

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Role of Employee Silence in The Effect of Perceived Gender Discrimination on Emotional Burnout in Female Employees

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## Abstract

This study aims to determine the effect of perceived gender discrimination on emotional exhaustion and the moderating role of employee silence in this relationship. Although it has been examined conceptually, there is no study that evaluates all concepts in a holistic model. In this respect, the research has a unique value in terms of contributing to the literature. The sample of the study, which adopts a quantitative research method, consists of enterprises operating in Ankara. The questionnaire forms created within the scope of the research with 397 women working in these enterprises were applied. In the analysis of the data obtained, SPSS v24 package program was used to determine pretests, descriptive statistics and relationships between variables, and IBM AMOS v24 package program was used for CFA analysis. In the study, firstly, the effects of perceived gender discrimination and employee silence on emotional exhaustion were tested. As a result of the analysis, it was found that perceived gender discrimination and employee silence (defensive silence, silence for the benefit of the organization and accepting silence) have an effect on emotional exhaustion, and defensive silence has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion. As a result of the research, recommendations were made for decision makers, employers and for further research.

**Keywords:** Perceived Gender Discrimination, Emotional Exhaustion, Employee Silence, Organizational Behavior

## Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, algılanan cinsiyet ayrımcılığının duygusal tükenmişlik üzerindeki etkisini ve çalışan sessizliğinin bu ilişkideki düzenleyici rolünü belirlemektir. Kavramsal olarak incelenmiş olmakla birlikte, tüm kavramları bütüncül bir modelde değerlendiren bir çalışmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bu bakımdan araştırma, literatüre katkı sağlanması açısından özgün bir değere sahiptir. Nicel araştırma yönteminin benimsendiği çalışmanın örneklemini Ankara'da faaliyet gösteren işletmeler oluşturmaktadır. Bu işletmelerde çalışan 397 kadımla araştırma kapsamında oluşturulan anket formları uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen verilerin analizinde ön testler, tanımlayıcı istatistikler ve değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri belirlemek için SPSS v24 paket programı, CFA analizleri için ise IBM AMOS v24 paket programı kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada öncelikle algılanan cinsiyet ayrımcılığı ve çalışan sessizliğinin duygusal tükenmişlik üzerindeki etkileri test edilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda algılanan cinsiyet ayrımcılığı ve çalışan sessizliğinin (savunmacı sessizlik, örgüt yararına sessizlik ve sessizliği kabul etme) duygusal tükenme üzerinde etkisi olduğu, savunmacı sessizliğin algılanan cinsiyet ayrımcılığı ile duygusal tükenme arasındaki ilişkide düzenleyici rol oynadığı bulunmuştur. Araştırma sonucunda karar vericiler, işverenler ve ileri araştırmalar için önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Algılanan Cinsiyet Ayrımcılığı, Duygusal Tükenmişlik, Çalışan Sessizliği, Örgütsel Davranış

## Introduction

Today's intense competitive environment requires employees to work synchronously and as a whole with the management of the organization. It is human capital as well as human capital that keeps businesses alive and ensures continuity. It is only possible to fulfill customer demands, report any problems in the system to senior management and find solutions only if employees and managers who are open to communication are in charge. An effective communication network from subordinate to superior and from superior to subordinate will ensure that employees work with high motivation. Regardless of the occupational group, the adoption of a management approach that does not discriminate between religion, language, race and gender should be seen as an important tool in achieving the goals set for businesses.

Women, who have been working in every field of production since the dawn of humanity, started to take part in business life for a wage with the industrial revolution. The main purpose of this is the need for cheap labor. Unfortunately, in working life, many negative situations unworthy of human dignity await women, such as glass ceilings, barriers and the search for identity caused by obstacles, which insist on remaining unchanged from the 19th century to the present day and perhaps from today to tomorrow. Despite this, she continues to search for a place for herself in a world dominated by male hegemony.

