A Field Research On The Existence of Glass Ceiling In Pharmaceutical Sector of Turkey

Iris Ersoy iersoy79@gmail.com

# Abstract

There has been a significant amount of research activity on the existence of glass ceiling in the workplace. In exploring the impacts of the glass ceiling, it should be noted that the gender composition of employees does not necessarily proove the existence of glass ceiling. In particular, the number of woman employees is not necessarily related with the existence of such a barrier. (Ozbilgin, 2000) Glass ceiling mainly exists in upper hierarchical level, therefore, female and male managers’ perceptions of their chances of advancement into managerial levels become critical, and that perception is the primary theme of this study.

This study investigates whether gender is perceived as a diversity factor or a cause for discrimination based on the findings of a field survey conducted in the pharmaceutical companies located in Istanbul, Turkey. It aims to provide insights into the attitudes towards women’s career development with a specific emphasis on glass ceiling. The pharmaceutical sector has been specifically chosen since this sector in Turkey is known to be more open to innovations and competition so that barriers are supposedly not so strong to prevent women from reaching top positions.

##### Introduction

In an age where people of different nations are interconnected more closely than they have ever been before, the separation between women and men continues to exist. The gap is continuously fed by misguided assumptions on men's and women's characteristics and their respective roles in the society. "Diversity" has been often considered with its negative aspects and it has been generally equated with "discrimination." (Foldy, 2004) Actually, a workforce that consists of people from different religions, cultures, backgrounds and genders strengthens the team spirit and brings workplace openness to challenge. Working with diverse individuals removes prejudices and hostile feelings along with it and further makes adaptation to globalization easier. This also helps the organization to maintain better and effective communication with its customers. The skill of managing diversity helps the organization to understand the demands of internal and external markets correctly and to shape its sales strategies according to these needs providing a high flexibility. (Kochan, 2003) Therefore, the organization becomes integrated to the world with a developed vision.

Although diversities can vary in many types such as race, colour, disability, national origin etc., the term “diversity” has been commonly used to refer to "gender diversity" throughout the history. Sex and gender have always been considered the same concepts. In fact, while gender means social, political, economical and every aspect of feminity, sex means only the biological difference (Mills, 1988). Women are argued to be dependent on men and their primary duty is defined as to meet the needs of her husband and children, which has been reinforced with religious, political and social foundations. The difficulties which women run into in social life come up in different forms such as “stereotypes”, “tokenism”, “sexual harrassment”, “mommy track” and “glass ceiling” in business life. (Karsten, 1994) The gender discrimination methods, perhaps under different names but serving for the same purpose, aim to obstruct women's career goals. Among all those, the "glass ceiling" deserves specific attention, as this term is able to express the inferior situation of women in rather a generic form. The glass ceiling can be formally defined as an invisible barrier to the advancement of women that cannot be explained by other qualifications such as education and experience. (Morrison, 1992)

This study aims to explore the perceptions of glass ceiling in Turkey’s pharmaceutical sector. A total of 63 male and female respondents have filled out a questionnaire assesing perception towards glass ceiling in their workplaces and in Turkey. Our findings show that executive women are more likely than executive men to believe in the existence of glass ceiling in their workplaces and in Turkey. It is also interesting to note that altough most of the executive women participated in this study state that they have not faced a glass ceiling in their career, they still believe in its existence.

Gender inequalities can be perceived in many different ways. The most commonly discussed inequalities concern wage scales, promotionand recruitment procedures. Although there has been an increase in the number of qualified women, this has essentially reflected into a steady growth in clerical positions while the numbers of female staff in managerial positions has not increased at the same pace. It is difficult for women to enter “the old boys network” because these groups are based on masculine activities. For example, in some companies, women can be disadvantaged because they do not play/watch football so they are excluded from football discussions. Relationships established in this kind of networking becomes advantage for male workers in promotion decisions.

