WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND GENDER EQUALITY: OBSTACLES AND POSSIBILITIES FOR TURKISH WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND ACADEMICS

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ABSTRACT

Academic women expect equal opportunities for advancement and recognition in a supportive work environment. For women in academics, it's also crucial to have access to professional and personal development programmes that align with their specific career objectives. Additionally, studies have shown that academic women prioritise work-life balance and personal happiness over conventional notions of professional success. It can be challenging for female academics to balance the demands of their careers with their family responsibilities, so it's important to create policies that encourage schedule flexibility to accommodate personal and family obligations. Recognising and eliminating gender bias in the workplace is also essential. This entails eliminating ingrained biases, ensuring fair remuneration, and cultivating an inclusive culture that values a range of viewpoints and experiences. By addressing these issues, we can influence the culture that upholds power imbalances and gender gaps and help create a more encouraging work environment for female academics. Changing organisational barriers including male dominance, progression barriers, lack of mentorship and support and discrimination is also necessary to create a work environment that supports female academics. The only way to fully solve these issues is to pass legislation that values diversity and inclusiveness. This paper highlights the need to understand the nuanced perspectives of female academics and encourages further efforts to support and advance gender equality in higher education.

Keywords: Female Academics, Working Life, Equal Opportunities, Workplace Balance

İŞ-YAŞAM DENGESİ VE TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET EŞİTLİĞİ: EĞİTİM VE AKADEMİDE TÜRK KADINLARI İÇİN ZORLUKLAR VE FIRSATLAR

ÖZET

Akademisyen kadınlar, destekleyici bir çalışma ortamında ilerlemek ve tanınmak için eşit fırsatlar beklemektedir. Akademisyen kadınlar için, kendi özel kariyer hedefleriyle uyumlu mesleki ve kişisel gelişim programlarına erişebilmek de oldukça önemlidir. Ayrıca araştırmalar, akademisyen kadınların iş-yaşam dengesine ve kişisel mutluluğa, geleneksel mesleki başarı kavramlarından daha fazla öncelik verdiğini göstermektedir. Kadın akademisyenler için kariyerlerinin talepleri ile ailevi sorumluluklarını dengelemek zor olabilir; bu nedenle kişisel ve ailevi yükümlülükleri karşılamak için program esnekliğini teşvik eden politikalar oluşturmak önemlidir. İşyerindeki toplumsal cinsiyet önyargılarının tanınması ve ortadan kaldırılması da çok önemlidir. Bu da kökleşmiş önyargıların ortadan kaldırılmasını, adil ücretlendirmenin sağlanmasını ve farklı bakış açılarına ve deneyimlere değer veren kapsayıcı bir kültürün geliştirilmesini gerektirmektedir. Bu konular dikkate alınarak, güç dengesizliklerini ve cinsiyet uçurumlarını koruyan kültürü etkileyebilir ve kadın akademisyenler için daha teşvik edici bir çalışma ortamı yaratılmasına yardımcı olabiliriz. Erkek egemenliği, ilerleme engelleri, mentorluk ve destek eksikliği ve ayrımcılık gibi kurumsal engellerin değiştirilmesi de kadın akademisyenleri destekleyen bir çalışma ortamı yaratmak için gereklidir.

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Bu sorunları çözmenin yolu, çeşitliliğe ve kapsayıcılığa değer veren yasalar çıkarmaktır. Bu makale, kadın akademisyenlerin bakış açılarını anlama ihtiyacını vurgulamakta ve yükseköğretimde toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini desteklemek ve ilerletmek için daha fazla çaba gösterilmesini teşvik etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın Akademisyenler, Çalışma Hayatı, Fırsat Eşitliği, İşyeri Dengesi

1. INTRODUCTION

Restoring equilibrium between work and life enables people to devote enough time to their personal and work lives, resulting in a harmonious lifestyle. When people have a work-life balance, it helps them to be content with their lives by allowing them to connect their social, personal and professional lives. Additionally, attaining a work-life balance helps individuals meet the demands of their professions while also maintaining stability in their personality, behaviour, and emotions (Hill et al., 2001; Clark, 2000). Scholars, like professionals in other fields, need to strike a work-life balance.

