PROBLEMS THAT WOMEN MANAGERS ENCOUNTERED IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY*

KAMU ÖRGÜTLERİNDE YÖNETİCİ KADINLARIN KARŞILAŞTIKLARI SORUNLAR: NİTEL BİR UYGULAMA

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Abstract

Despite the fact that women have gained power within societies in every area of life and have thus transcended their previously traditional places, they still tend to encounter problems in their management duties. These problems naturally impact a woman's business life, reducing their work motivation. Some of the problems that women encounter while performing their management duties in public organizations need to be resolved. This article aims to bring solutions to these problems and thus contribute to the literature. It is also believed that resolving women's problems will improve their standing, both in public and private sector management offices, therefore contributing to the national economy. This research was grounded upon this justification. The purpose of this research is to determine the problems that women encounter in the course of performing their management duties in Turkish public organizations. Data for the research was acquired in 35 interviews with female managers working in public management offices. A semi-structured interview form was prepared for this purpose. Since the research is of qualitative nature, interview questions were established as open-ended questions. The data was obtained using the qualitative "content analysis" method. The data were evaluated using the NVIVO 11 package software. 68 statements were obtained as a result of the interviews. According to the findings of the study, the problems faced by women in management were identified with 68 statements. The findings of the study were grouped under three components. At the conclusion of the research, problems that female managers faced in public organizations were specified. The problems were grouped in three categories, namely psychological, socio-cultural and environmental factors.

Keywords: Turkish Public Organizations, Managers, Women, Problems.

Öz

Toplumlarda kadınlar yaşamın her alanında güç kazanarak, geleneksel yapının dışına çıkmış olsa da yöneticilik görevlerinde bazı sorunlar ile karşılaşmaktadır. Bu sorunlar, kadınları iş yaşantısında da etkileyerek, iş motivasyonlarını azaltmaktadır. Kadınların kamuda yöneticilik görevlerini yerine getirirken karşılaştıkları bazı sorunlarında çözümlenmesi gerekmektedir. Dolayısıyla, kadınların sorunlarının çözümlenmesi, gerek kamuda gerekse de özel sektör yönetiminde ülke ekonomisine sağlayacakları katkıyı arttıracağı düşünülmektedir. Bu hedefler doğrultusunda, araştırmanın yapılmasının gerekliliği düşünülmüştür. Araştırmanın amacı, Türk kamu örgütlerinde kadınların yöneticilik görevini yerine getirme sürecinde karşılaştıkları sorunları belirlemektir. Araştırmanın verileri, kamusal alanlarda görev alan 35 kadın yönetici ile yapılan mülakatlardan toplanmıştır. Araştırmada ayrıntılı bilgi elde edilmesi bakımından, veri toplama sürecinde, tüm soruların önceden tanımlandığı bir soru kâğıdı üzerinden "yarı yapılandırılmış ve derinlemesine mülakat yöntemi" tercih edilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olan "içerik analizi" yöntemi kullanılarak bulunmuştur. Veriler, NVİVO 11 paket programı ile değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına gore, yönetici kadınların karşılaştıkları sorunlar 68 ifade ile tespit edilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulguları 3 bileşen altında toplanmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, kamusal alandaki kadın yöneticilerinyöneticilik görevlerinde karşılaştıkları sorunlar belirlenmiştir. Bu sorunlar; psikolojik, sosyo-kültürel ve çevresel faktörlerden kaynaklanan sorunlar olmak üzere toplam 3 başlıkta toplanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Kamu Örgütleri, Yönetici , Kadınlar, Sorunlar.

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INTRODUCTION

Women constitute approximately half of the human population in the world, and in Turkey alike. Unfortunately, this ratio is far from similar in terms of economic activities. Women's predefined social roles are the main cause of this. In addition, the general male-orientation of business life ensured that businesswomen were in the background (Negiz and Yemen, 2011:190).

However, social developments triggered by the Industrial Revolution changed the society's view on the subject. Changes in perspective gave new social roles to women (Çıkmaz, 2017). Therefore, women took their place in the business world.