Another possible origin of gender inequalities in the workplace is the so-called “mommy track”. This is used to define the cases where employers are reluctant to hire or promote women of child-bearing age. Most time, this is simply an excuse to pay women less and keep them from competing for the managerial positions. (Davidson, Burke, 1994).

Some sectors traditionally employ fewer females, and in other sectors despite the high number of female employees, their representation in executive levels is very rare. While teaching, nursing, and law are female-dominated occupations; the role of executive is commonly reserved for men. In addition, more women take place in human resources, public relations, and marketing departments than techinical departments such as IT, business development etc. Gender stereotypes play an important role in these companies. Even in female-dominated occupations, the chance of males rising to executive positions is higher than that of their female colleagues. (Davidson, Cooper, 1992).

Although women face “glass ceiling”, the women who make the top clearly prove that they are right for the job. In the literature, it is discussed that women have brought a new value system to corporate policymaking providing a better balance in today’s competetive management. Their understanding of the female psyche has been valuable in marketing all products, not just for female-oriented ones. (Jewell, 1977)

Women tend to be people-minded, are generally more aware of human factor in business relationships and more concerned about the personal feelings of their peers. This sensivity is described as good for management. Since women can keep calm in stressful situations, they have a good effect on the environment. However, these characteristics are equated with women’s domestic roles and not considered as key success factors that enable women to high-level managers. (Rosener, 1990)

In Turkey, there are wide discrepancies between men and women employment in terms of distribution by sectors. About 85% of working women are employed in agriculture sector. 69.2% of these women are unpaid family workers, so their jobs do not provide them with an independent income that would liberate them. (State Institute of Statistics-DIE, Household Labor Force Survey Results, April 2005) The second area women are concentrated in is industrial labour. The main areas in which gender-based discrimination comes out in professional life are career guidance, recruitment, promotion, attitudes and assessments. Career guidance is done most intensively during school time. A study on school textbooks reveals that the image of “mother with profession,” stressed in the first years of the Republic, was placed by the image of “the housewife” after the 1950s. (TUSIAD, 2000)

In Turkey, women’s status has evolved rather slowly over one hundred years throughout the modernization process. In the first decade of the Republican era, important steps were taken towards women’s participation in public life. Since the 1980’s, as the second-wave feminist movement developed, the gains of the Republic were assessed in the context of the women’s process of becoming individual beings. In spite of the steps forward in women’s benefits, taking part in political, social and economic life has remained below the envisioned levels of Ataturk, the founder of Turkish Republic. (KA-DER, 2004)

# Research and Hypotheses

The research model under consideration consists of a dependent variable: “perception of the existence of the glass ceiling.” There are a number of independent variables that are used during the study, some of which are gender, marital status, work experience, educational level, time-off for family responsibilities etc. In our study, the relationship between these independent variables and perception of glass ceiling is thoroughly analyzed.

In the following, we present a model which indicates that glass ceiling affects recruitment, promotion, and wage scales in a company. This results in various levels of turn-over rates. However, each employee is affected differently, based upon the level of company’s gender-based policies or the individual’s characteristics. While the model indicates that all employees are affected by glass ceiling, it remains unclear which gender is more vulnurable or negatively affected and if all women are affected at the same level.

Given the past literature the following hypotheses are offered:

* Hypothesis 1: Executive women are more likely than executive men to believe in the existence of the glass ceiling in Turkey.
* Hypothesis 2: Executive men are more likely than executive women to be married.
* Hypothesis 3: Married executive women with children are more likely than married executive men with children to consider family roles as obstacles to their career advancement.
* Hypothesis 4: Executive women who have been sexually harrassed in workplace and have not made a official complaint are more than those who have made a official complaint due to sexual harrassment.
* Hypothesis 5: Turn-over rates are lower in companies which have family-friendly human resources policies than those which do not have.

