THE ROLE OF GENDER ROLE PERCEPTIONS IN CAREER SUCCESS: FEMALE BUSINESS LEADERS IN TURKISH SOCIETY

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctorate in Social Sciences
at the University of Leicester

by
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June 2018
Abstract

The role of gender role perceptions in career success: Female business leaders in Turkish society, Özlem Ada

This dissertation examines the self-reported gender role perceptions and the socio-cultural factors that make these perceptions available for Turkish women business leaders in the fast moving consumer goods sector.

In Turkey, the share of employed women is 24% while women’s representation on boards is 8% which is comparable to that of most developed countries (WEF, 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand how Turkish women get a comparable share of representation on boards in a country where the share of women’s employment is almost half of that of the developed countries.

Twenty women leaders were interviewed in order to understand their gender role perceptions with respect to enabling socio-cultural factors that they think influenced their career success. They reported that they were exposed to a social environment where there are less traditional rules regarding gender roles as well as less social pressure and criticism for their non-traditional behaviours as compared to many women in Turkey. The women leaders also explained that in their social environment, they perceived their role to be both mothers and career women.

The women leaders in this study reported a preference for career success which is also claimed by Hakim’s Theory. However, the participants in this study explained that social-cultural, family and personal situations influenced their career and life choices. The women leaders reported that modern gender role perceptions, education that propels a Westernized understanding of gender roles, and the financial and emotional support of their liberal families, particularly male figures, provided favourable conditions for their career success. Moreover, these male figures put pressure on the women in this study to be successful at school and later at work. This pressure encouraged the women leaders to be successful in order not to disappoint these male figures who trusted and supported them. These findings support that it is not only the preferences but also the constraints and influencers that shape the life and career success of the women leaders in this study. Furthermore, the women leaders explicitly denied the existence of a glass ceiling but simultaneously described circumstances that indicated that there had been a glass ceiling without acknowledging it as such.

These findings contribute to the understanding of the role of gender role perceptions in Turkish women leaders’ career success. The findings also expand the understanding on the enabling socio-cultural factors that influence the gender role perceptions of Turkish women leaders. They thus contribute to the discussions on Hakim’s theory which disregards the influence of constraints on women’s career choices and advancement from a perspective of a developing country.
**Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to Ass. Prof. Dr. Glynne Williams and Prof. Dr. Daniela Rudloff for their guidance, recommendations and time devoted to this study. Their insightful feedback and support made my doctoral studies a rewarding learning experience. I would like to thank them for their great support and confidence in me.

I am deeply grateful to the remarkable women leaders who participated in my study for their time and contribution. Without their cooperation, willingness to share their career stories and insights with me, carrying out such a study would not have been possible.

I would like to thank Dr. Maria Darmi, Ass. Prof. Dr. Özlem Ünlühisarcıklıoğlu, Dr. Özlem Yazlık Alcott and Gülnur Kircalı for their genuine friendship and support throughout my doctoral studies.

I would like to dedicate this study to my husband Bülent Ülke and daughter Defne Ülke who have provided me with inspiration, support and love throughout my PhD years.

I also would like to express my gratitude to my parents who have been a constant source of support despite the physical distance which has separated us.
## Contents

**Chapter 1 Introduction**  
1.1 Research background and context  
1.2 Research questions  
1.3 Significance of the study  
1.4 Structure of the thesis  

**Chapter 2 Literature review and theoretical framework**  
2.1 Introduction  
2.2 Turkish women: historical and socio-cultural perspectives  
2.3 Gender role perceptions and women in Turkey  
2.4 Turkish women at work  
2.5 The career success of Turkish women leaders  
2.6 Women’s perceptions of the glass ceiling  

**Chapter 3 Research design**  
3.1 Introduction  
3.2 Research methodology and methods  
3.3 Procedures  
3.4 Reflexivity  
3.5 Data analysis  

**Chapter 4 Data Analysis**  
4.1 Introduction  
4.2 Emerging themes in the journey to leadership  
4.2.1 The role model of the modern society and social pride  
4.2.2 Parents, particularly fathers, as role models and mentors for women leaders  
4.2.3 Westernized education and the role of educational achievement in career success  
4.2.4 Work-focused and resilient attitude
4.2.5 The support system 84
4.2.6 Traditional gender roles / gender occupations in Turkey 90
4.2.7 Women’s attitudes towards leadership 92
4.2.8 The glass ceiling in the organizations 96

**Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusion** 100
5.1 Introduction 100
5.2 Summary of the findings and discussion 100
5.3 Implications on Hakim’s Theory 110
5.4 Implications on women’s leadership 114
5.5 Recommendations for further research 117
5.6 Limitations of the study 122

**Appendices** 124
Appendix A Invitation letter that was sent to the participants summarising research aims 124
Appendix B Questions that led the interviews with the women leaders 125
Appendix C Questions of the pilot study 126
Appendix D Information about the participants 127

**References** 128
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FMCG</td>
<td>Fast Moving Consumer Goods</td>
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<td>KSGM</td>
<td>Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü - Directorate General on the Status of Women in Turkey</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>TÜİK</td>
<td>Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu - Turkish Statistical Institute</td>
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<td>WEF</td>
<td>World Economic Forum</td>
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research background and context