At its most basic level, gender discrimination, which sees women as second-class citizens, is the most important indicator of inequality in economic life. Although social stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes towards women vary from country to country, in general, the positioning of women behind men is still a reality of business life as a global problem. The negativities caused by the glass ceilings that women face in business life push them to emotional exhaustion and silence in the organization over time.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of perceived gender discrimination on emotional exhaustion and the moderating role of employee silence in this relationship. It is thought to contribute to the literature since there is no study in which gender discrimination, which constitutes

the glass ceiling of women in business life, and the subsequent concepts of emotional exhaustion and employee silence are evaluated together.

## Conceptual Framework

### Perceived Gender Discrimination

Perceived gender discrimination is an individual's perception that he/she is subjected to unfair, negative attitudes and behaviors by different gender groups because of his/her gender. The individual who thinks that gender discrimination is practiced against him/her believes that he/she is disadvantaged compared to other employees (Seçer, 2009). In the world of work, women are subjected to gender discrimination and are evaluated within the framework of the tasks attributed to them by society. In fact, women are perceived as a gender limited to their roles in family life and restricted to domestic chores and responsibilities. Women who are forced to work have to assume both their work duties and their domestic roles on their own. Patriarchal management approach makes it difficult for women to take part in management positions (Ergeneli and Akçamete, 2004). Since women's roles increase the burden of responsibility on them, they limit their opportunities for promotion in their professions and do not provide equal opportunities. Since the roles assumed by women increase the burden of responsibility on them, they limit their opportunities for advancement in their professions and do not provide equal opportunities. This is because the roles that women have to assume are such that they prevent their wives from continuing to work. For example, women getting married, giving birth, and assuming household responsibilities are unfavorable for employers (Tolga, 2023).

The main areas where equal opportunities are not provided are vocational training, utilization of social opportunities, finding a job and promotion (Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005: 196-200). These negativities in working life have created glass ceilings, which are the most important indicator of gender discrimination against women. Glass ceilings are defined as situations that prevent women from

taking part in top management levels in the organizations where they work (Aytaç et al., 2002).

### Emotional Exhaustions

Although burnout as a concept was first introduced by Freudenberger in 1974, it became a concept associated with Marlash, who developed the scale (Aslan & Güzel, 2018). The difficult psychological environment awaiting women in business life and as a result of unfulfilment of long-term emotional demands, individuals emotional, mental and physical exhaustion and ultimately burnout syndrome (Pines, Aranson, & Kafry, 1981; Neuberg et al., 2017; Ajayi, Ajayi & Udeh, 2024).

Burnout syndrome is a concept consisting of three dimensions: depersonalisation, which refers to the alienation of the person from others; a decrease in the sense of personal achievement caused by thinking that the person is not capable of achieving success in their personal careers; and emotional exhaustion, which is characterised as the depletion of emotional resources (Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Budak & Sürvegil, 2005; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Geuens, Bogaert, & Franck, 2017; Shepherd, Tashchian, & Ridnour, 2011; Wilczek-Rużyczka, 2024).

Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling of being overloaded and exhausted due to the work. In addition, it is the first indicator of burnout and if it is detected early, burnout can be prevented (Önder & Basim, 2008). The feeling of unreality, fatigue and extreme boredom encountered in people experiencing emotional exhaustion has physical, psychological and organisational consequences. The stress experienced by the individual causes him/her to experience negative emotions such as exhaustion of emotional resources, decreased energy, emotional fatigue, and as a result, he/she becomes insensitive to many environmental factors and even the thought of going to work causes him/her to feel fear (Bodur B. & Erdem, 2023). In addition, it causes negative situations such as increased turnover, low performance, social shirking, intention to quit, absenteeism, problems in work and family life, silent resignation and health

problems (Maslach & Jackson, 1985; Kanten, 2014; Bakır & Özcan, 2025; Erdek & Meteriz, 2025).

There are many studies finding that perceived gender discrimination has an effect on emotional exhaustion (Gül, 2023; Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2020; Adebayo et al., 2008

### Employee Silence

Just as the conductor of a large orchestra wants to hear the right note from each instrument, managers expect to hear only the words that sound right to them in the organisation they manage. However, although this situation is accepted in an autocratic approach, it should not be a preferred situation in a democratic management approach and an innovative organisational structure. In situations that affect the future of the organisation, individuals who express their opinions without any reservations against any situation can play an active role in the decision-making mechanisms to make the right decisions. On the other hand, silence is the situation where employees who are in a position to influence the decisions or future of the organisation prefer to remain silent. The important thing is to identify the motivation of the employees who prefer to remain silent even though they have a good command of the subject. Because this negative situation is a type of behaviour that directly affects the potential of the organisation (Tayfun & Çatır, 2013).

