

Problems faced by Turkish female professionals working in the field of veterinary medicine

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Received: June 11, 2020

Accepted: August 04, 2020

Abstract

This study was aimed to gain reliable data regarding gender-based discrimination towards women academicians working in the veterinary faculties in Turkey. The data is based on 220 (31.3 %) women academicians out of 544 women while the total educators working in 24 veterinary faculties in Turkey during 2017 were 1,739. The scope of the study was from career beginners to the women who are on the administration positions. Results showed that the memberships in the professional organization are increased up to 51.4 % where this ratio is directly proportional to the level of an academic position. 79.10 % think that there is no discrimination towards them due to their gender, while 57 % of them did not face a problem as a woman in their respective workplaces. The rate of women in the administration is 20.9 %. As a result, it can be concluded that the academic profession offers relatively more equal employment opportunities to women, compared to other professions, however, the ratio of women is very less in the decision-making mechanisms in academia.

Keywords: Gender-based discrimination, problems, veterinary medicine, veterinarians, women.

INTRODUCTION

In the first half of the twentieth century, women overcame most of the barriers they faced due to their traditional role they were forced to adopt and made important contributions in their professional life. Today, in relation to the level of development of societies, women's employment takes place at different levels and under different conditions. Especially with the shift of balance from industry to the information and service sectors in business life, it is seen that women take part in many of the new occupations created by the new information age (Dikmen and Maden, 2012; Gönüllü and İçli, 2001).

The contribution of women is manifested in the economic and private sector. More women are glittering their names in the world of science; as an indicator, the number of women faculty members are on the rise in the universities. The female employment rate in Turkey was 33.6 % in 2017 (TÜİK, 2018). According to the data provided by the Turkish Council of Higher Education (YÖK,2019), 156.127 academicians are working in Turkish universities, out of which, 69.265 are women that makes a total of 44.4 %. After comparing this ratio to the other Turkish institutions, the gender-based distribution seems to be quite balanced among the academicians.

One of the oldest service-based professions i.e. the veterinary, was initially performed by men, just like many other professions. The presence of female academicians in the veterinary community as well as in all other scientific disciplines took place in Turkey in 1930; both quantitative and qualitative. There are limited studies in Turkey performed on the problems faced by the female academics originating from their female identity (Dikmen and Maden, 2012; Ergöl, et al. 2012; Özkanlı, 2007; Yılmaz and Özdemir, 2012). The fact that there is no study on the perspectives of female academicians in the veterinary

profession, where men generally work extensively, makes this study unique. The results obtained from this study are based on the females working in the 24 education-based veterinary faculties in Turkey. The scope covers the women at the beginning of their careers to the women at the highest levels of their careers; including those on the administrative posts. The aim was to conclude whether these women face any gender-based discrimination.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The target audience of the study were the women working in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Turkey. In the study, 544 female academicians were working in 24 educating faculties in 2017. Detailed information on the sample size and data collection of this study was given in Demir Ayvazoğlu and Koç, (2020). This study was conducted with 220 female academicians in veterinary faculty who agreed to participate in the study. This figure corresponds to 40.4% of the total population. Questionnaires were prepared in two different forms for the participants, while the first questionnaire included gender-related professional questions, the second included questions about the livestock sector. In this article, data related to the first questionnaire were used. The data obtained are presented in tables as frequency distribution and / or percentages and Chi-square analysis was performed to evaluate the categorize the data.

RESULTS

In 2017, there were a total of 1.739 academics working 24 faculties of veterinary in various Turkish universities, out of which, 544 (31.3 %) were female (YÖK, 2018). Table 1 shows list universities where female academicians are working in the veterinary faculties and participated in the survey.

