employed intersectionality to highlight how social movement organization and advocacy around violence against women ignored the vulnerabilities of women of color, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities (Carbado et al., 2013). For Crenshaw (1991) intersectionality is used to denote how gender and race interact shaping being as a Black woman. According to Crenshaw (1991) social categorizations need to be reconsidered as these categories may hinder or blur the intragroup differences. For instance, violence against women can result from multiple factors beyond their gender and should not be reduced to an issue of identity politics (Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality has the potential to widen our horizon on inclusionary action and discourse (Cho et al., 2013). Intersectionality refers to the interconnectedness of different types of oppression through institutional and symbolic mechanisms. This perspective recognizes the complexity of power relations and is seen as a productive approach by many scholars (Carbado et al., 2013). Crenshaw’s works are instrumental in uncovering and challenging the ways in which institutionalized discourses, such as the law, legitimize existing power structures and marginalize certain groups. Crenshaw (1991) also highlighted that even movements of resistance, like feminism and antiracism, can themselves perpetuate marginalization (Carbado et al., 2013). Intersectional subordination states Crenshaw (1991) does not have to be intentionally produced; it can emerge when preexisting conditions interact thus creating intersectional disempowerment. Therefore, it can be concluded that intersectionality is a term used for focusing on “difference and sameness” in the context of anti-discrimination and social movements and its relation to power (Cho et al., 2013, p.787).

Intersectionality has become increasingly popular among feminist and antiracist scholars across the globe (Cho et al., 2013). Intersectionality problematizes the limitations of mainstream discourses by incorporating multidimensional experiences from Black feminist thought (Tomlinson, 2013). Intersectionality refers to the ways in which an individual’s various identities can intersect and lead to unique forms of discrimination. These identities are often social or political, and when discussing intersectionality, the most commonly considered factors are gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and class (Center for Intersectional Justice, 2024). Various metaphors such as the road intersection, matrix and the interlocked vision of oppression has been used to depict what intersectionality is (Cho et al., 2013, p.787).

The experience at the intersection can be much larger and heavier than the dimensions analyzed alone (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality views identities as “both/and” not “either/or” kind of completions (Chun et al., 2013, p.921). Özbilgin et al. (2011) argued that any social phenomena regarding power and diversity is inherently intersectional. For instance, in addition to racial and ethnic discrimination, LGBTQ and disabled women in the US are facing a wider gender pay gap than White women (Kochhar, 2023). Additional burden is more than mere addition making former one least bearable (Crenshaw, 1991). For instance, discrimination is normalized against black men and white women, while it is often a blind spot for black women narratives (Cho et



al., 2013). It is even asserted that women of color were marginalized even within feminist and antiracist discourses (Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, only intersectional analysis according to Crenshaw (1991, p.1283) can provide “intellectual and political response” to this dilemma.

Experiences of women according to Crenshaw (1991) is the product of other intersecting patterns. Uncovering differences beyond gender at work can also highlight other aspects of diversity, such as disability, religion, belief, and sexuality (Özbilgin et al., 2011). Intersectionality adds complexity to our understanding of gender by highlighting how gender processes intersect with and are influenced by race and class processes, as well as other forms of inequality and exclusion (Acker, 2012). In other words, gender cannot be studied in isolation and must be viewed in the broader context of social hierarchies and power relations.

Not every difference is a difference (Tomlinson, 2013). Intersectionality provides an antiessentialist critique for the socially constructed identities siloed in categories for the sake of “linguistic economy of difference” (Crenshaw, 1991, p.1296). Compound marginalization of identities cannot be analyzed by using single-axis tendencies, as those identities can fall into the intellectual voids (Crenshaw, 1991). The ones trapped in the void are challenged by power exercised mutually reinforcing by each dimension (Crenshaw, 1991), since their sorrows are often overlooked. Hence, coalitions of identities should be forged to combat societal struggles (Chun et al., 2013). In this study, intersectionality theory is used to better understand the gender pay gap. It is expected that gender pay gap can be analyzed more comprehensively than employing single-axis theoretical frameworks (Cho et al., 2013).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design employing thematic analysis conducted in Germany and Turkey with a purposively selected sample of participants. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative research has several characteristics that can help researchers apply it better. Qualitative research involves reporting how people talk about things, describe things, and see the world. It also involves going out to a particular setting and studying it firsthand. This helps the researcher to focus on how the context or setting shapes what they have to say. Qualitative research is exploratory research, which means that it helps researchers to explore a situation in an open-ended way. This way, they can develop a complex understanding of the situation. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.10), the method of research in question is a field that is “interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary, crosscutting the humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences.” It is important to note that using given categorical identities alone may not be enough to fully understand and explore complex identities (Chun et al., 2013), which is why the methodological choice made in this study was necessary.