As an increasing number of women enter the business world and occupy leadership positions on corporate boards, there are now more women leaders who assume business leadership roles (Ararat, Alkan and Aytekin, 2015). However, women are still under-represented in senior roles in corporations in most countries, both developed and developing, such as the US, the UK, Germany, France, Russia, Denmark and Turkey (WEF, 2014). The share of Turkish women on boards is listed to be 8% which is comparable to the developed countries such as the UK with 7%, Denmark with 9% and the US with 10% (please see Table 1 below). Furthermore, the share of women on boards in Holland (5%) and Germany (3%) is far behind that of Turkish women (WEF, 2014).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1: Share of Women on Boards</th>
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<tr>
<td>Share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share of women on boards of listed companies (%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turkey has a population of 76.7 million where the share of women employed in the non-agricultural sector is 24% (WEF, 2014). The comparable portion of women employed is 48% in Germany, 47% in the UK, 48% in the US and 50% in France and Denmark as shown in Table 1 above (WEF, 2014). A number of studies (Aycan, 2004; Örücü, Kılıç and Kılıç, 2007; Koca, Arslan and As, 2011; Titrek, Bayrakçı and Güneş 2014; Koca and Öztürk, 2015) suggest that gender role perceptions, women’s familial responsibilities, role incongruence and male-oriented organizational culture are the key barriers to women’s employment, career advancement, and having leadership roles. These studies also suggest that women’s gender roles are not considered as consistent with leadership roles in both developed and developing countries. According to Karataş-Özkan, İnal and Özbilgin (2010), traditional gender roles which stipulate that family care and household duties are the primary responsibilities of women, the socio-
cultural structures, women’s poor educational levels, gender discrimination, male dominance at work and the lack of role models and social networks are the main reasons for the low share of women’s employment in Turkey, which is 24% (WEF, 2014). Furthermore, Sanal (2008) notes that women’s unwillingness to assume leadership positions and their preferences to prioritize their families influence women’s career advancement to leadership positions.

To understand the socio-cultural factors influencing Turkish women senior managers’ careers in Turkey, it is vital to understand the socio-cultural, economic and political developments that have influenced women’s status in Turkey. The Republic of Turkey was established in 1923 out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire. In the 1920s, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of Turkish Republic, expanded the modernizing reforms of the 19th century and gave legal rights to women in many areas such as the right to inheritance, to custody and to vote in general and local elections (Arat, 1999). The modernisation in state laws and education was undertaken by the young Republic to catch up with the norms of the developed countries (Sunar, 2002).

Education and political rights have been a big part of the modernizing reforms of the Republic: in 1924, women were given equal educational rights with the Educational Reform Act, followed by the right to elect and be elected in 1935 (Arat, 1999). Thus, the socio-cultural context in Turkey started to change in favour of women with the reforms of the young Republic, considering the opportunities in education, social and political life and employment which were recognized as significant steps for the modernisation of women in Turkey (Titrek and Cobern, 2011). Despite all these positive developments in women’s socio-political and economic rights, women in Turkey are still underrepresented in economic, political and business realms: in 2015, the official illiteracy rate was 9% for women and 1.8% for men; 15.6% of women and 23.5% men completed twelve years of education, and 13.1% of women and 17.9% men completed higher education in the 2015 education year (TÜİK, 2015); the ratio of women parliamentarians in the 2015 elections was 14% (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2017); the share of employed women was 24% and women’s
representation on boards was only 8% in 2014 (WEF, 2014). Albeit low, 8%
representation on boards is comparable to that of most developed countries.
Therefore, it is important to understand how Turkish women get a comparable
share of representation on boards in a country where the share of women’s
employment is almost half of women’s employment rate in the developed
countries (WEF, 2014). This relative over-achievement of Turkish women senior
leaders is particularly important to explore because it takes place in a
developing country where the socio-cultural context does not support women’s
employment in general and gender equality in achieving leadership roles such
as a general manager or chief executive officer. It is therefore vital to
understand the gender role perceptions of women who have achieved
representation on boards in a country where women’s participation into paid
work and representation on boards are limited.

Gender roles are defined as the beliefs and behaviours which are traditionally
assigned to men and women in their societies (Archer and Lloyd, 2002;
İmamoğlu, 2013). Gender roles are based on cultural and social norms which
shape the gender-related beliefs and behaviours of men and women in their
societies (Eagly, 2009). Different socio-cultural conditions may lead to
differences in gender role perceptions. Therefore, it is also important to explore
the socio-cultural factors that influence Turkish women senior leaders’ gender
role perceptions.

As for women’s low representation in corporate boards, different measures
have been taken by different countries to tackle this issue. Countries such as
Belgium, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Malaysia and Norway set quotas for
corporate boards in order to improve gender equality (Ararat, Alkan and
Aytekin, 2015). Countries such as Denmark, Finland, Spain and Netherlands
adopted a 30-40% approach whereby 30-40% of their corporate board
members were women whereas the UK achieved significant progress in
boosting women’s board membership through a voluntary business-led
framework (Ararat, Alkan and Aytekin, 2015). The measures to increase
women’s representation on boards vary by country but the trend for women’s representation on boards is upwards (Ararat, Alkan and Aytekin, 2015).

Most studies on women leaders have been conducted in developed countries such as the USA, Australia and European countries; similarly, the theories on women leaders and professionals and their career advancement originate from the developed country settings (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hakim, 2002; Crompton and Harris, 1998; McRae, 2003; Kan, 2005; Johnstone and Lee, 2016). As for the limited number of studies conducted on Turkish women managers, these include the studies that focused on the key success factors of Turkish women managers (Aycan, 2004), the barriers to Turkish women’s leadership (Titrek, Bayrakçı and Güneş, 2014) and the gendered perceptions about female managers in Turkish sport organizations (Koca and Öztürk (2015). In these studies, the gender role perceptions were found to be an important determinant of women’s career success. Koca and Öztürk (2015) explored the influence of gender role perceptions in the career advancement of female managers in sports organizations and found that gender role stereotypes significantly influenced their career advancement. However, there has been no study that explored Turkish women business leaders’ (general managers) gender role perceptions. This study will thus focus on the role of gender role perceptions in the career success of women business leaders in Turkey. In this study, the gender role perceptions are defined as the beliefs one has about men and women in a society, and gender roles are considered as guidelines shaping the behaviours of the individuals in a society. (Archer and Llyod, 2002).

