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## Organizational Experiences, Satisfactions and Psychological Wellbeing among Managerial and Professional Women in Turkey<sup>4</sup>

**Abstract:** This research, building on previous work of others, examines the association of four work experiences with work and extra-work satisfactions and psychological wellbeing of a sample of managerial and professional women in Turkey. The four work experiences : Use of male standards, Career barriers, Negative perceptions of family responsibilities, and Workplace supports. Data were collected from 209 women using anonymously completed questionnaires. Women worked in the private, public, and voluntary sectors. Work outcomes included job and career satisfaction, work engagement, intent to quit, work-family conflict and perceptions of male bias in their workplaces; psychological wellbeing included levels of emotional exhaustion, life satisfaction and health complaints. Women reporting more negative perceptions of Family responsibilities also indicated higher levels of Male standards and Career barriers in their workplaces;

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women reporting a greater prevalence of Male standards also indicated more Career barriers in their workplaces. One or more organizational experiences had significant relationships with all work and well-being outcomes, controlling for the effects of both personal demographic characteristics and work situation factors. Career supports were associated with more positive outcomes; career barriers and more negative perceptions of family responsibilities were associated with more negative outcomes

**Key words:** organizational experiences, women's advancement, Turkey.

## Introduction

More organizations have undertaken initiatives to support the career advancement of qualified managerial and professional women realizing that they now need the best available talent to remain competitive. Human resource managers, academic writers and researchers, and women's advocacy organizations have put forward both suggestions of desirable policies and practices as well as describing the efforts of best practice organizations [Wittenberg-Cox, 2010; Giscombe 2005; Catalyst 1998; Spinks & Tombari 2002; McCracken 2002; Mattis 2005, 2002; Mays, Graham Vinnicombe 2005]. Yet progress remains slow [Davidson & Burke 2011] some writers even suggesting no progress at all has been made [Carter & Silva 2010].

Initiatives identified as important to the advancement of women include gender awareness training, flexible work hours, mentoring and sponsorship opportunities, access to training and development, the use of gender in increasing women's career opportunities in hiring, training, promotions and international assignments decisions, among others. Wittenberg Cox [2013] moves the emphasis away from "fixing the women" to "fixing the workplace culture". Changing the workplace culture, she argues, must start with the full commitment of the CEO and the top management team.

Several researchers have examined work experiences found to be associated with women's career advancement [Morrison, White & Van Velsor 1987; Morrison 1992; Ragins, Townsend & Mattis 1998; MaCall, Lombardo & Morrison 1988]. These experiences include help from above via mentoring and sponsorship, taking career risks [Sandberg 2013], skill in managing one's staff, access to training and development, being given challenging and visible assignments, having financial bottom-line accountabilities, and receiving support. Obstacles to women's career progress include the attitudes and biases of their male colleagues, adapting to the male-dominated and male-gendered workplace, and fewer developmental job opportunities [McCall, Lombardo & Morrison 1998; Horgan 1999].

The present research examined the relationship of a range of organizational experiences and managerial and professional women's work and career satisfactions, work engagement and psychological wellbeing. It hopes to contribute to our understanding of factors associated with women's advancement. In addition, the research was carried out in Turkey, a country having societal and cultural values

that may not be conducive to women's career success [Burke & Koyuncu 2012; Kabasakal, Aycan, Karakas & Maden 2011; Kabasakal, Aycan & Karakas 2004; Guney, Gohar, Lilie & Akinci 2006].

## Method

### *Procedure*

The Turkish member of our team solicited female participants through Facebook, Linked in and Research Gate. Interested women were then sent an electronic survey in English. Data were collected over a two month period. Completed surveys were obtained from 209 women. This sample is best described as a convenience sample.

### *Sample*

Table 1 presents the personal demographic and work situation characteristics of our respondents (n=209). Most respondents worked full-time (86%), were married (68%), had children (66%), almost all had university degrees at various levels (97%), the majority having Bachelor's degrees (46%), worked between 31 and 50 hours per week (63%), were in middle management positions (34%), had taken no career breaks (74%), had less than 5 years of organizational and job tenures (47% and 65%, respectively), worked in organizations having between 101 to 500 employees (35%), and earned between 20,000 and 30,00 Turkish liras in annual salary (41%).

