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ORCID 0000-0001-9153-7097
ORCID 0000-0001-7330-6690

GENDER DISTRIBUTION AND WAGES IN THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS: GLASS CEILING THEORY³

Ömer Buğra SÜDÜPAK¹
İsmail ŞENTÜRK²

ABSTRACT

The statistical gender status of work and its impact on wages is considered an important issue for understanding the dynamics of the current market. This study examines gender differences in wages during the job search process. The difficulties faced by male and female candidates in job search options, the way they evaluate job offers, gender-based distributions in discounts on bulk purchases, and the distributions on these wage differences are investigated. Additionally, the glass ceiling system framework, gender alternative barriers to career progression, and suggested policies to take these barriers into account are discussed. These studies provide the basis for steps to be taken towards promoting gender equality in the job search process and reducing wage differences. In the study, understanding the gender status of the job search process and its effects on wages is critical to promoting gender equality and creating a more equitable environment for producing workforces where people are healthy. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to improve policies that will reduce alternative selective discrimination and increase women's workforce, in cooperation with employers, policy makers and all segments of society. In this way, gender equality relations at both individual and social levels and a more inclusive environment in the business world can be created.

Keywords: Job Search Methods, Gender, Wage, Glass Ceiling Theory

Jel Codes: J64-J16-E24-J71

İŞ ARAMA SÜRECİNDE CİNSİYET DAĞILIMI VE ÜCRETLER: CAM TAVAN TEORİSİ

ÖZ

İş piyasasında cinsiyet dağılımı ve bunun ücretler üzerindeki etkisi, işgücü piyasasının dinamiklerini anlamak için önemli bir konu olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bu çalışma, iş arama sürecinde cinsiyet temelli farklılıkların ücretler üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. İş arama süreçlerinde kadın ve erkek adayların karşılaştığı zorluklar, iş tekliflerini değerlendirme biçimleri ve işe alım süreçlerindeki cinsiyete dayalı ayrımcılık gibi faktörler ele alınarak, bu faktörlerin ücret farklılıkları üzerindeki etkileri araştırılmaktadır. Ayrıca, cam tavan teorisi çerçevesinde, kariyer ilerlemesinde karşılaşılan cinsiyet temelli engeller ve bu engellerin üstesinden gelmek için önerilen politikalar tartışılmaktadır. Bu çalışmalar, iş arama sürecinde cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanması ve ücret farklılıklarının azaltılması yönünde atılacak adımlar için temel oluşturmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada, iş arama sürecinde cinsiyet dağılımının ve ücretler üzerindeki etkisinin anlaşılması, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini teşvik etmek ve iş gücü piyasasında daha adil bir ortam yaratmak için kritik öneme sahip olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu hedefe ulaşmak için, işverenlerin, politika yapımcıların ve toplumun tüm kesimlerinin iş birliği yaparak cinsiyet temelli ayrımcılığı azaltacak ve kadınların iş gücüne katılımını destekleyecek politikalar geliştirmesi gerekmektedir. Bu şekilde hem bireysel düzeyde hem de toplumsal düzeyde cinsiyet eşitliği sağlanabilir ve iş dünyasında daha kapsayıcı bir ortam oluşturulabileceği düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İş Arama Yöntemleri, Cinsiyet, Ücret, Cam Tavan Teorisi

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¹ PhD student, Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Economics, E-mail: b.sudupak@gmail.com

² Assoc. Prof. Dr., Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Economics, E-mail: ismail.senturk@gop.edu.tr

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1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of gender distribution in the labor market, particularly in the context of wage disparities, has emerged as a crucial area of research for understanding the dynamics of today's labor force. The differing conditions faced by men and women during the job search process, and how these conditions affect wages, have become central issues in studies on gender equality. This study aims to analyze in detail the effects of gender-based differences on wages within the framework of the glass ceiling theory during the job search process.

The primary objective of this research is to explore the challenges faced by male and female candidates in job searches, how they evaluate job offers, and the gender-based discrimination present in hiring processes, in order to reveal how these factors influence wage disparities. Additionally, understanding gender-based barriers in job search methods and hiring processes aims to contribute to the development of policies that promote gender equality. The fact that women are generally employed in lower-paying jobs and face invisible barriers to career progression is one of the most evident manifestations of the glass ceiling. In this regard, the study also discusses the policies proposed to break this glass ceiling.

The significance of this research lies in its provision of a scientific foundation for steps towards creating a fairer and more inclusive labor market. Unveiling the various aspects of gender-based job search and hiring processes is crucial for policymakers and employers to take necessary steps to improve these processes. Achieving gender equality in workforce participation is important not only from a social justice perspective but also offers significant benefits in terms of economic growth and labor force productivity.

By examining the role of gender distribution in job search processes in depth, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the structural and systemic barriers faced by women in the labor market. Additionally, it will evaluate the applicability of policy recommendations aimed at reducing wage disparities and promoting gender equality. In this context, the research underscores the necessity of collaboration at both individual and institutional levels to ensure gender equality and offers strategic recommendations for creating a more inclusive labor market.

2. GENDER AND LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The subject of gender and labor force participation is a crucial area of research that examines the current status of men and women in the labor market and the impact of gender norms on this participation. The concepts of sex and gender are central to this discussion. While sex refers to the biological differences between men and women, gender involves the social roles, behaviors, and expectations attributed to individuals based on their biological sex (Butler, 1990, p: 6-7). These concepts play a key role in shaping the dynamics of labor force participation. Gender norms influence individuals' career choices, their roles in the labor market, and the opportunities or barriers they face.