Aycan (2004) claims that the socio-cultural context determines work and family values which shape the perceptions of women about their career advancement in Turkey. According to traditional gender roles, women in Turkey are assigned with roles such as family care and household duties whereas work is not considered as the primary goal of women (Aycan, 2004). However, among the educated urban population, the education of women and girls is highly valued, and modern Turkish women are encouraged to work outside by their families and social network (Sunar, 2002). When gender roles are well-defined by
cultural norms, the perceptions are difficult to change dramatically, and these
gender role perceptions play a key role in women’s attitudes and beliefs on
career advancement (Titrek, Bayrakçı and Güneş, 2014). According to Titrek,
Bayrakçı, Güneş (2014) and Koca and Öztürk (2015), gender roles play a
fundamental role in the career success of women in Turkey. According to
Aycan’s study in 2004, the main success factors for women are their self-
confidence and resilience to achieve their career goals, followed by the support
from their families and organizations.

Aycan (2004, p. 454) claims that the most significant limitation on women’s
career advancement is the “cultural norms toward gender role”. Therefore, it is
crucial to explore the gender role perceptions which form the basis for women’s
beliefs and attitudes about their career advancement to leadership roles. This
thesis is an attempt to understand the gender role perceptions of Turkish
women leaders who have already achieved the leadership roles in their social
and cultural contexts in Turkey. The thesis also explores the reported enabling
socio-cultural conditions in which Turkish women leaders form their gender role
perceptions to understand the socio-cultural factors that support women’s
career advancement.

It is important to note that the modernising reforms of the Republic of Turkey
have first and foremost influenced major metropolitan centres, with the reforms
mainly reaching urban women from the higher socio-economic classes (Gök,
2007). Thus, a small group of urban women, particularly from middle to upper
socio-economic classes, have been able to access education at all levels and
achieve high status, and well-paid jobs (Gök, 2007). The women who come
from families where the egalitarian treatment of boys and girls is supported,
such as having equal expectations and providing equal support for educational
and career success, are classified as “modern” and these women mostly live in
urban areas (Sunar, 2002). On the other hand, the women who come from
families where traditional gender role perceptions are associated with
motherhood and household duties are considered as traditional, and these
women mostly live in rural areas. Most of the women who have traditional
gender roles have lower educational qualifications, and less advantaged socio-economic conditions (Sunar, 2002). The studies in Turkey do not seem to explore the structures and values of modern families and traditional families separately. Moreover, the gender role perceptions of modern families and women as opposed to traditional families and women in Turkey have not been investigated considering the distinctions and commonalities between them. Moreover, there is little information (Sunar, 2002) about the ways in which the gender role perceptions of modern and traditional women are formed distinctively. In my sample, all the women leaders were modern women even though they were randomly selected from the group of women leaders in the fast moving consumer goods sector. Therefore, this study is an attempt to understand the reported gender role perceptions of women business leaders who are classified as modern and educated. The study explores these gender role perceptions in relation to the socio-cultural factors that the women business leaders think influenced their career success.

This study will focus on women leaders working in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector because of the increasing importance of this sector for the Turkish economy. This sector represents 19% of the retail economy which is the second biggest sector in Turkey (TÜİK, 2015). The FMCG sector represents a large component of the Human Resources (HR) practices due to multinational companies, especially in relation to women business leaders’ positions. In this study, the “leader” or “leadership role” terms will be used interchangeably to represent women who have general manager roles on the corporate boards.

1.2 Research questions

This study examines Turkish women leaders’ self-reported gender role perceptions with respect to the socio-cultural factors that they think influenced their career success in the fast moving consumer goods sector. In this respect, the study asks the following research questions:
1. What are the reported enabling socio-cultural factors that render women leaders in Turkey more likely to formulate more favourable gender role perceptions towards career success?

2. What are the reported enabling socio-cultural factors that support Turkish women leaders’ access to leadership positions?

