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Effect of the Glass Ceiling on Women Academicians in Public Relations Education to Managerial Positions



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Abstract

Public relations assume a managerial role in communication between institutions and their target audiences and are increasingly valued daily. Women play an important role in the formation of this value. In the literature review, studies were found that have investigated the status of women in the public relations profession and have observed that the number of women working in this field is higher than that of men; however, this number is not the same ratio for women in senior management. The present study aims to determine the ratio of female to male academics working in the public relations and publicity and public relations advertising departments of state and foundation universities in Turkey and determine their roles and ratios in management. The numerical data used in the present study was obtained from the academic staff information on the “YÖK (CoHE) Atlas” and university websites in January 2025 and evaluated using content analysis. There are undergraduate public relations departments in 43 state and 34 foundation universities in Turkey in which 293 male and 451 female academics work. Of the female academics, 11 were appointed as rectors, 57 as vice-rectors, 32 as deans, and 56 as vice-deans. The research and these data show that female academics have an important role in public relations education, although they do not equally share senior management positions with men, and that the glass ceiling syndrome continues to affect their career advancement in public relations education. This study can provide guidance for universities to develop policies on gender equality in academic leadership roles and reflect these policies in institutional practices.


Keywords

Public relations • female academics in public relations education • women’s place in management in public relations education • glass ceiling • glass ceiling in public relations

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Effect of the Glass Ceiling on Women Academicians in Public Relations Education to Managerial Positions

Individuals have a profession based on various factors, such as ensuring their livelihood, realising themselves in line with their goals, and benefiting society. Studies have often reported that biological sex also has an impact on selecting a profession (Hoştut, 2020, p. 252).

In all societies around the world, there are different social roles assigned to men and women. These roles have the ability to shape, direct and control the behavior of individuals. These roles, which indicate the responsibilities of women and men in society and how they should behave with various sociocultural elements, are defined by society and expect individuals to behave in accordance with the gender role. Gender roles, which begin to be learned in the womb, continue to develop within the socialization process of the individual (Saraç, 2013: 27). According to this role definition, women are defined as sensitive, emotional and compassionate, helpful, altruistic and dependent, while men are expected to be competitive, success-oriented, individualistic, rational and independent. Although there are different approaches to this expectation, women and men exhibit personality traits that accept these roles over time. In the context of gender, non-administrative tasks in the service sector such as care services, housework, nursing, teaching, public relations are considered appropriate for women and these professions are characterized as women's professions (Elmasoğlu, 2015: 59).

Thus, women are commonly involved in the teaching profession and academics in business life as well (Poyraz, 2013, p. 1; Kaplan et al., 2020, p. 43); however, the maternal responsibilities of women play an important role in career planning and recruitment. Having to choose between their jobs and plans to start a family lead to a variety of emotional conflicts and, as a result, it is very common for women to become unmotivated in and unsatisfied with their careers. Another issue for women is the expectation that women should focus on family life instead of balancing work and family (Akbulut, 2011, p. 54; Poyraz, 2013, p. 2; Şahin & Acar Şentürk, 2020, pp. 356–357). Several studies have examined the work and private lives of female academics and shown that they have great difficulty that is generally the result of family responsibilities, especially during their doctoral studies and, accordingly, they are prevented from taking higher positions. In contrast, the issues that male academics have are generally due to the institutions they work for, in other words, outside of family responsibilities (Kaplan et al., 2020, p. 44; Suğur & Cangöz, 2016, p. 97; Yıldız et al., 2022, p. 318).

The number of women academics working at universities in Turkey is increasing day by day. However, women academics face inequality based on gender roles in finding a place in administrative positions (Yerlikaya Yaran, 2024: 560–561; Halifeoğlu, 2020: 175; Öztan & Doğan, 2015: 214–215). This is also true for women academics working in public relations (Öksüz & Görpe, 2014: 137).

Turkey has a dynamic socio-cultural structure where traditional gender roles are intertwined with academic structures. The structural barriers that women academics face in their career development provide a unique context for understanding the glass ceiling phenomenon in Turkey. In addition, although the representation of women in higher education has increased in recent years in Turkey, the fact that this increase is not reflected in senior management positions creates a remarkable area of inequality.

Considering the data within the scope of the present study, the number of female academics working in the field of public relations is quite high; however, there are more men than women in this field, especially in higher managerial positions. This ratio stems from the various missions and responsibilities imposed on women by professional environments and society. This approach makes Turkey an important place to research gender inequalities in academia. This is one of the main reasons why Turkey was chosen as the sample for this study.

The literature review has shown that although various studies have been conducted on the presence of female employees in the public relations profession, few have examined the status of female academics in management positions in public relations education. This gap in the literature indicates that despite the high number of women working as academics in that field, the proportion of them in high management positions, such as rector, vice-rector, dean, and vice-dean, is lower than that of men. The present study was conducted to provide information on the “glass ceiling” that has been perceived for many years and to draw attention to the discrepancies to help provide suggestions to resolve the issues presented.

Female Academics in Public Relations and Management

After the Industrial Revolution, the concepts of production and employment gained different meanings in society, which has led to a change in social structure. Accordingly, societal changes have occurred in the perception of institutions and individuals, and it has become necessary for institutions to establish a means by which communication with individuals and society can be effective based on mutual good will, benefit, and understanding and can benefit from public relations practices.