Historically, gender norms have confined women primarily to domestic roles, while men have been expected to occupy full-time, high-income positions in the workforce. This division persisted, especially until the mid-20th century, with women largely concentrated in unpaid domestic and caregiving roles (Hochschild and Machung, 1989, p: 285-286). However, with changing gender norms and improvements in women's education levels, there has been a significant increase in women's labor force participation (Goldin, 1995, p: 20-24). This increase has been supported by factors such as economic development, improvements in education levels, and declining fertility rates (Becker, 1985, p: 37-41).

Gender, as a social construct, also influences the experiences of individuals in the labor market. Even when men and women compete for the same positions, they can be treated differently. Women are often concentrated in lower-paying jobs with limited opportunities for advancement. Despite efforts to increase women's economic independence, gender norms continue to disadvantage women in the labor market (Blau and Kahn, 2017, p: 797). For example, care-related sectors, where women are overrepresented due to traditional gender roles, tend to offer lower wages (England, 2010, p: 152).

Distinguishing between sex and gender is essential for understanding the deep-rooted inequalities in the workforce. While biological differences can explain some disparities, it is the influence of socially constructed gender norms that primarily shapes gender-based divisions in the labor market (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004). For instance, women are often perceived as more risk-averse and more focused on family responsibilities, while men are expected to pursue full-time, high-paying jobs (Hochschild, 1989, p: 259-262).

These gender role perceptions not only influence job choices but also impact recruitment and promotion processes. Research has shown that women face greater challenges in reaching senior management positions compared to men, often due to the so-called "glass ceiling" — invisible barriers that hinder their career advancement (Eagly and Carli, 2007). The glass ceiling refers to structural and social obstacles that make it difficult for women to rise to leadership positions, perpetuating gender inequality in the workplace (Reskin and Padavic, 1994).

Although changes in gender norms have encouraged more women to participate in the workforce, more policies and practices are needed to ensure true equality in the workplace. Technological advancements, globalization, and increased equality in education have all contributed to higher levels of female workforce participation, yet the influence of gender norms continues to hinder women's ability to achieve equal pay and career progression (David, 2013, p: 186-188). To mitigate the effects of gender norms in the workplace, it is crucial to develop policies and practices that promote gender equality.

In conclusion, the relationship between gender and labor force participation is critical to understanding the barriers women face in the workplace. Eliminating gender-based job segregation and wage disparities is essential to achieving gender equality in the workforce and creating a fairer work environment. To achieve this goal, gender norms must be challenged, and policies that promote gender equality must be implemented (Heilman, 2012, p: 118-119).

2.1. Effects of Gender Distribution in Employment on the Job Search Process

It is known that men and women differ in terms of job selection criteria, behaviors during the recruitment process, and the difficulties they face during this process. Women generally tend to accept job offers at an earlier stage than men, and this also affects gender wage gaps. Gender-based discrimination in employment has been addressed by Das and Kotikula (2019). Their research indicates that employment discrimination, which creates differences between the quality of work and wages and employment trajectories of male and female employees, creates significant costs on the economy. Employment discrimination continues to be a factor that reinforces gender inequality, especially in countries with talent shortages. Studies such as Eriksson and Lagerström (2012) and Le Barbanchon et al. (2019) show that differences in job search strategies between men and women are important at the beginning of the job search process and that these differences may contribute to gender wage gaps. These differences are associated with the difficulties women face in their job search processes and gender-based discrimination during the recruitment process. The distribution of gender in employment is seen to have significant effects on job search processes. These impacts offer important insights into making recruitment processes more equitable and inclusive.

2.2. Relationship Between Job Search Methods and Gender

The job search process is one of the important steps that individuals take to achieve their career goals. However, gender differences manifest themselves in many areas, from job search strategies to the challenges encountered during this process. Gender discrimination is generally evaluated from two different perspectives. The first perspective focuses on the individual characteristics of employees, such as education and experience, while analyzing the gender structure of the workforce. This approach also highlights the influence of individuals who gather information about job opportunities and then choose the most suitable job for themselves. The second perspective points to structural factors that reinforce the gender-based division of labor of employers and organizations. Neither perspective alone is sufficient to fully explain gender inequalities in the workplace (Granovetter, 1981; Marini, 1989; Reskin, 1988). In the modern business world, the

methods used in job search processes vary depending on gender, cultural and individual factors. Job search methods include searching for jobs through social networks, using public and private employment offices and applying directly to employers. Each of these methods is preferred by men and women at different rates and these preferences determine their success in finding a job.

Public employment offices provide official and usually free services to job seekers. They provide job seekers with the tools they need to find a job and offer various training and support. Men and women may use public employment offices with different frequencies. In general, job search through these offices is relatively balanced in terms of gender, although some studies indicate that men use public resources more effectively (Sloan, 2017, p: 175).

Private employment agencies usually offer more specific and specialized services for a fee. These types of agencies are used more frequently for highly qualified positions and are generally used more by men. Women may be less likely to use private employment agencies than men, which can be explained by various sectoral and occupational trends (Williams and Davis, 2018).

The direct employer application method involves job seekers searching for jobs on their own initiative, either by applying directly to job postings or by sending their resumes to potential employers. Studies show that men use this method more often than women and that this approach is more effective for men (Brown et al., 2019).

Social networks play an important role in the job search process. For job seekers, spouses, friends, relatives, and other social connections can be a critical resource for learning about potential job opportunities and opening doors to employment. Research shows that women use social networks more than men during their job search (Smith ve Johnson, 2020). While women are generally more successful in finding a job through social relationships, men tend to use this method less and turn to more direct methods (Taylor and Lee, 2021).

In terms of the efficiency of social networks based on network theory, job seekers' use of their personal relationships as a social resource makes it easier for them to access critical information that cannot be accessed through more formal channels (such as Public Employment Offices, Private Employment Offices and Applying Directly to the Employer) (Granovetter, 2018; Kanter, 1987; Lin et al., 1981). According to Granovetter's (2018) study, using personal networks is a more common method of finding a job compared to using formal channels and allows job seekers to be directed to higher quality jobs with higher job satisfaction and better wages.