Table 1. List of female participants (%) in the survey and their universities

Veterinary Faculty's University	Number of Women Academics	Participated	% Participant
Aydın Adnan Menderes University	36	31	86.11
Afyon Kocatepe University	19	11	57.89
Aksaray University	4	2	50.00
Ankara University	62	33	53.23
Atatürk University	20	6	30.00
Balıkesir University	5	3	60.00
Bingöl University	6	2	33.33
Cumhuriyet University	10	3	30.00
Çukurova University	8	5	62.50
Dicle University	17	3	17.65
Erciyes University	21	7	33.33
Fırat University	29	5	17.24
Harran University	12	3	25.00
İstanbul University	70	27	38.57
Kafkas University	24	16	66.67
Kırıkkale University	18	4	22.22
Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniv	27	7	25.93
Mustafa Kemal University	18	5	27.78
Namık Kemal University	13	6	46.15
Ondokuz Mayıs University	26	7	26.92
Selçuk University	23	9	39.13
Siirt University	10	2	20.00
Uludağ University	46	18	39.13
Yüzüncü Yıl University	20	5	25.00
Total	544	220	40.4

Those females took part in the survey were 19.5 % professors, 19.5 % associate professor, 23.2 % assistant professors, 18.6 % PhD-holder research assistants, and 19.1 % research assistants. Out of these participants, 61.4 % were married and 38.6 % were single or divorced; whereas 65 % has no children, and out of the remaining 35 %, 51.9 % has one while 48.1 % has two children. The marital and parental status together with the academic titles of the

participants are given in Table 2. shows the ratio of marriage and children increased with the increase in the academic title. The difference between the chi-square analysis was found to be statistically significant. The data showed that 86 % of female professors were married while 65 % were having children. This rate dropped in the case of research assistants as 5.3-45.2 % of them were married.

Table 2. Marital statuses of the female academics

Academic Position	Marital Status			Parental Status		
	Married	Single	Total	1 Child	2 Children	Total
Prof. Dr.	37 (86.0 %)	6 (14.0 %)	43	8 (33.3 %)	16 (66.7 %)	24
Assoc. Prof.	28 (65.1 %)	15 (34.9 %)	43	9 (47.4 %)	10 (52.6 %)	19
Assist. Prof.	30 (58.8 %)	21 (41.2 %)	51	14 (60.9 %)	9 (39.1 %)	23
Res. Assist. (PhD)	21 (51.2 %)	20 (48.8 %)	41	9 (90.0 %)	1 (10.0 %)	10
Res. Assist	19 (45.2 %)	23 (54.8 %)	42	0 (0.0 %)	1 (100 %)	1
Total	135 (61.4 %)	85 (38.6 %)	220	40 (51.9 %)	37 (48.1 %)	77
P value	$X^2 = 17.830$ $p < 0.01$			$X^2 = 11.106$ $p < 0.05$		

Table 3 shows the data obtained for the appointment of women academicians and their membership to professional organizations during their professional lives. Data in Table 3 shows that 51.4 % of females have memberships to the professional organizations/unions whereas that rate increased with the increase in the academic title. The

difference between the chi-square test was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). It was found that 39.8 % of the 113 female academicians who stated that they were members of any professional organization belonged to a related institution, 41.6 % belonged to the veterinary chamber while 18.6 % were the member of both.

Table 3. Membership status of female academicians in the professional organizations

Professional Memberships	Title	Prof. Dr.		Assoc. Prof. Dr.		Assist. Prof. Dr.		PhD-Holder Res. Assist.		Res. Assist.		Total	
	Yes	27	62.80%	24	55.80%	28	54.90%	24	58.50%	10	23.80%	113	51.40%
No	16	37.20%	19	44.20%	23	45.10%	17	41.50%	32	76.20%	107	48.60%	

$\chi^2 = 16.453$ $p < 0.01$

The ratio of female academicians who were assigned to an administrative position in their professional lives was determined as 20.9 %. Their administrative duties are given in Table 4. Out of 220 academics, 46 has performed any administrative duties where only 1 was dean, and 7 were assistant deans. The ones who took part in the administrative duties were 36.9 % professors, 28.2 %

associate professors, 26.1 % assistant professors and 8.9 % were PhD-holder research assistants. A statistical significance was found between the academic title and the administrative position ($p < 0.01$). The number of those who reported working in any commission other than administration was determined as 26.