A descriptive qualitative design (Doyle et al., 2020) was preferred for the overall construction of the study. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews to examine the gender pay gap and its intersectionality. Qualitative research methods aim to explore



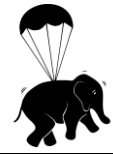
experience, meaning, and perspective from the participants' point of view (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The techniques used in qualitative research include small-group discussions, semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, and the analysis of texts and documents. These techniques are employed to investigate beliefs, attitudes, concepts of normative behavior, views on a focused topic, background information, institutional perspective, and private knowledge (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers strive to maintain the integrity of their work through various means such as trustworthiness, credibility, applicability, and consistency (Leininger, 1994). The qualitative method provides a comprehensive understanding of everyday life including attitudes, behaviors, interactions, events, and social processes. This enables social scientists to gain insight into how society-wide factors like social structure, social order, and various social forces influence everyday life (Crossman, 2020). In the upcoming sections, how the empirical material of the study was generated, and the research participants were selected will be described.

3.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Empirical material of this study was generated by conducting semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a type of data gathering technique that make use of both open-ended, pre-planned and theory driven questions. The goal is to generate empirical material based on the experiences of the participants, as well as on established concepts within the field of study. This method can be used with individuals or groups, and it allows for easy comparison of responses. Additionally, it can help the interviewer reach a consensus more efficiently on key issues related to the research topic (Galletta, 2013).

According to Adams (2015), semi-structured interviews are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and require an interviewer to be intelligent, sensitive, poised, nimble, and knowledgeable about relevant substantive issues. Alvesson (2003) provides several strategies for comprehending and constructing research based on interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a great way to establish good communication between the interviewer and interviewee, making it easy for the interviewer to obtain detailed information (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Eye contact is an important factor during the interview process. It enables the interviewer to empathize with the interviewee and facilitates the researcher's entry into the interviewee's world (Dempsey et al., 2016). Maintaining eye contact helps the interviewer establish trust and confidentiality, which is essential for studies of this nature.

A semi-structured interview guide with 13 questions and corresponding probes was developed based on the theoretical background of the study and Kallio et al.'s (2016) recommendations, acknowledging the investigative notion of research interviews (Czarniawska, 2014). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the semi-structured interviews that were originally planned to be conducted face-to-face had to be conducted either online or face-to-face. The interviews were conducted with four groups of women workers from Germany and Türkiye. This purposeful selection of participants, described in detail below, contributed to the study by providing



valuable insights on subjects such as the intersectionality of the gender pay gap and gender discrimination.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out in the participants' respective languages, which included Turkish, English, and German. The interviewees were given the choice of language, and their preference was adhered to. The questions were prepared and translated into all three languages prior to the interviews. This helped the participants to express themselves clearly, reduced ambiguity during the interview process, and alleviated their anxiety about language and expressing their ideas.

To ensure that there was no ambiguity about the semi-structured interview guide, a pilot interview was conducted. The answers given during this interview were compared with the theoretical background of the study to ensure coherence. The participants were informed about the confidentiality of their personal information and were asked to sign a voluntary participation permission form before the interview. This form contained their rights as participants. Additionally, a participant information form was filled in by every participant, which contained their age, birthplace, educational background, position, sector, and other relevant information. While verbal permissions were obtained and recorded during all interviews, in some of the online interviews written consent were not supplied.

