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A Mixed Research on Barriers and Facilitators to Women's Representation in Academic Leadership in Türkiye

Türkiye'de Akademilerde Kadınların Yönetici Liderlikte Temsilinin Önündeki Engeller ve Kolaylaştırıcılar Üzerine Karma Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the profile of academic women manager leaders in Türkiye in comparison to the global dimension and to reveal the obstacles that cause female academics to be underrepresented in all academic leadership positions. It also aims to identify the observations and experiences of women academics on how these obstacles can be overcome and to get their views on what changes can be made to ensure adequate representation. In this mixed-method study, the status of women academic manager leaders in Türkiye was initially examined using a descriptive statistical technique based on quantitative data and a census designed to provide a snapshot of the career profile over time. Subsequently, qualitative research was conducted using a descriptive phenomenological design. The objective was to gather as much information as possible by asking open-ended questions and to allow the participants to share their experiences in depth. In this context, 26 academic women manager leaders working in different universities who have experienced or are experiencing academic leadership were reached. The common meaning of their experiences and observations was then sought to be revealed. Quantitative findings show that the proportion of academic women manager leaders is lower than the proportion of male leaders at different leadership levels. This proportion decreases as the leadership level increases. The results of the qualitative research, which analyzed the descriptive statements of the participants, indicate that women academic manager leaders in different positions and titles in Türkiye encounter obstacles, including internal competition, unequal gender roles, a patriarchal structure, implicit gender discrimination, and the necessity of exerting greater effort to attain leadership positions due to their gender. This has a negative impact on their general health, psychology, and time management. Nevertheless, it is recognized that the participants anticipate that the male-dominated academic leadership structure in Türkiye will be dismantled through a combination of individual, institutional, and social strategies. These include time management techniques, elected positions, and women's solidarity.

Keywords: Higher Education, Academic Leadership, Women's Leadership, Gender Discrimination, Mixed Research, Türkiye

Özet

Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki akademik kadın yönetici lider profilini küresel boyutla karşılaştırarak betimlemeyi ve onların tüm akademik liderlik pozisyonlarında yeterince temsil edilmemesine yol açan engelleri ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, kadın akademisyenlerin bu engellerin nasıl aşılabileceğine dair gözlem ve deneyimlerinin tespit edilmesi ve yeterli temsilin sağlanabilmesi için ne gibi değişiklikler yapılabileceğine dair görüşlerinin alınması amaçlanmaktadır. Karma yöntemli olarak tasarlanan araştırmada; ilk önce Türkiye'de akademik kadın yönetici liderlerin durumu nicel verilere dayalı betimsel istatistiksel teknikle incelenmiş ve kariyer profilinin zaman içindeki anlık görüntüsünü vermek için tasarlanmış bir kişi sayımı yapılmıştır. Sonra da betimleyici fenomenolojik desen kullanılarak nitel araştırma yapılmıştır. Açık uçlu sorular yöneltilerek mümkün olduğunca çok bilgi toplamak ve çok şey paylaşmalarını sağlayarak 'seslerinin' duyulmasına izin vermek amaçlanmıştır. Bu kapsamda farklı üniversitelerde çalışan ve akademik yönetici liderlik deneyimi yaşayan/yaşamış olan 26 akademik yönetici kadın lidere ulaşılarak yaşadıkları deneyim ve gözlemlerin ortak anlamı çıkarılmaya çalışılmıştır. Nicel bulgular, farklı liderlik düzeylerinde akademik kadın yönetici lider oranının erkek lider oranından düşük olduğunu ve liderlik düzeyi yükseldikçe bu oranın düştüğünü göstermektedir. Katılımcıların betimleyici ifadelerinin analiz edildiği nitel araştırma sonuçlarına göre, Türkiye'de farklı pozisyon ve unvanlardaki akademik kadın yönetici liderler "kadın" oldukları için liderliğe ulaşma sürecinde; kurum içi rekabet, toplumsal roller, toplumsal yapı, örtük cinsiyet ayrımcılığı ve daha fazla çaba gösterme zorunluluğu gibi engellerle karşılaşmaktadır. Bu durum onların genel sağlıklarını, psikolojilerini ve zaman yönetimlerini etkilemektedir. Ancak katılımcıların Türkiye'deki erkek egemen akademik liderlik yapısının geliştirilecek bireysel (zaman yönetimi gibi), kurumsal (pozisyonların seçimle verilmesi gibi) ve toplumsal (kadın dayanışması gibi) çözümler ile kırılacağını dair umutları bulunduğu anlaşılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yükseköğretim, Akademik Liderlik, Kadın Liderliği, Cinsiyet Ayrımcılığı, Karma Araştırma, Türkiye

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A leader is defined as a person who mobilizes, motivates, influences, and unites people around specific goals without resorting to coercion (Gül, 2019). The leaders of educational institutions are their managers. However, managerial approaches exhibited only according to the laws cannot meet the needs of educational institutions (Şişman, 2014). Because while management is a relatively structured process to achieve organizational goals within the framework of defined roles, leadership in contrast, is an interpersonal process that mobilizes and motivates followers by focusing on long-term organizational goals and change (Taylor and Machado, 2006). In this context, academic managers who seek to develop educational institutions in accordance with the established goals must assume a leadership role. However, as senior leadership roles are typically perceived as being more suited to men, these positions are predominantly occupied by men (Guihen, 2019). In organizations that lack explicit policies on leadership development, men tend to select individuals who are similar to themselves and prefer to have another man in these roles (Gandhi and Sen, 2021). Consequently, the difficulties women encounter in accessing leadership positions and their underrepresentation in academic manager leadership roles remain a pervasive issue (Burkinshaw et al., 2018; Showunmi et al., 2016).

The critical social science approach, which aims to understand organizations and organizational management and to grasp different aspects of power relations, suggests that the interests of various groups should be represented at the same time and in the same proportion (Alvesson and Deetz, 2006 as cited Topçu and Yaslioglu, 2022). The critical approach posits that organizations are sites where power relations are perpetuated and reinforced. The exercise of individual and organizational power in any practice has the potential to perpetuate social inequalities, including those based on class, race, and gender. Some authors posit that feminist social science approaches constitute a subset of this overarching methodology (Kümbetoğlu, 2011).