Social networks become powerful when they provide access to a variety of people in different social and professional positions. The diversity of an individual's social networks and the variety of information about the job he or she is looking for change at the same rate. Therefore, the individual obtains clearer and more non-repetitive information (Burt, 1992). Granovetter (2018) calls this "the strength of weak ties." He has shown that strong networks emerge when people extend beyond one's immediate circle of contacts and consider that people generally have the same knowledge and information as their surroundings. Similarly, Burt (1992) has shown that "structural holes," or gaps between non-repeated personal contacts, are sources of information or a type of social capital. He stated that knowing many people from different positions in an organization allows job seekers to access more heterogeneous information. Burt also found that individuals who access heterogeneous information are promoted faster and at a younger age than those who do not. Boxman et al., (1991), Campbell et al. (1986), Lin and Dumin (1986) have emphasized the importance of diversity in the social networks of individuals seeking employment. In addition, the socioeconomic status of individuals seeking employment and the socioeconomic status of their social networks were associated with the type of information to which job seekers were exposed, and thus it was expected that individuals with higher status in their past would also have higher status in their social networks. In this way, it was concluded that individuals would obtain higher wages, prestigious jobs, and greater job satisfaction.

2.3. The Effect of Job Search Methods on Wage Differences

Gender wage gaps in jobs obtained through job search methods are one of the most visible indicators of gender inequalities in the labour market. Men often apply directly for positions that offer higher wages, while women may have limited access to such positions (Williams and Davis, 2018). This may be due to structural barriers and gender-based biases that women face in their job search. For example, women often face gender-based biases when applying for leadership positions or higher-paying jobs in technical fields (Martinez, 2019). These differences between the results obtained from the job search methods of women and men indicate that employers and policy makers need to take measures to promote gender equality. Ensuring gender equality in job search processes will contribute to a fairer environment in the labor market and create more equal job opportunities for both genders. There are a number of measures that employers and policy makers can take to promote gender equality in job search processes. First of all, it is important to encourage applications from candidates of both genders by using gender-neutral language in job advertisements. In addition, employers should make conscious efforts to increase gender diversity in recruitment processes. Public and private employment offices can play an important role in this process by organizing training on gender equality and developing policies to reduce gender-based prejudices. As a result, gender differences in job search methods are linked to wider gender inequalities in the labor market. Overcoming these differences will be beneficial not only for job seekers, but also for employers and society. Adopting job search strategies that support gender equality will contribute to a more fair and inclusive environment in the business world.

3. THE EFFECT OF GENDER-BASED DIFFERENCES ON JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Gender differences in the methods used in job search processes are a feature that reflects broader inequalities in the labor market. For example, men's preference for more direct and aggressive strategies in job search may help them obtain higher-paying jobs in general. This is supported by gender norms and expectations; men are expected to be more aggressive and dominant in society (Brown et al. 2019). Women, on the other hand, often use more passive and indirect methods of job search, which can lead to them obtaining less visible and often lower-paying positions (Smith and Johnson, 2020).

This situation shows that the methods of job search and the strategies used have a significant impact on the success of the job search process. The methods that men and women prefer in their job search processes are complex, shaped not only by individual preferences but also by social expectations and structural barriers. For example, women may often refrain from applying for full-time jobs due to childcare responsibilities, which may limit their career development and thus affect their job search methods (Taylor and Lee, 2021).

3.1. Gender Discrimination in Recruitment Processes

Gender discrimination in the recruitment process can be defined as employers or recruiters discriminating, consciously or unconsciously, in the evaluation and decision-making process of job applicants based on a person's gender (Ningrum et al., 2020, p: 1-3). This can lead to candidates being treated differently at various stages of the recruitment process, including recruitment, interview invitations, job offers and salary determination. Gender discrimination generally works to the advantage of men at the disadvantage of women, but in some cases male candidates may also face similar discrimination for roles where women are preferred (Temizkan et al., 2020, p: 1124-1125).

Gender discrimination in the hiring process can occur in the following ways:

- *Discrimination in Resume Screening:* Employers may be tempted to screen out resumes based on candidates' names or information that could be associated with another gender.
- *Discrimination in the Interview Process:* Interviewers may misjudge candidates' abilities and suitability due to gender-based biases, such as favoring male candidates for leadership positions or asking female candidates questions about family plans and childcare.
- *Discrimination in Job Offers and Salary Determination:* Offering lower salaries or fewer promotion opportunities to female candidates compared to similarly qualified male candidates.
- *Role and Industry Stereotypes:* The view of certain jobs or industries as "men's work" or "women's work" can lead to gender-based bias in selecting candidates for those roles (Isaac et al., 2009, p: 1441).

Gender discrimination not only leads to unfair hiring decisions, but also deepens gender inequality in the labor market and can result in talented candidates being overlooked. It is also harmful to businesses because it hinders the positive contributions of diversity and inclusion to business performance, creativity and decision-making. Therefore, combating gender discrimination in hiring processes is strategically important for businesses, in addition to promoting gender equality (Carlsson and Eriksson, 2019, p: 3).

Gender discrimination in the hiring process creates an uneven playing field between male and female candidates, which continues to perpetuate gender inequality in the workforce. Gender discrimination refers to the presence of gender-based biases in hiring decisions, whether conscious or unconscious, and these biases can limit women's chances of finding jobs, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields and senior management positions (Heilman, 2012; Ridgeway and Correll, 2004).

Gender discrimination can negatively impact not only women but also male candidates who deviate from gender norms during the recruitment process. This means that gender norms and expectations lead to candidates being evaluated beyond their professional qualifications (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004, p: 516-519). In combating discrimination, methods such as anonymous applications and structured interviews are recommended as effective tools to reduce sexism in recruitment processes. Anonymous applications conceal candidates' gender, names and other personal information, allowing employers to assess only their professional qualifications. Structured interviews, on the other hand, include standard questions that are applied equally to all candidates, which helps to reduce subjective judgments (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004, p: 994-998).