Table 4. Administrative tasks

Administrative tasks	Frequency	%	Total ratio
Dean	1	2.17	0.45
Assistant Dean	7	15.22	3.18
Head of Department	10	21.74	4.55
Institute Director/Assistant Director	4	8.70	1.82
Director of Vocational School etc.	4	8.70	1.82
Head of Department (main branch)	20	43.48	9.09
Total	46	100.00	20.91

In the interviews, the answers to the question “Do you think that there is a negative discrimination towards female veterinarians regarding employment?” are shown in Table 5. In the given answers, 79.1 % replied that there is no gender-based discrimination and everybody is treated

equally; however, 10 % of the participants think the other way. No statistically significant difference was found ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. Views on gender-based negative discrimination

	No	Yes	Partially	Total
Prof. Dr.	31 (72.0 %)	6 (14.0 %)	6 (14.0 %)	43
Assoc. Prof.	38 (88.3 %)	3 (7.0 %)	2 (4.7 %)	43
Assist. Prof.	37 (72.6 %)	6 (11.8 %)	8 (15.6 %)	51
Res. Assist. (PhD)	33 (80.5 %)	4 (9.7 %)	4 (9.8 %)	41
Res. Assist	35 (83.3 %)	3 (7.2 %)	4 (9.5 %)	42
Total	174 (79.1 %)	22 (10.0 %)	24 (10.9 %)	220

The data obtained from the problems faced by women in the academic profession and business life in the interviews are presented in Table 6. 57% of the participants thought that academic life is easy and they do not face professional problems, while 40 % think that it is hard to be

an academic. Although there is a statistically significant difference in the analysis, it was observed that the newly employed research assistants face less problems and are more positive towards their profession.

Table 6. Opinions of female academics about their profession

Title	Is it hard to be a female academician?			Do you face problems in the work place as a female?			Total
	Yes	No	Partial	Yes	No	Partial	
Prof. Dr.	14(32.6%)	19(44.2%)	10(23.2 %)	13(30.2%)	25 (58.2%)	5 (11.6%)	43
Assoc. Prof.	16(37.2%)	16(37.2%)	11(25.6%)	12(27.9%)	23 (53.5%)	8 (18.6%)	43
Assist. Prof.	19(37.3%)	17(33.3%)	15(29.4%)	14(27.5%)	28 (54.9%)	9 (17.6%)	51
Res. Assist. (PhD)	13(31.7%)	13(31.7%)	15(36.6%)	16(39.0%)	20 (48.8%)	5 (12.2%)	41
Res. Assist	6 (14.3%)	22(52.4%)	14(33.3%)	6 (14.3%)	29 (69.0%)	7 (16.7%)	42
Total	68(30.9%)	87(39.5%)	65(29.5%)	57(25.9%)	125(56.8%)	38(17.3%)	220
P value	X ² = 9.892 p>0.05			X ² = 12.090 p>0.05			

In this study, the participants were asked to rank the difficulties of the profession and the problems they face most in order of importance. The order of the total frequencies is given in Table 7. Among the main challenges of being female academician are; devoting less

time to home and children, busy working hours and responsibilities/duties expected from women in the society, not taken into consideration as compared to men, late hiring, and less assignments in the administrative duties.

Table 7. Problems faced by female academics in their professional lives

Challenges of being a female academician	n	S. No.	Institutional challenges of being a female academician	n	S. No.
Devoting less time for home and children	91	1	Nobody cares / Ignoring	52	1
Long working hours (7/24)	78	2	Late getting hired as compared to men	38	2
Multi-tasking expectation from women	63	3	Not being placed in positions that require high responsibility	26	3
Other	49	4	Keep away from field work	24	4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Gender equality is an issue that needs to be emphasized in the field of education as in all other areas of society. In particular, academic life requires a pace of work that is not limited to time and space. It was determined during the interviews that 65 % of the participants have no children, while the rate of having children among those who have children (77 peoples, 35%) increased to 85.7 % with an increase in the academic level (Assist. Prof, Assoc. Prof., and Professor). This data can be explained as the majority of female academicians are delaying child birth, even if they prefer to be married, due to the concerns of progress in their profession.