Besides their socially accepted roles, women entered business life and started reflecting their inherent skills onto their work. The typically female urge to fulfill a duty under any condition made it possible for women to advance in the business world to reach and gain managing positions. This meant that women proved themselves to themselves, and to society. To gain executive positions and be conducting executive duties is an achievement for women. This, however, led to the uncovering of certain problems (Kocacık and Gökkaya 2005: 195). Women encounter a certain set of problems in their business lives. The necessity to conduct studies in this area can be justified by taking into account the importance of these problems.

This is a two-dimensional research which focuses on problems encountered by women working in management affairs. The first dimension of the research approaches the problems encountered by women in public organizations from theoretical and empirical standpoints. This research centers around women in managing positions. After thematically categorizing the mentioned problems in the first dimension, the research then moves to the second dimension to specify granular issues under each category. Therefore, with this research, this aim is to determine and evaluate these problems in an effort to enrich contributions to public administrations and the national economy, while setting a path for the social development of Turkish women. The problems encountered by female managers were determined in a qualitative survey which was conducted with women working in managing positions in Gaziantep.

I.   FEMALE MANAGERS IN PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

In all of human history, there has always been an equal division between men and women, in terms of population. It is however an unfortunate fact that a similar ratio cannot be seen in business life and management positions. This is typically associated with the development level of a country, however women are behind men in every society. The falling behind of women in economic, social and politic areas is closely related to fundamental structural attributes of a society and is due to reasons such as male-dominated gender discrimination in society, the low education level of women and ineffective legislation. Socio-economical developments in the world also directed social views and gave new roles to women in their families and in societies. Beside these roles, women also stepped into business life and gradually started reflecting their inherent traits onto their work, but still had a difficult time when they set out from the position of "worker" until reaching "manager". In Turkey, women and men have equal rights when applying to positions in public organizations and negative gender discrimination is forbidden. Therefore there is a different view in the area of management duties (Tunç vd., 2015:7). In addition, it is an obvious fact that women encounter certain problems in their management duties.

The problems women encounter in business life in Turkey are due to the traditional structure of Turkey. Society gives women to work and educate themselves

1768

(Çelebi, 1993: 5). However the traditional approach in the patriarchal Turkish social structure is beyond the predefined roles of women to establish and grow families, as business positions and ranks are generally supposed to be male-dominated.

The courage of women to reach towards managing positions in business life is important in terms of them taking their own decisions. On the other hand the (Besler and Oruç, 2010: 18) study emphasizes that in countries where paternalism restricts the freedom to be elected, it is even more difficult for women to be courageous. Unfortunately, according to research conducted by Hofstede (1980:286) there is a high tendency for paternalism in Turkey (Aycan, 2004: 453). Therefore women in Turkey should be encouraged to take up duties in various positions in business life, so they can set their paths to promotions towards managing positions in the future. This is very important in terms of the development of the country, while it is believed that it will inspire more women in the country to work. A Holst and Bush (2009) study suggests that promotion to higher ranking positions is impossible for women in business life. The work of management is regarded to be a man's job and it is suggested that women encounter a certain set of problems in their paths to managing positions (Acuner and Sallan, 1993: 79).

It is observed that women have always taken lesser positions than they are supposed to. Furthermore, the idea that the best position a woman could have in business life would be a complementary role to a male position is also socially supported. In Turkey, due to the patriarchal social structure, women can take very few positions in public organizations and even less in managing positions (Acuner and Sallan, 1993: 79).

Taking a general look at the 2017 employment and gender distribution data from the State Personnel Administration (SPA) regarding the numbers of civil servants and executives, there are a total of 3,022,600 civil servants in Turkey, of which approximately 40% are female (993,973) and 60% are male (1,813,560). While the majority of civil servants are male, there is quite a respectable ratio of women civil servants. Taking into account the numeric data regarding women in managing positions in Turkey, the Civil Servant Survey (1992) indicates that about 32% of the civil servants in 1990 were female and from 1988, approximately 8% of the managing positions were held by women (Acuner and Sallan, 1993:79). This concludes that women take very positions in public institutions and organizations. It is believed that women working in management positions tend to quit work, are not supported, their motivation is negatively affected and their work efficiency decreases due to the problems encountered in the course of their business life. Therefore it has become a necessity to determine these problems and study them.