In accordance with the tenets of gender role theory, the formation of gender roles is contingent upon the fulfilment of specific social expectations, which in turn constrain the behavioural proclivities of women and men. The characteristics that society expects women and men to demonstrate separately are referred to as gender stereotypes. The study employs an institutional barriers and discrimination theory to elucidate the manner in which gender-based discrimination and implicit sexist practices serve to exacerbate the challenges women encounter in their pursuit of senior leadership roles. In everyday life, individuals act as situated subjects, speaking from the vantage point of their respective positions when conveying their experiences. In this context, the term "social constructivism" is used to describe the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and qualities that are considered appropriate for women and men within a given society (Polat, 2018). As Dikmen and Maden (2012) assert, the distribution of tasks related to these roles is structured in a manner that is not open to question and is continually reinforced. As Ergöl and others (2012) observe, female lecturers tend to perpetuate traditional gender roles rather than challenging them. It is evident that there is a disparity between women and men with regard to their involvement in social activities, the advantages they derive from opportunities, their access to services, and the resources they are able to utilize (Başarır and Sarı, 2015). These discriminatory and unequal practices against women result in significant inequalities in the economic, social, cultural, and political structures of society (Özaydınlık, 2014).

In point of fact, the constitutions of numerous states are gender-sensitive and adopt democratic principles that respect the dignity of all individuals. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), one of the fundamental human rights treaties of the United Nations, was adopted by Türkiye in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. CEDAW prohibits all forms of discrimination against women and agrees to pursue policies to eliminate such discrimination. In this context, the effects of the Convention, which includes provisions such as the enactment of laws prohibiting discrimination against women and providing for the necessary sanctions, and the amendment or abolition of existing laws, regulations, customs, and traditions, have also been reflected in constitutions. In Türkiye, the Commission for Equal Opportunities in the Employment Sector was established in 2009. The Law No. 6701 on the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, published in the Official Gazette in 2016, states in paragraph 2 of Article 7 that gender discrimination in working life is prohibited, except in cases arising from necessity ((HREIT, 2016). The Constitution enshrines the principle of equality between men and women and guarantees equal rights for both sexes. A plethora of legislation exists pertaining to gender equality, including the Labor Law (Özkanlı and White, 2008). The proportion of women in leadership positions is reflected in global reports, with a global average of 36% (World Economic Forum, 2020). UN Women's Gender Outlook Report (2021) estimated that it would take 257 years to achieve global progress on gender equality, equal participation and pay. However, the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented this from happening. Türkiye, which had been making progress on gender inequality since the 2000s, was affected by the pandemic, leading to a worsening of its gender equality record.

The Global Status of Women Manager Leaderships in Academia

As posited by critical organizational theory, organizations serve as sites where power relations are perpetuated. Any practice wherein individual and organizational power is perceived has the potential to give rise to social inequalities, such as those pertaining to gender discrimination (Knights,

2009 as cited Topçu and Yaslioglu, 2022). It is challenging for women to thrive in a system that perpetuates gender discrimination. In positions that require power, prestige, and status, such as management and leadership, this becomes even more challenging, and inequalities are encountered (Utma, 2019). According to the literature, the main obstacle is the male hegemony, which creates a stereotype by associating leadership with masculinity (Taşçı-Kaya, 2016). The fact that educational leadership is based on masculine behaviors results in a gender gap in academia. For instance, in India, while the number of female university graduates is on the rise, only 13 out of 725 universities have female vice-chancellors (Jangid and Dalal, 2022). In Vietnam, the proportion of women occupying leadership positions in higher education is approximately 23% (Maheshwari and Nayak, 2022). In New Zealand universities, 15.18% of female academics hold the rank of professor, while 23.19% hold the rank of associate professor (Nandi, 2019). The gender gap in Malta is among the largest in Europe (Azzopardi, 2017). The proportion of female academic leaders remains disappointingly low (Ellul, 2009). In Malaysia, the proportion of female vice-chancellors is 15%, while in Australia it is 18% (Morley, 2013). In China, women academics are discouraged from assuming leadership roles by a male-dominated top management culture and privileged male networks (Zhao, 2008).

In the European Union, only 15.5% of higher education institutions and 10% of Ph. D.-granting universities are headed by women. The proportion of women in the position of rector/vice rector is 13% (Morley, 2014). Oxford University broke the 800-year-old glass ceiling by appointing its first female vice-chancellor in 2016. In the United Kingdom, approximately 46% of academics, 24% of professors, and 14% of vice-chancellors are women (Macfarlane and Burg, 2019). In German universities, as reported by Read and Kehm (2016), 12% of rectors/vice-chancellors are women. In the United States, 26% of universities have female heads (Parker, 2015). Yale, Stanford, Cornell, Calgary, Harvard, McGill, Yale, Stanford, Cornell, Calgary, Harvard, McGill, and Yale have women's leadership centers that provide opportunities for women to explore and realize their leadership potential. However, except for Harvard, these centers focus on women in business.

The State of Women Manager Leadership in Academia in Türkiye

Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, was a notable leader. One of the primary objectives of the republican reforms was to establish equality between men and women. According to him, "If only men have modern rights in a society, it weakens more than half of the society" (Ünsay, 2017). In 1923, Atatürk asserted that women would become scientists and pursue all levels of education alongside men. "Then they will walk together with men in social life, they will help and support each other," and thus initiated the first step of a society that aspires to develop and modernize (Atatürk, 1969). This initiative, which sought to transform the conventional mode of societal existence, led to women assuming their rightful position in the social and economic realms (Mısırdalı Yangil & Öztürk Başpınar, 2022).