Revision of institutional policies and practices is critical to combating sexism. Researchers such as Kalev et al. (2006) suggest that employers can increase the awareness of their recruiters through diversity and inclusion training. Such training raises awareness of gender discrimination and can help make more objective decisions in hiring processes.

3.2. The Role of Gender in Career Advancement

Career progression is shaped by the various challenges, opportunities and dynamics that individuals encounter in their work lives. Gender emerges as an important factor in this process. Career progression holds an important place in the professional lives of individuals and many factors can be effective in this process. One of these factors is gender (Koenig et al., 2011, p: 630-636). Gender contributes to the shaping of many opportunities and barriers in professional careers. For example, the barriers women face in reaching management positions are often expressed with the metaphor of the "glass ceiling," suggesting that there are invisible barriers preventing women from advancing to senior management positions (Powell and Graves, 2003, p: 147-151). The existence of the glass ceiling is due to misperceptions of women's leadership abilities, sexist cultures and bias in the workplace. Research shows that female leaders face harsher evaluations and criticism than their

male counterparts, and feel more pressure on their leadership style (Eagly and Carli, 2007). It has also been observed that women have more difficulty than men in creating professional networks and taking advantage of mentoring opportunities, which can negatively impact their career development (Ibarra, 1993, p: 75). The underrepresentation of women in fields such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics leads to a gender imbalance in these sectors and limited career opportunities for women in these fields. This shows that the challenges women face in their careers are not only related to social and cultural factors, but also to educational and career orientation processes (Beede et al., 2011, p: 4-8).

Various strategies have been developed to combat gender-based discrimination in career progression, including gender quotas, awareness training and anti-discrimination policies. However, there are still significant barriers to implementing such measures and debates about their effectiveness continue (Kalev et al., 2006, p: 593). The significant obstacles encountered in implementing strategies developed to combat gender-based discrimination demonstrate the complexity and multifaceted nature of this struggle. For example, practices such as gender quotas help to increase representation, but in some cases they can be perceived as “anti-quota” or positive discrimination, which in itself can bring about new debates and resistance (Dobbin et al., 2015, p: 1027). While awareness training and anti-discrimination policies are important tools to support cultural change in the workplace, the effectiveness of the measures depends largely on the implementation process and organizational context (Klein, 2016, p: 151-154). To overcome these obstacles, strategies to combat gender-based discrimination need to focus on the root causes of the problem rather than just addressing the surface symptoms. In order to promote gender equality in business, it is important to combat discrimination by providing training to leaders and employees to recognize and overcome gender biases (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). In addition, setting concrete goals for gender equality in the workplace and regularly monitoring and evaluating these goals can help combat discrimination efforts produce tangible results. In this context, changing organizational culture plays a critical role in creating a workplace environment that supports gender equality. Organizational culture shapes employee behaviors, attitudes, and values; therefore, fostering a culture that prioritizes and supports gender equality can lead to long-term success in combating discrimination (Ely et al., 2011, p: 487).

4. GLASS CEILING AND GENDER-BASED CAREER BARRIERS

Introduced by Morrison et al. in 1987, the glass ceiling theory provides a crucial framework for understanding gender-based inequalities in the workplace, particularly those observed in leadership positions. The theory seeks to explain the invisible yet very real barriers that prevent women from advancing to senior roles. These barriers are often not explicitly defined, but they arise from a combination of organizational cultures, biased leadership approaches, and the prevalence of male-dominated networks (Morrison et al., 1987). The glass ceiling refers to a metaphorical “ceiling” that women face, limiting their career progression despite having equal qualifications and abilities as their male counterparts (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Research in this area has extensively explored how the glass ceiling shapes women’s career paths. Women often encounter more challenges than men in being promoted to managerial positions due to gender-based biases and discriminatory hiring and promotion policies. Moreover, these barriers are reinforced by societal stereotypes such as the “think manager, think man” bias, which suggests that leadership roles are inherently masculine. This stereotype leads to women being underrepresented in senior positions and having their leadership potential underestimated (Eagly and Carli, 2007). The existence of the glass ceiling has profound effects not only on women's career advancement but also on the overall structure of the workforce, influencing gender equality policies and institutional practices (Mansson et al., 2013).

The barriers contributing to the glass ceiling are multifaceted and can be categorized into individual, organizational, and societal factors. At the individual level, women often face personal challenges such as self-confidence issues and work-family conflicts, which can be exacerbated by societal expectations. Studies have shown that women tend to underestimate their abilities and leadership potential due to internalized gender stereotypes, leading to lower self-confidence in pursuing high-ranking positions (Heilman, 2012). Additionally, the burden of balancing professional and domestic responsibilities often disproportionately falls on women, limiting their availability for

the demanding roles typically associated with leadership (Taparia and Lenka, 2022). This can lead to women self-selecting out of promotion opportunities or not pursuing them as aggressively as their male peers.

At the organizational level, the glass ceiling is sustained by biased recruitment and promotion practices, male-dominated corporate cultures, and limited networking opportunities for women. Gender biases in hiring processes often lead to men being seen as more suitable for leadership roles, reinforcing the status quo (Smith et al., 2012). Furthermore, many organizations have cultures that unconsciously favor male leadership styles, which can exclude women from important decision-making networks. Networking and mentorship opportunities tend to be more accessible to men, further hindering women's career advancement (Ibarra et al., 2010). The lack of mentorship and sponsorship for women within organizations means that they often miss out on critical advice and advocacy needed for career growth. Additionally, societal barriers, such as deep-rooted gender stereotypes and cultural norms, reinforce traditional gender roles. Women are frequently expected to prioritize family over career, while men are encouraged to focus on professional success. This societal pressure can lead to a workforce division where women are underrepresented in high-ranking roles. The stereotype of "think manager, think man" continues to pervade workplace cultures, reinforcing the notion that leadership is a male domain and making it more difficult for women to be seen as capable leaders (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004). These societal norms shape both individual attitudes and institutional practices, maintaining gender imbalances in leadership.