1.3 Significance of the study

Very few studies have been conducted about women leaders in their socio-economic and cultural contexts in developing countries. This study will be one of the a few studies that attempt to understand the gender role perceptions of women leaders who have actually succeeded to reach leadership positions in a developing country – in this particular case of Turkey. This study aims to fill the gaps in the literature by exploring the gender role perceptions of Turkish women leaders and the enabling socio-cultural factors that support their progress to leadership positions. This study can provide researchers with more knowledge and insights about the gender role perceptions of women leaders in Turkey and their reported enabling socio-cultural factors. The finding of this study has a potential to lead to further research and the development of theories that can help the career advancement of women leaders both in developed and developing countries. The findings of this study may also help researchers, policy makers and business leaders to understand the enabling socio-cultural factors for gender role perceptions which support the career advancement of women to leadership positions. The findings of this study can also help verify the premises of the existing theories related to gender roles and leadership which are mostly formulated in and for developed countries in a developing country setting – in this case of Turkey.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two begins with a historical overview of Turkish women’s social, economic and educational positions and conditions. In this thesis, my sample is from the modern urban society of Turkey. Even though my sample is from the modern urban strata of Turkey, to understand the overall socio-cultural
dynamics that influence gender role perceptions of modern urban women in Turkey, it is important to explore the socio-cultural and economic conditions of both modern urban and traditional rural sections of Turkish society. Following this, Turkish women’s roles in society and their gender role perceptions are investigated. Then, this chapter presents the research on Turkish women in the business world and introduces statistics that show women’s positions in the business sector in Turkey. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the role of gender role perceptions in the career success of Turkish women. Chapter Two concludes with the gender role perceptions which influence the glass ceiling phenomenon. Chapter Three details the research design of the study including data collection and analysis procedures. It introduces how this research makes use of qualitative research methodology and methods and thematic analysis. It also provides information on the research design and the sample of this study. This is followed by the reasons why the researcher has chosen this methodology and analysis method to explore the research questions. Chapter Three also presents how the researcher analyses and interprets the data to examine the research questions. It also presents how the semi-interviewing technique was found useful to gather data for this research. Chapter Four presents the themes that emerged as a result of thematic analysis. The themes are presented one by one, and the findings are shown as the interpretation of what was reported by women leaders. For each theme, the extracts from the interviews with women leaders are presented to support the analysis and the findings of the study. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings. Lastly, Chapter Five begins with a short summary of the findings and then discusses how the enabling socio-cultural factors and the gender role perceptions influence the career success of the women leaders. It continues with the discussion about how the findings relate to Hakim’s Theory and the findings of other studies in the literature. It also discusses the implications of the findings of this study on women’s leadership. This chapter concludes with recommendations for further research and the limitations of this study.
Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is comprised of five sections. (1) First, this chapter contextualizes the study by providing a brief discussion of the historical and socio-cultural background that has influenced the particular socio-cultural, economic and political contexts in which women leaders in Turkey are embedded; (2) Secondly, it discusses the formation of gender role perceptions, by exploring the influence of this process on women’s career choices and advancement. Also, it analyses traditional and modern gender roles and the influence of education on the gender roles and career choices of women in Turkey; (3) Next, there is an overview of main indicators on women’s employment in Turkey. Namely, the section discusses a number of characteristics and skills associated with women leaders in Turkey and touches upon some favourable socio-economic factors that enable Turkish women leaders’ career success; (4) Then, the chapter discusses three theories, e.g. the Social Role Theory (Eagly and Wood, 1991), the Role Congruity Theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002) and the Preference Theory (Hakim, 2002) on the relationship between gender role perceptions and women’s career success which form the theoretical framework of this thesis. This section then discusses the challenges that women leaders face in their career paths and ends by focusing on the favourable socio-economic and cultural conditions reported by a particular group of Turkish women leaders in Turkey; and (5) This chapter ends with the section that describes the glass ceiling phenomenon in the relevant literature which addresses the barriers for women to accessing to senior management positions in corporations.

In this thesis, the research questions focus on women leaders’ gender role perceptions and the role of socio-cultural factors that make these perceptions available. Thus, the focus of the literature review is around women leaders’ gender role perceptions in relation to their career success and the socio-cultural factors that provide enabling conditions for these perceptions to develop, paving
the road to career success for the women in this study. Therefore, the literature review presented in this chapter does not explore the studies on women in leadership, women’s leadership styles and their experiences of women leadership. However, it discusses the literature related to the perceptions of women leaders’ traits and skills that influence the career success of these women, touching upon several perceptions that are associated with women’s leadership styles whilst not discussing these styles extensively as this is not the focus of this thesis. Furthermore, the thesis discusses women’s perceptions of the glass ceiling as it is related to the career success of women in the organizations.

2.2 Turkish women: historical and socio-cultural perspectives

Turkey was established as a secular state in 1923 out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire. In order to establish a new nation-state, Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, expanded the modernisation projects that had started with the institutional reforms of the Ottoman State in the 19th century (Keyder, 1997). The reformers of the early Republic abolished the Sultanate as well as the Sharia law and the office of Caliph which was held by the Ottoman Sultans and seen as representing the Prophet Muhammad (İlkkaracan, 2008). In Turkey, the modernisation process has been considered as westernisation since the early years of the Republic (Kara, 2006).

The modernising reforms targeting women’s socio-economic, educational and political positions included The Educational Reform Act in 1924, which gave women equal educational rights including the compulsory five-year elementary school education; the right to vote in local elections in 1930 and in national elections in 1934; full enfranchisement including the right to be elected in national elections in 1935; The Dress Reform Act in 1928 which provided the women with the liberty to not to cover their heads and wear black veils; the introduction of a Civil Code that introduced equal rights for men and women in marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance and owning property; and opportunities
to achieve jobs in the public sphere (Arat, 1999). These reforms introduced and enhanced the values of secularism, modernism and westernisation in Turkish society. Turkish women acquired an important role in the modernisation of Turkey and these developments were considered as a measure of success in reaching modernity and westernisation of Turkish society (Arat, 1999).

The modernisation process in Turkey continued with becoming a member of a number of Western organizations such as joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952 (NATO, 2017) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1960 (OECD, 2014a). At the same time, Turkey has still been in the negotiation process to be a member of the European Union (EU) although this process came to an unofficial halt after the coup attempt in Turkey on 15 July 2016, after which the Turkish government declared a state of emergency curtailing basic rights and freedoms to restore and protect national security. In addition to its membership to major international organizations, the modernizing efforts of Turkey included ratifying key conventions and declarations on women’s rights. For instance, Turkey signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985 (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2017) and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993 (UN General Assembly, 1993).