## Methodology

As already stated in the previous sections, the purpose of this study is to investigate perceptional and demographic differences between women and men at managerial levels in pharmaceutical sector of Turkey. It was investigated that whether gender was perceived as a diversity factor or a cause for discrimination. We have chosen pharmaceutical sector as a sample case and conducted a survey to collect data on the perceptions of executive men and women regarding the glass ceiling. The survey questionnaire was prepared intending both sexes to maintain objectivity. The reason for choosing pharmaceutical sector is based on the fact that this sector is open to innovations and competition so that status and hierachy will not be considered as significant issues. Another objective of this study is to determine if managerial women are more likely than men to perceive the existence of a glass ceiling that obstructs their advancement to higher levels in the pharmaceutical world. It was estimated that glass ceiling would be less effective in a competetive sector.

The pharmaceutical companies invited to participate in our survey were drawn from member lists of the two biggest pharmaceutical trade unions of Turkey called IEIS and AIFD. Human resources managers of sixty-eight companies were contacted by telephone or e-mail. Thirteen companies accepted to participate. Using convenient sampling method, human resources managers were requested to distribute the questionnaires to both men and women at managerial levels of the company. Interviews with ten managers were further conducted. In addition to the questions about demographic characteristics, the women and men managers were asked about issues related to family life, spousal support, and organizational support. They were also requested to provide information on how they started their career, whether or not they made positive discrimination and what factor contributed the most to women’s success. Interviews took an hour on average. Responses were coded and analyzed by using SPSS 10.0. (Bas, 2003)

## Results

Sixty-three respondents participated in this study. 66.7% of the participants were females. The average age range in the sample was 36-40.

#### Table 1. Age

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Frequency | Percent |
| <25 | 5 | 7,9 |
| 26-30 | 8 | 12,7 |
| 31-35 | 20 | 31,7 |
| 36-40 | 18 | 28,6 |
| 41-45 | 4 | 6,3 |
| 46-50 | 5 | 7,9 |

Overall, they were highly educated. 32 had a university degree, 21 had a master’s degree, and two had a doctorate. Forty-one were married, and while there were seven divorced women, only one man was divorced. Among the married, the number of men and women who have children was equal; 32 managers had children.

#### Table 2. Marital Status

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Frequency | Percent |
| Single | 13 | 20,6 |
| Married | 41 | 65,1 |
| Separated | 8 | 12,7 |
| Widowed | 18 | 28,6 |
| Other | 1 | 1,6 |

While there were three board members and six general managers among women, there were only one board member and one general manager among men. The rest of the titles included twenty-one executive managers, nine middle managers and four supervisors.

Crosstabs and Mann-Whitney U Tests were conducted to examine the questionnaires of male and female respondents. Results showed that while 36.78 % of executive women believe in the existence of glass ceiling in Turkey, only 21.19% of executive men believe its existence. Mann-Whitney U analysis revealed that p value is 0.001. Since 0.001<0.05 (confidence level is 95%) we can say that executive women are more likely than executive men to believe in the existence of the glass ceiling in Turkey.

#### Table 3. Perception of Glass Ceiling in Turkey

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sex | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
| Female | 41 | 38,15 | 1508 |
| Male | 21 | 21,19 | 445 |
| Total | 63 |  |  |

38.5% of executive women believe the existence of glass ceiling in their workplaces while 19.69% of executive men believe its existence in the workplace. It can be inferred from these results that, altough executive women face glass ceiling in their workplaces, they are more likely to believe its existence in Turkey. This shows that executive women are more pessimist about the glass ceiling in Turkey.