3.2. Research Participants

Given the novel and ever-evolving nature of the intersectionality of the gender pay gap, a purposeful sampling strategy based on theory was utilized (Palinkas et al., 2015). It is observed in previous studies that the geographical location has significant effect on gender pay gap (Chapman and Benis, 2017). For this study, participants were selected from a diverse group of women knowledge workers in Germany and Türkiye, considering factors such as birthplace, nationality, and work country, to maximize diversity (Patton, 2002). The aim of this selection was to obtain a wider range of answers and real-life experiences related to the research questions. The study included 40 participants in total, consisting of 10 Turkish women workers who work in Türkiye, 10 Turkish women workers who were born in Germany, 10 Turkish women workers who immigrated from Türkiye to Germany, and 10 German women workers who work in Germany. The group classification was designed to better understand the research subjects and address the main research questions. Knowing group unity may force us to think group uniformity in the long run (Chun et al., 2013), within group nuances revealed during the interviews were highlighted coherent with the purpose of the study.

The participants in this study had diverse backgrounds, including differences in age, occupation, sector, education, and position within their workplace. The background information of each participant is presented in the four tables below (Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4), which include details such as their age, occupation, sector, years of experience, and the gender of their first line manager. Participants provided short or long responses to each question on the participant information form. The interviews were conducted between June 2019 and



August 2020, and lasted 10 to 20 minutes, an average length of about 12 minutes. Due to the relative sensitivity of the phenomenon under scrutiny, the interviews had to be shorter than expected. Code names were assigned to each participants denoting their intersectionality such as “Türkiye as birthplace Turkish participants working in Türkiye” were coded as Tb/Tw_n, “Türkiye as birthplace Turkish participants working in Germany” were coded as Tb/Gw_n, “Germany as birthplace Turkish participants working in Germany” was coded Gb/Gw_TR_n, and “German participants working in Germany” were coded as Gb/Gw_DE_n.

Table 1. Türkiye as birthplace Turkish participants working in Türkiye

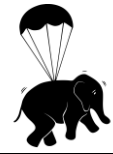
Name	Age	Occupation	Sector	Year	Gender of the First Line Manager
Tb/Tw_1	25-35	Software Engineer	Private	2	Male
Tb/Tw_2	25-35	English Teacher	Public	3	Male
Tb/Tw_3	25-35	Human Resources Consultant	Private	4	Male
Tb/Tw_4	25-35	English Teacher	Public	2	Male
Tb/Tw_5	25-35	Civil Engineer	Private	4	Male
Tb/Tw_6	25-35	Clinical Psychologist	Private	4	Male
Tb/Tw_7	25-35	Psychological Counselor	Private	5	Male
Tb/Tw_8	25-35	Operational Coordinator	Public	4	Male
Tb/Tw_9	25-35	Method Engineer	Private	2	Male
Tb/Tw_10	46-55	Nurse	Public	10+	Female

Table 2. Türkiye as birthplace Turkish participants working in Germany

Name	Age	Occupation	Sector	Year	Gender of the First Line Manager
Tb/Gw_1	25-35	Software Engineer	Private	7	Male
Tb/Gw_2	25-35	Data Analyst	Private	3	Male
Tb/Gw_3	25-35	Civil Engineer	Private	2	Male
Tb/Gw_4	36-45	Information Security Architect	Private	3	Male
Tb/Gw_5	25-35	Dentist	Private	4	Female
Tb/Gw_6	25-35	Nurse	Private	4	Male
Tb/Gw_7	25-35	Purchase Manager	Private	9	Male
Tb/Gw_8	25-35	Central Tender Manager	Private	2	Male
Tb/Gw_9	25-35	Brand Manager	Private	9	Female
Tb/Gw_10	36-45	Teacher	Public	10+	Male

Table 3. Germany as birthplace Turkish participants working in Germany

Name	Age	Occupation	Sector	Year	Gender of the First Line Manager
Gb/Gw_TR_1	36-45	German Teacher	Public	10+	Female
Gb/Gw_TR_2	25-35	Physiotherapist	Private	9	Male
Gb/Gw_TR_3	25-35	Architect	Private	10+	Male
Gb/Gw_TR_4	25-35	Architect	Private	2	Female
Gb/Gw_TR_5	36-45	Teacher of Mentally Handicapped	Public	7	Male