Furthermore, in the beginning of 1980s, many governmental and non-governmental initiatives were launched to improve women’s social and economic status in Turkey including the Project Supporting Women’s Entrepreneurship, the Professional Development and Employment Project for Girls and Women, Women’s Professional Empowerment Project and the Microcredit Project for Women Entrepreneurs (KSGM, 2009). Even though the above-mentioned projects have been successful to some extent in supporting women’s career development, women in Turkey have to negotiate high expectations and they feel the need to work harder than men and prove themselves over and over again in order be successful in the business world, particularly for leadership positions (Kabasakal et al., 2015). It is important to
realize that the modernizing reforms of the Turkish state have taken place in a society that has transformed from a predominantly rural and agricultural one to an increasingly urban and industrial one. The urban population was 13% in 1923 and 19% in 1950; this ratio increased to 70% in 2000 and 81% in 2014 (TÜİK, 1991, 2001 and 2014). The migration from rural areas to urban areas has taken place due to the population increase, the lack of arable land, industrialization, the mechanization of agriculture and the opening of the Turkish economy to the international markets (Sunar and Fişek, 2005; Karpat, 2004).

The rural-urban migration has had significant effects on women’s employment in Turkey. According to İlkkaracan and Selim (2007), women’s participation in paid work in Turkey has been low. Women’s participation in paid work was 50.9% in 1980 (Buğra, 2010) which decreased by 29.3% in 2017 (TÜİK, 2017). The decrease in women’s participation in paid work is mainly due to the decline in women’s employment in agriculture as a result of urbanization (Dayıoğlu and Kırdar, 2009). Most women who used to work in agriculture in the rural areas, they may not find jobs in the cities or they find low-paid jobs with poor conditions which they quit especially when they get married and have children (Dayıoğlu and Kirdar, 2009).

Despite the modernization process and its positive impact on women’s socio-economic status, women in Turkey are still underrepresented in educational, economic and political arenas as compared to men (Kabasakal et al., 2015). The official illiteracy rate was 9% for women and 1.8% for men in 2015; 15.6% of women; 23.5% men completed twelve years of education and 13.1% of women and 17.9% men completed higher education in the 2015 education year (TÜİK, 2015). These figures show that women fall behind men in education at all levels. In parallel, women’s employment participation rate of 29.3% is also behind that of men (TÜİK, 2017). According to (Buğra, 2010), the socio-economic and cultural factors that limit women’s participation in paid jobs are (1) women’s working in low profile jobs with no social security; (2) long work hours as well as being responsible for household duties and child care; and (3) traditional gender roles that assign the responsibilities of child care and household duties to women. Similarly, women’s representation in the Turkish
Parliament has been very low. The ratio of women parliamentarians was 9.1% in 2007, 14.4% in the 2011 elections and 14% in 2015 (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2017), mainly because of the general attitudes and stereotypes towards women in society about leadership roles.

The first section provides a brief synopsis of historical background and the socio-cultural and economic conditions that have influenced women’s socio-economic, political and educational status in Turkey. The synopsis is followed by literature on the process of gender role socialization and the implications of this process for women in Turkey in their particular socio-cultural and economic contexts.

2.3 Gender role perceptions and women in Turkey

Gender roles are defined as the beliefs people have about the members of the categories designated as man and woman in accordance with the expectations of the society they live in (Archer and Llyod, 2002; İmamoğlu, 2013). The major difference between sex and gender is that sex is defined by nature whereas gender is based on the cultural and social roles of an individual. That is to say, gender roles are traditionally assigned to men and women (Eagly, 2002). According to Eagly (2009), gender roles act as guidelines that shape the behaviours of men and women in a society.

When it comes to children’s socialization to gender roles, Witt (1997) suggests that gender role socialization occurs at an early age and children’s self-esteem develops through role modelling within their family and broader social environment. Witt explains that as children move on to school, they are exposed to ideas and beliefs regarding gender roles in their school environment. Noting the importance of family, educational institutions and the media in the socialization of youngsters into gender roles, Witt addresses that as children get older, these gender role perceptions become beliefs and a part of their self-concept. According to Witt (1997, p. 253), “the strongest influence on gender role development seems to occur within the family setting, with parents passing
on, both overtly and covertly, their own beliefs about gender”. Witt notes that in many cultures, parents treat unequally to their sons and daughters, and parent-child relationship is found to be the most influential factor in the development of a child’s gender role perception (Witt, 1997). Thus, Witt claims that parents’ attitudes have a considerable impact on children’s socialization to gender roles. Devine (1989) and Schein (2006) argue that gender roles learned at early ages, including stereotypical behaviours and characteristics attributed to males and females, have their roots in the cultural beliefs and heritage of the child’s family and wider social setting.

The gender role socialization of girls is quite different than that of boys in Turkish families similar to most of the Western countries (Sunar and Fişek, 2005). Turkish families tend to encourage their boys to be independent and aggressive whereas they expect dependence and obedience from their daughters (Ataca, 1992). While boys are permitted to have more freedom to choose their lifestyles, girls are expected to obey the restrictions, and be less assertive (Fişek, 1993). Girls mostly engage in games related to their domestic roles while boys mostly play games to practice male attributes such as being competitive and aggressive (Fişek, 1993). In relation to the influence of gender role socialization in participation in paid-work, Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) note that in traditional agricultural societies, women’s main role is considered to be a home-maker and mother whereas men are assigned paid work and duties outside the home. They note that although many societies have moved away from agriculture-based socio-economic settings, the perceptions about gender roles persist. Weinraub, Jaeger, and Hoffman (1988), on the other hand, note that children who have mothers working outside the home are found to have less traditional gender role perceptions, they do not form strong associations between women and home as well as men and paid-work outside the house (Weinraub, Jaeger, and Hoffman, 1988). Pointing out a different aspect of parental influence on gender role socialization, Sonnert’s (2009) study found that not only parents’ work but also parent’s educational levels influenced children’s gender role perceptions in relation to their own career. He claimed that parents with high educational levels were more likely to influence the career
choices of their children. In Sonnert’s study, women reported that their fathers, rather than their mothers, influenced their career choices.