II.   METHOD

This part of the research explains in detail the content analysis method, which is used to study the expressions of women given in the surveys. Accordingly, this part consists of three subsections, namely the data gathering method and content analysis, the validity and reliability of the research and, analysis and findings.

2.1. Data Collection Method and Content Analysis

A qualitative research method of content analysis was used for this study. Entering the literature in 1941, content analysis is completed by various methodological purposes and technics that can be applied to a variety of expressions. In other words, content analysis is the process of uncovering previously unknown themes and dimensions. This process is made up of four stages, which include coding of data, determination of themes, arranging of data

according to codes and themes and interpretation of findings (Coşgun and İlgar, 2015, p.38-39).

In this research, the problems women encounter in management positions are specified, and then studied. These problems were entered into the Nvivo 11 package software. Components were set up and then arranged with the help of codes.

The first components to be set up were the "Psychological Problems Component" and the "Socio-Cultural Problems Component". However, later in the course of the research these components were checked and found to be insufficient. A new component under the name of "Environmental Problems Component" was then created. According to this, the problems women encountered in public organizations were grouped under three components, namely psychological problems, socio-cultural problems and environmental problems.

2.2. Validity and Reliability of the Research

According to a Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016) study, *"Validity in a qualitative research means the ability of the researcher to observe a situation as it happens and from a completely objective standpoint"*. In other words, validity of a qualitative research depends on the researcher's ability to observe the subject of their study as objectively as possible (Creswell, 2013: 250). At this point, objectivity is the core value in this research. Nevertheless, the codes that were created were still checked in terms of sufficiency and accuracy. Academic opinions were also requested and the surveys were conducted with the purpose of creating a valid study.

Reliability is approached from a variety of perspectives in qualitative researches. In regards to reliability, the Silverman (2005) study advocates a consensus among coders (Creswell, 2013, s.253). In this context, a specialist researcher with experience in qualitative research performed separate coding procedures on the gathered data to gauge the reliability of the research. Then, these codes were compared to calculate the consistency rate. This rate was calculated using Cohen's Kappa analysis and turned out to be 89.8%. It is safe to say that there is an excellent consistency in this regard.