Public relations is defined as the process by which a programmed activity is strategically prepared and implemented for various purposes, such as managing the communication between an institution and its target audiences within the framework of good will and mutual understanding, resolving existing or potential issues, informing the public and soliciting their opinions and suggesting and supporting new ideas, determining the trends in society regarding the institution in advance, and informing the managers of the institution about these trends (Healy, 1995, p. 17; Grunig, 2005, 15; Asna, 2012, p. 17; Okay & Okay, 2013, p. 10; Geçikli, 2019, p. 3; Ergin Çağatay, 2024, p. 109). Public interest, ethics, and two-way communication are the foundations of public relations.

Public relations, which some consider a science and some an art, has become an exclusive profession. Although this profession attracts both men and women, the majority of those working in this field are women. Studies conducted at different times in different countries, such as the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, and Germany, have reported that women outnumber men in public relations jobs (Aldoory & Toth, 2002, p. 104; Hon et al., 2005, p. 442; Verhoeven & Aarts, 2010, p. 1; Tanyıldızı, 2011, pp. 76–77; Deren van Het Hof & Hoştut, 2016, p. 102).

The number of women working in public relations in Turkey and around the world is high and continues to increase. Various assumptions have been put forward about the high number of women working in public relations. Among these assumptions; women's need for positive discrimination, women's way of thinking being different from men, being detailed, friendly and hospitable, hardworking and meticulous, and the creation of new commercial policies for women (Aldoory & Toth, 2002: 105; Tanyıldızı, 2011: 77; Öksüz & Görpe, 2014: 137; Elmasoğlu, 2015: 62 Ertem Eray & Aslan, 2019: 161). In addition, as a result of the decrease in the wages of those working in the field of public relations in the 1970s-1980s, the number of female employees in the field of public relations increased as men working in the sector preferred different managerial positions

where they could earn higher wages. In addition, flexible working hours in the field of public relations, facing less sexist obstacles compared to other fields of work, and women being more successful in jobs that require social skills and persuasion are seen as effective factors in women's orientation towards public relations (Elmasoğlu, 2015: 62; Ertem Eray & Aslan, 2019: 155; Shahrul et al. 2021: 174). According to another study, women working in the field of public relations in Turkey.

A 1980 study conducted by Broom, who is considered to be the pioneer of the studies on the subject, determined the roles of men and women working in public relations and reported that men have more managerial positions than women. Previous studies have emphasized that women working in public relations generally assume the role of technicians (Sha & Toth, 2005; Tanyıldızı, 2011, p. 75), and according to Gersh, this is mainly because women are characterized by some as ineffective managers by their nature (Hon et al., 2005, p. 445).

Scrimger (1985) conducted a study to determine the salaries of women working in the field of public relations in Canada. The study has also evaluated the perceptions and experiences of men and women working as public relations practitioners from different studies conducted in the field, as well as the job opportunities of men and women in public relations and how public relations practitioners would be evaluated in the coming years in terms of biological sex and profession (Hon et al., 2005, p. 444; Sha & Toth, 2005; Tanyıldızı, 2011, p. 75).

In 1986, the International Association of Business Communication prepared a research report entitled *The Velvet Ghetto: The Impact of the Increasing Percentage of Women in Public Relations and Business Communication (Velvet Ghetto)*, which brought the place and role of women in public relations to the table and examined it in detail for the first time. The report revealed the changes and transformations that took place in the field of public relations and business communication in the United States between the 1970s and mid-1980s (Deren von Het Hof & Hoştut, 2016, p. 102). According to the report, the field of public relations and business communication was on its way to becoming a low-paid and low-prestige profession because of the high number of women working in this field, despite that women and men are similar in terms of education and skills in the fields of teaching, nursing, and librarianship. When the *Velvet Ghetto* was published, 80% of the employees working in public relations and business communications were women. Toth, who prepared the report, stated that this rapid increase in the number of women working in public relations and communication would lead to a situation in which salaries would rapidly decrease, men would leave the profession for better positions, and the work area would shift away from the managerial positions believed to be required in the organisation to technical positions (Mall, 1986; Hon et al., 2005, pp. 444–445; Deren von Het Hof & Hoştut, 2016, p. 102).

The study entitled *Beyond the Velvet Ghetto* (1989), which was conducted following the *Velvet Ghetto*, also found that inequality between men and women in the field of public relations continues to exist in terms of salary differences, recruitment, and promotions (Hon et al. 2005, p. 446; Deren von Het Hof & Hoştut, 2016, p. 102).

As Tanyıldızı (2011) has pointed out, there are few studies that have examined the place of women in the public relations profession in Turkey. Although various studies have been conducted on the subject after 2011, it can be argued that these are insufficient when considering the persistence of the glass ceiling problem in managerial positions for women. Specifically, there are few studies that have investigated the role of female academics in public relations education and management. Based on the literature review,

the main studies on women in the public relations profession and women in public relations education not only in Turkey but throughout the world are presented below.

In the study entitled *Gender Discrepancies in a Gendered Profession: A Developing Theory for Public Relations*, Aldoory and Toth (2002) debated on some of the theories that explain the persistent sex differences in recruitment, salary, and wage perceptions, and promotions in the field of public relations through literature review and various studies. Tanyıldızı (2011) examined similar issues and concluded that the majority of women working in public relations in Turkey are satisfied with their jobs and do not believe that men have better conditions in terms of salary or career.

Sha and Toth (2005) have investigated how future public relations practitioners would be perceived in terms of work and sex issues in their study entitled *Future Professionals' Perceptions of Work, Life, and Gender Issues in Public Relations*. They have emphasized the importance of providing public relations students with the necessary equipment to deal with such issues during the education process.