Academic institutions can maintain and improve standards to improve student behaviour and boost retention rates by encouraging a healthy work-life balance (Schreiber and Asner, 2011). Teachers who successfully manage their personal and professional lives can have a greater favourable influence on the growth of their students. As a result of having a bad work-life balance, academic professionals may encounter personal problems and perform poorly at work (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Despite its importance, academic staff members all over the world are starting to worry about preserving a work-life balance. Due to their lengthier workdays than the average, the unequal distribution of family responsibilities and the additional stress of raising their children, American academics find it difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Furthermore, they struggle even more because they are dissatisfied with the security and safety of the creche for their child and because their partners or spouses are not providing them with adequate assistance to manage their daily routine (O'Laughlin and Bischoff, 2005). Most New Zealand academics put in more than 10 hours of overtime beyond their regular full-time schedules (Houston et al., 2006).

Scholars find it difficult to reconcile work and life in their daily schedules, which has a big impact on their personal lives (Kinman and Jones, 2003). The marital status of a working woman also reveals how well she manages her personal and professional lives in South Asia. Following marriage, women have a lot of responsibilities to fulfil, which causes stress and a feeling of overload (Kinnunen et al., 2006). Furthermore, research from India indicates that because they work too many hours in the office each week, women workers may experience a conflict between their obligations at work and at home. This includes rigid overtime required to complete organisational responsibilities, an inflexible work schedule and unsupportive management (Frone et al., 1997). Furthermore, a study conducted in Bangladesh discovered that a considerable degree of discontent stems from women's imbalance in their personal and professional lives, which is challenging to handle fairly (Uddin et al., 2013). Accordingly, research on women's work-life balance indicates that the variety of responsibilities women have affects their stress levels, well-being and mental and physical health (MacDonald and Friedman, 2002; Shakir and Noorani, 2014; Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017).

2. WOMEN'S ISSUES: WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The concept of work-life balance pertains to an individual's tendency to uphold clear boundaries and allocate a suitable duration to the diverse responsibilities of their personal and professional lives. As a result, one achieves life balance (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007); contentment and optimal functioning at home and at work with the least amount of role conflict (Clark, 2000); and a fruitful, profitable, and productive life that harmonises a variety of life pursuits, including spiritual and personal growth, and expresses an individual's distinct interests, pastimes, and values (Emmerik, 2002; Wayne et al., 2004; Creswell, 2012).

Historically, work-life balance has been seen as a rival model with demeaning results based on burnout and stress (Marks, 1977; Gay and Airasian, 2000; Houston et al., 2006; Marafi, 2013). According to Gordon and Whelan-Berry (2004), social support is a crucial factor that supports work-life balance. The substantial help that an employee receives from their parents, siblings, children, spouse, cousins, coworkers, department head and friends outside of the job is referred to as social support (Marcinkus et al., 2007). Studies have demonstrated a beneficial correlation between work-life balance and social support.

A noteworthy source of support is the life partner, who offers assistance in a range of work and non-work domains, including financial support (Hakanen et al., 2011; Kossek et al., 2011), career guidance (Darcy et al., 2012), supervision of the family, and individual support (Abendroth and Den, 2011). According to Wallen (2002), family support also involves helping one another out. According to Wayne et al. (2007), there are two types of personal social support: instrumental and emotional. Emotional support is the preservation of work-life balance by positive emotional expressions that improve a person's behaviour or influence.

As such, it concerns the expression of affective conduct in support of an individual's function in the workplace. The phrase "instrumental support" describes the mindsets and behaviours of family members who are meant to support each other in their day-to-day activities. For example, a family member might do less around the house to focus more on their work. The individual's employment benefits from the preservation of energy that would have otherwise been used up (Thomas and Ganster, 1995; Russo et al., 2016). Support from supervisors and colleagues at work is another essential element of work-life balance (Abendroth and Den, 2011).

A few examples of workplace support in the form of organisational support are reduced work weeks, flexible scheduling, telecommuting, shortened working hours, childcare facilities, job security, part-time work schedules, job crafting, job sharing, mother leaves and enhanced working conditions (Lyness and Kropf, 2005; Kelliher et al., 2019; Erden and Bayazit, 2019; Chung, 2019). Integrating and supporting obligations in both work and life is seen to require these structures. Even in countries where family arrangements fluctuate and women work in different capacities, women are still the primary carers for the home and children (Rossi, 2001; Siu and Phillips, 2007; Beutell and Wittig-Berman, 2008). Owing to women's strong employment penetration and career-focused mindset, there has been a rise in research on work-life balance issues.