1770

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the research focuses on the expressions that women use when stating problems encountered in public organizations. Problem expressions are grouped under three components and a total of 22 expressions were studied. The components tied to problem expressions and obtained frequency values are shown in Figure 1.
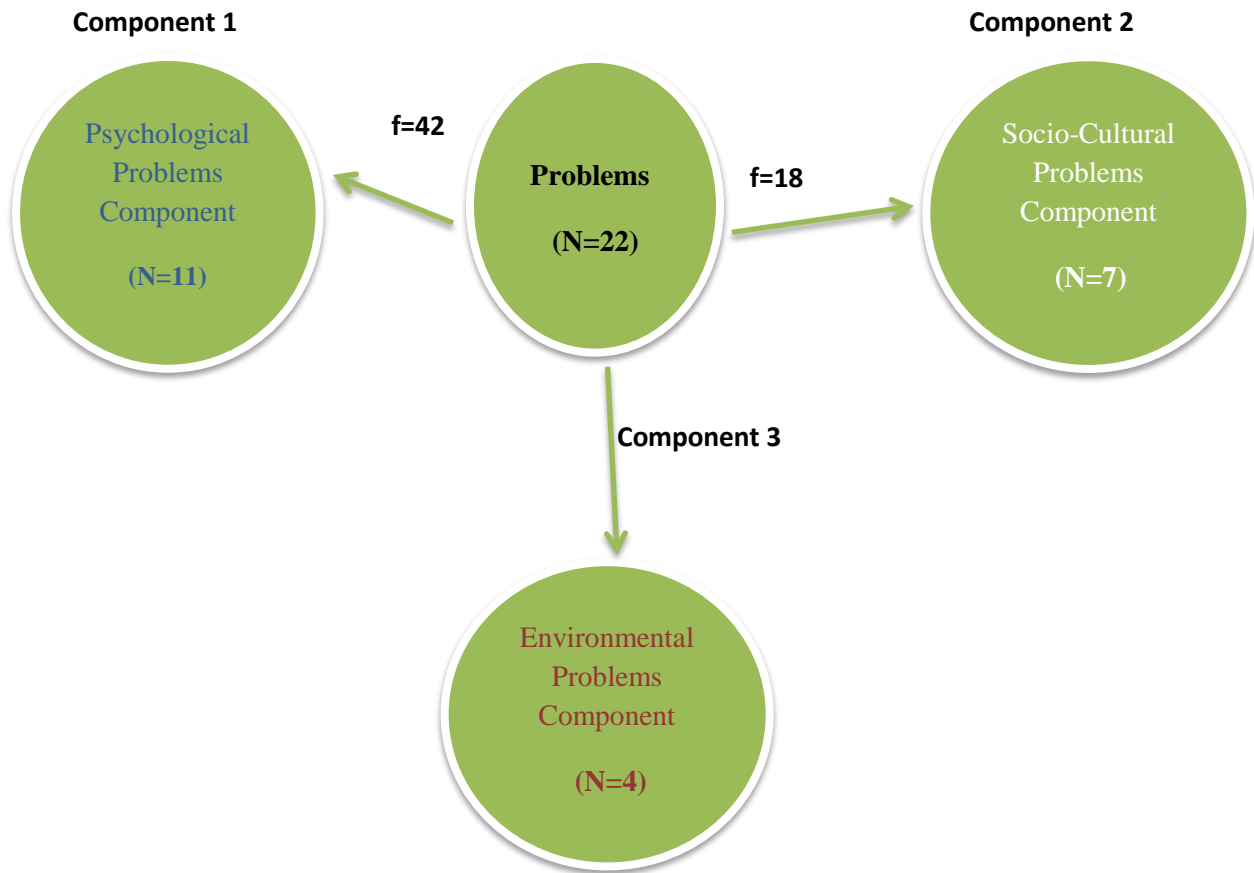
Figure 1: Components and Frequency Values Created in Relation to the Problems Women Encounter in Management Duties in Public Organizations

In Figure 1 it can be observed that the expressions, which are created in relation to the problems encountered by women in management positions in public organizations, are grouped under three components. A total of 68 problems were addressed. It was observed that the most frequently repeated component was psychological (f=42). Considering the standing of women in the Turkish society, women in management positions encountering psychological problems is quite an expected result. Therefore this finding shows that psychology is important for individuals and roles. This finding is also consistent with the findings of the Türktan (2011) study. On the other hand, the Tınaz (2006) research which focused on psychological harassment, and concluded that women were subjected to unbearable levels of mobbing in their business lives. Considering these results, it is safe to say that the conclusions of this research are in line with others.

Figure 1 shows that the component with the second highest frequency is the "socio-cultural problems component" (f=18). It is also shown here that the component with the lowest frequency is the "environmental problems component". Frequency values pertaining to the "psychological problems component", which was created to represent a certain set of problems encountered by women in managing positions in public organizations, are shown in Figure 2.
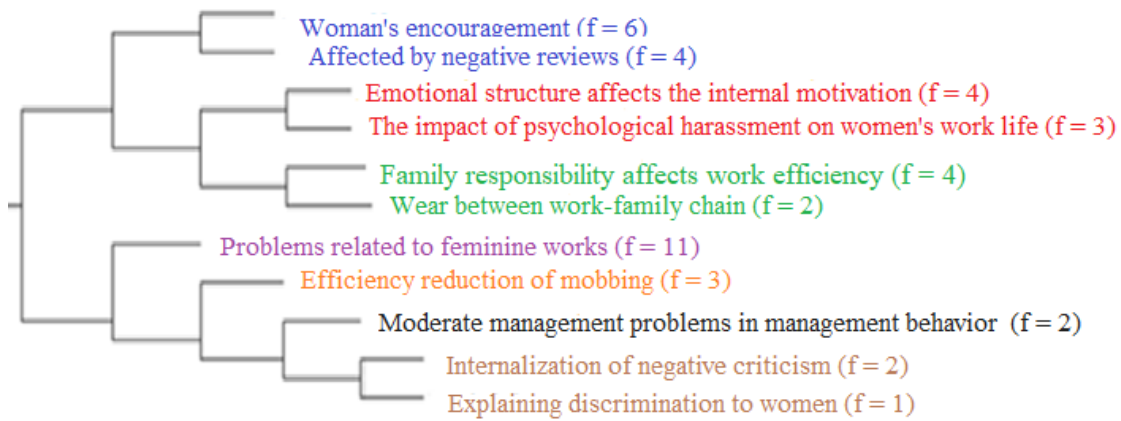
Figure 2. Frequency Values Pertaining to the Psychological Problems Component