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Sample**

<u>Age</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Work status</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
25 or less	23	11.0	Full time	179	85.6
26-30	36	17.2	Part time	30	14.4
31-35	37	17.7	<u>Marital status</u>		
36-40	27	13.0	Single/divorced	67	32.1
41-45	25	11.9	Married	142	67.9
46-50	25	12.0	<u>Parental status</u>		
51-55	16	7.6	Children	138	66.5
56 and over	20	9.6	No children	70	33.5
<u>Education</u>		<u>Hours worked</u>			
High school	6	2.9	20 or less	31	14.8
Bachelors	88	43.1	21-30	37	17.7
Masters	61	30.5	31-40	67	32.1
Doctorate	50	24.4	41-50	65	31.1
<u>Organizational level</u>		51 or more 9 4.3			
<u>Non-mgmt.</u>		<u>Career breaks</u>			
Lower mgmt.	56	27.4	None	145	70.7
Middle mgmt.	68	33.5	2 years or less	35	17.1
Senior mgmt.	28	13.6	3 years or more	25	12.2

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Organizational size</u>				
Academic	108	51.7	50 or less	66	31.6
Business	101	48.3	51-100	32	14.3
			101 -500	72	35.4
			500 or more	39	18.7
<u>Job tenure</u>	<u>Organizational tenure</u>				
1-5 years	131	64.6	1-5 years	98	46.9
6-10 years	20	9.6	6-10 years	40	19.1
11-15 years	28	13.4	11-15	23	11.0
15-20 years	26	12.4	16-20	18	8.6
			21 or more	30	14.4
<u>Salary (Turkish Lira)</u>					
20,000 or less	33	15.8			
20,000 – 30,000	83	41.1			
31,000 – 40,000	38	18.2			
41,000 – 50,000	27	12.9			
51,000 or more	25	12.0			

Source: own work.

### *Measures*

#### *Personal demographic and work situation characteristics*

These were measured by single items. The former included age, marital status, parental status, level of education, work status, hours worked per week, and whether respondents had ever taken career breaks, The latter included organizational level, organizational tenure, job tenure, organizational size, and income.

Responses to the remaining variables in the research were made on five point Likert scales.

#### *Organizational experiences*

Organizational experiences were assessed using items from an earlier study of managerial and professional women undertaken by Burke, Koyuncu and Fiksenbaum [2006] in Turkey. Four organizational experiences were included. Workplace support was measured by four items ( $\alpha=.63$ ) One item was “There are strong female role models in my organization”. Career barriers were assessed by ten items ( $\alpha=.85$ ). One item was “Women who are perceived as dominant and in control are negatively perceived by men”. Use of male standards was assessed by four items ( $\alpha=.75$ ). A sample item was “Women need to be aggressive to be taken seriously.”. Negative perceptions of having family responsibilities was measured by three items ( $\alpha=.75$ ). One item was ”If a women takes a break from her career to have a child, her chances for advancement will suffer”. Three of the six correlations among the four organizational experiences were positive

and statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). Women reporting more negative perceptions of having family responsibilities also reported higher levels of Male Standards and Barriers in their workplace ( $r = .39$  and  $.57$ , respectively). In addition, women reporting a higher presence of Male Standards also indicated more Barriers in their workplace ( $r = .70$ ).

#### *Work outcomes*

##### *Job satisfaction*

Job satisfaction was assessed by a seven item scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ) developed by Kofodimos [1993]. One item was “I feel challenged by my work”.