Alsager (2008) has examined the experiences of Bahraini women working in public relations using a qualitative approach and found the existence of various challenges when working in that field, including cultural marginalization, collegiality, social pressure, and marginalization of public relations. The study recommends that Bahraini women use their personality traits, communication behaviors, and management styles; combined liberal and radical feminist strategies; and social and organisational reforms to improve their roles in public relations.

Verhoeven and Aarts (2010) have investigated the influence and perceptions of men and women working in public relations in European countries and found that the profession is practiced mostly by women. Deren von Het Hof & Hoştut (2016) have conducted a similar study entitled *Pink Ghetto: Corporate Communication Managers in Turkey* in which they examined sex-based discrimination and the feminization of the profession in Turkey. Based on their research on BIST10 companies and LinkedIn, they have found that 69% of those working in public relations in Turkey are women.

In a master's thesis entitled *Attitudes of University Students Studying Public Relations Toward Women Being Managers in the Field of Public Relations: The Effects of Gender and Gender Role Orientation*, Turan (2014) found that male students, specifically those who were studying at state universities, had a negative view of women becoming managers in the field of public relations.

Öksüz & Görpe (2014) have conducted interviews with female academics, practitioners, and representatives of professional organisations working in the field of public relations in Turkey. Based on numerical data, they have assessed the role of women in this profession and how they have been treated in this regard.

In their qualitative study, Şahin and Acar Şentürk (2020) addressed the sex-related issues experienced by women working in the field of public relations and advertising and found that women were often exposed to sex discrimination. Kaplan et al. (2020) have conducted a similar study and evaluated the impact of male and female identities on the academic environment and studies and offered various solutions on the subject.

In recent years, various studies investigating the problems experienced by women working in the field of public relations have obtained various results regarding the problems women face in issues such as gender inequality, promotion, and wages.

Mirela P. & Mirela H. (2020), *Women in Public Relations in Croatia*, in their study on the problems faced by women working in the field of public relations in Croatia, stated that women mostly complained about long working hours, having to work intensively both at home and at work, and the glass ceiling obstacle in

reaching management positions. In a similar study conducted by Meng & Neill (2021), it is explained that women in public relations are exposed to gender inequality in leadership positions and which questions should be answered to solve this problem. The study emphasizes that mentoring and support networks are vital for women public relations professionals to reach leadership positions.

Martínez-Fierro & Lechuga Sancho (2021), in their study titled *Descriptive Elements and Conceptual Structure of Glass Ceiling Research*, state that women are generally exposed to sexist discrimination in business life and public relations, as well as experiencing various negativities when they reach managerial positions, and that the reason for these negativities is the stereotype that disproportionately affects women.

Topic &Tench (2021), *Women in Public Relations: A Thematic Analysis of ECM Data (2009-2019)*, in their bibliometric analysis, found that although women outnumber men in the communication and public relations sector, they are still disadvantaged in various issues such as glass ceiling, wage gap, sexism and discrimination. In a similar study, Jiménez-Marín et al. (2022), *Advertising and Public Relations Degrees: Profiles and The Glass Ceiling in The Spanish Labour Market*, Jiménez-Marín et al. (2022), who conducted a similar study, stated that although the number of women working in public relations and advertising in Spain is higher than men, 90% of management positions are occupied by men and women are subjected to gender discrimination in this regard.

Grabowski (2023) examined the book *The Future of Feminism in Public Relations and Strategic Communication: A Socio-Ecological Model of Influences* (2021), written by Aldoory & Toth, and stated that it is a study that examines research on public relations and strategic communication from a feminist perspective and that this book can be a good guide to better understand the obstacles faced by women working in this field. In this book, Aldoory and Toth state that the number of women working in the field of public relations is high, but they are subjected to various discriminations in terms of salary, promotion, and the balance between family and work life.

Shahrul et al. (2021), *Women Influence Practical Role of Public Relations in Iskandar Malasia Region*, in their study conducted in Alexandria Malaysia, stated that women working in the public relations sector are not subjected to sexist discrimination, but generally work in the role of technicians rather than managers, while Wright (2021), *Re-examining the Existence of the "Velvet Ghetto" and the "Glass Ceiling" Examining the Status of American Women in Public Relations A Generation Later*, reviewed the studies investigating the problems of women working in public relations and stated that although the situation of women working in public relations has not been perfect in recent years, there has been an improvement compared to the past, but there is still work to be done on this issue. Cueto & Pedrosa (2024), in their study *Public Relations and Startups in Andalusia: Analysis of Their Activity with a Gender Perspective*, found a similar situation in their research on women entrepreneurship in the provinces of Malaga and Seville in Spain. The researchers found that while women working in public relations are not subject to gender inequality as much as they used to be, encouraging women who have achieved significant success in entrepreneurship and public relations to take on communication leadership and managerial roles would increase entrepreneurship and diversity.

Even when considering that >40 years have passed, women still have various issues in being assigned to senior management within this field. The literature review conducted within the scope of the present study yielded similar results.

Based on the literature review, no study has been identified that examined the proportion of female academics working in public relations education in Turkey in positions such as rector, vice-rector, dean, and vice-dean. Within this context, the present study was conducted to fill this gap. The aim of the study is to

determine with concrete data how women academics working in the field of public relations have gained a place in management positions and to put forward various suggestions to eliminate gender inequality.