Figure portrays 11 women, a significant amount, encountering problems due to "predefined female duties being deemed fit for them". Another six people, again a significant number, stated that a "lack of courage given to women" is another important problem. One person considered it a problem when "women were subjected to discriminatory speech". The figure clearly demonstrates female managers' statements that they encounter psychological problems such as "being affected by negative criticism", "emotional nature affecting inner motivation", "internalizing of negative criticism" and "mobbing leading to reduced work stress".

Frequency values pertaining to the "socio-cultural problems component", which was created to represent a certain set of problems encountered by women in managing positions in public organizations, are shown in Figure 3.
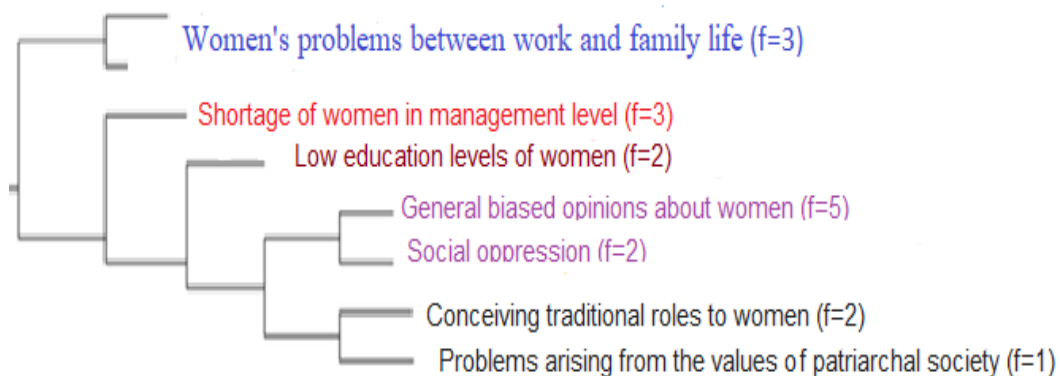
1772

Figure 3 Frequency Values Pertaining to Socio-Cultural Problems Component

Figure 3 indicates five women, a significant number within management, stating that "the prejudiced approach against women" is a problem. Three women also stated that "women in management duties as a minority" is another problem. The figure clearly demonstrates female managers' statements in that socio-cultural problems such as "problems

created by patriarchal society values", "low education level of women", "problems women encounter switching between their business and domestic lives" and "social oppression" are encountered.

Frequency values pertaining to the "environmental problems component", which was created to represent a certain set of problems encountered by women in managing positions in public organizations, are shown in Figure 4.
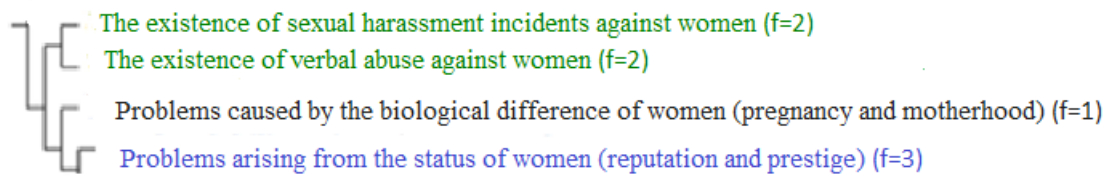
The existence of sexual harassment incidents against women (f=2)
The existence of verbal abuse against women (f=2)
Problems caused by the biological difference of women (pregnancy and motherhood) (f=1)
Problems arising from the status of women (reputation and prestige) (f=3)