Although Turkish women were granted the right to enter higher education in 1914, they were afforded equal rights and opportunities with men as a result of the new educational mobilization in the republican period (Çağlayan, 2015). The advent of a set of principles, including secularism, republicanism, populism, statism, reformism, and nationalism, facilitated the entry of women into the academic field in 1932 (Acar, 1991). In the subsequent years, social norms became more flexible, as evidenced by statistical indicators indicating that between 1930 and 1970, women were increasingly able to enter education, employment, and other public spheres of social life (Özkanlı and Özbilgin, 2001). Türkan Akyol (May 30, 1980) was the inaugural female rector in Türkiye. As rector of Ankara University, Akyol was elected as a member of the Inter-University Council in 1981 and subsequently became its president (Çerezci, 2018). Despite a notable expansion in the number and proportion of female academic personnel in Türkiye since 1993, women remain underrepresented in senior academic roles and academic leadership positions within universities. While there is a concentration of women in lower and mid-level administrative and academic positions, the number of women in managerial leadership positions is quite low. The data indicate that the majority of women in higher education encounter difficulties in appointments and promotions. As they ascend the academic ladder, the proportion of women declines, particularly at the associate professorship and professorship levels. Female academics are generally able to ascend to the roles of head of department and dean, but not to vice-rector or rector (Acuner and Sallan Gül, 1993). İrey (2011) discovered that female academics in Turkish universities are concentrated in lower-status positions such as lecturers, and that women believe they are taken for granted and relegated to the background. Nevertheless, some women administrators do not perceive that they are subject to gender discrimination and are hindered, despite the low representation of women academics in senior administrative positions such as rectors/vice-rectors (Özkanlı, 2010). Machado-Taylor and Özkanlı (2013) concluded that the representation of women in professorships in Türkiye is quite high compared to other countries, and that their promotion to senior academic positions is supported.

In Türkiye, the appointment of rectors of state and foundation universities is the responsibility of the president, while the appointment of vice-rectors is the responsibility of the rectors themselves. The Council of Higher Education selects and appoints deans from among the candidates proposed by the rector, while vice-deans are

appointed by the rector. The appointment of directors of institutes is the responsibility of the rector, who acts on the recommendation of the dean of the respective faculty. The appointment of directors of colleges and professional schools is the responsibility of the rector.

Global challenges that impede the representation of academic women in managerial leadership positions.

The obstacles faced by women academics are categorised in different ways by authors (Yıldız & Çiçek, 2013, s. 136; Yıldız, 2014; Bullough & Sully de Luque, 2015; Fuller, 2017). Despite being classified under different headings, these barriers are interrelated. Despite regional and national variations in culture, achievement, and development, the obstacles to women's participation in academia are remarkably consistent across contexts (Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017). The principal barriers can be enumerated as follows:

Patriarchal perspectives and patriarchal family structures: One of the most pivotal explanatory concepts in feminist theory is patriarchy. Patriarchy denotes the predominance of men over women in both the public and private domains. It signifies an intensifying male dominance over women in society and the institutionalization and display of male dominance over women and children in the family. This suggests that men possess authority in pivotal societal institutions, while women are denied access to such power. The androcentrism that persists in educational institutions places the male perspective at the center of scientific, historical, academic, and everyday phenomena. As a result, gender polarization persists. It can be posited that women can benefit from opportunities and possibilities as long as men allow them (Eroğlu & İrdem, 2016). In a system where leadership patterns are associated with men, women face the problem of the glass ceiling (Coleman, 2012). The concept of the glass ceiling can be defined as an invisible and artificial barrier created by organizational prejudices and stereotypes that prevent women from reaching senior positions (Wirth, 2001 as cited Karataş and Su, 2016). This barrier results in women being subjected to gender discrimination in the organizational context and being employed in lower positions than men. Consequently, the increase in women's educational leadership roles is less than 1% per year (Fuller, 2017). Indeed, the findings of Suğur and Cangöz's (2016) study indicate that universities are not entirely exempt from the patriarchal structure that operates as a network of relations between men in terms of working practices. This structure perpetuates gender-based inequalities, hindering the creation of egalitarian working environments for women and impeding their advancement to senior management positions within the university management hierarchy. Additionally, women also find it difficult to identify authority with women because they see men as the center of power and authority with the perspective of "think leader, think man" (Mihail, 2006). When university students were asked in a study to draw the leader in their mind, 18.75% of them drew a female leader, 18.75% drew a genderless leader, and 62.5% drew a male leader (Çetin & Bilir Güler, 2018). The patriarchal system, which is sustained by power relations, perpetuates gender roles and discourse. The deeply embedded structure of patriarchal ideology presents a significant challenge for women in recognizing these obstacles. Therefore, unequal power relations between genders pervade all aspects of social life, becoming normalized, legitimized, and internalized as obstacles in the very arenas where these pressures manifest. When the education system reinforces traditional gender roles, it can be said that educated women in society internalize these roles and cannot move away from them (Başarır & Sarı, 2015). Indeed, Aktaş's (2020) research indicates that the predominant manner in which women academics conceptualize management is as a practice situated within a male-dominated field. This field also serves to illustrate the fact that management is characterised by a gender-specific feature. The participants underscored the pivotal role of gender-based roles in the social structure in shaping the male dominance in academia. In this context, women academics perceive management as a challenging endeavor within a male-dominated field.

Lack of family support: The simultaneous demands of domestic responsibilities, such as housework and childcare, and professional responsibilities, such as teaching, conducting scientific research, writing books and articles, and attending events such as congresses and conferences, present a significant challenge for women in the academic managerial leadership race (Toffoletti & Starr, 2016). This situation has even led some women to decide not to have children (Vella, 2022). As reported by Özkanlı (2010), female academics in Türkiye identify a lack of family support as a significant barrier to achieving senior management positions. Another study indicates that, as a consequence of gender-based socialization, only 20% of men engage in domestic work. While women continue to struggle to balance home and work responsibilities, the majority of Turkish husbands play a minimal role in domestic tasks (Özkanlı & Korkmaz, 2000). Some men believe that they can only provide assistance if they desire to do so, rather than assuming a more equitable distribution of responsibilities. Therefore, it is imperative that the division of labor with spouses be established. Otherwise, women academics will be disinclined to assume managerial leadership positions, a challenge that persists globally (Husu, 2001).