When it comes to the case of Turkey, parents from high socio-economic backgrounds with mothers working outside the home adopted more egalitarian gender roles for their children compared to the traditional families with mothers staying at home and fathers acting as the breadwinners of the household (Fişek, 1995). In Fişek’s study, like the women in Sonnert’s (2009) study, the youngsters mostly reported that they consulted their fathers regarding the decisions related to their career choices. Fişek suggested that this finding can be explained with the dominant perception of men as engaging in paid work in several fields outside the house, including adopting powerful positions in the business world.

Furthermore, similar to Sonnert’s study, in Turkey, parents’ educational level appears to be influential on their perceptions of gender roles (Sunar, 2002). According to Sunar, girls are valued higher in educated urban families compared to rural traditional families. Sunar attributed this difference mainly to social class (Sunar, 2002). According to her, the higher the social class is the less traditional gender role perceptions are shaped for girls and boys, compared to the traditional gender roles attributed to girls and boys in Turkey. Sunar further argues that there is more gender equality in educated urban families. Arat (1999) also suggests that since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 the families from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds – the modern and educated families in the Turkish context – have given a considerable amount of importance to the education of their daughters, and have encouraged them to be educated in schools where values associated with the West such as social and economic independence and gender equality are promoted. Similarly, Pehlivanoğlu (1999) and Ataca (1992) argue that social class and education are important factors in gender role socialization in Turkey as they influence boys’ and girls’ gender roles. In these families it is less likely for parents to favour one sex over the other in terms of allocation of resources and expectations of educational and career success.
As for the influence of childhood gender role socialization on adulthood, Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) note that gender roles children are socialized into continue affecting their lives and careers in adulthood, shaping their career choice and advancement. Betz and Fitzgerald note that women are socialized to assume household and family responsibilities whereas men are considered as the main breadwinner. Furthermore, women are expected to be sensitive, caring and emotional as compared to men who are perceived to be achievement-oriented and instrumental (Betz and Fitzgerald (1987). As Cook, Heppner and O’Brien (2002, p. 298) suggest “From early childhood throughout life, many women are exposed to pervasive messages that a woman’s life should revolve around taking care of others and that their career plans are somehow superimposed on this primary obligation”. Cook, Heppner and O’Brien (2002) also allege that men give more importance to pursue a successful career compared to women. According to Cook, Heppner and O’Brien (2002), women tend to limit themselves to occupations that are considered appropriate for females such as teaching and nursing whereas men tend to prefer professions that are considered more competitive such as becoming a doctor, an engineer or a pilot. It is reported that in many societies, in the context of traditional gender roles, the traits that are attributed to men are instrumental whereas the ones related to women are considered more nurturing (Carli, 2001; İmamoğlu, 2013).

In Turkey, the traditional gender roles are well defined with respect to Turkish values and Muslim traditions (Esmer, 1991). According to Sunar and Fişek (2005, p. 8), an important social value influencing women’s life choices is “honour” which, in its more traditional interpretations, gives the responsibility of women’s sexual behaviour to their families and considers the family name and honour tarnished if women are engaged in sexual behaviours that are not approved by their families. The concept of honour is still prevalent in many Muslim societies: that the women will sexually seduce men if they are not isolated from men in social settings (Kandiyoti, 1974). Although the importance of honour has decreased with industrialization and urbanization, it is still a value that has a strong hold in rural areas in Turkey (Baştuğ, 2002). Moreover, Sunar
and Fişek (2005) argue that albeit being softer with the urbanization wave, the values regarding honour are still evident in urban Turkey. She notes that among urban and educated families in Turkey, there is more tolerance for dating. Also the importance of marriage has decreased, with other co-habitation choices and divorce co-existing with the married family life. However, Sunar and Fişek argue that in the sense of respect for the traditional family unit, the married family life still represents the backbone of the culture in Turkey. They explain that within the family unit in Turkey, family relations rely on respect for and authority of the father and family togetherness.

Commenting further on the significance of the family unit in Turkey, Sunar and Fişek note that (2005, p. 11), “Not only does the honour tradition underwrite male dominance, it also contributes to the closely-knit relationships of the traditional family: honour belongs to individuals, not as individuals but as members of families. Thus, each person is dependent on the behaviour of all the rest of the family for his or her status as an honourable member of the community”. This suggests that Turkish culture can be characterized as a collectivistic culture (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996). According to Kağıtçıbaşı (1996, p. 89), “In collectivistic cultures, the interests of the individual are conceptualized as the interests of the family”. Furthermore, Kağıtçıbaşı (1996, p. 89) notes that modern Turkish families are “emotionally interdependent”.