In the study, only 14.30 % of the research assistants stated that the academic profession is difficult. This rate ranged between 31.7-37.2 % among women with other academic titles. This includes both the academic (writing articles, participating congress-conferences) and departmental tasks (undergraduate, graduate-doctorate courses, participation in various research and project studies, commission work, consultancy to students, etc.). This situation is exhausting, especially for married women who are having children and having too many responsibilities at work. Indeed, among the main difficulties of being a female academician is spending less time with home matters and children due to busy working hours. Due to the traditional responsibilities of the women, an increase in the academic title exempts women from holding their roles in the household and child care in Turkey (Dikmen and Maden,

2012; Ergöl et al. 2012). This may limit the educated, working women in society to traditional gender roles. In this respect, it can be said that women academics, whose working hours are not limited to normal working hours and who have more responsibilities in the workplace, are further pressed (Basarır and Sarı, 2015). The literature regarding Turkey and other countries clearly shows that many women are facing role conflicts, that negatively affect their academic career development (Armenti, 2000; Arthur et al., 2007; Özkanlı, 2007; Dikmen and Maden, 2012; White, 2004). In a study conducted with academics, 63.2% of the participants agreed with the statement "A woman should be a good housewife and a mother" and 55.5 % stated that home management is the duty of the mother rather than the father (Kahraman et al., 2014). In this respect, it can be said that male academicians can devote all of their time to scientific studies, while their female colleagues have to carry out their traditional roles additionally.

In the study, the rate of female academicians, who are members of any professional organization, was determined as 51.4 %. With the increase in academic title, the membership and membership rate to professional organizations has increased. This situation can be interpreted as people's commitment to their profession and institution as the age gets older. However, Özmen et al. (2005) reported that the emotional commitment of women to organizational and professional institutions was lower than their male counterparts.

In the interviews, 79.1 % of the participants thought that there was no distinction in the question "Do you think there is a gender-based negative distinction towards female veterinarians regarding employment?". This can be interpreted as the fact that academic life offers relatively more equal rights for women and men compared to other professions. On the contrary, only 20.9 % of the female academicians were assigned to an administrative position in their professional life; whereas, only one person among 220 female academicians were a dean. Machado-Taylor and Özkanlı (2013) also reported that administrative duties in higher education institutions are still male-dominated. According to Özkanlı (2007), in Turkish universities, female academicians are concentrating as lecture, teaching assistant, expert, and related lower grade positions. In other studies carried out in various parts of the world, it is reported that most of the female academicians do not want to take part in administrative duties due to the excessive burden arising from traditional roles and responsibilities required by business life (Kettle, 1996; Kulis and Sicotte, 2002; O'Laughlin and Bischoff, 2005; Van Anders, 2004; Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2005).

In this study, the most common problems faced by the women academicians in their workplaces are; they are not to be taken into consideration compared to male academicians, late hiring for the positions, and less assigned to administrative tasks. During the interviews, it was determined that the rate of encountering any problems (39 %) in the workplace was higher in the case of Ph.D. holder research assistants. The most important problem faced by these research assistants as compared to males is the late hiring. One of the problems faced by the female academicians whose academic title will increase, is that they are not taken into consideration and not assigned to administrative positions compared to male academicians. After comparing with the other professional fields, it was concluded that the academic field provides not only equal rights to the women professionals but also provides higher chances to be hired. On the contrary, as it has become a tradition, women are seldomly involved in the decision-making mechanisms due to gender-based discrimination; not only in the universities/workplaces, but also in the homes.

Financial Support

This research received no grant from any funding agency/sector.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in the content of the article

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