Lack of family-friendly policies: It is recommended that family-friendly measures such as childcare facilities, extended maternity/parental leave, flexible or reduced working hours, and paid leave be implemented. It is also important to ensure that these measures are not merely on paper (Hellicar, 2013). In this manner, female academics should not be compelled to choose between their careers and their families. In the absence of a supportive environment, there may be a tendency to delay the formation of a family

unit until after the attainment of tenure. Alternatively, some may refrain from starting a family altogether, due to concerns that their familial commitments may not be perceived favourably in relation to the tenure process or other professional opportunities.

Lack of professional development programs and mentoring: Professional development programs assist academic women managers in becoming more competent and confident, thereby providing a driving force to maintain their career goals and contributing to their career advancement (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008). Nevertheless, the majority of women who attain leadership roles fail to establish prototypes or serve as mentors to other female candidates (Faniko et al., 2016). The "queen bee syndrome" posits that successful women in male-dominated work environments disassociate themselves from other women and impede their development and advancement. Additionally, these women tend to resist changes in traditional gender roles (Mavin, 2008).

Lack of motivation: The result of years of stereotypical upbringing is that the majority of women are still lacking in the motivation to pursue careers at the senior levels. Motivation can be defined as the driving force that motivates individuals to take action in pursuit of a specific goal, in alignment with their personal aspirations. From another perspective, human capital theory posits that women's dearth of motivation to invest in the cultivation of their intellectual capital represents a pivotal factor contributing to their underrepresentation in senior positions (Gandhi & Sen, 2021).

Lack of confidence: This is one of the most frequently cited obstacles in the academic literature on women's academic managerial leadership (Negiz & Yemen, 2011). As Chesterman and others (2005) have observed, many women academics are reluctant to apply for leadership positions without specific encouragement or approval from others. This reluctance may be compounded by a lack of confidence and ambivalence—even resistance—to these roles. Gill and Orgad (2017) posit that the primary obstacle preventing women from attaining top academic careers is not a lack of confidence, but rather a dearth of time and opportunity. To overcome this barrier, Reis (2015) suggests that women should develop their communication and networking skills proactively. At this juncture, the concept of social capital becomes pertinent. The evaluation of women leaders' access to social networks and solidarity groups, as well as their career development, can be conducted within the framework of social capital theory. The functions of social capital include facilitating access to extensive information sources, providing control and influence, and offering solidarity in relationships characterized by proximity and trust. The social capital that women managers possess enables them to access the resources that they require for their professional activities, including status, reputation, power and information.

Risk aversion: The term "risk-taking behavior" is used to describe the decision-making processes of an individual in a risky situation. Here, uncertainty is the main feature. The results of the decision can be positive or negative. A person's risk tendency or risk aversion, together with risk perception, determines the evaluation of a risky situation as positive or negative and the possibility of taking risks. According to this model, personal, social and cultural factors also affect risk tendency and risk aversion. This tendency manifests in their preference for maintaining a background role and limiting their visibility (Croson & Gneezy, 2009).

Conflict between administrative and academic roles: Role conflict refers to a situation in which the fulfillment of one role makes it challenging for an individual to simultaneously fulfill other roles. As a consequence of assuming multiple roles, it is inevitable that tension and conflict will arise. Consequently, the individual will either fail to fulfill the requisite roles or attempt to fulfill as many roles as possible, ranking them in order of priority. Female academics in leadership roles attempt to reconcile their academic responsibilities with those of an academic manager. Being in senior management negatively impacts business life due to the decrease in time devoted to career and research, the multitude of non-work roles, and difficulties in time management. When their research suffers, many of these women choose to reject administrative roles in favor of continuing their research (Morley et al., 2017). Neale and Özkanlı (2010) found that academics frequently relinquish their research roles when they are burdened with excessive administrative responsibilities for which they are ill-prepared.

Barriers created by women themselves: Some female academics decline leadership roles that would necessitate travel and additional responsibilities, citing concerns about their ability to fulfill their traditional roles as housewives and mothers (Ersöz, 1988). A significant proportion of academic women in managerial roles are dissuaded from pursuing senior leadership positions due to the inherent difficulties involved in attaining such positions and the additional challenges associated with maintaining them (Drew & Murtagh, 2005). The study of women's "managerial leadership" processes remains a significant area of academic inquiry, there are very few articles on "mid-level leadership" such as deans or department heads within the research on leadership in higher education (Inman, 2011). The objective of this study is twofold: firstly, to ascertain the proportion of female academics occupying executive leadership roles in Türkiye in comparison to the global average; and secondly, to investigate the obstacles to the advancement of academic women managers, including those in mid-level leadership positions. Additionally, this study aims to reflect on the individual physical and psychological consequences and effects of the obstacles faced by women academic

managers, to suggest solutions for female academics who are going through a similar process, and to reflect on their observations and experiences regarding potential changes that could be made to increase the representation of academic women in managerial leader roles.

Research Design

This study was designed as a mixed methods research. First, the status of academic women manager leaders in Türkiye was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques based on quantitative data. Census was conducted to provide a snapshot over time of the demographic and career profile of women in the academic managerial leadership roles of rector/vice rector, dean/director, and department head at universities in Türkiye. These data were collected from publicly available sources, primarily university websites. A descriptive phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research designs, was then used to see what meaning the participants attributed to their observations and experiences and how they reflected on them (Creswell, 2018). This design is suitable for realistic and holistic reflection of human experiences in their natural environment, as well as for understanding tacit knowledge about the topics covered (Miles & Huberman, 2015).

Ethical Issues

The ethics committee approval required for the realization of the study was obtained from Anadolu University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Board with protocol number 680319.