To break the glass ceiling, a comprehensive approach that addresses these barriers at every level is essential. Many organizations and governments have started to implement policies and practices aimed at promoting gender equality and supporting women's advancement into leadership roles. One key policy that can help overcome the individual and societal barriers to women's advancement is the implementation of flexible working hours. Providing flexible working arrangements and parental leave policies can help alleviate the work-family conflict that disproportionately affects women. This ensures that women are not forced to choose between their careers and family responsibilities, allowing for greater participation in leadership development (Kalev et al., 2006). Another critical area of focus is the enforcement of equal pay for equal work policies. Gender pay gaps are a major contributor to the glass ceiling, as women are often paid less than men for the same roles, reducing their financial incentive and resources to pursue higher positions (Smith et al., 2012). Governments and companies can enforce salary transparency and implement pay audits to ensure that women receive fair compensation.

Organizations can also establish mentorship and sponsorship programs to support women's leadership development. By connecting women with senior mentors who can offer guidance and advocate for their career progression, companies can help women build the confidence and networks necessary for moving into leadership roles (Ibarra et al., 2010). Sponsorship, in particular, is crucial, as it involves senior leaders actively promoting high-potential women for promotion. In addition, many organizations are now adopting gender sensitivity training and unconscious bias reduction programs to tackle organizational barriers. These programs aim to raise awareness about gender biases in recruitment, performance evaluations, and promotions. Research has shown that such training can lead to more objective decision-making and create a more inclusive workplace culture (Heilman, 2012). To address the leadership gap, companies are also investing in inclusive leadership training that promotes diverse leadership styles and values the contributions of both men and women. This kind of training helps dismantle the "think manager, think man" stereotype by highlighting the benefits of diverse leadership approaches and fostering a more inclusive corporate culture (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

Lastly, innovative approaches such as cross-sector mentorship programs and inter-institutional collaborations can help broaden women's access to leadership opportunities. These collaborations provide women with a wider network and exposure to different industries, enhancing their leadership development and professional growth (Dreher and Cox, 2000). By building alliances between sectors, women can benefit from shared resources and mentorship, helping to bridge the leadership gap across various industries. Examining the glass ceiling theory from a global and culturally diverse perspective allows us to understand the unique challenges faced by women in different geographies and different

sectors. Such analysis enables the development of more effective global policies and strategies. The glass ceiling theory and gender-based career barriers have become one of the biggest challenges to achieving gender equality in the business world. Individuals and institutions from all segments of society must take active roles in overcoming these barriers to create a more just and equal business world (Bilimoria and Piderit, 2007).

5. POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

In her study on gender and development, Rathgeber (1990) defines three different schools of thought: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD). The oldest and most dominant approach, WID, emerged from the search for practical solutions based on the failures of the development concept, the rise of feminism, and the need for a more systematic evaluation of the roots of women's disadvantages. This approach "was born as an international movement; thus, its emergence was built upon a strong sense of solidarity among women beyond national borders" (Grant and Newland, 1991, p: 122).

In the early 1970s, the term "Women in Development (WID)" was used by the Women's Committee of the International Development Association in Washington, D.C., and was adopted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with the idea that women could contribute economically to development but were still an untapped resource. While the initial focus of WID was on economic development, the United Nations (UN) Women's Conferences emphasized policies aimed at improving women's education, employment, political representation, and social welfare, fostering the internationalization of the women's movement. At the 1995 Beijing Conference, women's rights were recognized as human rights. WID focused on how women could be integrated into development initiatives by accepting existing social structures but did not question the sources of women's oppression and domination. This approach was criticized by structuralist perspectives, which argued that women were already integrated into the global economy under unequal conditions, while ignoring exploitation relationships among women (Vijayamohan and Asalatha, 2009, p: 9-12).

In the second half of the 1970s, the Women and Development (WAD) movement, based on neo-Marxist feminism, emerged out of frustration with the limitations of modernization theory. WAD argued that women had always been part of the global system of exploitation and inequality, and that we should analyze why women had not benefited from past development strategies from this perspective. In the 1980s, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged to address the shortcomings of the WAD movement through gender analysis. GAD aimed to increase women's power in economic, social, and political structures and directly challenge the cultural, social, and economic privileges of men (Goetz, 1997, p: 3). GAD addressed the gender inequalities faced by women, advocating for the restructuring of social and institutional rules, and adopted the strategy of "gender mainstreaming." This strategy aimed to integrate a gender perspective into the design, implementation, and evaluation stages of all policies and programs. Finally, beyond GAD and gender mainstreaming, women began to demand full human rights and develop a human rights-based approach to economic policy (Vijayamohan and Asalatha, 2009, p: 13-18).

Around the world, women face many challenges in the labor market. These issues typically include difficulties in balancing heavy workloads with domestic responsibilities. The main problems faced by women in working life include the exploitation of labor, the inability to meet the needs of their homes and children due to overtime work, being employed in part-time and low-wage jobs, harassment and mobbing, and being deemed inadequate for many jobs due to society's sexist perceptions (Küçük, 2015, p: 1-17).

With social changes, human rights have entered a transformation process referred to as the third generation, and during this process, the conceptualization of gender has gained importance. The concept of gender, first introduced by Robert Stoller in 1968, is based on the perception of male superiority created by societies and cultures, rather than biological differences (Ecevit and Karkner, 2011, p: 6). The patriarchal order, built upon the inferiority of women, associates women with their bodies, emotions, and nature, demeaning them and convincing them that they need men. Institutions

such as the family, religion, and the state play an active role in reproducing this inequality and determining the distribution of gender-based division of labor and roles (Berktaş, 2004, p: 1-2).