#### Table 4. Perception of Glass Ceiling in Workplace

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sex | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
| Female | 42 | 36,78 | 1602,50 |
| Male | 21 | 19,69 | 413,50 |
| Total | 63 |  |  |

While 22 executive women are married (53.7%), the number of married executive men is 19 (90.5%). We retain H2 regarding executive men are more likely to be married than executive women Furthermore, there are two seperated executive women who do not live with their children. Beside these results, while 84.3% of executive women have left their jobs for their babies, only 18.8% of executive men have left their jobs for paternal leave. This is another example that indicates child rearing responsibilities fall to women for traditional reasons. According to the results, 95.2% of executive men make business travels while 64.3% of executive women make business travels. (see App. 1)

Women tend to find long travels as an obstacle to their domestic responsibilities and their husbands sometimes do not let them make these travels. These findings point to the fact that, women still consider domestic responsibilities important and there is a pervasive concern regarding marriage and children prevent their career advancement. However, married executive men are viewed as assets since they have a stable family life with caring vives (Davidson, Cooper, 1992).

According to the Mann-Whitney U analysis, since p value which is 0.059 is bigger than 0.05, we retain H0 regarding that there is no difference between the rates of married executive women who consider family roles as obstacles to their career advancement and executive men with children who think in the same way. It is interesting to note that men disagreed more than women on the item “having children is an obstacle to women’s career advancement.”

21.4% of executive women have been sexually harrassed in their business life. There was no executive man who has been sexually harrassed. 55.6% of harrassed women have made an official complaint. Since p value which is 0.004 is smaller than 0.05, we accept that there is a difference between sexually harrassed women who have made an official complaint and those who have not. (See App. 2) These findings revealed that, since the sample consists of high-educated women making an official complaint scored higher. In a nation-wide survey, it was found that, only 2.8% of 1980 participants had made an official complaint due to the sexual harrassment. Among 1980 respondents, only 9.2% had a university or a higher degree while 85.8% of women respondents have a university or a higher degree in this survey.

Mann-Whitney U Test indicated that since p value which is 0.083 is bigger than 0.05, we accept H0 regarding that there is no difference between turn-over rates of companies which have family-friendly policies and those which do not. (See App. 3) Altough there is no statistical difference, only 5 respondents told that their company had a family-friendly policy. These respondents understood only day care nursery facilities from family-friendly policies while this issue contains many other practises such as flexible working hours, job sharing, parental leave, working from home etc. (Saltzstein, Ting, Saltzstein)

According to the factor analysis, the common attitude of women and men managers is that a woman who is not qualified and hard-working can not be succesful but a man can. Another interesting finding that men who have working mothers were the ones who supported their wives’ career advancement. Women executive attributed their success to factors such as determination, hard work and a supportive spouse.

Altough men and women respondents have similar qualifications such as education, job experience, foreign language knowledge; more men work as high-level executives.(See App. 4) Due to this fact, executive men earn more than executive women. While 38.5% of men earn 4001-4500 YTL a month, only 25.6 % of women earn this amount. (see App.4& 5)

These career discrepancies can not be explained with education, age or work experience advantages; this is an invisible discrepancy. While women are busy with domestic obstacles, men are climbing up the career ladder rapidly.

**Conclusion**

Altough the findings of this study are merely representative, they reveal that attitudes towards women in management are rather positive in pharmaceutical sector of Turkey. Since, this is an e-mail survey and participation is rather limited, it does not allow testing a model comparing individual and situational factors. However, the research described in this paper is significant for several reasons:

It helps to strengthen the limited research on glass ceiling in Turkey. Altough gender based problems occur in numerous ways, glass ceiling has an important place among them. Glass ceiling is an invisible obstacle so that people can hardly notice it. This research enlightens the hidden sides of this problem. In addition, this research makes a significant contribution to the literature by portraying both women and men executives working in pharmaceutical sector which is not a “men’s sector”.

Based on our results, glass ceiling can not be explained by superior qualifications such as a better education, longer work experience etc. Altough men and women respondents in our research have nearly the same qualifications, executive men are likely to work in better positions and take higher salaries. Their perceptions about glass ceiling support this fact; women are more likely than men to believe in the existence of glass ceiling both in Turkey and their work place. In spite of the highly qualified work force in pharmaceutical sector, gender-based stereotypes and discrimination at the top levels still remain. Another interesting finding indicates that none of these nationally and internationally famous pharmaceutical companies have written work-life balance policies.