Silence of employees is seen as an undesirable situation in organisational terms. Employee silence has three components: defensive silence, silence for the benefit of the organisation and accepting silence. Defensive silence can be defined as employees' expressing their opinions after abstaining and observing for a while in order to protect their own position and position due to the anxiety and uneasiness they experience (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003). This self-protective behaviour can also be considered as a defensive attitude. Since employees fear that they will be harmed if they speak out, they avoid saying what they want to say for their own benefit and prefer to protect their current positions (Knoll & Van Dick, 2013). In other words, it means that employees hide their information, ideas and

thoughts by creating a personal strategy with a deliberate and proactive approach to protect themselves from external factors due to the fear they feel (Beheshtifar, et al., 2012; Dyne, et al., 2003). In addition, they may prefer to remain silent and not express their thoughts due to fears such as not being promoted, being subjected to ill-treatment and being unemployed (Öztürk & Cevher, 2015). This situation leads to the concealment of new ideas and thoughts as well as the concealment of errors and mistakes within the organisation (Yalçınsoy, 2019). The employees' self-protection motive can be considered as an indication that they do not have the power and intention to fight. Aktaş and Şimşek (2015) investigated the role of job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion perceptions in organisational silence and found that as emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation increase, defensive silence increases (Aktaş & Simsek, 2015). It is considered that defensive silence, one of the components of employee silence, may have an effect on emotional exhaustion.

Silence for the benefit of the organisation, which is the second dimension of employee silence, is when employees prefer silence even in the face of positive or negative events occurring within the organisation, considering the interests of the organisation (Yakışır, 2024). The main motivation for silence for the benefit of the organisation is the belief that if the issue or issues are not raised, there will be consequences for the organisation (Whiteside & Barclay, 2013). On the other hand, avoiding sharing information about organisational events can lead to serious organisational problems, detecting mistakes and preventing ethical violations (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Silence for the benefit of the organisation can be considered as a factor that hinders productivity and development, increases stress, reduces job satisfaction and causes emotional exhaustion (Knoll & Redman, 2016).

The last dimension of employee silence is accepted in the literature as accepted silence. Accepted silence is the voluntary choice of silence and inaction by employees who have lost their belief that something will change in the organisation (Tayfun & Çatır, 2013). They are unresponsive, indifferent and uncaring towards all kinds of environmental and organisational events (Pinder &

Harlos, 2001). Individuals who feel that their opinions are not valued feel inadequate and show their thoughts and behaviours by obediently and silently obeying the decisions taken in the workplace (Dyne, et al., 2003). Thus, the employee, who is distanced from all kinds of organisational goals, concentrates on personal goals. In the literature review, a limited number of studies on the relationship between acceptance silence and emotional burnout were found. Yıldırım (2019), in his research, found that emotional burnout has a positive effect on accepting silence (Yıldırım, 2018). However, in our research model, we aimed to question the opposite of this problematic and to evaluate the effect of variables on each other.

At the core of gender discrimination is the expectation of behaviour in accordance with the role assigned to women by society. In addition to a number of features given by the nature of creation, women also have duties determined by the society. This sexist perspective puts pressure on women to 'force them to live within the limits drawn for them'. Women can only behave and live in accordance with this role. Regardless of the responsibilities of working life, regardless of the circumstances, women are considered as the person who has to fulfil the role assigned to her. Regardless of the situation, capacity and living conditions of the woman, she has to give priority to responsibilities appropriate to the role imposed by society, as well as fulfil other responsibilities in business life. The responsibilities imposed on them by social pressure and the specific requirements of business life cause women to become silent (Kocabacak, 2014). In the literature review, no study was found in which employee silence and its sub-dimensions, gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion were examined in a model. The above literature reviews suggest that all three dimensions of employee silence may have a moderating role between gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion.