Gb/Gw_TR_6	25-35	Buying Specialist	Public	5	Male
Gb/Gw_TR_7	25-35	Buying Specialist	Public	2	Female
Gb/Gw_TR_8	25-35	Industrial Manager	Private	8	Male
Gb/Gw_TR_9	25-35	Therapist	Private	8	Female
Gb/Gw_TR_10	25-35	External Quality Controller	Private	2	Male

Table 4. German participants working in Germany

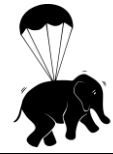
Name	Age	Occupation	Sector	Year	Gender of the First Line Manager
Gb/Gw_DE_1	25-35	Group Partner Manager	Private	1	Male
Gb/Gw_DE_2	25-35	Big Data Engineer	Private	9	Male
Gb/Gw_DE_3	25-35	Consultant	Private	2	Male
Gb/Gw_DE_4	25-35	Junior Project Manager	Private	2	Male
Gb/Gw_DE_5	25-35	Teacher (D.A.F.)	Public	3	Female
Gb/Gw_DE_6	25-35	Requirements Engineer	Private	1	Male
Gb/Gw_DE_7	25-35	Master and Business Analyst	Private	4	Female
Gb/Gw_DE_8	36-45	Sales Manager	Private	4	Male
Gb/Gw_DE_9	25-35	Requirements Engineer	Public	1	Male
Gb/Gw_DE_10	25-35	Industrial Engineer	Public	4	Male

4. FINDINGS

This study is designed as a qualitative descriptive study (Kim et al., 2017), and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) was conducted to understand the intersectionality of the gender pay gap. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012, p.255) main goal of this type of design is to generate “a comprehensive summarization, in everyday terms, of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals” who are facing the phenomenon under scrutiny. The interview transcripts were translated from Turkish and German to English. To avoid misunderstandings and ambiguities, the terms mentioned by participants were expressed in English, and verbatim comments were included with their direct quotations to make them more coherent. The findings will be presented in two parts below: intersectionality of the gender pay gap and causes of other discriminatory issues related with the gender pay gap uncovered during the interviews.

4.1. Intersectionality of Gender Pay Gap

Convergence of various diversity factors requires intervention strategies that will not be designed for single diversity factor (Crenshaw, 1991). Utilizing an intersectional lens, we can understand the multidimensional oppression experienced by women workers with an immigrant background, recognizing that “no single oppression is subordinate to another” (Chun et al. 2013, p.918). The analysis revealed that the gender pay gap or gender discrimination is not solely caused by gender factors. Other factors like nationality, language, cultural background, and religion also contribute to it. Women report experiencing discrimination not only on the



basis of their gender, but also due to their race and ethnicity. The intersectionality of these factors results in wage disparities and barriers to career advancement.

“The wage distribution is unequal in my organization. My male colleagues who do the same job as me and although we are at the same age and have the same qualifications, they earn 15,000 EURO per year more than me. Because of the gender and nationality factor, I earn less than my male colleagues.” (Participant Tb/Gw_7)

Some of the participants stated that Turkish women who have immigrated to Germany experience gender and race-based wage discrimination, as well as ethnic discrimination.

“Due to my language problem, don’t think that it seems possible to rise to the executive position for me. But still, I believe that male candidates are chosen, and they have priority in top managerial positions.” (Participant Tb/Gw_8)

According to Erbil et al. (2023), linguistic capital is generally acknowledged as reflecting talent at work. It is unfortunate that language proficiency can lead to discrimination against women employees. Non-native speakers may face obstacles in career advancement, even if they are fluent in English. For instance, a woman who cannot speak German well might be overlooked for a promotion, particularly if she is competing with native speakers. This problem is particularly pronounced for women who were not born in Germany. However, Turkish women who were born in Germany have the advantage of being bilingual in both languages.

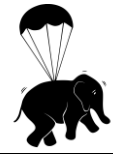
When we take into account language and ethnic background and categorize these groups in a triangle, women from Turkey are at the lowest point, just below women born in Germany. Learning a new language is a time-consuming process, and many German companies require proficiency in German, especially for local firms and higher positions. Women born in Germany seem to be more optimistic about their chances of getting promoted.