According to the World Value Survey (2015), Turkey is a traditional country whose strong traditional position has not changed significantly in the last three decades. In Turkey, the society is more security- and trust-driven, and people cannot easily stand out in ways that will challenge or differentiate significantly from the system of social and cultural norms, as the established system supports and gives the people a sense of security and social appreciation (World Value Survey, 2015). However, these insights in urban populations differ from rural populations because urban populations have more egalitarian treatment to both of the genders For instance, parents value the education of both of their daughters and sons and encourage them to be successful at school and later at work (Sunar, 2002). According to Kara (2006, p. 131),
“Although the modernisation process is still continuing, and the status of women has been improving in Turkey, women’s status and employment has been influenced by a polarization between Islamic traditions and the secular philosophy of Ataturk, which prevented genuine equality to women”. Thus, although Turkish women are in the process of gaining more control over their life choices in the social and economic realms within the process of modernisation, and potentially in urban areas families become gradually more progressive, and they demonstrate higher gender equality. However, traditional roles and relationships are still socially important, and they pose a limitation in the process of modernisation.

On the one hand, Turkish women strive for liberalizing and having equal rights; on the other hand, they acknowledge and respect their traditional roles and responsibilities (Kara, 2006). The restrictions of the traditional gender roles and responsibilities are considerably less for Turkish women who have liberal and modern families, mostly coming from urban and middle and higher socio-economic status and assuming a Westernized way of life (Sunar, 2002). Although these women may also face pressure from their families and friends to spend more time with their families, this pressure is less than Turkish women who come from traditional backgrounds (Kabasakal et al., 2015). Furthermore, Healy, Özbilgin and Aliefendioğlu (2005, p. 254) reported changes in the images of Turkish women since the 1980s: “The image of republican Turkish women, expected to ‘self-sacrifice’ and ‘pioneer’ for the advancement of the nation, has lost its influence on a new generation of young women graduates”. They also note that since the modernisation of Turkey the professionalization of women has had a great importance. Namely, since 1920’s, the families from middle and high socio-economic strata have supported the education of their daughters. Healy, Özbilgin and Aliefendioğlu also stated that educated young Turkish women were liberated to be more individualistic in determining their careers and social lives rather than taking the “responsibility of national wellbeing” (2005, p. 254).
However, Dökmen (2004) argue that in work, social and family life, the differences between men and women in Turkey are evident (Dökmen 2004). She notes that even in the middle-class sections of the society in Turkey, it is still common that women are expected to get their husband’s approval to work. If the husband does not give his wife permission to work, it is not socially acceptable for women to work outside the home; even if women get permission to work, they mostly find jobs with lower status and salaries (Dökmen, 2004). Dökmen further observes that in social life, it is difficult for women to leave home alone and socialize at night. Dökmen also states that in family life, women are considered as responsible for child care and household duties. Similarly, İmamoğlu (2013) notes that men in Turkey are mostly associated with paid work whereas women are perceived to have the full responsibility of the household duties and child care. İmamoğlu further observes that women are not expected to work in the sections of the society which prescribes to the traditional gender roles that associate women with home and creates inequality at work and in social life. Therefore, Turkey still scores very low in gender equality rankings as compared to Western countries (İmamoğlu, 2013).

Similar to İmamoğlu (2013), based on the findings of Sunar’s study (1982), both men and women in Turkey perceive men as the breadwinner of the family and women as the homemaker and supporter of their husbands. Sunar notes that even if women work outside home, they may quit their jobs after getting married and having children. In her study, Sunar (1982) found that women were perceived as dependent, emotional, passive, inexperienced and weak as compared to men by the sections of the society that adopt traditional gender roles. Similarly, Gürbüz (1988) examined the gender stereotypes and socially accepted traits for Turkish men, and described the men as ambitious and risk takers. On the other hand, it was reported that socially accepted characteristics for Turkish women were mostly associated with “passivity” (Kabasakal, 2000, p. 231).

Thus, although traditional gender roles associating women with the home have lost its power to a certain extent in urban households with high educational
levels in Turkey, men are still considered to be the main breadwinners, and they are associated with traits such as achievement-oriented whereas women are associated with the gentleness and thrift as it is expected from an effective home-maker and mother. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the gender roles that associate women with the home and meekness have been transformed into more egalitarian gender roles for girls and women in some urban families. In order to understand this transformation, it is vital to look into the significance of education on gender role perceptions in Turkey.

In the social development and modernisation of Turkey, education has played a key role. Therefore, it is crucial to look at the education system to understand the effect of education on the gender role perceptions of women. Since the Education Reform Act in 1924 that made the five-year primary school education compulsory for girls and boys, the education system in Turkey has been highly centralized (Arat, 1999; Gök, 2007). However, the policies on women’s education have not made it possible for most rural and poor women to continue their education beyond primary school. Instead they have encouraged the women to give priority to their work in the fields and their families (Arat, 1999; Gök, 2007). On the other hand, females from the urban population, especially from higher socio-economic backgrounds, have had greater opportunities to access all levels of education which enable them to achieve well-paid jobs with high social status (Arat, 1999; Gök, 2007). Thus, in urban families from middle and upper socio-economic status, both girls and boys have been encouraged to attend all levels of education and enter professions such as engineering and business regardless of their gender (Acar, 1989; Erkut, 1982). To understand how privileged such women are in terms of educational achievements, it is worthwhile to look at the major indicators of women’s educational status and school enrolment in Turkey.

In Turkey, the rate of literacy was 67% for women and 89% for men in 1990, it increased to 90% for women and 98% for men in 2013 (TÜİK, 2014). In 1997, the length of time spent in education was raised from five to eight years by the law making both primary and junior-high school education compulsory (TÜİK,
In 2012, the length of compulsory education was extended to twelve years through a 4+4+4 structure of primary, junior high and high school education system (Ministry of National Education, 2012-2013). In the 2014-15 education years, 96% of the female student population at the primary school education age level attended primary school; the same year, this ratio was 94%, 79%, and 41% for female students for junior high school, high school, and higher education (Ministry of National Education, 2014-2015). Thus, by the year 2015, there has been no significant difference in the schooling ratio based on gender. However, gender inequalities in education still exist in Turkey as in many developing countries: for instance, although the gender gap in primary education has diminished with a female ratio of 0.98, this ratio is 0.85 in tertiary education, favouring males in Turkey (Rankin and Aytaç, 2006).