## Methodology

In this study, it is aimed to determine the effect of perceived gender discrimination on emotional exhaustion of female employees and whether employee silence has a moderating role in this relationship. In the literature review, there is no holistic model in which three variables and their components are examined in one model. The research hypotheses formed within this framework are as follows:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Perceived gender discrimination has an effect on emotional exhaustion.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Employee silence has an impact on emotional exhaustion

**H<sub>2a</sub>:** Defensive silence has an effect on emotional exhaustion

**H<sub>2b</sub>:** Silence in favour of the organisation has an effect on emotional exhaustion

**H<sub>2c</sub>:** Acceptive silence has an effect on emotional exhaustion

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Organizational silence has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion

**H<sub>3a</sub>:** Defensive silence has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion

**H<sub>3b</sub>:** Silence for the benefit of the organisation has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion

**H<sub>3c</sub>:** Accepting silence has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion.

## Research Model

The theoretical model of the research is shown in Figure 1. The main purpose of this study is to reveal the effect of perceived gender discrimination on emotional exhaustion and the moderating role of employee silence in this relationship. In order to achieve this aim, 7 hypotheses were formulated to test the model established below.

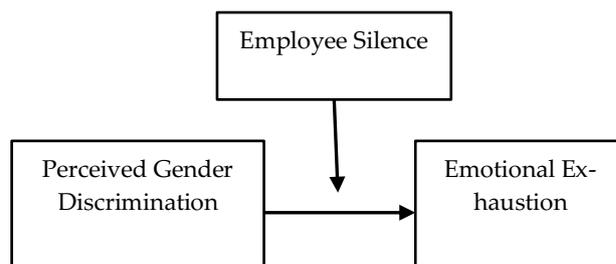


Figure 1. The Research Model

## Research Implementation and Sampling

The main mass of the research consists of women working in the service sector in Ankara. According to İŞKUR (2022) data, the total number of women working in Ankara is 418,918 (İşkur, 2022). Model of the research is shown in Figure 1. According to Cohen et al. (2002), the sample size should be 384 (Cohen, et al.,2002). Since 397 female employees participated in this study, it was determined that the sample size was sufficient. The average age of the participant female employees is 32,6 years, and their working time in their current workplaces is 2 years and 4 months. Their total work experience is 8 years and 2 months on average.

## Data Collection

**Perceived Gender Discrimination Scale:** To measure perceived gender discrimination, a four-item scale adapted by Foley et al. (2015) based on the 'Discrimination Scale' developed by Sanchez and Brock (1996) was used (Foley, et al., 2015). Sample items of the unidimensional scale with an  $\alpha$  value of 0.87: 'I sometimes feel that my gender is a limitation at work' and "My gender has a negative impact on my career progression".

**Employee Silence Scale:** The scale consisting of fifteen items developed by Bilgin et al. (2019) was used to measure employee silence (Bilgin, et al., 2019). The scale consists of three dimensions called 'Defensive Silence, Prosocial Silence and Accepting Silence'. Sample items of the scale: 'This employee is reluctant to talk about change proposals because he/she is excluded' and "This employee withholds confidential information on the basis of co-operation".

**Emotional Exhaustion Scale:** Maslach and Jackson's (1981) nine-item emotional exhaustion scale, which is the most widely used scale in the literature, was used to measure emotional exhaustion (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Sample items of the unidimensional scale are: 'I feel emotionally drained by my job' and "I feel exhausted at the end of the working day".

than 0.50. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine the construct validity of the scales. The goodness of fit values obtained with CFA are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results**

	$\chi^2/df$ <5	AGFI >0.85	GFI >0.85	CFI >0.90	NFI >0.90	SRMR <0.08	RMSEA <0.08
Perceived Gender Discrimination	3.124	0.908	0.912	0.921	0.918	0.078	0.078
Employee Silence	2.756	0.944	0.942	0.955	0.941	0.064	0.068
Emotional Exhaustion	3.658	0.902	0.910	0.907	0.901	0.079	0.078

### Data Analysis and Tests

The philosophical basis of this study is based on the post-positivist paradigm. Post-positivism is a scientific paradigm that approaches reality with an objective enquiry, taking into account the possible influence of the researcher's biases (Panhwar, et al., 2017).