“Of course, I can get a promotion. Right now, I am already on the promotion process. Our goal with my boss is that he will remain from his position completely, then he will do his works and I will be like an assistant manager. During this process being a woman, I had no difficulties.” (Participant Gb/Gw_TR_3)

“Definitely, I can get a promotion, and gender or other things do not play a role in this.” (Participant Gb/Gw_TR_5)

During the interviews, the participants talked about their personal experiences and emotions related to the gender pay gap, discrimination, and cultural issues that exist in both Türkiye and Germany. They mentioned that the distribution of wages has changed over the years, leading to a pay gap between man and woman employees.

“At first, the payment was the same with me and my male colleagues at hiring. However, in the following periods, I see that men are selected to rise or get promotions faster and women stay



behind them. This situation leads to their election for high positions and the pay gap between genders.” (Participant Tb/Gw_3)

According to the research findings, the government needs to address gender discrimination and the issue of unequal pay gaps. To tackle this problem, it is suggested that suitable legislation should be implemented to regulate and control such practices. The government should use its legislative power to ensure that those who breach the law are penalized accordingly.

“It does not matter whether women or men in my workplace, however, I see that in many organizations, men earn higher than women. The government should tighten the laws to get the pay gap under control.” (Participant Gb/Gw_TR_7)

The gender pay gap is more prevalent among participants who are classified as “Türkiye as birthplace Turkish participants who work in Germany (Tb/Gw)”. These participants find it difficult to adapt to German culture and tend to reflect Turkish culture more than the group “Germany as birthplace Turkish participant work in Germany (Gb/Gw_TR).” The latter group is more assimilated to German culture and language, making it easier for them to understand the local people. Lack of German language skills can cause discrimination against Turkish women workers, especially in higher positions.

4.2. Causes of Gender-Based Discrimination and Gender Pay Gap

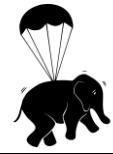
This section summarizes participants’ views on the causes of gender-based discrimination and the gender pay gap.

4.2.1. Lack of Workplace Transparency

Transparency in wages leads to a diminishing gender pay gap (Abudy et al., 2023; Bennedsen et al., 2023). However, woman employees are often unable to determine if they are being paid fairly due to the lack of transparency in wage distribution. They are not provided with information about the wages of male employees who have the same job position. This lack of transparency encourages firms to implement different wage distributions which can lead to unequal pay for women. Participant Tb/Gw_2, who works as a data analyst in Germany, highlights this issue.

“I am curious about the earnings of my male colleagues, but I do not have any data that they earn. The company says that there is no discrimination in this way, but I want to trust their words because they don’t publish everyone’s salaries. If male employees earn more, this has been never acceptable and salaries should be according to performance and experiences, not considering gender differences. The government should also detect this issue and if such injustice is concerned, it should be urgently intervened and eliminated.” (Participant Tb/Gw_2)

Findings of the study has shown that a considerable number of workers in both countries are uncertain whether they receive equal pay as their male colleagues. Their respective companies



tend to keep the salary information confidential. The absence of transparency in payment reinforces women's conviction that there is a gender pay gap, even if it is not present.

"I do not have any clear information about the salaries of my male colleagues, but I guess they are getting more than me." (Participant Gb/Gw_TR_2)

"From time to time I think about how much my male colleagues earn, and I do not find wage inequality normal. I also do not know if any initiative has been taken for this situation in my company. As for the government, it should also determine the wage policy by measuring positions, not individuals." (Participant Tb/Gw_9)

4.2.2. Human Capital Theory Is Not Working

Although the percentage of women with a bachelor's degree has increased, the gender pay gap in the US has remained stagnant for the last two decades (Kochhar, 2023) which is not in line with the issues raised during the interviews. According to the findings of this research, the human capital theory is not a significant factor in explaining the root causes of gender-based discrimination and the pay gap between genders. This is because women are of the opinion that they have the same opportunities as men when it comes to education and training.