The traditional systems of developing countries like Türkiye do not take the initiative to increase the scope of support given to women to preserve a balance between the roles of carer and earner. In traditional cultures, women's status outside the house has been limited by deeply rooted traditions (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). She will be criticised by everyone in society, even other women, if she refuses to carry out her assigned role as a housewife.

Concerns about women's work-life balance have gained a lot of attention recently in Türkiye. As the country continues to modernise and adapt and as more and more women enter the workforce, traditional gender standards are coming under scrutiny. Nonetheless, striking a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives still presents significant difficulties. Turkish women are expected by society to take care of the home while going to work, which commonly leads to stress and burnout. Despite progress in gender equality, work-life balance issues still need to be addressed if women in Türkiye are to be empowered.

One of the biggest problems Turkish women face is the traditional family structure, in which women are expected to perform a significant portion of household chores. The inability of many women to strike a balance between their work and these taxing family chores results in high

levels of stress and fatigue. The strong support of extended families in Turkish society may also make women feel obligated to take care of family members, particularly in-laws or elderly family members. Women's capacity to pursue occupations and attain financial autonomy is sometimes hampered by the complex web of responsibilities.

Recently, the government has put in place work-life balance initiatives for women, such as flexible work hours and remote jobs. Nonetheless, challenges persist, particularly in more traditional and rural communities. More needs to be done to challenge cultural norms, break down gender stereotypes, and give women access to strong support systems. Enhancing the equilibrium between work and personal life is essential for promoting gender parity and women's rights in Türkiye.

3. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FEMALE EMPLOYMENT IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

From an economic standpoint, there are no gender disparities in the workforce. It's a place where customers and sellers meet to exchange products and services. But labour markets don't work by themselves. People, power disparities, and social norms all have an impact on this social structure (Browne and Misra, 2003). Men and women have distinct skill sets and knowledge bases, as well as disparate labour, financial and social capital resources. According to DeLeire and Levy (2001), the way labour markets operate is a reflection of both formal and informal social norms.

Although there is no gender difference in the connection between an employer and employee, it does follow the gender standards that society has developed (Atalianis and Litosseliti, 2017). Male supervisors are prevalent, and labour is divided into two categories: "male's work" and "female's work." Rather than the product of a person's choice, these prejudices are embedded in cultural systems. On the other hand, women are limited to a narrow number of occupations, even though Türkiye's constitution promises equal job opportunities to men and women. In actuality, there is a higher concentration of women employed in some professions than in others, particularly in those in education and medicine. Women's responsibilities have changed significantly during the past 50 years in both industrialised and developing countries (Zedeck and Mosier, 1990).

The problem of female employment in Türkiye's education sector and work-life balance is intricate and multifaceted. In Türkiye, the number of women working in the education sector has grown dramatically in the last several years. This indicates that there has been a positive trend towards gender equality in the workplace and also highlights the need for greater work-life balance to support these female educators (Cudeville and Gurbuzer, 2010; Gocen, 2020).

There is a noticeable increase in the number of women working in Türkiye's education sector; many of these women have roles as instructors, administrators, and professors. Still, people often find it difficult to reconcile their personal and work lives (Aldan, 2021). Lesson planning, long workdays, and administrative responsibilities are just a few of the challenges that come with working in the education sector. Stress and burnout may consequently harm the wellness of female educators and their families (Blundell and Shephard, 2012).

Furthermore, in addition to pursuing careers in education, women in Türkiye are also expected to adhere to traditional gender roles and take care of the home. It can be extremely stressful for female educators to balance the demands of their professional responsibilities with their responsibilities. It's still quite challenging to strike a healthy balance between work and family life. Despite the growth in the number of working women, the employment-to-population ratio for women is still less than half that of men, at 49.9 percent (TUIK, 2022), and it is still below the OECD average of 62.5 percent. Research on the percentage of women employed in postsecondary

education institutions is few (World Economic Forum, 2022). Nevertheless, multiple studies have attested to the paucity and underrepresentation of women in the academic field (Yousaf and Schmiede, 2017; Tree and Vaid, 2022).