##### *Career satisfaction*

Career satisfaction was assessed by a five item scale ( $\alpha = .76$ ) developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley [1990]. An item was “I feel satisfied with the progress I have made in my career to

##### *Work engagement*

Three facets of work engagement were assessed using scales developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker [2002]. Vigor was measured by six items ( $\alpha = .83$ ). One item was “At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy”. Dedication was assessed by five items ( $\alpha = .87$ ). An item was “My job inspires me”. Absorption was measured by six items ( $\alpha = .86$ ). An item was “I get carried away when I’m working”.

##### *Perceptions of bias*

Seven items used previously by Burke, Koynucu and Fiksenbaum [2008] measured the extent to which our women respondents saw their organizations favoring men ( $\alpha = .87$ ). The opening stated “In my organization the general perception is that”. One item was “Men are better suited for upper level management positions.

##### *Intent to quit*

Intent to quit was measured by two items ( $\alpha = .78$ ) developed by Burke [1991]. An item was “Are you currently looking for a different job in a different organization?” (yes/no).

##### *Psychological well-being*

##### *Emotional Exhaustion*

Emotional exhaustion was assessed by a nine item scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ), part of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, created by Maslach, Jackson and Leiter [1996]. One item was “I feel emotionally drained from my work”.

### *Work-family conflict*

Work-family conflict was measured by a six item scale ( $\alpha=.73$ ) created by Carlson, Kacmar and Williams [2000]. An item was “My work keeps me from family activities more than I would like”.

### *Life satisfaction*

Life satisfaction was measured by a four item scale ( $\alpha=.8$ ) developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin [1985]. One item was “I am satisfied with my life”.

### *Psychosomatic symptoms*

Psychosomatic symptoms or complaints were assessed by a nineteen item scale ( $\alpha=.87$ ) created by Quinn and Shepard [1974]. Respondents indicated how frequently they experienced each physical symptom or complaint (e.g. headaches, difficulty sleeping) in the past year.

## **Results**

### *Analysis plan*

Hierarchical regression analyses were undertaken in which predictor variables were entered in a specified order. The first block of predictors ( $n=6$ ) were personal demographics which included age, marital status, parental status, level of education, career breaks and work status. The second block of predictors consisted of work situation characteristics ( $n=5$ ) and included job and organizational tenure, organizational level, hours worked, and organizational size. The third block of predictors ( $n=4$ ) were the measures of organizational experiences. When a block of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment of explained variance on a work outcome or psychological wellbeing measure ( $p<.05$ ), individual items or measures within such blocks having a significant and independent relationship with an outcome variable were identified ( $p<.05$ ). This method of analysis indicates the relationship of measures of the four organizational experiences with outcome variables controlling for the effects of both personal demographic characteristics and work situation factors.

### *Predictors of work outcomes*

Table 2 shows the results of an examination of predictors of eight work outcomes. The following comments are offered in summary. First, women working full-time and women having longer organizational tenures were more job satisfied ( $Bs=.28$  and  $.24$ , respectively); women reporting fewer workplace Barriers, women

indicating higher levels of workplace Supports, and women reporting more negative perceptions of having family responsibilities were more job satisfied ( $B_s = -.35, .27$  and  $.17$ , respectively). Second women reporting fewer workplace Barriers, and women indicating a higher presence of Male Standards, reported higher levels of career satisfaction ( $B_s = -.35$  and  $.38$ , respectively). Third, women reporting more career breaks, and married women, reported more Work Family Conflict ( $B_s = -.30$  and  $-.18$ , respectively); women indicating more negative perceptions of having family responsibilities also indicated more Work Family Conflict ( $B = .26$ ). Fourth, younger women, single women, women working full-time and women with children indicated higher intentions to quit ( $B_s = -.25, .22, .14$  and  $.14$ , respectively). Women having less organizational tenure were also more likely to intend to quit ( $B = -.22$ ), and women indicating more workplace Barriers and fewer negative perceptions of having family responsibilities were more likely to intend to quit ( $B_s = -.38$  and  $-.32$ , respectively).