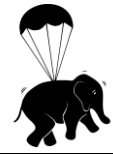
"I don't see any difference in human capital, because in the field of education we have the same opportunities, and we get the same education. In this regard, I would like to have the opportunity to work as men have by taking more responsibility for my job satisfaction. I think that women should be given more responsibility in the business world." (Participant Tb/Gw_3)

"I have never thought that the human capital differs because practically all opportunities are available for both women and men in Germany and I decide my job without considering as it is men or women's job." (Participant Gb/Gw_TR_1)

4.2.3. Occupational Segregation

Highlighted by intersectional approaches, power work unevenly with the society (Chun et al., 2013). Although our purposeful sample had more women working in STEM areas, early-career women in social sciences, humanities, and business administration (excluding accounting) face a higher gender pay gap (Morgan, 2008). Our findings revealed that gender-based occupational segregation creates an unfair pay gap by dividing jobs into well-paid and low-paid.

"Occupational segregation is true for some other occupational groups, although it does not include software. For example, you cannot see a female construction worker, or a taxi driver or a bus driver. In other countries, women also work in these occupational groups. I think it is related to the perspective of society. Construction work may be a power-based job that women may not prefer especially. You can never see a female municipal employee. I do not know what the reason for this is. It may be because there are unfamiliar professions, a woman may be uneasy to work in these environments, even if she prefers in case of compulsory need. How can



I woman in 100 men work peacefully? The same goes for taxi, minibüs, bus driver. How can work in this profession without harassment in Turkey, I cannot imagine a woman in those positions.” (Participant Tb/Gw_1)

“I think that the tasks and positions are not equal. I observe that the responsible duties which seem important to the society are given to men, while women are assigned to jobs which are less important, in the background and seem lower.” (Participant Gb/Gw_TR_8)

4.2.4. Culture

Unsolved problems of the society require new forms of identity coalitions (Chun et al., 2013). Gender roles play a significant function in determining how women act and behave in society. Cultural norms have a profound impact on the occupational segregation of genders. Women are often pressured to conform to societal expectations of femininity, which often result in them being directed towards jobs that are considered more suitable for women. As a result, women are expected to behave, act and work in a manner that aligns with these gender norms.

“I always think that certain jobs are done by certain genders in society. I have been living in Antalya for 25 years and I saw a woman chauffeur for the first-time last year. I was surprised too, although I am a woman. The chauffeur as an occupation is done by men in Turkey. Men always use machines, for example, the shovel operators are always men, and managers also consist of men. When you say ‘chauffeur’, everybody thinks man first and if you ask it, from 5 people, 4 of them will be considered such as that.” (Participant Tb/Tw_4)

“I wanted to be an electric-electronic engineer, while I was deciding on my university preferences, but in that time electric-electronic engineering was known as a male-specific profession. The majority in the class and the faculty consisted of male students. Let’s say that there are 60-person in a class, the number of women is not more than 3 or 4. Because of these prejudices, I decided on being a computer engineer. Like electrical-electronics engineering, civil engineering has also this impression that men do it better. While I was going to choose the area which I wanted, I had to choose a different area.” (Participant Tb/Tw_1)

4.2.5. Glass Ceiling

Gender, immigration status and poverty are found to be used for labor exploitation purposes in previous studies (Chun et al., 2013). The current study also reveals that women in Türkiye and Germany face a glass ceiling that hinders their promotion opportunities.

“I do not think that I can get a promotion for the management positions. In fact, I think, I have good knowledge and experience in my field. With the certificates I have received, I think I am better than my colleagues with my competences. But the thing that my institution keeps in the highest priority is the gender factor, so in order to get a promotion, your gender must be male.” (Participant Tb/Tw_7)



“According to research that we have conducted, management positions are not still dispersed equally between men and women. The glass ceiling phenomenon, even if foreign companies’ operations in Turkey, is still there, because this is a social issue, and it is also in the perspective of companies that women should be more interested in their homes after giving birth, especially after having a baby. Therefore, it does not appear equal in the currently.” (Participant Tb/Tw_3)

“Men are working on more managerial roles. In my organization, from 7 head of directors, 6 of them are men.” (Participant Gb/Gw_TR_7)

“I would say to the promotion process to managerial positions in my institution is not transparent or how the gender plays a role” (Participant Gb/Gw_DE_1)

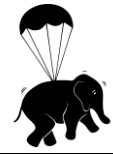
In Germany, as in Türkiye, women often report experiencing gender discrimination and encountering a glass ceiling in managerial positions. This discrimination is particularly prevalent among older generations and can be especially felt by women working in firms where there is a generation gap. Participant Gb/Gw_DE_4, a junior project manager, has shared her personal experiences of navigating being a woman manager within her company.