Glass Ceiling Syndrome in the Management of Public Relations Education

Women experience some difficulties such as sex inequality, stereotyped cultural and moral values within society, inequalities in education, and inability to rise to higher management positions in their professions while they meet both their domestic and professional responsibilities (White & Özkanlı, 2010, p. 4; Poyraz, 2013, p. 4, pp. 14–15; Adak, 2018, p. 32; Oğan & Wolff, 2020, p. 220; Çubuk & Erol, 2023, p. 186). This is a worldwide issue that has been widely discussed. One of the main obstacles for women to participate in senior management within their organisations is the perception of the glass ceiling (Tahtaloğlu, 2016, p. 91; Suğur & Cangöz, 2016, p. 94; Korkmaz, 2016, p. 97; Babic & Hansez, 2021, p. 8; Çubuk & Erol, 2023, p. 186).

The concept of the glass ceiling, which emerged in the 1970s throughout literature on management in the USA, is defined as invisible and artificial barriers created by organisational prejudices and stereotypes that prevent women from reaching top management positions (White & Özkanlı, 2011; Özyer & Azizoğlu, 2014, p. 96; Korkmaz, 2016, p. 104; Öztürk, 2017, p. 9; van Veelen & Derks, 2022, p. 3; Çubuk & Erol, 2023, p. 186). The glass ceiling metaphor refers to a barrier that is difficult to detect and limits the opportunities to climb the career ladder, especially for women (van Veelen & Derks, 2022, p. 3; Javarof & Kamiloğlu, 2022, p. 1495, Tekindal et al., 2023, p. 152).

Studies have found a direct relationship between the glass ceiling and job satisfaction and the intent to leave the job. Female managers who discover the presence of the glass ceiling at work are less satisfied with their jobs and more likely to quit. The glass ceiling also undermines an individual's personal attributes such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism, as well as their energies (e.g., knowledge and money). Women who face such discrimination are disadvantaged in terms of job choice, salary, and prestige. The perception of the glass ceiling prevents women from seeking and achieving promotions and reduces their ability to form bonds and support structures for their own careers. In addition, women internalize the negative evaluations and stereotypes of those in the majority, causing them to limit themselves and reject opportunities for career advancement for fear that they will not succeed (Ilgen & Youtz, 1986; Babic & Hansez, 2021, pp. 8–9).

According to Kelly and Young (1993, p. 23–29), the causes of the glass ceiling syndrome are as follows:

- women's working life is interrupted from time to time, especially during motherhood.
- women are employed in areas such as public relations and human resources where they have less chance of promotion.
- higher management applies discrimination policy in hiring and promoting women; and
- women are given missions at the social level (Korkmaz, 2016, p. 97; Babic & Hansez, 2021, p. 3–4).

There are 181.498 academic staff who work at universities in Turkey. 97.291 are male, and 84.207 are female, in other words, female academics make up 46.40%. Of the female academics working at universities in Turkey, 12.296 are professors (34.30%), 9.947 are associate professors (41.80%), and 20.728 are faculty members with a PhD (47.40%). The number of female research assistants and female lecturers is higher than that of men, with 42.350 research assistants at the universities. Of these, 22.792 are women (53.80%). Likewise, among 35.776 lecturers, 18.444 are women (51.60%). (www.yok.gov.tr/ 2024, Access date: January 30, 2025).

The number of female academics working in universities is high; however, this does not mean they do not face the glass ceiling obstacle. The representative rate of female academics, especially in university administration, is quite low (Suğur & Cangöz, 2016, p. 9; Hoştut, 2020, p. 264).

The number of women working in the fields of public relations and publicity, public relations, and advertising is higher than that of men; however, men are given priority in management positions and promotions (Şahin & Acar Şentürk, 2020, p. 329, 344; Kaplan et al., 2020, p. 57–58). This approach can give the perception that the glass ceiling culture continues within the dimension of female academics working in public relations education.

Methods and Material

Aim and Importance of the Study

The aim of the present study is to examine the number of female academics working in high management positions, such as rector, vice-rector, dean, and vice-dean in universities, and faculties that provide undergraduate education in public relations and publicity, public relations, and advertising majors in state and foundation universities and to determine how the glass ceiling syndrome affects this number. The study is authentic because it compared the number of female academics working in the field of public relations in senior management positions compared with that of men. According to a literature search, a similar study has not been conducted; therefore, the present study is important in terms of being the basis for future studies on this subject.

Methods

The present study is conducted based on a literature review and analyses of secondary data. Academic staff lists published on the websites of the faculties and universities that have public relations and publicity, public relations, and advertising undergraduate departments in the state and public universities included in the 2024 “YÖK (CoHE) Atlas” preference guide were examined in January 2025. Higher Education Program Atlas, starting from the preparation phase of YKS (Higher Education Institutions Examination), aims to support candidates to make more “informed decisions” while making university and profession choices. It is a system developed by YÖK. Thanks to this system, it is possible to have information on various subjects such as the scores of those who are placed in undergraduate and associate degree programs of universities, their success ranks, YKS scores, the high schools they come from, the regions they come from; lecturers in the program, foreign students, Erasmus programs of universities (www.osym.gov.tr, Access Date: 29.03.2025). The number of female academics and administrators working in these faculties was then determined, and tables were created and evaluated using content analysis (CA). CA is used to transform into numerical data of what is said by people on a subject in scientific studies, written in printed media, or as digital media, and is one of the prominent techniques among research methods within the scope of the social sciences. It is a flexible method that combines both qualitative and quantitative analyses that allow the systematic examination of data obtained from mass media (Alanka, 2024, pp. 69–70; Kaplan et al., 2020, p. 46).