Population and Sample (Quantitative Dimension of the Research)

In order to understand the complex structure and different layers of gendered reality, qualitative research techniques are frequently used. However, qualitative techniques are predominant, quantitative techniques can also be used together. This study was designed as a mixed-method research. The population of the quantitative dimension of the study consists of academic leaders of universities in Türkiye. The sample consists of female academics in academic manager leader positions in universities in Türkiye. Accordingly, a census of academic women manager leaders was conducted to provide a snapshot of their demographic and career profile in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Study Group (Qualitative Dimension of the Study)

Phenomenology is an endeavor to comprehend and elucidate the practices of everyday life, as well as the ideas, beliefs, perceptions, behaviors, and knowledge that give rise to these practices. In phenomenological studies, the study group should consist of individuals and groups who have experience with the research topic and can reflect on their experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2007). In this study, 26 people working at different universities who were reached through sympathetic channels and who had/have experience in academic leadership were reached. In the research, which was conducted according to the principle of confidentiality of the academic and institutional identities of the participants, the study group was selected using the criterion sampling technique (experience in academic leadership) (Miles & Huberman, 2015). This choice was effective in gathering in-depth information from the data sources and was appropriate for the research problem (Neuman, 2012).

In this study, the data obtained through open-ended questions based on a comprehensive review of the literature were determined by the participants' own representations of how they attributed meaning to their experiences (phenomena) from their own perspectives (Greasley & Ashworth, 2007). In this way, the aim was to obtain as much information as possible and to allow their 'voices' to be heard by allowing them to share as much as possible. A language expert and two field experts were consulted about the appropriateness of the questions. For this purpose, an attempt was made to determine the level of consensus with options such as "appropriate", "not appropriate" and "your suggestions for correction" for the questions prepared in the draft interview form. In analyzing the data; defining the phenomenon, organizing the data collection tool, organizing the data.

Findings

Quantitative Findings

In Türkiye, 38.2% of academics were women in 2003, 45% in 2020 and 46.2% in 2023. In 2023, 51% of research assistants, 46.6% of Ph.D. students, 40.8% of associate professors and 33.9% of professors will be women. This shows that as the academic title increases, the number of female academics decreases and the number of female academics, except for research assistants, lags behind the number of male academics (CoHE, 2023). According to CoHE (2020), the proportion of female deans is 18%. In this study, if female directors are added, the result is 23.3%. It is assumed that the proportion of female rectors (8%) has not changed since 2020. According to the data for the 2022-2023 academic year, 8.4% of the rectors of 206 universities in Türkiye are women and 91.6% are men. Among the vice-rectors, 17.8% were women and 82.2% were men. Among deans and directors, 23.3% were women and 76.6% were men. Among department chairs, 36.1% were female and 63.9% were male. The results show that there are fewer female leaders than male leaders at different levels of leadership, and that the proportion of female leaders decreases as the level of leadership increases. Detailed information on the gender of academic manager leaders in Turkish universities is presented in Table 1.

Qualitative Findings

Demographic findings about the research participants are presented in Table 2.

The responses of 26 female participants in academic leadership positions in Turkish universities to the research questions were coded using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) open coding and axial coding techniques. This procedure is presented in two parts: The first section lists the open codes of the responses to a total of seven questions (Table 3). The second section presents the axial codes and relevant quotes.

Note: In question 1, 16 out of 26 participants indicated that they did not face any obstacles, in question 3, 11 out of 26 participants indicated that they did not have to prove themselves, while in question 4, 11 out of 26 participants gave short answers such as yes or no. In question 5, 12 out of 26 participants indicated that they did not experience role conflict. In question 6, 2 out of 26 participants stated that there could be no individual solution.

Barriers Encountered According to Participants' Responses

The "obstacles encountered" according to the participants' responses consist of six subcategories, such as internal competition, unequal gender roles, personal preferences, patriarchal structure, implicit gender discrimination, and having to make more effort, and are shown in Table 4 with the participants' sample descriptive statements coded as P1, P2, P3, and Pn.

Consequences and Impacts of Barriers According to Participants' Responses

The "consequences and effects of barriers encountered" according to participants' responses consist of three subcategories: health effects, psychological effects, and time management effects, and are shown in Table 5 with examples of participants' descriptive statements.

Solutions to Obstacles Category

"Suggestions for solutions to the obstacles encountered", determined on the basis of the answers given by the participants, consist of three subcategories: individual, institutional and social solutions, and are presented in Table 6 with descriptive examples.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this mixed method study, the situation of academic women manager leaders in Türkiye was investigated with descriptive statistical techniques based on quantitative data, and then a qualitative study was conducted to understand the phenomena in depth. A descriptive phenomenological design was used to try to uncover the common meaning of the experiences and observations of academic women managers in different positions and titles. According to a snapshot of the gender of academic leaders taken from publicly available sources in the 2022-2023 academic year, 8.4% of the 206 university rectors, 17.8% of vice-rectors, 23.3% of deans and directors, and 36.1% of department heads in Türkiye are women. The results show that there are fewer female leaders than male leaders at different levels of managerial leadership and that the proportion of female leaders decreases as the level of managerial leadership increases. According to the results of the qualitative research, which explored the reasons for this situation in depth, women in Türkiye - like women in other countries (UN Women, 2021) - face barriers in their access to academic leadership that limit their opportunities and undermine their full participation in various processes.

Based on the descriptive statements of the participants, there are six categories of obstacles that female academics in different positions and titles in Türkiye face in the process of achieving academic leadership: 1) internal competition (being seen as a competitor, competition among women, not being the first choice - men are considered first - mobbing, leaders' efforts to protect their positions), 2) unequal gender roles (getting spouse's approval - expectation -, motherhood - excuse of motherhood - and emotionality - women are emotional -, being a son - sister - mother, family responsibilities, prioritizing children - women say we don't have time for children -, balancing family and work), 3) personal preferences (not leaving the comfort zone, lack of self-confidence, avoiding responsibility), 4) patriarchal structure (patriarchal society, patriarchal thinking, male-dominated system), 5) implicit gender discrimination (distribution of work during pregnancy - not giving responsibility on the pretext of pregnancy, drudgery - assigning small, easy tasks), (excessive extra responsibilities, distraction, social perception that one cannot be as successful as men), 6) the need to try harder (to be perfect, to prove oneself, to work harder, to be more disciplined, to sacrifice one's personal life).