Thanks to the struggles of feminist movements, gender inequality has shifted from being a traditionally accepted norm to a phenomenon that must be combated. The scope of human rights has expanded to more specific issues, and social policies have begun to take shape around egalitarian ideas (Bourdieu, 2014, p: 113-115). Through international organizations and conventions, gender equality is seen as the most lasting and powerful way to address the injustices faced by women, and it is desired that this equality become the main policy of countries (Şahin and Gültekin, 2013, p: 5-6). However, although there has not been full improvement in the rights granted to women on the basis of gender equality, significant steps have been taken by the UN, the Council of Europe, the ILO, and international NGOs.

Table 1. International Regulations for Gender Equality

Year	International Organization	International Regulation
1945	UN	The first international UN document establishing the principles of gender equality was adopted.
1946	UN	It was decided to establish the UN Commission on the Status of Women to improve women's rights.
1949	UN	The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others was adopted.
1951	ILO	The Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value was adopted.
1952	UN	The Convention on the Political Rights of Women was adopted.
1957	UN	The Nationality of Married Women Convention was adopted, granting women the right to choose their nationality independently of their husbands.
1960	ILO	The Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation was adopted.
1962	UN	The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriages was adopted.
1967	UN	The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was adopted.
1972	UN	1975 was declared the International Women's Year (IWY), with the goal of focusing on women's rights issues.
1974	UN	It was decided that the World Conference on Women would be held in Mexico City in 1975 as part of IWY.
1975	UN	The First World Conference on Women (Mexico City) was held, and 1975-1985 was designated as the United Nations Decade for Women.
1976	UN	The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights entered into force.
1979	UN	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted.

1979	Council of Europe	It was decided to establish the first committee responsible for gender equality in the Council of Europe.
1980	UN	The Second World Conference on Women (Copenhagen) was held.
1981	Council of Europe	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) entered into force.
1985	UN	The Third World Conference on Women (Nairobi) adopted 'Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.'
1988	Council of Europe	The Council of Europe Gender Equality Declaration was published.
1988	UN	The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was established.
1993	UN	The World Conference on Human Rights was held, with decisions related to women's rights.
1995	UN	The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
2002	Council of Europe	The Recommendation on the Protection of Women Against Violence was adopted.
2006	Council of Europe and other NGOs	The Campaign to Combat Violence Against Women, including Domestic Violence, was launched.
2006	European Union	The European Institute for Gender Equality was established.
2010	UN	The UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN WOMAN) was established.
2011	Council of Europe	The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) was adopted.

Source: Adapted from Bitmez (2019), *Social Policies for Women in Turkey in the Context of Human Rights and Gender Equality*, (Journal of Society and Cultural Studies, 2019), 60-61.

In Turkey, similar disadvantages faced by women in the labor market have highlighted the necessity of protecting them. In this context, regulations have been made, and various restrictions and prohibitions have been introduced regarding issues such as low wages, night work, work in underground mines, and work during pregnancy and motherhood periods. The aim of these regulations, which include positive discrimination, is to ensure equality between men and women in the workforce. The Constitution and international agreements guarantee that equality before the law and positive discrimination do not violate the principle of equality. Article 10 of the Constitution emphasizes that men and women have equal rights and that the state is responsible for ensuring this equality in practice. Additionally, Article 90 states that international treaties duly enacted have the force of law and take precedence in domestic law. These international agreements are of great importance due to the norms they contain regarding gender discrimination (Demir, 2019, p: 114-115).

During the Republican era, Atatürk, who took the first steps towards improving women's rights, carried out significant efforts to achieve gender equality, believing that overcoming challenges and achieving development could only be possible through education. With the 1924 Law of Unification of Education, educational institutions were placed under the Ministry of National Education, secularized, and both male and female students were given equal access to education. With the adoption of the Civil Code in 1926, women's rights were expanded, polygamy was banned, and equality in matters such as divorce, custody, and inheritance was established (Acar and Altınok, 2012, p: 76). The right of women to participate in political life was constitutionally guaranteed between

1930-1934, and in the 1935 elections, for the first time, 17 female members of parliament entered the assembly (Kaypak and Kahraman, 2016, p: 307).

With the enactment of the Labor Law in 1936, the working life of women was regulated, and rights such as maternity insurance and old-age pensions were improved. While female employment increased with the establishment of state enterprises in the 1950s, the share of women in employment decreased after the 1960s due to the rise of the male population. During the early Republican period, women were supported and successful in various fields such as medicine, theater, and local governance. However, despite these innovations, the roles expected of women remained primarily as housewives and mothers, and socially, women could not progress beyond the role of a conscious and educated mother and a faithful wife (Bitmez, 2019, p: 64-65).

In the 1980s, neoliberal approaches were adopted in Turkey, with the belief that economic stagnation would be overcome, and the regulatory and supervisory functions of the state were reduced through the implementation of free-market economy practices. Although the social state concept adopted by the 1961 Constitution was detailed in the 1982 Constitution, it lost its former importance. During this period, the importance of family and kinship ties was emphasized, the activities of foundations and voluntary aid organizations were supported, and social solidarity was brought to the forefront (Taşçı, 2008, p: 131). Neoliberal discourses emphasized that questioning gender roles and the existing order was wrong, making it necessary to question the social positions of women.

Since the 1980s, scientific research by academic circles and social policies have increased to reshape women's rights in Turkey according to international standards. Problems such as unemployment and poverty increased due to rural migration during this period, affecting women the most. In social policy theories and practices, the understanding of keeping women within the domestic sphere and protecting them did not change. In the 1990s, feminist movements organized street demonstrations, sit-ins, and campaigns to raise awareness about women's rights and promote gender equality, protesting rights violations such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and virginity tests (Bitmez, 2019, p: 66).