Let us now consider the three work engagement measures. Fifth, older women, and women with less organization tenure indicated higher levels of Vigor ( $B_s = .42$  and  $-.25$ , respectively); women reporting higher levels of workplace support, more Career Barriers, fewer negative perceptions of having family responsibilities, and a smaller presence of Male Standards also indicated higher levels of BVigor ( $B_s = .50, .32, -.24$  and  $-.18$ , respectively), Sixth, Women who were married indicated higher levels of Dedication ( $B = .14$ ); women reporting higher levels of workplace support, more workplace barriers, and fewer negative perceptions of having family responsibilities also indicated higher levels of dedication ( $B_s = .42, .22$  and  $-.28$ , respectively). Seventh, women working full time, those receiving higher levels of workplace support, and those indicated fewer negative perceptions from having family responsibilities also indicated higher levels of Absorption ( $B_s = .23, .29$  and  $-.25$ , respectively) Eighth, and finally, women reporting fewer workplace barriers, fewer negative perceptions from having family responsibilities, and higher levels of workplace supports indicated a lower Perception of Male Bias ( $B_s = .37, .28$  and  $-.26$ , respectively).

**Table 2. Predictors of work Outcomes**

Work Outcomes				
Job satisfaction (n= 197)	R	R2	Change R2	P
Personal demographics	.36	.13	.13	.001
Employment status (.28)				
Work situation factors	.39	.15	.02	NS
Organizational experiences	.57	.33	.18	.001
Barriers (-.35)				
Support (.22)				
Family Responsibilities (.17)				

<u>Career Satisfaction (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.20	.04	.04	NS
<u>Work situation factors</u>	.20	.04	.00	NS
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.35	.12	.08	.05
Male standards (.35)				
Barriers (-.35)				
<u>Work-Family conflict (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.42	.18	.18	.001
Marital status (-.16)				
Career breaks (-.30)				
<u>Work situation factors</u>	.46	.21	.03	NS
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.55	.30	.09	.001
Family Responsibilities (.26)				
<u>Intent to quit (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.49	.24	.24	.001
Age (.35)				
Work status (.14)				
Marital status (.22)				
Parental status (.14)				
<u>Work situation factors</u>	.53	.28	.04	.01
Organizational tenure (.22)				
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.62	.39	.11	.001
Barriers (-.38)				
Family responsibilities (.32)				
<u>Vigor (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.38	.14	.14	.001
Age (.42)				
<u>Work situation factors</u>	.47	.22	.08	.01
Organizational tenure (-.25)				
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.67	.45	.23	.001
Support (.50)				
Barriers (.32)				
Family Responsibilities (-.24)				
Male standards (-.18)				
<u>Dedication (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.33	.11	.11	.001
Marital status (.14)				
Work situation factors	.37	.13	.02	NS
Organizational experiences	.57	.33	.20	.001
Support (.44)				
Family Responsibilities (-.28)				
Barriers (.22)				
<u>Absorption (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.37	.14	.14	.001
Work status (.23)				

<u>Work situation factors</u>	.40	.16	.03	NS
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.52	.27	.10	.001
Support (.29)				
Family Responsibilities (-.25)				
<u>Perceptions of bias (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.18	.03	.03	NS
<u>Work situation factors</u>	.22	.05	.02	NS
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.62	.38	.37	.001
Barriers (.37)				
Support (-.26)				
Family Responsibilities (.26)				

Source: own work.

A few more general observations of these findings are worth highlighting. First the presence of workplace Barriers, negative perceptions of having family Responsibilities, and levels of workplace support has six, seven and five significant relationships with the eight work outcomes. The presence of Male Standards had only two significant associations with these eight outcomes. Workplace supports had always had positive relationships with desired work outcomes; stronger negative perceptions of having family responsibilities generally had negative relationships with desired work outcomes, and the presence of workplace Barriers had mixed relationships, sometimes positive with desired work outcomes and sometimes negative with desired work outcomes. The presence of workplace Barriers seemed to operate as challenges with particular work outcomes (e.g., Vigor, Dedication).