These reasons show that women's gender roles in Türkiye, which has a patriarchal culture, are affected by many factors. As is known, patriarchy is an ideological structuring that results in the conformity, submission and upholding of certain principles by all kinds of things depicted as other in cultural, institutional and social spheres. This ideology has its roots in the advent of the concept of property. The initial establishment of patriarchal ideology was predicated upon the formation of familial structures, the delineation of kinship relations, and the transfer and distribution of property. Subsequently, a multitude of economic, social, political, and cultural structures were formed within the context of this ideology. Indeed, patriarchal electoral practices and institutional cultures serve to reinforce this inequality, despite evidence that men in leadership roles are aware of the problem. Despite the existence of policies designed to promote gender equality, the implementation of effective actions to achieve this goal remains constrained. The influence of patriarchal language and sexist stereotypes persists.

From the descriptive statements of the participants, the individual consequences and effects of the barriers faced by academic women leaders affect their 1) health, 2) psychology, and 3) time management. The participants reported that they did not get enough sleep, they were stressed, they gained weight because they could not eat a healthy and balanced diet, and they felt tired. They also reported that their tolerance decreased, they felt inadequate, they lacked self-confidence, they felt guilty about not being able to pay enough attention to work or family, their motivation decreased or increased, or they became indifferent. In terms of time management, they indicated that the obstacles they faced had consequences, such as not being able to spend time with family and skipping career steps for longer periods of time. Örücü and others (2007) posit that social and cultural values, social patterns, and gender discrimination have a deleterious impact on women's stress levels.

Again, as can be seen from the descriptive statements of the participants, the proposed solutions to the obstacles encountered consist of three subcategories: 1) individual solutions - work harder, be combative, manage time well, cope with stress, not shirk responsibility, and have merit, 2) institutional solutions - apply quotas, emphasize merit, professional approach, distribute positions through selection and rotation, create support systems, 3) social solutions - ensure equality between women and men, women's solidarity, family support, and change mindsets.

Gender inequality is a product of societal biases, preferences, and processes. In academia, traditionally a career choice for many women, it is unfair that women are underrepresented in the leadership pool. Support strategies, mentoring, and participation in leadership development programs are needed to help women close the gap and assume leadership roles in higher education. Women should not be perceived as people who should act as caring mothers, but their views should be valued as much as those of men (Cauchi, 2007). Although the role congruity theory of bias (Eagly & Karau, 2002) perceives an incompatibility between women and leadership and suggests that women's leadership styles are not viewed positively and therefore are not preferred for leadership roles, compared to men, they are more resistant to tests, persistent in different tests (persevering in difficulties), creative, competent, can be firm and patient, and have more effective interpersonal skills (Hamka, 2016). Moreover, according to Jangid and Dalal (2022), women are more inclined to democratic behavior as educational leaders and are more successful, especially in fulfilling administrative responsibilities. Indeed, Cuadrado and others (2008) discovered in their study that leaders, irrespective of gender, are regarded as more capable and effective and evaluated more favourably when they adopt stereotypically feminine leadership styles.

Based on these research results for the access of women to leadership positions is that organizations should take into account the contributions and the value of feminine styles, instead of blocking women's access to traditionally masculinized settings. Likewise, they should consider the importance of the feminine styles when training managerial skills and styles. It is very likely that these aspects, together with the growing access of women to leadership positions—which will gradually modify the content of gender stereotypes— will prevent the devaluation of female leaders and allow egalitarian access of men and women to positions of responsibility. Not only women, but organizations and society in general can achieve important benefits. It is therefore necessary to raise this awareness by educating all stakeholders, including parents and educators, who traditionally believe that leadership is a man's job. In addition, gender education from an early age can help future generations not to discriminate between men and women in managerial leadership roles. For all these reasons, academic women manager leaders should be encouraged and gender diversity should be incorporated into higher education policies. In addition, education, awareness and promotion of the role of women should be a priority for the Ministry of National Education and other public, civil society and private organizations.

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Table 1
Gender Data of Academic Leaders in Türkiye (2022-2023 Academic Year)

Academic Leadership Title	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Rector	Female	17	8,4
	Male	186	91,6
Vice Rector	Female	84	17,8
	Male	388	82,2
Dean, Manager	Female	825	23,3
	Male	2715	76,6
Head of Department	Female	4981	36,1
	Male	8835	63,9
Total		206	100

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N)

Education	Master's Degree (2)	Doctorate (24)			
Titles	Lecturer (3)	Lecturer Dr. (4)	Assistant Professor (2)	Associate Professor (10)	Professor (7)
Age	30-39 (4)	40-49 (14)	50 yaş + (8)		
Marital Status	Married (18)	Single (8)			
Total years of study	1-5 yıl (1)	6-10 yıl (1)	11-15 yıl (24)		
Length of time in leadership position	Less than 1 year (1)	1-2 years (6)	3-4 years yıl (5)	5-6 years (6)	7 years + (8)
Leadership Position Held *	Head of department / Asst. (4)	Chair / Asst. (9)	Dean / Asst.(3)	Manager / Asst.(2)	
Leadership position held in the past **	Head of department / Asst. (4)	Chair / Asst.(8)	Dean / Asst. (1)	Manager / Asst. (7)	Rector/Vice Rector (1)

*8 of the respondents are not currently in a leadership position.
**5 of the respondents have not held a leadership position in the past.