Content analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative research methods and frequently used in the fields of social sciences such as communication, media, history, psychology, sociology, etc., provides the opportunity to analyze the content of visual, audio and written sources in a systematic way and thus to obtain in-depth information about the subjects. Content analysis, which offers an important perspective in better understanding media content and determining its impact on society, also provides the opportunity to

evaluate the quality of media content. With content analysis, it is easier to evaluate which topics are covered more in the media, how the topics are handled, and what the effects of the topics are (Alanka, 2024: 78-79).

In this study, the content analysis method was preferred because it allows for the systematic identification of implicit meanings, themes and discourses in written texts. While methods such as surveys and qualitative interviews provide data based on individual experiences, content analysis makes it possible to reach a broader structural pattern through existing literature and documents. In this way, social and institutional patterns regarding the representation of women academics in public relations management can be analyzed more comprehensively. Considering all these features, it was thought that using the content analysis technique in this study would be more effective in understanding the study.

The data obtained within the scope of the present study are subjected to comprehensive and systematic analyses. Frequency distributions of the data and percentage values related to these distributions were calculated using Microsoft Excel. When calculating the percentages of management roles, the number of female managers was multiplied by 100 in Excel and divided by the total number of managers, and the exact results were written as they were, while the incomplete results were indicated as only two digits after the comma.

Research Questions

RQ1. What is the number and ratio of female and male academics working in the field of public relations in universities?

RQ2. What is the ratio of female academics working in the field of public relations in universities to those working in senior management positions such as deanship and vice-deanship, rectorate and vice-rectorate?

RQ3. What is the most important problem faced by women academics working at universities in Turkey?

Study Population and Sample

The population of the study was the universities in Turkey with public relations and publicity, public relations, and advertising departments that provide undergraduate education, which were included in the 2024 “YÖK Atlas” preference guide. There were 77 state and foundation universities with these departments, which is why a separate sample was not taken, and the entire population was used.

Limitations of the Study

This research was conducted within the framework of the current personnel information on the YÖK Atlas and the websites of universities. However, there is a possibility that additions or deletions may be made in the YÖK Atlas regarding the presence of public relations and publicity, public relations and advertising departments in the preference list in the coming years and that universities may have made changes in their personnel policies and staff assignments after the research. These possibilities constitute the limitation of the study in terms of data source.

Results

Table 1

Number of Academics and Administrators Working in the Public Relations, Publicity, and Advertising Departments of Universities in Turkey in 2024

University Type	Rector		Vice-Rector		Dean		Vice-dean		Academics	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
State	40	3	111	17	31	12	56	24	191	220
Foundation	26	8	27	50	14	20	18	32	102	231
Total	66	11	138	57	45	32	74	56	293	451
Percentage	85,71	14,29	70,76	29,24	58,44	41,56	57	43	39,38	60,62

Source: The researcher (Hacer Hande Ergin Çağatay) created this table within the framework of the information obtained from the websites of the universities.

As of January 2025, the number of female academics in public universities was higher than that of male academics. There were 191 (46.50%) male and 220 (53.50%) female academics in state universities; foundation universities employed 102 (30.63%) male and 231 (69.36%) female academics. The number of female academics working at foundation universities was more than twice that of male academics.

There were 744 academics, 293 of whom were men and 451 of whom were women, working at state and foundation universities. The percentages of male and female academics were ~40 and 60%, respectively.

Based on these numbers, the number of female academics teaching in the undergraduate departments of public relations and publicity and public relations and relations and publicity advertising was higher than that of male academics, a result in line with the perception that there were more women working in the public relations profession worldwide.

Table 2

Distribution of Female Academics Working in Managerial Positions at State Universities

Sequence Number	University	Rector	Vice-Rector		Dean	Vice-dean	
			1 F**	2 F		1 F	2 F
1	Akdeniz	X	X		X	X	
2	Anadolu		X			X	
3	Ankara		X			X	
4	Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli		X			X	
5	Atatürk		X			X	
6	Aydın Adnan Menderes				X		
7	Bandırma 17 Eylül		X		X		
8	Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart		X		X	X	
9	Ege			X			X
10	Fırat						X
11	Giresun		X				
12	Gümüşhane				X		
13	İstanbul			X			
14	Manisa Celal Bayar	X			X		

Sequence Number	University	Rector	Vice-Rector	Dean	Vice-dean		
15	Munzur		X				
16	Kocaeli		X	X	X		
17	Karabük		X				
18	Samsun On Dokuz Mayıs	X		X	X		
19	Selçuk		X	X	X		
20	Süleyman Demirel				X		
21	Trakya		X				
22	Yozgat Bozok			X	X		
23	Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit			X	X		
24	Erciyes				X		
25	Sivas Cumhuriyet				X		
26	Hatay Mustafa Kemal				X		
27	Necmettin Erbakan				X		
28	Sakarya				X		
29	Pamukkale				X		
30	Niğde Ömer Halis Demir					X	
	Total	3	13	4	11	18	6

Source: The researcher (Hacer Hande Ergin Çağatay) created this table within the framework of the information obtained from the websites of the universities.

Table 3

Number and Ratio of Female and Male Academics in Management Positions in Public Relations, Publicity, and Advertising Departments at State Universities

	Rector		Vice-Rector		Dean		Vice-dean	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number	3	40	17	111	12	30	24	56
Percentage	6,98%	93,02%	13,30%	86,70%	28,50%	71,50%	30%	70%

Source: The researcher (Hacer Hande Ergin Çağatay) created this table within the framework of the information obtained from the websites of the universities.

Of the 43 public universities in the study sample, 15 did not employ female academics in the rector, vice-rector, dean, and vice-dean positions. This is more than one-third of the 43 universities. Only 3 of these universities had a female rector; the other 40 had a male rector (93,02% and 6,98%, respectively).