Future research should include pharmacists, doctors and nurses to draw a complete picture of health sector in Turkey. It would be also interesting to compare the experiences of women in an European Union country who made it to the top with those living in Turkey still assuming the pharmaceutical sector. Future research should also focus on what companies are currently doing and what further needs to be done for the glass ceiling to disappear in different cultures.

**References**

Bas, T. (2003). Anket, Ankara: Seckin Yayincilik.

Davidson, M. J. & Burke, R. J. (1994). Woman in Management*.* London: Paul Chapman, 93-121.

Davidson, M. J. & Cooper, C. L. (1992). Shattering the Glass Ceiling*.* London: Paul Chapman, 117-145.

DIE (Devlet Istatistik Enstitusu) (2005). Household Labor Force Survey Results*.* Ankara: DIE.

Foldy, E. G. (2004). Learning from Diversity: A Theoretical Exploration, Public Administration Review*,* September-October, 64,5: 529-536.

Jewell, D. O. (1977). Woman and Management: An Expanding Role. USA:Georgia State University.

KA-DER (2004). Turkiye’de ve Avrupa Birligi’nde Kadinin Konumu: Kazanimlar, Sorunlar, Umutlar, Istanbul:

KA-DER.

Kalaycioglu E. and Toprak B. (2004). Is Yasami, Ust Yonetim ve Siyasette Kadin. Istanbul: TESEV, 63.

Karsten, M. F. (1994). Management and Gender-Issues and Attitudes. Westport: Quorum Books.

Kochan, T. (2003). The Effects of Diversity on Business Performance:Report of the Diversity Research Network”, Human Resource Management. 42(1): 3-21.

Mills A. J. (1988). Organization, Gender and Culture, Organization Studies, 9(3): 351-369.

Morrison, A. M., White, R. P., van Velsor, E. and The Centre for Creative Leadership (1987) Breaking the Glass Ceiling, New York: Addison-Wesley.

Ozbilgin, M. (2000). Is The Practise of Equal Opportunities Management Keeping Pace with Theory?, Human Resource Development International, 3(1): 43-67.

Rosener, J. B. (1990). Ways Women Lead, Harvard Business Review, November-December: 119-124.

Saltzstein A. L., Ting Y., & Saltzstein G. H. (2001). Work-Family Balance and Job Satisfaction: The Impact of Family-Friendly Policies on Attitudes of Federal Government Employees, Public Administration Review, July-August, 61(4): 452-467.

TUSIAD (Turk Sanayici Isadamlari Dernegi) (2000). Kadin-Erkek Esitligine Dogru Yuruyus*,* Istanbul: TUSIAD.

**Appendices**

###### **Appendix 1. Number of Business Travels**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sex | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
| Female | 36 | 31,44 | 1132 |
| Male | 18 | 19,61 | 353 |
| Total | 54 |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mann-Whitney U | 182,000 |
| Wilcoxon W | 353,000 |
| Z | -2,755 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | 0,006 |

**Appendix 2. Number of Harrassed Executive Women**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Executive Women Who Have Been Harrassed | Number | Percent | Valid Percent |
| I have made a complaint | 5 | 11,9 | 55,6 |
| I have not made a complaint | 4 | 9,5 | 44,4 |
| Total | 9 | 21,4 | 100,0 |
| Executive Women Who Have Not Been Harrassed | 33 | 78,6 |  |
| General Total | 42 | 100,0 |  |

**Appendix 3. Flexibility**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Flexibility | N | Mean Rank | Sum of Ranks |
| Yes | 36 | 19,93 | 717,50 |
| No | 5 | 28,70 | 143,50 |
| Total | 41 |  |  |

Appendix 4. Women’s Monthly Payments



**Appendix 5. Men’s Monthly Payments**