Figure 4. Frequency Values Pertaining to Environmental Problems Component

Figure 4 indicates that three women in management duties, stated "problems caused by the female status (reputation and prestige)." Four women indicated another problem of "oral harassment" against women. One woman also indicated "problems due to biological difference of women (pregnancy, maternity).

1773

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Any success and self-esteem that women can gain in business will have positive affects on every aspect of their lives. Therefore, this will also beneficial in terms of mental welfare. The self-esteem coming from financial independence means that women can feel like proper individual members of society. (Yıldırım and Çıkmaz, 2016: 977) The will of a woman to fulfill her duty will get stronger and therefore her self-esteem will increase, which is a true path to further success. Therefore, self-esteem at work will help a woman to move forward and upwards in her career, all the way up to managing positions. In this sense, more women in managing duties means development of a country, socially and economically. But this brings new problems. Women have been facing a certain set of problems in fulfilling their duties. The necessity to conduct studies in this area can be justified by taking into account the importance of these problems. Therefore in order for female managers to professionally improve themselves and become more effective business people, they must be encouraged and supported. It is believed that resolving these problems will enrich contributions to public administrations and the national economy, while setting a path for the social development of Turkish women.

The purpose of this research is to determine the problems women encounter in the course of performing their duties in Turkish public organizations, as well as producing solutions for them. The research data consists of interviews made with women in managing positions in public organizations. In order to obtain detailed information, a "semi-structured interview method" was preferred for data gathering, where all questions were written on a question paper. To this end a semi-structured survey form was prepared and the survey was conducted with 35 female managers, all holding offices in public organizations in Gaziantep. Since the research is of qualitative nature, interview questions were established as open-ended

questions. The data was obtained using the qualitative "content analysis" method. The data was analyzed using the "MAXQDA" qualitative research package software. The findings are as follows:

- The problems women encounter in the course of performing their duties in Turkish public organizations were communicated in 15 statements and then grouped under three components. It is observed that statements were grouped under three component groups, namely "Psychological Problems Component", "Socio-Cultural Problems Component" and "Environmental Problems Component" and a total of 68 statements were addressed. It was observed that psychological problems were the most frequently encountered problems by women in management positions in public organizations.

- In regards to the problems encountered by female managers in public organizations, socially negative criticism towards and the lack of encouragement for women can be deemed as problems. However, that female managers are more susceptible to psychological disturbance in managerial affairs due to their mild and sensitive nature is also a legitimate conclusion. Another psychological problem is the deeming of predefined female duties for women.

- In regards to the socio-cultural problems encountered by female managers in public organizations, it is possible that the deeming of predefined female duties for women can lead to a dilemma between domestic and professional roles. The very few number of female managers in public organizations is another problem. A broader conclusion is that the lower education level of female managers leads to reduced work efficiency.

1774

- The problems encountered by female managers in public organizations, arising from the status of women, namely reputation, prestige, image-induced problems, biological difference (pregnancy, motherhood) may also be regarded as aspects which lead to female discrimination. It is also likely that the existence of sexual harassment against women leads to a chain of new problems. Moving forward, an increase of awareness in society can lead to better supporting female managers in terms of psychological, socio-cultural and environmental aspects, help increase female employment in management positions in public and private organizations and therefore result in the development of Turkey on local and global scales.

Evaluating the results of the research in general, it is observed that being a female manager in public organizations brings about a variety of problems. In other words, this research demonstrates that female managers are negatively affected by the psychological, socio-cultural and environmental problems encountered in public organizations. This being said, for possible future studies, the samples created in this research should be adjusted to other regions and countries.

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1775