#### *Predictors of psychological wellbeing outcomes*

Table 3 presents the results of predictors of the three measures of psychological wellbeing. The following comments are offered in summary. First, considering emotional exhaustion, women with shorter career breaks and single women reported higher levels of emotion exhaustion ( $Bs=.19$  and  $.15$ , respectively). Women at higher organizational levels also reported more exhaustion ( $B=.15$ ). None of the our organizational experiences had significant and independent relationship with level of emotional exhaustion. Second, considering health complaints, older women and women working full time reported more health complaints ( $Bs=.21$  and  $-.27$ , respectively). Women reporting higher levels of support indicated fewer health complaints ( $B=-.19$ ). Finally, no personal demographic or work situation factors had significant and independent relationships with life satisfaction. However women indicating more workplace barriers, more negative workplace perceptions of having family responsibilities, and less workplace support indicated lower levels of life satisfaction ( $Bs=-.31$ ,  $-.18$ , and  $.15$ , respectively).

**Table 3. Predictors of Psychological Wellbeing**

Psychological Wellbeing				
Emotional Exhaustion (n=198)	R	R2	Change R2	P
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.40	.16	.16	.001
Career breaks (-.19)				
Marital status (-.15)				
<u>Work situation factors</u>	.48	.23	.07	.01
Organizational level (.15)				
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.52	.28	.05	.05
<u>Health complaints (n=185)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.34	.16	.16	.001
Age (.21)				
Work status (-.27)				
Work situation factors	.43	.19	.03	NS
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.57	.33	.14	.001
Support (-.19)				
<u>Life satisfaction (n=198)</u>				
<u>Personal demographics</u>	.25	.06	.06	NS
<u>Work situation factors</u>	.28	.08	.03	NS
<u>Organizational experiences</u>	.45	.21	.15	.001
Barriers (-.31)				
Family Responsibilities (-.18)				
Support (.15)				

Source: own work.

Again a few more general observations are worth noting. First, organizational experiences had significant relationships with two of the three measures of psychological wellbeing. Second, workplace support was associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing whereas the other organizational experiences diminished psychological wellbeing.

## Discussion

The results of this investigation, consistent with previous conclusions, showed relationships between managerial and professional women's organizational experiences and various work and psychological wellbeing outcomes (see Tables 2 and 3). Three organizational experiences had relationships across a number of these outcomes: levels of workplace or organizational support, negative workplace perceptions of having family responsibilities, and the presence of workplace barriers. It is sensible then that interventions be designed and implemented to address these areas; increasing levels of support, reducing concerns about the costs of family responsibilities, and understanding those Barriers that enhance women's contributions and those that interfere with women's contributions. While each of

these three organizational experiences can be addressed in various and differing ways, they are also tied together by a common workplace culture. Changing the workplace culture requires a complete commitment by the chief executive officer and the senior team to foster the advancement of qualified managerial and professional women. Without this investment, efforts will fall short [Wittenberg-Cox 2010]. Men have to become allies instead of adversaries to women's career advancement [Burke & Major 2014]. Prime, Otterman and Salib [2014], based on their work with organizations in changing workplace cultures illustrate how fostering inclusive leadership increases men's commitment.

Let us now consider ways in which each of the three common workplace experiences noted above can be addressed. Increasing levels of support involves a full commitment to supporting women's advancement as the context, collecting data on the experiences of women currently in the organization and, their jobs and levels, and their past development; the use of gender in hiring, promotion salary and career planning and employee development discussions to ensure equal access; the creation of policies that support both women's and men's advancement, the setting of targets for increasing women's presence and progress, and measuring the results of these initiatives over time.

Concerns of women about the ways that both the perceptions and the realities of having family responsibilities are seen to have negative career consequences in the wider workplace culture can be addressed by again having full commitment of the senior executive team to change this aspect of the culture, the use of flexible work hours, compressed workweeks, telecommuting, and reduced workload arrangements for a short period of time under particular circumstances. Hill and Morrison [2013] highlight the role of workplace flexibility in work-life integration. They define workplace flexibility as "the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where and for how long they engage in work-related tasks" [p.270]. They see workplace flexibility as having three aspects: schedule flexibility, location flexibility and reduced workload. Examples of each include: schedule flexibility – flextime, a compressed work week; location flexibility – telecommuting, work at home; and Reduced workload - part time work, job sharing. Several workplace efforts to support work-family integration have been undertaken to change workplace cultures, providing examples of best practice [Bailyn, Fletcher & Kolb 1997; Rapaport, Bailyn, Kolb & Fletcher 1998].