Table 3
Open Codes Determined Based on Participants' Responses

Questions	Open Codes Identified
1. In your academic leadership roles*, what obstacles have you encountered in your promotion to management because you are a "woman", and who were the parties involved?	Being seen as a rival Competition between women Getting spouse's approval Motherhood and emotionality Not being the first choice Becoming a son, sister, mother Mobbing Manager's efforts to maintain position
2. In your opinion, what are the individual reasons, such as personal preferences and lack of motivation/self-confidence, institutional reasons, such as implicit gender discrimination, and societal reasons, such as patriarchal perspectives and patriarchal family structure, for women to stay away from academic leadership positions?	Motherhood Lack of self-confidence Patriarchal order Family responsibilities Not leaving the comfort zone Putting the child first Male-dominated system Avoiding responsibility Putting the child first Balancing family and work Patriarchal society
3. Did you, as a woman, have to prove yourself more persistently and work harder than men to demonstrate your suitability for an academic leadership position? What impact did this have on your ability to assume an academic leadership position?	Work distribution during pregnancy Need to be perfect Loss of motivation Feeling of weakness Chores Having to work more Avoidance of responsibility Redundancy of extra responsibilities Work more disciplined Not becoming ambitious Giving up privacy Indifference
4. Do women's traditional gender roles and highly bureaucratized academic roles, especially the need to maintain a research profile, affect women's ability to take on administrative academic leadership roles? If so, why?	Lack of time The idea that women can't Doing many things in limited time Deferring some roles for success Doing small and simple things
5. How has being an academic leader affected your life in terms of role conflict, work-life balance, etc.?	Time commitment Lack of self-efficacy and confidence Fatigue Weight gain Intolerance No time for family Guilt Increased stress Feelings of inadequacy Extended academic career Inability to turn back time Sleeplessness
6. What advice would you give to other female colleagues who face gender barriers in academia? What are some possible solutions?	Be hardworking Be a fighter Manage time well Deal with stress
7. What do you think could facilitate women's access to leadership positions in academia? What changes are needed to increase the number of women in academic leadership positions?	Not running away from work Applying quotas Emphasis on merit Equality between men and women Professionalism Having merit Distribution of positions through selection Solidarity among women To be successful Rotation Family Support Support Systems Change in thinking

* The concept of academic leadership roles refers to the leadership roles of academic managers.

Table 4
Categories of Barriers According to Participants' Responses

Disability Categories	Identified Code	Descriptive Statements
Internal Competition	Being seen as a competitor	The dean blocked my review for an associate professorship to appoint me to a staff position, thinking that I might become the head of the department. P1
	Competition between women	Competition between women In leaders*, I have had to deal with the demands of female employees the most. There is also a perception that they do not trust female managers and see women as incompetent. P5
	Not being the first choice	Not being the first choice Since academic leadership positions are not elected, women are generally not the first choice for leadership positions. P17
	Mobbing	Mobbing A negative image was created through rumors and slander. I was not informed about the meetings and interviews that took place in the organization, I was not invited. (...) I was intimidated by investigations. P19
	Manager's efforts to maintain position	Managers' efforts to protect their positions Strategies used by current managers to protect their positions. P23
Unequal Gender Roles	Seeking Spousal Approval	The male manager who offered me a management position suggested that I get my wife's approval before considering the offer. P8
	Motherhood and Emotionality	It is very difficult to advance in a male-dominated academy. Management wanted to work with men. Sometimes the excuse was that we were mothers. Sometimes because we are emotional.P13
	Being a son, sister, mother	Unequal gender roles (being a son, a sister, and a mother). P8
	Family Responsibilities	I think the role of housewife and mother of female academics is more effective. P14
	Putting the child first	Some female academics say: "We don't have time from home and children. Don't make us managers", which causes discrimination. P3
	Balancing family and work	Especially after having children, the intense pace of work and parental duties, as well as the patriarchal order of the patriarchal order and the fact that the routine chores of the house fall on women, are the most basic parameters for women managers to give up these leadership positions. P24
Personal Preferences	Not leaving the comfort zone	I think comfort is a big factor in keeping women out of academic leadership positions. When it comes to any administrative position, there is a need to stay at the workplace for longer hours. P8
	Lack of self-confidence	Because of prejudices from society, women's self-confidence can sometimes drop. P6
	Avoiding responsibility	I think the first reason why women stay away from academic leadership positions is that they do not want to take responsibility. I think the underlying reason is a lack of self-confidence. P20
Patriarchal structure	Patriarchal Society	I have observed and sometimes been exposed to implicit gender discrimination, and I have noticed that due to the patriarchal social structure, my interlocutors respect my male colleagues more and treat them as if they were in a higher position. P 3
	Patriarchal thinking	In my opinion, the patriarchal family structure and the mindset that women will prioritize children after having children and that this will affect their professional lives are the most important reasons why women do not lead or are not made to lead in the academic community. P9
	Male dominated system	I think the most important factor is gender discrimination. It is very exhausting to deal with the male-dominated system and to fight against it. Because not only your boss but the whole management system is dominated by men. P19
Implicit Sex Discrimination	Pregnancy	When I was pregnant, I was told, "We didn't ask you if you wanted this position, we thought you wanted to spend time with your child. P8
	Housework	We work harder. We take on more tasks. But they are usually drudgery. P13 Socially, it is considered appropriate for men to have higher titles and positions, while small, simple jobs are generally accepted for women. P25
	Extra responsibilities	If your natural leadership qualities are perceived as a threat by the academic leader, you will be kept busy with side jobs and your achievements will be celebrated. In a contrived way...even if you prove yourself, you are not even brought in as an assistant. P23
	Social perception	There is a belief that women cannot do the job properly, especially because of gender roles. P17
Having to Exert More Effort	Be flawless	I had to work hard, produce work, and prove myself. Being a woman leaves no room for error, perfection is expected. If mistakes happen, the first reason is that I am a woman. P16
	Work harder	In academic leadership, as in all fields, as a woman, I had to work harder to show that I was an expert. P17
	Become more disciplined	In a hierarchy dictated by the physical characteristics and socially accepted natural superiority of male administrators, certain positions are achieved by working with a lot of discipline and sometimes putting in more effort than male academics. P24
	Give up privacy	I usually do the work I can't finish at school after my family is asleep, so I sacrifice my personal life. P25

* The concept of leaders refers to the leadership roles of academic managers.