As can be seen in Table 1, the CFA analysis revealed that the scales had good goodness of fit values (Hinkin, 1998). In order to further test the convergent and discriminant validity, the steps suggested by Netemeyer et al. (1990) were followed (Netemeyer, et al., 1990).

**Table 2. Convergent and Discriminant Validity Analysis Results**

	Mean	SD	AVE	CR	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceived Gender Discrimination	3.39	1.869	0.644	0.921	<b>(0.802)</b>				
2. Defensive Silence	4.02	0.894	0.508	0.802	0.423***	<b>(0.713)</b>			
3. Silence for the Benefit of the Organisation	3.02	1.018	0.516	0.804	-0.216*	-0.148*	<b>(0.718)</b>		
4. Accepting Silence	4.21	1.441	0.501	0.798	0.186*	0.246**	-0.185*	<b>(0.708)</b>	
5. Emotional Exhaustion	3.78	1.114	0.541	0.816	0.465***	0.581***	0.281**	0.335***	<b>(0.717)</b>

SD = Standard Deviation; \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001; Values in Brackets =  $\sqrt{AVE}$

In this context, quantitative research method was used to test the assumptions formed in the theoretical part of the study. In the analysis of the data, SPSS v24 package programme was used to determine pre-tests, descriptive statistics and relationships between variables, and IBM AMOS v24 package programme was used for CFA analyses.

### Results

#### Findings and Discussion

Firstly, the construct validity and reliability of the scales were tested. In this direction, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. As a result of the factor analysis, it was determined that the factor loadings of the statements in the scale were higher

Accordingly, the square root of the variance produced by the variables (AVE) should exceed the correlation coefficient between the variables. In addition, variance and factor values (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) coefficients were calculated for concurrent validity and tested whether they were within the accepted values (AVE = 0.50; Factor load = 0.50; CR = 0.70).

Finally, for concurrent validity, the square root of the variance values should exceed the correlation coefficients (Fornell and Larcker, 1981: 39). These results are presented in Table 2.

When the findings were analyzed together, it was determined that the study met the criteria of convergent and discriminant validity. In addition,

it was concluded that it has a sufficient level of reliability.

Since it was determined that the data provided sufficient reliability and validity, hypothesis tests were started. Hierarchical regression analysis was performed to reveal the multiple relationships between the dependent (perceived gender discrimination), independent (emotional exhaustion) and moderator (employee silence) variables. The results of the multiple regression analysis conducted with SPSS v26 package programme are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis**

Variables <sup>a</sup>	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	$\beta$	S.h.	$\beta$	S.h.	$\beta$	S.h.
Fixed	3.285	.185	3.721	.191	3.956	.196
Perceived Gender Discrimination	.385***	.067	.281***	.067	.223***	.066
Defensive Silence			.204**	.074	.196**	.074
Silence for the Benefit of the Organisation			.096*	.096	.091*	.097
Accepting Silence			.165**	.077	.158**	.077
Defensive Silence X Perceived Gender Discrimination					.181**	.058
Silence for the Benefit of the Organisation X Perceived Gender Discrimination					.041	.072
Accepting Silence X Perceived Gender Discrimination					.046	.074
	R <sup>2</sup>	18.6		21.3		15.8
	$\Delta$ R <sup>2</sup>	17.8		20.9		15.6
	F	22.853		19.186		24.645

<sup>a</sup>Dependent Variable = Emotional Exhaustion; N = 397; \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

In the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis, the effect of the independent variable (perceived gender discrimination) on the dependent variable (emotional exhaustion) was examined. The percentage of explanation of this significant model is R<sup>2</sup> = 17.8 and the F value is 22.853. In the second step, defensive silence, silence for the benefit of the organization and accepting silence variables, which are the dimensions of the moderator variable, were added to the model. The percentage of explanation of this significant model is R<sup>2</sup> = 20.9 and the F value is 19.186. In the third step, interaction terms were added to the model. The percentage of explanation of this significant model is R<sup>2</sup> = 15.6 and F value is 24.645.