The 1971 Labor Law allowed married women to leave work with severance pay and allowed married women to work with their husband's permission (Ecevit, 2012, p: 15). Moreover, workplaces with fewer than 300 female employees were not required to provide nursing and childcare facilities (Dedeoğlu, 2015, p: 264). These regulations aimed to confine women to the roles of mother and wife, excluding them from working life. While affirming the traditional social structure, these legal regulations legitimized the notion that women's roles should be limited to domestic responsibilities. Thus, the disadvantages faced by women were legitimized by law, and inequality was deepened through the cooperation between the state and society (Bitmez, 2019, p: 67).

The fight against gender discrimination began with the United Nations General Assembly's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), established in 1981 and signed by Turkey in 1985. This convention defines discrimination against women and obliges states to take legislative measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination and to adopt temporary and special measures to ensure gender equality. Turkey has been a party to more than 20 international conventions and directives created by organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the International Labour Organization to combat gender discrimination (Erikli, 2020, p: 51).

In Western Europe, the labor market has been one of the earliest areas of social policy to incorporate gender perspectives. Gender-based inequalities in the workplace were examined earlier than in other social policy areas and were a priority in international agreements. In Turkey, however, employment policies began to gain attention in the 2000s. Since the establishment of the Republic, it had been assumed that education and development policies would resolve employment issues, but these expectations were not fully realized (Dedeoğlu, 2015, p: 263). Especially after the 2002 elections, many positive regulations were made for women as part of the EU harmonization process. However, today, a more conservative social policy approach has emerged, in which women are exalted in their roles as mothers raising healthy generations. This conservative approach views the family as a place of tranquility and a means of ensuring the continuity of generations, in accordance with Islamic

principles (Yazıcı, 2007, p: 3). According to Ecevit (2012), the increasing conservatism in Turkey has led to policies and practices that restrict women’s social rights in areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and social security. The transformation of the "Ministry of Women and Family Affairs" into the "Ministry of Family and Social Policies" in 2011, and its merger with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in 2018, indicate a departure from gender equality approaches at the state level.

Table 2. National and International Regulations Regarding Gender Discrimination in Working Life and Social Life

Year	Regulations
1930 (Turkey Ratification- 1938)	Forced Labor - ILO
1935 (Turkey Ratification- 1937)	Prohibition of Women Working in Mines and Underground - ILO
1951 (Turkey Ratification- 1966)	Equal Pay for Equal Work - ILO
1957 (Turkey Ratification- 1960)	Abolition of Forced Labor - ILO
1958 (Turkey Ratification- 1967)	Elimination of Discrimination in Employment and Occupation - ILO
1962 (Turkey Ratification- 1973)	Equality of Treatment - ILO
1964 (Turkey Ratification- 1977)	Employment Policy - ILO
1966	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
1966	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
1979 (Turkey Ratification- 1999)	CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) – UN
1981 (Turkey Ratification- Not Ratified)	Workers with Family Responsibilities – ILO
1986/613/EC	Directive on Equal Treatment of Self-Employed Men and Women
1990/70/EC	Directive on Fixed-Term Work
1992/85/EC	Directive on Pregnancy
1994 (Turkey Ratification- Not Ratified)	Part-Time Work – ILO

1996/34/EC	Directive on Parental Leave
1996 (Turkey Ratification- Not Ratified)	Home-Based Work – ILO
1997/81/EC	Directive on Part-Time Work
2000 (Turkey Ratification- Not Ratified)	Protection of Maternity – ILO
2000/43/EC	Directive Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment Irrespective of Racial or Ethnic Origin
2000/78/EC	Directive Establishing a General Framework for Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation
2002 (Turkey Ratification- 2002)	CEDAW Optional Protocol – UN Optional Protocol
2002/73/EEC	Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment, Vocational Training, Promotion, and Working Conditions 2002/73/EEC
2003	Labor Law No. 4857
2004	Regulation on the Conditions of Employment for Pregnant or Nursing Women and on Breastfeeding Rooms and Childcare Centers
2004	Regulation on the Conditions of Night Work for Women Workers
2004	Prime Ministry Circular No. 2004/7 (on adhering to the principle of equality in personnel recruitment)
2005	Municipality Law No. 5393 (requiring the opening of shelters for women and children)
2006	Prime Ministry Circular No. 2006/17 (on measures to prevent violence against children and women, including honor killings)
2006/54/EC	Directive on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Matters of Employment and Occupation
2009	Law No. 5840 on the Establishment of the Equal Opportunity Commission for Men and Women

2010	Regulation on Heavy and Dangerous Work (specifying the conditions under which women may work in such jobs)
2010	Prime Ministry Circular No. 2010/14 (on increasing women's employment and ensuring equal opportunities)
2012	Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women
2013	Regulation on the Opening and Operation of Women's Shelters
2014	Prime Ministry Circular No. 2014/5 / Alo 183 Call Center Services

Source: This table was prepared using the sources “Bitmez, 2019, p, 70-74” and “Erikli, 2020, p, 52”.

The report titled *Women at Work: Trends* published by the ILO in 2016 reveals that the significant progress made in women's education over the past twenty years has not been equally reflected in their position in the workforce. According to the report, data from 178 countries shows that inequality between men and women in the global labor market continues to persist (ILO, 2016). The constant association of women with their roles within the family and the insincerity of gender equality discourses reduce the potential of social policies to increase women's employment. As shown in Table 3, Turkey has generally adopted and enforced the UN and ILO conventions with delays, which has resulted in the postponement of implementing equitable policies for women in the workforce.