Table 5
Categories of Barrier Consequences and Impacts According to Participants' Responses

Result and Impact Categories	Identified Code	Descriptive Statements
Health Issues	Insomnia symptoms	It takes a lot of dedication to juggle everything. When I finished my leadership* role, I started to sleep better. For non-power-oriented people like me, leadership is not a role you can volunteer for. P3
	Stress	I had to work more hours, I had to be more tired, I had to do housework. This situation increased my stress. Because whether you are an employee or a leader, your role as a homemaker continues. P5 I have been seeing a psychiatrist and taking antidepressants for 2 years because of the stress of not being able to keep up with work. P24
	Weight gain	We had some health problems related to weight gain because we did not have time to cook in a pot, so we turned to convenience foods and did not have a balanced diet. P8
	Tiredness	From time to time, I experienced effects such as fatigue and difficulty tolerating simple events. However, this situation has diminished over the years. P10
Psychological	Intolerance	From time to time, I experienced effects such as fatigue and difficulty tolerating simple events. However, this situation has diminished over the years. P10
	Feeling of inadequacy	Bringing work home changes the routine at home and leads to a confusion of domestic roles. This sometimes makes you feel inadequate and unable to fulfill your role as a mother, for example. On the contrary, it makes you question your competence at work. P18
	Lack of self-efficacy and self-confidence	In particular, not being able to fulfill the duties of both mother and wife at home has led to a lack of self-efficacy and self-confidence. For this reason, I (live) with the feeling of not being able to do anything fully. P24
	Feelings of guilt	Sometimes it feels guilty to think about work-life when there are expectations of us in our private lives. Sometimes it is the other way around, e.g. if you are the head of the department or deputy director, you feel guilty if you have to reflect on a situation in your private life in your work (e.g. a child's illness). P25
	Loss of motivation	I have seen my friends who have to prove themselves lose their motivation to take on academic leadership positions. P2
	Increased motivation	...(when I had to prove myself) I became more ambitious. P26
	Indifference	I made no effort to be placed in a leadership position, I made no requests. When, on rare occasions, I was given some small tasks as a favor, I refused. P19
	Avoidance of responsibility	It can lead to disruptions in work-life balance, changes in emotional state, and thus unrest in the family. Under the influence of the male-dominated culture in management, women may decide to sacrifice and give up their leadership positions. P8
Time Management	Not spending too much time	The leadership role takes a lot of time away from other roles in the academy and especially from personal life, and it becomes difficult to find a balance. P7
	Little time for family	Because of the increased workload, I have less time to devote to my academic studies and my family. P12
	Extended academic career	I was a manager during the pandemic. It was stressful to juggle my family life and responsibilities with being a manager. My leadership role extended my academic career. P20
	The inability to turn back time	My work-first focus at the beginning of my academic career changed when I had a child. It was convenient to act with the logic that the academic process would be completed anyway, but I could never go back to the 0-10 years of my child. Then I went back to the work-oriented period. P23
	Deferring some roles for success	Many female academics postpone their research for the sake of order. I have never met a male academic who breastfed and wrote an article at the same time, but when I had a baby, I often had to work that way. P24

* The concept of leadership roles refers to the leadership roles of academic managers.

Table 6
Categories of Suggested Solutions to Obstacles According to Participants' Responses

Solution Categories	Identified Code	Descriptive Statements
Individuality	Be hardworking	They should be more successful, they should work harder, and they should be able to spend more time with their children and spouses. P16
	Be a challenger	First of all, I tell them not to give up when they encounter obstacles, but to keep fighting. I want them to remember that it is much more beneficial to focus on their own goals than to be cold-blooded, to keep their emotions in balance, and to waste time and energy on things like who says what and what they think. P9
	Time management	It is effective and efficient to allocate 8 hours of work, 8 hours of sleep, and 8 hours for oneself and one's family. It is important to manage time well. P22
	Deal with stress	Intrinsic motivation to protect their self-identity, try different activities, and develop strategies to cope with stress. P26
	Not shirking responsibility	In terms of management and leadership, I would say not allowing the environment to be male-dominated, being more visible, not shirking work and responsibility, supporting other women, and not carrying water for the patriarchal mentality. No one is handing us these roles on a platter. P7
	Having merit	The quality and competence of academic studies are a priority factor for both male and female academics. I do not think it is right to give positive discrimination to an academic just because she is a woman. P9
Corporate	Quota application	Higher authorities must develop a more positive perspective towards women managers. Certain quotas can be used to pave the way for women's academics. P2
	Emphasis on merit	All that is needed is merit and proper functioning. It should be decided that a manager should not have more than one job. K9
	Professionalism	Not only women but also men must act professionally and not emotionally. Emotional approaches are more pronounced in women. They should also develop a solution-oriented approach, not a prescriptive one. P4
	Position distribution by selection	First of all, I think there is a need for elections for academic leadership* positions. P17
	Rotation	I think that academic leadership positions should be given to everyone at certain intervals in the form of rotation in the units. Equal distribution of tasks will eliminate gender discrimination. P24
	Support systems	Support systems for women can be created. An egalitarian environment can be created by eliminating many career barriers (glass ceiling, tiara syndrome, imposter syndrome, etc.). It is important to give and see opportunities. P18
Social solutions	Equal roles for men and women	Women and men should have equal roles in the home. The advancement of women, especially those who are mothers, should be encouraged and they should be exempted. P1
	Women's solidarity	On the one hand, I think that women should be given more room in the upper levels of management, women should support women and at the same time take more responsibility in the units where they work. As a woman, I build my teams without gender discrimination, looking at whether the responsibility given is fulfilled or not. I recommend the book "Women Running with Wolves" to my female friends whose self-confidence I feel is broken at some point. As the book says, when women lead women, we are stronger and more beautiful together. P6
	Family support	To increase the number of women in academic leadership positions, spouses, children, and family elders should be supportive, senior management should offer flexible work schedules, and women should work with confidence. P11
	Changing mindsets	First of all, they need to change their mindset. A mindset that recognizes that women exist in the workplace and that they can be as ambitious, hardworking, and determined as men is a must. P13

* The concept of academic leadership refers to the leadership roles of academic managers.

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