The results of this study indicate that female academics' management techniques need to be improved. To help women achieve a better work-life balance, they should focus on improving their time management skills and creating more realistic goals. Self-management is crucial in this situation, as female academics must moderate their expectations for how their work and personal lives will be balanced. Academic women endeavour to balance their professional aspirations with their familial obligations. The strain of these two responsibilities could lead to arguments and tensions. They put in a lot of effort, but they are unable to obtain extra time to carry out additional study, thus their progress is still going slowly. Another finding of this study is that female professors did not have personal free time. They were unable to find free time for their leisure activities and lacked any hobbies as a result. This problem contributed to their degree of disregard for their physical, emotional, and personal health. Therefore, a healthy work-life balance has been linked to improved performance and mental health in them (Punia and Kamboj, 2013).

174 universities in total provide services to the public and private education sectors: 229 public and 77 private. Public universities have multiplied since 1947, when there were just two of them and none in the private sector. There is a greater workforce as a consequence. According to Fatima and Sahibzada (2012), recruiting more employees typically results in issues in both the personal and professional spheres and lowers organisational effectiveness. Consequently, contemporary companies are finding it more and more challenging to give their workers a work-life balance.

Under such circumstances, considering the implications for the education sector and academia vis-à-vis work-life balance and career development could easily bypass the striking distinctions of these two separate entities, different dynamics in light of one another. While the workload of those teaching at the primary, secondary, and high school levels is shaped by the rules and policies set out by the Ministry of National Education, academic work at universities allows more flexibility but also requires more intensive research and publication activities. These differences create different challenges and opportunities regarding work-life balance and career development. Work-life balance in academia is threatened by demands on research, teaching, and administration, and increasingly also by international collaboration, production of publications, and fundraising. The consequence of this development could be that academics have to accept a high level of intensity of work, especially during non-work time. Further, academic careers-like an associate professorship or professorship-are very competitive and demanding promotional procedures. Furthermore, universities' flexible working arrangements, which promote good work-life balance for academics, may blur the demarcation line between work and personal life.

Things, though, change much when it involves the education sector that involves teaching in fields about teachers of K-12 levels in kids. Teachers more often than not work in a morning-to-evening sort of schedule and are frontline, field-involved with students rather than administrative, backend tasks. Still, the pressure of after-school extra classes, preparations for different sets of examinations and parent-teacher interaction go ahead and create an imbalance in their personal life. It is, therefore, relevant to distinguish the educational sector from academia when assessing each of these professions, with their opportunities and challenges. Research on work-life balance and career development in academia could, therefore, be utilized for recommendations on academics at the university level. Resources could be focused, for example, on workload reduction, extension of research support programs, or the extension of career guidance. Such measures in the field of

education include training programs that would be important for teachers' professional development, stress management techniques, and flexible working models (Sullivan and Ariss, 2021; Torres et al., 2024).

These two fields are thus so different that a difference between them could underline the elaboration of more specific policies and solutions. This includes robustness checks to support findings, which validate results as indicated: replacing mobile cellular subscription with other ICT-related indicators; combining such as broadband penetration or, including subtle digitalization effects such as digital literacy or the gender digital divide. The variance inflation factors have been computed to check the multicollinearity so that the regressors like fertility rates and GDP per capita are not highly linked-a facts that can distort the estimates (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). The data set therefore excludes outliers as a means of analyzing stability in the results-some countries having very high GDP per capita and internet penetration. This is necessary in ensuring the robustness of testing over time-for instance, excluding previous years. Estimates have been made using both fixed and random-effects models. First, in order to identify the best strategy, this paper used the Hausman test, which ensured that unobserved country-specific factors were managed. Other dependent variables, which could capture complementary aspects of female labour market outcomes, might include gender wage inequalities or unemployment rates among females (Papke and Wooldridge, 2023).