“Actually, I feel sometimes women are rejected. For example, in my project manager position, I come across a lot of old men who did not want to help or inform or follow suggestions or decisions just because I am a younger woman. However, in today’s life, it is a more conservative attitude rather than misleading organizations.” (Participant Gb/Gw_DE_4)

Regarding promotion, there is a noticeable difference between Türkiye and Germany for women workers. In Türkiye, cultural norms tend to limit women’s chances to rise to higher positions in an organization. On the other hand, the corporate sector in Germany focuses on tackling the gender pay gap and gender-based discrimination. Strategies are being implemented to increase the global commitment to gender equity. However, managerial positions in Germany are still predominantly held by men. This can be attributed to the strong effect of the glass ceiling, which is prevalent in most countries, including Germany. As stated by Arulampalam et al. (2007) the gender pay gap tends to be more significant at the top of the wage distribution, and this is due to the glass ceiling effect.

4.2.6. Male Grapevine

We are living in social groups that make us similar and different than the others (Chun et al., 2013). Findings reveal that men tend to be more effective than women at gaining work-related critical information through informal channels due to the fact that most managerial positions are held by men. The informal connections between men in the workplace facilitate the flow of work-related critical information. Unfortunately, this can leave women feeling excluded or alienated. Women often report that they only learn important news or information through their male colleagues.



“My male colleagues who smoke with my manager always get information before me or my manager tells them to forward the information to me.” (Participant Gb/Gw_DE_2)

“If the manager is male, I do believe that information gets spread more quickly between them. I have not yet felt alienated due to this situation, but I have felt not included in my job.” (Participant Gb/Gw_DE_6)

“Men definitely have better informal connections than women, especially in Turkey the work-related information is learned after football matches in the evenings.” (Participant Tb/Gw_4)

“I think the work-related key information flows more man to man. In general, men dwell in top positions more than women. Therefore, employees of the same sex can be closer to each other and become better friends. Because there can be misunderstandings in the relationship between men and women, male-to-male communications are easier than the opposite sex.” (Participant Tb/Tw_5)

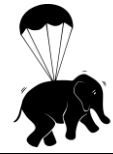
4.2.7. Downsizability

The likelihood of women being downsized more than men, due to physical abilities or traditional gender roles, is a significant factor causing gender-based discrimination and the pay gap. For instance, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women, resulting in a “she-cession” (Gupta, 2020). Physical force often plays a significant role in determining who gets dismissed during downsizing. Women who work in jobs that require more physical strength are more likely to be laid off than men. This is due to the perception that women are physically weaker than men, which negatively affects their performance evaluation. However, this factor has a minor impact on knowledge-based work. While most participants agree that women are more likely to be laid off than men, none of them have reported being dismissed due to physical force requirements.

“The removal of women, in general, is a situation that I have come across by my friends around me. Generally, women are dismissed because it is thought that men have more powerful than women. Or, if the woman is at home and has a child, or if she is likely to become pregnant, the managers decide that women should be removed.” (Participant Tb/Gw_5)

Perceived gender roles in Turkish society dictate that women are primarily responsible for caring for and serving the household, while men are responsible for earning money. Unfortunately, these social norms often result in women being dismissed from their jobs more frequently than men. These cultural and traditional beliefs have a significant impact on the way women are treated in the workplace in Turkey.

“It seems that women are more likely to be dismissed in case of downsizing because when you are a woman, you have different responsibilities at home. Our society has given women some duties and responsibilities. We have learned and taken these responsibilities from our



childhood... If a woman is married, then her husband is already looking after her about money. If she is single, then her family look after her.” (Participant Tb/Tw_1)

5. DISCUSSION

A civilization that proves incapable of solving the problems it creates is a decadent civilization.

A civilization that chooses to close its eyes to its most crucial problems is a stricken civilization.

A civilization that uses its principles for trickery and deceit is a dying civilization.