An evaluation of public universities with the highest number of female academics on the administrative staff shows that one of the rectors, vice-rectors, deans, and vice-deans is a woman at Akdeniz University. The rector, dean, and one of the vice-deans are women at Samsun On Dokuz Mayıs University. One vice-rector, dean, and one vice-dean are women at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. The rector and dean are women at Manisa Celal Bayar University. One vice-rector, one dean, and one vice-dean are women at Selçuk University. One vice-rector and one dean are women at Bandırma On Yedi Eylül University. One vice-rector is a woman at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli and at Anadolu universities. The dean and one of the vice-deans are women at Yozgat Bozok, Kocaeli, and Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit universities. One of the vice-rectors is a

woman at four of the state universities and one of the vice-deans of the faculties where there are public relations and publicity and public relations and advertising departments is a woman in 18 state universities. In three, two of the vice-deans are women. Female academics are included in only one of the administrative staff at 12 universities.

Considering the number of vice-rectors working in state universities, most men stood out at 111 (86.70%) with only 17 female academics. Two of the vice-rectors at the Ege and Istanbul universities were women. Apart from this, a vice-rector in the 13 state universities was a woman. The Vice Rectors of 28 of the state universities in the sample are male.

There were 30 male and 12 female academics working as deans in the public relations and publicity, public relations, and advertising departments at the state universities. Of these, 71.50% of the deans were male and 28.50% were female academics.

Table 4

Distribution of Female Academicians Working in Managerial Positions by Foundation Universities

Sequence No	University	Rector	Vice-Rector		Dean	Vice-dean	
			1 F	2 F		1 F	2 F
1	Atılım						X
2	Ankara Medipol					X	
3	Bahçeşehir	X					
4	İstanbul Arel			X		X	
5	İstanbul Aydın		X			X	
6	İstanbul Medipol		X				
7	İstanbul Topkapı		X				X
8	İzmir Ekonomi			X			X
9	Başkent		X		X	X	
10	Beykoz				X		X
11	Çankaya				X		
12	Doğu Akdeniz		X				
13	Fenerbahçe	X	X		X		
14	Girne Amerikan		X		X		
15	İstanbul Beykent		X		X	X	
16	İstanbul Bilgi		X		X		X
17	İstanbul Galata	X	X		X		
18	İstanbul Gelişim		X		X	X	
19	İstanbul Kent				X		

Sequence No	University	Rector	Vice-Rector	Dean	Vice-dean
20	İstanbul Nişantaşı	X	X	X	X
21	İstanbul Okan	X	X	X	X
22	İstanbul Yeni Yüzyıl		X	X	X
23	İstinye		X	X	
24	Kadir Has	X	X		X
25	Lefke Avrupa		X	X	X
26	Maltepe	X		X	X
27	Uluslararası Kıbrıs			X	X
28	Üsküdar	X	X	X	
29	Yaşar		X	X	X
30	Yeditepe			X	X
Total		8	18	8	20
					1
					14

Source: The researcher (Hacer Hande Ergin Çağatay) created this table within the framework of the information obtained from the websites of the universities.

Table 4 shows that 8 (23,50%) of the 34 foundation universities had female rectors. All foundation universities with a female rector were in Istanbul and 4 out of 34 had no female academics in any administrative position.

The number of men as vice-vector was higher with 50 (65%) men and 27 (35%) women. One of the rectors, deans, and vice-deans was a woman at Istanbul Nişantaşı, Istanbul Okan, and Maltepe universities, respectively. In addition, one of the vice-rectors at Istanbul Okan University was a woman. Qualitative or quantitative studies can examine whether the rector, dean, and vice-dean of the same university being a woman indicates that the glass ceiling syndrome had been relatively overcome at this university. In addition, it can be investigated how the rector being a woman had an effect on the appointment of women as deans and vice-deans.

In foundation universities in Turkey, 20 female and 14 male academics serve as deans. The rate of female academics serving as deans is approximately 59%.

There are 18 (36%) male and 32 (64%) female vice-deans in foundation universities in Turkey. The number of female academics in the positions of vice-dean and dean is high in these universities. Studies should examine whether this is a result of the high number of female academics working in the field of public relations or whether female academics play a more active role in management.

Table 5

Numbers and Percentages of Female and Male Academics in Management Positions in the Fields of Public Relations, Publicity, and Advertising at Foundation Universities

	Rector		Vice-Rector		Dean		Vice-dean	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number	8	26	27	50	20	14	32	18
Percentage	23,5%	76,5%	35,06 %	64,94 %	58,82%	41,18%	64%	36%

Source: The researcher (Hacer Hande Ergin Çağatay) created this table within the framework of the information obtained from the websites of the universities.

Table 6

Number and Titles of Female and Male Academics in Public Relations, Publicity, and Public Relations and Advertising Departments in 2012

Title	Female	Male	Total
Professor	21	15	36
Associate Professor	37	22	59
Assistant Professor	72	35	107
Instructor	18	12	30
Research Assistant	52	30	82
Other (Expert, lecturer)	3	3	6
Total	229	127	356

Source: Görpe et al., 2012; Cited by: Öksüz & Görpe, 2014.

Table 7

Number and Titles of Female and Male Academics in Public Relations, Publicity, and Advertising Departments in Turkey in 2024

Title	Female	Male	Total
Professor	47	54	101
Associate Professor	152	112	264
Assistant Professor	142	50	192
Instructor*			
Research Assistant	86	74	160
Other (Specialist, lecturer)	22	14	36
Total	449	304	753

Source: The researcher (Hacer Hande Ergin Çağatay) created this table within the framework of the information obtained from the websites of the universities. *The title of Assistant Professor was abolished on June 3, 2018 (www.memurlar.net). In some universities, the titles of Doctor Faculty Member and Faculty Member, PhD are intertwined in this table; therefore, the number of instructors was not specified but was counted within the Doctor Faculty Member.