Regulations made in Turkey during the 2000s, within the framework of EU harmonization processes, became more effective. Article 5 of Labor Law No. 4857, which came into effect in 2003, includes regulations prohibiting all forms of discrimination in employment relations and adopting the principle of equal treatment. In 2004, with an amendment to Article 10 of the Constitution, it was stated that men and women have equal rights, and the state is obligated to ensure this equality. This article also emphasizes that positive discrimination towards groups such as children, the elderly, the disabled, and relatives of martyrs cannot be considered a violation of the principle of equality. Additionally, the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey, established in 2016, is tasked with taking necessary measures to prevent discrimination and address existing inequalities. This institution aims to ensure equality in many areas such as employment, social assistance, and social services (Erikli, 2020, p: 53).

Although various policies have been developed to increase women's participation in the workforce, many issues still remain in practice. The lack of monetary value attached to women's domestic labor leads to the undervaluation of women's labor in the workforce. Women are particularly concentrated in the education, care, and service sectors, while in sectors dominated by men, they experience discrimination in recruitment and promotion processes, negatively impacting women's employment. The establishment of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey in 2016 was an important step towards preventing discrimination and addressing inequalities. However, gender equality violations that women face in the labor market continue, causing economic, social, and cultural problems.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical importance of understanding gender distribution and its impact on wages during the job search process, particularly with regard to promoting gender equality in the labor market. The research findings reveal that gender-based differences in job search strategies and wage-setting practices have significant and long-lasting implications for both individuals and society. The barriers that women encounter in the workforce, particularly those associated with the glass ceiling effect, remain substantial obstacles that limit their career progression and perpetuate wage disparities between men and women.

The glass ceiling represents an invisible barrier that restricts women's advancement to leadership roles, not because of their lack of qualifications or abilities, but due to deeply entrenched societal norms, biased organizational structures, and discriminatory policies. This metaphorical ceiling not only limits women's career growth but also exacerbates gender-based wage inequalities and broader inequalities in access to high-paying jobs, further perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage for women in the labor market.

The research findings indicate that the glass ceiling is reinforced by societal perceptions that associate leadership and decision-making with male characteristics, often referred to as the “think manager, think male” bias. As a result, women face substantial challenges in attaining management and leadership positions, which restricts their potential to contribute at the highest levels of organizations. These challenges are further compounded by the fact that women are typically overrepresented in lower-paying sectors and occupations, such as education, healthcare, and social services, which are traditionally undervalued in terms of compensation.

The gender-based wage gap and limitations on women's career progression do not only have a negative impact on individual women; they also have far-reaching economic and social consequences. From an economic perspective, the underutilization of women's talents reduces overall productivity and economic growth potential. Societies that fail to fully engage and empower women in the workforce are missing out on a vast reservoir of talent, creativity, and innovation that could otherwise contribute to economic advancement and societal well-being. Moreover, gender wage disparities and employment discrimination hinder the ability of women to achieve financial independence and social mobility, which reinforces cycles of poverty and inequality.

Furthermore, this research highlights how women, despite using social networks more frequently during their job search processes, still face barriers that prevent them from accessing high-paying roles. Men, on the other hand, tend to benefit from more direct methods of job application, which afford them greater access to lucrative positions. This points to the structural inequalities that still exist in recruitment and hiring practices, where women are often evaluated based on traditional gender roles rather than professional merit.

Addressing these systemic issues requires comprehensive and multi-faceted solutions at both the organizational and policy levels. First, it is essential to develop and implement policies aimed at reducing gender-based discrimination in the job search process and hiring practices. These policies should include measures such as gender-neutral job advertisements, anonymous application processes, and the enforcement of equal pay for equal work. Additionally, training programs that raise awareness of unconscious gender biases in recruitment and promotion processes are vital for creating more objective and equitable hiring decisions.

Mentorship and sponsorship programs must also be prioritized to support the career advancement of women, particularly in male-dominated industries. Mentorship provides women with the guidance and support they need to navigate organizational hierarchies, while sponsorship ensures that women are actively promoted for leadership roles. Such programs can significantly increase women's visibility and opportunities for career progression, ultimately helping to break through the glass ceiling.

Another important aspect of addressing gender inequality in the labor market is the provision of flexible working arrangements, including remote work options and parental leave policies. These arrangements are critical in helping women balance work and family responsibilities, which is often

cited as one of the primary barriers to their career advancement. By enabling women to participate fully in the workforce while maintaining their caregiving responsibilities, organizations can help close the gender gap in both participation and wages.

Moreover, governments and international organizations should continue to enforce and monitor the implementation of gender equality laws, ensuring compliance with regulations that protect women's rights in the workplace. This includes conducting regular audits of wage structures and promotional pathways to identify and address discriminatory practices. Additionally, encouraging more women to pursue careers in high-paying, male-dominated sectors—such as STEM fields—through educational reforms and targeted recruitment efforts is critical to achieving greater gender balance in the workforce.

The long-term impact of promoting gender equality in the workforce is not only beneficial for women but also for society as a whole. Achieving gender equality will result in a more inclusive labor market that leverages the talents of all individuals, regardless of gender, leading to greater innovation, higher productivity, and more equitable economic outcomes. Gender-diverse leadership teams have been shown to make better decisions, foster more collaborative environments, and contribute to the overall success of organizations.

At the societal level, ensuring gender equality in the workforce can help shift cultural attitudes and challenge the deeply embedded gender norms that perpetuate discrimination. By normalizing women's participation in leadership roles and high-paying jobs, societies can create more egalitarian environments that allow both men and women to thrive.

In conclusion, the gender distribution in the job search process and its impact on wages are critical areas that must be addressed to promote gender equality in the labor market. Overcoming the barriers posed by the glass ceiling requires a concerted effort from employers, policymakers, and society as a whole. By implementing gender-sensitive policies, promoting equal opportunities, and challenging traditional gender norms, it is possible to create a more inclusive and fair labor market—one where women and men can participate equally and enjoy the same opportunities for career advancement and financial success.

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