Hammer, Van Dyck and Ellis [2013] review organizational policies supportive of work-life integration. These include flexible work arrangements, child and elder care supports, and informal supervisor support. Shockley, Thompson and Andreassi [2013] advocate changes to organizational cultures. They propose addressing organizational time demands, reducing the negative career images of taking part in work-family programs, and increasing levels of supervisor support.

Finally, workplace barriers need first be identified, then addressed. Barriers in the present study included the absence of female role models, higher performance standards for women, negative perceptions of dominant women held by both men and other women, and penalties attached to women having family responsibilities. Burke [2014] identified ways in which masculine organizational cultures disadvantage women in terms of valuing long working hours, viewing women's contributions differently than men's, and male chief executives and managerial women having different views on the barriers women face.

Let us now consider ways in which organizations can address these barriers. Streets and Major [2014] identified gendered career obstacles and opportunities for interventions to address these. These included: self-perceptions and career aspirations - addressed by having role models of successful women and career counseling; workplace culture - sexism, perceptions of bias - addressed by having successful women; workplace obstacles such as was gaps, work family conflicts, and the glass ceiling - addressed by increasing support for work-family integration, successful women ; advancement concerns, gendered leadership, and promotional barriers - addressed by decreasing the masculine culture, women use their leadership advantage strengths to succeed.

Vinnicombe, Moore and Anderson [2013] identify value in offering training and development sessions for women only. Metz and Kulik [2014] review old barriers to women's advancement (e.g., women lack the right stuff, lack line experience), persistent barriers (e.g., gender discrimination, gender roles), and new versions of old barriers (eg. covert instead of overt discrimination). They offer a number of suggestions, grounded in research evidence, to reduce these barriers including compulsory workshops to examine gender issues in their workplace, allowing and welcoming women back from maternity and other leaves, , holding managers accountable for women's progress, changing the long work hours norm allowing greater workplace schedule and place flexibility, and sponsoring women as well as mentoring them. Nugent, Dinolfo and Giscombe [2013] show how mentoring and sponsorship were integrated along with other strategies in formal leadership development programs, and employee support and networking groups. Brook and Graham [2013], using case studies, describe various initiatives developed to support the advancement of women including, quantitative and qualitative analyses of the status and experiences of women in a workplace reciprocal mentoring arrangements, career development support for women in the pipeline, and ensuring that systems, policies and processes essential for supporting women's advancement are in place.

### *Practical implications*

It is particularly critical to create a workplace culture supportive of women's advancement immediately upon women's joining an organization. Such efforts

will counter the decline in their aspirations in their early careers stages as they experience biases, limited support, and lack of career counseling from mentors and sponsors.

### *Limitations of the research*

This research, like most research has potential limitations which must be noted to place the results in a larger context. First, the sample, while relatively large, was a convenience sample. It may not reflect the experiences of managerial and professional women in Turkey. Second, all data involved self-reports with the slight possibility of response set tendencies. Third, all data were collected at one point in time making it difficult to consider causality.

### *Future research directions*

Several future research directions seem promising. First, replicating the study using a more representative sample of Turkish managerial and professional women would add benefit. Second, including indicators of job performance, including the evaluations of supervisors would extend and strengthen our conclusions. Third, focusing more specifically on the experiences of women, and men, having different numbers of children would also be instructive. Miner, Pesonen, Smittick, Seigel and Clark [2014] in a large sample of male and female faculty of law schools found that being a mother, particularly if one had three children was associated with higher levels of workplace incivility; men who were fathers also experienced higher levels of workplace incivility than did non-fathers.

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