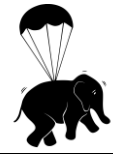
(Aimé Césaire, 2000, p.31)

“Most White people do not want to be called racists; many men do not want to be accused of sexism. And almost no one talks about class” Acker (2012, p.221) concluding that this is making it harder to pinpoint intersectional inequalities. When one digest Césaire’s (2000, p.31) verses together with Acker’s (2012, p.221) points, in a “tricked and deceit” system of civilization, it becomes impossible to find out and cure several vulnerabilities of women of the contemporary working life, and eventually most of us may found ourselves in these societal voids. We should remember that categorizations and under- or non-acknowledgement of current and potential identity coalitions impose power with its social and material consequences (Crenshaw, 1991). That’s why differentiating the distinctions, which are otherwise blurred, can empower subgroups that are part of a larger group (Chun et al., 2013).

The gender pay gap is multidimensional, complicated, and abstruse. Under the given circumstances, this study tried to unravel the dynamics that create and sustain gender pay gap for women knowledge workers in different cultural settings. Through this study, a significant question related to the intersectionality of the gender pay gap faced by Turkish women knowledge workers in Germany due to cultural, religious, and linguistic factors has been explored in-depth. This has been achieved by examining various processes, such as hiring, promotions, access to knowledge, authority, and exit management. The empirical data collected through the study reveals that Turkish women knowledge workers who have migrated from Türkiye to Germany are subjected to discrimination based on their gender and race. Furthermore, their language skills also impact their chances of getting promotions or earning as much as their German-speaking colleagues. The current study and other research in this area may help fostering mutual understanding and respect among women which is strongly needed according to Chun et al. (2013) for overcoming intersectional inequalities.

6. CONCLUSION

Intersectionality provides the nodal point from which researchers can further their research endeavors about various inequalities (Cho et al., 2013). Tomlinson (2013, p.996) states that intersectional understanding revealed “how politics defined identities, rather than identities defining politics.” Integrating individualist and institutionalist perspectives is needed to better understand and address the gender pay gap (Roos and Gatta, 1999). Intersectionality is the idea

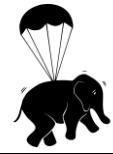


that social identities, like race and gender, are interconnected and cannot be understood separately from each other. It is a framework for understanding how different forms of oppression intersect and it emphasizes the importance of addressing these intersections to achieve a more democratic and egalitarian society (Chun et al., 2013). Based on the experiences gained by analyzing women of color, intersectional critique can foster our understanding of other coalitions of identities (Crenshaw, 1991). It can also be argued that education may overcome gender pay gap, but over the past 40 years, the gender pay gap has decreased more for women without a bachelor's degree in the US than for women with a bachelor's degree (Kochhar, 2023). It can be concluded that providing support for educating women is one thing, but not everything in terms of battling with the gender pay gap.

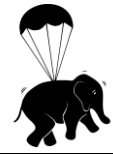
As with other empirical studies, the findings of this study have limitations and practical implications. It should be noted that the claims of discrimination based on gender and race presented in this study require further empirical evidence to be considered systemic and therefore strengthened. Although more studies similar to this one are needed, the following suggestions aim to minimize the gender pay gap and its intersectionality for women in Germany and Türkiye. Discrimination against Turkish immigrant women must be addressed, and the German government should focus on controlling multicultural organizations in terms of racial discrimination. Governments should also strictly regulate the private sector to ensure gender distribution is equal for both men and women in Germany and Türkiye. Governments must also balance the number of women employees in the public sector, not just in lower positions but also in higher ones. Family-friendly policies are recommended to address the gender pay gap resulting from differing child-rearing expectations (Chevalier, 2007). Organizations are also advised to raise awareness of gender discrimination and the negative effects of the gender pay gap, and gender balance should be monitored at higher levels of the organizational hierarchy as well. Lastly, in addition to racial and ethnic discrimination, LGBTQ and/or disabled women's intersectionalities should be analyzed further. Since it is known that LGBTQ and disabled women in the US are facing a wider gender pay gap than White women in the US (Kochhar, 2023), this issue should also be considered in future studies on gender pay gap.

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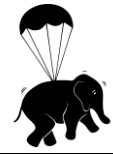
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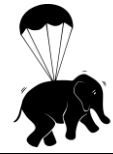
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