Compared to the table in the study by Öksüz & Görpe (2014), it is possible to claim that the number of academics in the field of public relations has increased >200% in the past 10 years. Although this increase was in all fields, such as professors, associate professors, faculty members with PhD degrees, research assistants, and specialists, there was a significant increase, especially in the number of associate professors. This can be considered as approximately four times the number of female academics in 2012. There were more than eight times more academics with the title of associate professor than in 2012. Comparing the

2012 table with the 2024 data, the number of female academics working in the field of public relations has increased by ~200%. The number of male academics has also increased; however, the number of female academics remains higher. Despite this increase, it is still striking that female academics are not sufficiently assigned to management positions. According to the literature review, studies on female academics working in the field of public relations in previous years are limited, and no table showing the place data on female academics working in this field in management was found; therefore, no chance to compare the data with that of 2024. The table created in the present study can be taken as a basis for future studies so that different research and comparisons can be made on the subject.

Discussion and Conclusions

The number of women working in the public relations profession and the problems they face have long been the subject of various worldwide studies. These various studies have addressed several issues, such as sex discrimination against women in the field of public relations, salary inequality, and the lack of opportunities to advance to senior positions within management (Broom, 1980; Mall, 1986; Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Sha & Toth, 2005; Hon et al., 2005; Alsager, 2008; Verhoeven & Aarts, 2010; Tanyıldızı, 2011; Turan, 2014; Öksüz & Görpe, 2014; Deren von Het Hof & Hoştut, 2016; Şahin & Acar Şentürk, 2020). In addition, although there is a high number of women in this profession, the ratio remains low compared to the number of men, especially in senior management positions.

In their study, van Veelen & Derks (2022) have found that the number of women in higher education in the social sciences has increased rapidly in recent years and sex equality has been achieved; however, this is not the case in the natural sciences, technology, and economics fields. It has been shown that women working as academics in these fields have a higher perception of the glass ceiling. In addition, there are fewer women academics in senior management positions in both the social and natural sciences, technology, and economics fields. Awareness of the issue and the legality of discrimination should be raised to ensure fairness for all in employment. Solutions to the problem should be developed by investigating what motivates individuals to break the glass ceiling (van Veelen & Derks, 2022, p. 28).

The present study has determined the number of female academics and their ratio to male academics working in undergraduate public relations and publicity or public relations and public relations and advertising departments in various faculties of state and foundation universities in Turkey. The universities are included in the "YÖK Atlas", which comprises the university preference list for 2024. The study also analyzed within the framework of numerical data whether the rectors and vice-rectors of the same universities and the deans and vice-deans of the faculties (Communication, Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, or Business) with these departments are women or men and whether these positions are generally held by male academics within the framework of the glass ceiling. Within the scope of the research, answers to the following questions were sought.

RQ1. What is the number and ratio of female and male academics working in the field of public relations in universities?

RQ2. What is the ratio of female academics working in the field of public relations in universities to those working in senior management positions such as deanship and vice-deanship, rectorate and vice-rectorate?

RQ3. What is the most important problem faced by women academics working at universities in Turkey?

RQ1. What is the number and ratio of female and male academics working in the field of public relations in universities?

Within the framework of the data obtained from the university websites in January 2025, 744 academics—293 male and 451 female—were working at state and foundation universities. The ratios of male and female academics were ~ 40 and 60%, respectively.

Examining these data, the number of female academics teaching in the undergraduate departments of public relations and publicity and public relations and advertising was higher than that of male academics, in line with the perception that there are more women working in the public relations profession worldwide. There is a 20% difference between them; however, it is not possible to suggest that there is no sex discrimination when it comes to senior management positions, such as rector, vice-rector, dean, and vice-dean, in universities in Turkey. The tables show that although the proportion of female academics was quite high, especially in public universities in Turkey, the proportion changed in favor of male academics in the positions of the rector, vice-rector, dean, and vice-dean.

RQ2. What is the ratio of female academics working in the field of public relations in universities to those working in senior management positions such as deanship and vice-deanship, rectorate and vice-rectorate?

Of the 43 state universities that have public relations and publicity and advertising departments at the undergraduate level, women were rectors at only 3 of them. These data show that women were still exposed to the social barrier of the glass ceiling in these positions, which are considered the highest management positions in the universities. Looking at the number of vice-rectors working in state universities, the majority of them (87%) were men (male $n = 111$, female $n = 17$). Two of the vice-rectors at Ege and Istanbul universities are women. Apart from this, one of the vice-rectors in 12 state universities was a woman. Males held the vice-rector position in the other 29 state universities.

There are 30 male and 12 female academics serving as deans in the faculties of state universities with public relations and publicity, public relations, public relations and advertising departments. In state universities, 72% of male and 28% of female academics are deans. When this ratio is compared with the total number of academics, it is observed that male academics are more involved in managerial positions. The universities in which female academics are appointed as deans are generally located in the west and central parts of Turkey. Gümüşhane University, in Gümüşhane, a city in the east of Ankara, is the only university with a female dean of the communication faculty. This raises the question of whether the perception of the glass ceiling is higher as we move regionally to the east of the country. In the 43 state universities, there are 56 (70%) male vice-deans and 24 (30%) female vice-deans. Within the framework of CA, in some faculties, the position of vice-dean is shared with one female and one male academic, while in others, both vice-deans are male. Only in Ege, Fırat, and Niğde Ömer Halis Demir Universities are women the vice-deans of the relevant faculty; the deans of the same faculties are men.