Work-life balance has been the subject of numerous studies that have examined how individuals manage their personal and professional lives. However, there is a clear gap in this study environment regarding the academic community, which is still a little-studied subject. Even while more women are pursuing academic careers, it is concerning that they still do not receive the respect they deserve in terms of work-life balance and professional visibility. Women's experiences are underrepresented in academia because of biases, prejudices, and injustices that hinder women's advancement in the workforce (Marecki, 2024).

This research gap emphasises how important it is to conduct studies that focus on the unique challenges faced by female academics in balancing their personal and professional lives and gaining more recognition. Understanding these issues is essential to resolving gender gaps in academia and promoting women's job satisfaction. By acknowledging the distinct obstacles and intricacies faced by female academics, we may formulate strategies and policies that foster an equitable, hospitable, and supportive educational milieu. Closing this research gap will benefit gender equality as well as the general standard and diversity of the academic workforce (Horta and Tang, 2023).

To address these issues, initiatives have been undertaken in the field of education, such as the introduction of flexible work schedules and remote work options. Still, there's more to be done to promote gender equality, redefine social standards, and provide total support for female educators. Not only is a better work-life balance vital for the well-being of women employed in the education sector but it is also required to guarantee that talented women will continue to contribute to Türkiye's educational progress and advance gender equality in the workforce (Smith and Sinkford). The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Women in Academics Female academics in Türkiye have a unique combination of opportunities and obstacles when navigating the academic environment. These adjustments and challenges are a reflection of broader cultural norms and expectations. Recent years have seen a greater recognition of the value of women's contributions to academia, which has opened up many opportunities for women scholars (Bakioğlu and Ülker, 2018).

In Türkiye, women have opportunities for academic and professional success. A growing number of women are being celebrated and acknowledged for their accomplishments in a wide range of academic sectors where they have made major impacts. The government and academic institutions have implemented policies and initiatives to improve gender equality in academia. These include funding and help for female researchers to advance their careers. The alternative is the changing values and attitudes of the younger generation (Marinoni and Cardona, 2024). The acceptance of gender equality and diversity in the classroom is growing among younger academics and students as cultural norms shift. This shift in mindset creates a more accepting and supportive environment for female academics.

Nevertheless, Turkish women's academics continue to face several challenges. Bias and gender-based stereotypes continue to be obstacles to promotion in the workplace. Women are underrepresented in positions of authority and usually face barriers in their pursuit of these positions. This underrepresentation has an immediate influence on academic policies and decision-making processes.

Balancing a profession and household responsibilities is a major challenge for female academics. Women's development in the workforce may be hindered by gender-specific traditional roles and expectations that place a burden on women to take care of the home. Balancing research, teaching, and administrative responsibilities with family responsibilities can be incredibly demanding. Furthermore, whereas governmental laws and institutional initiatives aim to promote gender equality in academia, their implementation may not always be successful. Closing these gaps is an ongoing battle because there are still differences in the chances that are provided fairly (Cerrato and Cifre, 2018).

Female academics face additional challenges due to gender-motivated assault, harassment, and intimidation. These issues could lead to hostile work environments and jeopardise women's academic prospects. It is necessary to address these problems and promote inclusive, safe campuses to provide a supportive academic atmosphere. All things considered, Turkish women scholars have a great opportunity to excel and make a significant contribution to the academic world. Still, there are problems with gender discrimination, work-life balance and violence. The advancement of education and research accomplishments in the nation depends heavily on the success made in addressing these issues and creating a more equitable academic environment for women.

4. CONCLUSION

The topic of work-life balance has attracted a lot of attention from academics. This is especially important for female academics in poor countries. It is typical for women to take on the majority of childcare and cleaning duties in this situation. Due to modernity, easier access to higher education, and more opportunities for working outside the home, women in traditional communities face numerous challenges related to work-life balance. The plethora of problems that female academics face at work and home is confirmed by the most recent poll. Among the issues are demands for equal performance in both contexts, jobs other than teaching in the workplace, and the lack of departmental support.

Furthermore, it seems that female academics do not have enough personal time, which negatively affects their mental and physical health. The good news is that women in academia seem to have the courage, the will, and the ability to get through these challenges by using a variety of coping strategies, such as splitting their lives, setting aside time for work, talking to their families about their problems, and making an effort to remain composed. These are interesting and

promising findings, and more thorough research is needed to go deeper into these and other intriguing subjects with more contextual and methodological details.

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