According to the results of regression analysis, perceived gender discrimination ( $\beta$  = 0.223; p<0.001), defensive silence ( $\beta$  = 0.196; p<0.01), silence for the benefit of the organization ( $\beta$  = 0.091; p<0.05) and accepting silence ( $\beta$  = 0.158; p<0.01) have a positive and significant effect on emotional

exhaustion. Based on these findings, “H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived gender discrimination has an effect on emotional exhaustion” **supported**. “H<sub>2</sub>: Employee silence has an impact on emotional exhaustion” **supported**. H<sub>2a</sub>: Defensive silence has an effect on emotional exhaustion, , H<sub>2b</sub>: Silence for the benefit of the organization has an effect on emotional exhaustion, and H<sub>2c</sub>: Accepting silence has an effect on emotional exhaustion’ hypotheses were **supported**.

When the interaction terms created to reveal the moderating effect analysis were examined, it was found that the interaction term ‘Defensive Silence X Perceived Gender Discrimination’ ( $\beta$  = 0.181; p<0.01) had a positive and significant effect on emotional exhaustion. In addition, it was observed that the interaction terms ‘Silence for the Benefit of the Organization X Perceived Gender Discrimination’ and ‘Accepting Silence X Perceived Gender Discrimination’ did not have a significant effect. In the light of these findings, the hypothesis “H<sub>3</sub>: Organizational silence has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion” **partially supported**. ‘H<sub>3a</sub>: Defensive silence has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion’ was **supported**. However, ‘H<sub>3b</sub>: Silence for the benefit of the organization has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion’ and ‘H<sub>3c</sub>: Accepting silence has a moderating role in the relationship be-

tween perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion' hypotheses were *rejected*. The regression curve slope matrix drawn to show the significance of the moderating effect of defensive silence is as shown in Figure 2.

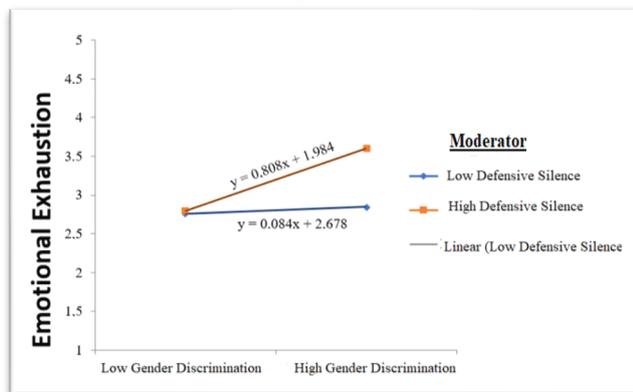


Figure 2. Moderator Impact Analysis Slope Matrix

As seen in Figure 2, the fact that the two lines are not parallel to each other shows that the moderating effect is significant (Aiken, 1991). According to this finding of the study, it is concluded that perceived gender discrimination, combined with defensive silence, leads to intense emotional exhaustion in individuals.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In today's world, women are still struggling to prove their existence in every field. Although women's first steps in business life were for economic reasons, in today's world, in addition to economic freedom, they work to prove themselves as individuals and to live freely in the modern world. Although all kinds of governmental organizations, legal entities and NGOs responsible for the governance of the modern world are working on women's participation in employment, they do not hesitate to build glass ceilings with education, marital status, legal regulations, procedures and unwritten rules when it comes to senior positions (Bozkaya, 2013; Corsun & Costen, 2001; Sposito, 2013; Amudha, et al., 2016; Jackson, 2001).

Although they do the same job and take on more responsibility for family life than their peers, the gender discrimination they face has physiological, economic, organizational and psychological consequences. In this study, a unique model was created at the center of gender discrimination in

the workplace and it was aimed to investigate its psychological effects on women. The hypotheses formed for this purpose, the analyses made and the model established are "Does perceived gender discrimination have an effect on emotional exhaustion?", "Does defensive silence have an effect on emotional exhaustion?", "Does silence for the benefit of the organization have an effect on emotional exhaustion?", "Does accepting silence have an effect on emotional exhaustion?", "Does defensive silence have a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion?", "Does silence for the benefit of the organization have a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion?" and "Does acquiescent silence have a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion?". In the studies conducted in the literature, there is no study in which three elements are examined together. In this context, it will set an example for future studies.