Of the foundation universities, 4 out of 34 have no female academics in any administrative position but only 8 (23.50%) of these universities have a female rector. All of these are located in Istanbul, which suggests that there is a glass ceiling perception in foundation universities founded in other cities. The ratio of the number of men in the vice-rectorship positions at the foundation universities is 50 men to 27 women. While the rate of male academics serving as vice-rectors is approximately 65%, the rate of female academics in the same position is 35%. One of the rectors, deans, and vice-deans is a woman at Istanbul Nişantaşı, Istanbul Okan, and Maltepe Universities, respectively. In addition, one of the vice-rectors at Istanbul Okan University is a woman. Qualitative or quantitative research can evaluate whether these numbers indicate that the glass ceiling syndrome has been relatively overcome at this university. Studies should investigate how a female rector at the university has an effect on the appointment of women as deans and vice-deans.

In foundation universities, 14 male (41.10%) and 20 (58.90%) female academics served as deans. It is possible to argue that the more female academics serve as deans in these universities the less they would be put into technical positions and the greater likelihood that they would be elevated to more professional positions; however, whether this is because of the higher number of female academics, or their management skills should be studied in additional research.

RQ3.What is the most important problem faced by women academics working at universities in Turkey?

Considering all the data, the number of female academics working in public relations education in universities in Turkey is quite high compared to that of men; however, the number of female academics working as rectors and vice-rectors at the universities with public relations and publicity or public relations and advertising undergraduate departments, deans, and vice-deans of related faculties is lower than that of men. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the number of female academics working in public relations education in public universities in Turkey is high, but the number of those in managerial positions is considerably lower than that of men. Thus, it can be argued that the glass ceiling social barrier remains in the academic community for women becoming managers.

The present study has made an important suggestion that although women working in the field of public relations, a branch of the social sciences that is typically perceived worldwide as a female profession, occupy an important academic staff position in universities, they often fail to be valued or considered for managerial positions. The results of the study by Çubuk & Erol (2023) correlate with the data in the present study showing that although the number of women working as academics in Turkey continues to increase, they are not promoted to management positions. To overcome this issue, qualitative and quantitative studies investigating the reasons behind the glass ceiling should be conducted. For example, examining whether female academics do not enter managerial positions by choice or for other reasons is important to help prevent the glass ceiling syndrome. One of Dozier's suggestions within the scope of the liberal feminist approach to breaking the glass ceiling is that women should use men's power means and give more space to scientific research in their studies to be more effective on their target audience. As a result, women can take part in decision-making mechanisms by equipping themselves scientifically and overcoming the male dominance in top management (Deren von Het Hof & Hoştut, 2016, p. 102). In addition, as stated in the study by Kaplan et al. (2020), various studies should be conducted to find and eliminate the low participation rates of female academics in decision-making processes in universities, the problems that women experience because of women in academic life, and the sociocultural reasons that prevent them from rising to managerial positions.

As stated by Şahin & Acar Şentürk (2020), necessary training programs should be planned for employees in the fields of public relations and advertising to assert their rights within a legal framework in case they are exposed to inequality behavior based on sex by considering it as a kind of mobbing. The same is true for women working as academics at universities in public relations and publicity, public relations, and advertising departments.

Measures are necessary to prevent women from being caught in the glass ceiling obstacle in both business life and the academic environment. The present study first recommends that research be conducted to reveal the social, legal, and individual barriers to women's access to managerial positions, and solutions should be considered within this framework. Second, if women have reservations about participating in management positions, these reservations should be eliminated by making necessary arrangements and organising training programs. Future research that includes various qualitative and quantitative interviews

and questionnaires may obtain more comprehensive information on the subject. In addition, these studies should also include departments that provide public relation education at the associate, master's, and doctoral levels at the universities.

It may contribute to the solution of the problem for universities to conduct annual self-assessments on the participation of female academics working in public relations and other fields in senior management, to establish gender equality committees on the subject, and to be sensitive to the distribution of duties in senior management equally between male and female academics.

Comparing the studies on the glass ceiling in an international dimension and evaluating the studies that examine how this issue is handled, especially in universities, can have significant effects on overcoming the glass ceiling syndrome.

Conducting cross-cultural studies on the subject may expand the size and impact of future research.

As Ateş & Tanyeri Mazıcı (2022), stated in their study, women's research centers in universities, which operate in line with public relations goals and strategies and provide important data on gender inequality and women's problems, can be used more actively to eliminate gender inequality that causes discrimination in issues such as social development, equality of opportunity, and the implementation of democracy.



As stated by Meng & Neill (2021), mentoring and support networks are vital for women public relations professionals to reach leadership positions and necessary studies can be carried out in this regard.

Martínez-Fierro & Lechuga Sancho (2021) argue that the reason why women are exposed to sexist discrimination in business life and public relations in general, as well as experiencing various negativities when they reach managerial positions, is based on stereotypes that disproportionately affect women and the roles expected of them at the societal level, and women can be provided with the necessary training to overcome these problems.

As Cueto & Pedrosa (2024) state, although women working in the field of public relations are not exposed to gender inequality as much as before, necessary studies can be carried out considering that encouraging women who have achieved significant success in entrepreneurship and public relations to take on communication leadership and managerial roles will increase entrepreneurship and diversity. This study can serve as a basis for future studies in this field.



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