Perceived gender discrimination was found to have an effect on emotional exhaustion. Accordingly, it is seen that the gender-based approach in the workplace starts during the recruitment process (Chang & Milkman, 2020), male employees are positively discriminated against (Onay, 2009) and negative situations such as not being able to work in top positions due to their gender cause emotional exhaustion in female employees (De Villiers, 2001; Lee, et al., 2021; Wang, et al., 2020). In addition, gender discrimination in the workplace is a factor that increases stress, depression and burnout (Hennein, et al., 2021). In this context, the research data support the studies in the literature.

It has been determined that defensive, accepting and organizational benefit silence, which are components of employee silence, have an effect on emotional exhaustion. In a study conducted by Çitli (2015) with the participation of teachers working in Istanbul, it was found that defensive silence, accepting silence and silence for the benefit of the organization had an effect on emotional exhaustion (Çitli, 2015). Based on the existing information

and literature review, it can be said that the silencing of female employees in the workplace causes emotional exhaustion.

In the moderator analyses, it is another finding that defensive silence in female employees has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion. It was thought and tested that the reaction of female employees who thought that they were subjected to gender discrimination by keeping silent would affect their emotional exhaustion.

Family, cultural structure, social factors, society's sexist perspective, social values and beliefs, which are the source of the role assigned to women, push them to behave in accordance with the role expected of them (Terzioğlu & Taşkın, 2008; Kocabacak, 2014). As a result, perceived gender discrimination increases emotional exhaustion because it pushes women to defensive silence. However, the hypothesis that silence for the benefit of the organization has a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion was not supported. In addition, it was found that accepting silence did not have a moderating role in the relationship between perceived gender discrimination and emotional exhaustion.

When the results of the research were evaluated, some suggestions were made. According to this:

- Although women and men do the same work in the same work groups, they are paid differently and male personnel are preferred when it comes to senior positions. The most important reason for this is that women cannot see the value they deserve in a world dominated by male hegemony. It is considered that the struggle for equal rights should be waged in unity and solidarity. In this context, it is recommended that women take an active role in NGOs such as trade unions.
- Women should train and work to be present in every sector. They must show their presence in all professions that have been considered men's work for centuries, prove their success and demonstrate to society that no work can be dependent on a person

or gender.

- It is known that women have a higher level of awareness than men in terms of detail mastery, fine workmanship, and the ability to follow several tasks at the same time. For centuries, women have been condemned to live in a world limited to "house, field and garden work" because of this feature bestowed upon them at birth. It is recommended that businesses should make preferences based on personal skills, education and experience rather than gender in their recruitment processes, and that they should not ignore women, especially in coordination positions, due to their natural abilities.
- States need a young population to survive. Women are the ones who can fulfill this task. However, due to the difficult economic conditions of today's world, women who have to work have to cope with heavy housework, the responsibility for children and the difficult conditions of working life. Is it not second-class treatment of women when they are not paid the wages they deserve, when they are burdened with all the responsibility for housework and childcare, and yet they are not considered suitable for senior positions in the workplace simply because they are women? However, young population is needed for the continuation of states and women should give birth to children for the continuation of the new generation. While the fertility rate in European Union countries in 2022 was 1.46, in Turkey this rate was 1.63 in 2022 and decreased to 1.51 by 2023 (TUIK, 2024). The decline in the birth rate jeopardizes the sustainability of countries' social security systems (Toker & Şahin, 2024). Women's labor force participation rate is also quite low. In 2021, the female employment rate, which was 54% even in OECD countries where the world average was the highest, was realized as 32.8% in Turkey. However, despite this, the birth rate continues to decline. Considering the economic conditions, it is considered essential and urgent to make some legal arrangements to facilitate the births of women

who have to work.

This study has some limitations. Conducting the research in Ankara and among service sector employees is considered as a limitation. Although it is anticipated that similar results will be obtained when applied to female employees in different sectors in relatively smaller cities, it is thought to be more inclusive. In addition, since the measurement of perceived gender discrimination, organizational silence elements and emotional exhaustion variables is based on subjective judgments, it can be considered as a limitation that the participants may have responded according to their current mood. In addition, it is recommended as a suggestion for future studies that holistic inclusive research should be conducted on the subject.

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