In Turkey, the foreign high schools, mainly American, German, French, Austrian and Italian high schools have provided their students with an exposure to Western curricula and values regarding gender roles, which in return has reflections on the management styles of these students (Pazarcik, 2013). As for the influence of family decisions on the educational prospects of girls and boys in Turkey, Rankin and Aytaç (2006, p. 27) suggest that “Family decisions about the education of children and the gendered nature of these decisions are strongly influenced by family structure, economic circumstances, and cultural preferences regarding education”. In addition, cultural norms and beliefs about gender influence educational decision-making, mostly favouring males (Arat, 1999). In their study, Rankin and Aytaç (2006) argue that although the family structure, resources and place of residence influence the education of both girls and boys, girls have greater chances to continue their education after primary school if they live in the cities and in less patriarchal families. It can be argued that these families are among the ones that give a considerable degree of importance to the education of their children, considering the education as a key for their children’s future. The statistics on the number of private high schools and female students in these schools seem to support this argument: as the number of private schools (high schools) increased from 55,305 to 232,039 in the last ten years, the number of girls in private schools increased from 24,341

Furthermore, according to the Global Parents’ Survey (ICEF Monitor, 2015a), Turkish parents (83%) come second after Indian parents (88%) in considering sending their children abroad for postgraduate studies. The Survey reports that these parents value postgraduate studies abroad as a means of 1) becoming knowledgeable about the world 2) experiencing different cultures and 3) having a chance to live abroad. It can be suggested that education abroad is particularly valued in Turkey since it is argued that the quality of education has dropped in Turkish universities although the number of universities increased from 77 to 176 in the last fifteen years (ICEF Monitor, 2015b). Furthermore, the decreasing funding for state schools, their lack of teachers and the deteriorating quality of education at the compulsory education level has been criticized by a number of critics (Şahin and Gülmez, 2000; Gök, 2010). Thus, for families in Turkey who would like their children to attend foreign schools or state schools that have a reputation for having experienced teachers and a good quality of education, the centralized nation-wide examinations at the 8th grade for entry to high school and for university placement at the end of high school gain a great amount of importance. As the demand is far greater than the supply of schools with quality education, students find themselves in a highly competitive environment, and they are forced to compete in nationwide examinations that do not tolerate mistakes (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2004). Similarly, as Turkey has limited resources, the acceptance rate for both prestigious high schools and universities is low - around 20%. Therefore, the students in Turkey are exposed to “some of the world's worst exam anxiety” (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2004, p.165).

Another consequence of the Turkish education system’s capacity and quality issues, combined with an overwhelmingly young population and low employment rates among university graduates, has been the number of Turkish students studying abroad (ICEF Monitor, 2015b). Turkish parents send a total of 100,000 students abroad every year (ICEF Monitor, 2015b). Globally, Turkey ranks among the top 15 senders and is one of the leading senders to the US in
The most popular countries for postgraduate study among Turkish students are the US, Germany, Bulgaria and the UK (ICEF Monitor, 2015b). In recent years, Turkish students prefer Canada, where Turkish enrolments increased by 80% between 2006 and 2015 (Facts and Figures 2015: Immigration Overview, 2015). According to the ICEF Monitor’s (2015b) study, Turkey is reported to send twice as many students as it receives from foreign countries. Turkish students who study abroad mostly prefer to study business, social sciences and engineering (OECD Indicators, 2014a).

According to the National Education Statistics (TÜİK, 2015-16), the number of Turkish students who received scholarships for studying abroad was a total of 2,987 in the 2015-2016 education years. Among these students 1,867 were male and 1120 female, female students constituting 37% of the total students who received scholarships from the Ministry of National Education for studying abroad (TÜİK, 2015-16). The same statistics showed that the majority of these students preferred to pursue their postgraduate degrees in science and social sciences such as business and economics in the US, followed by the UK and Germany.

Thus, the families in Turkey who would like their children to continue their education at schools with a good quality of education attempt to achieve this by preparing their children for the national examination exams, sending them to private and foreign schools and sending them abroad for higher education based on their socio-economic backgrounds. In the case of girls in Turkey, continuing education beyond high school seems to increase their probability of entering paid work considerably (Çelikoğlu et al., 2009). Thus, in Turkey, there is a strong correlation between the level of education and female participation in paid work; primary education increases the probability of working by 3%, whereas university education does so by 73% (Çelikoğlu et al., 2009). In Turkey, with a primary school education, 70% of men and 22% of women work in the labour market; this number increases to 71% for university-educated women whereas it is 83% for men (WEF, 2014). Furthermore, high levels of education play a key role in Turkey in increasing women’s access to jobs with
Thus, although women who complete higher education in Turkey participate in paid work more and are more likely to have jobs with good pay and high social status, women with higher education are still reported to prefer jobs such as being doctor, teacher or nurse as opposed to men who prefer occupations such as management and leadership positions, leading to lower numbers of women in managerial positions (Özbey, 2004). In the case of Turkey, the women who get higher education as well as opportunities to continue their education abroad and live abroad and aspire to the values of gender equality in these developed countries mostly come from high socio-economic backgrounds. The women from this socio-economic group can be argued to have a greater chance of combining their career and family life and being less influenced by the social constraints as compared to the women who cannot achieve jobs with high social status and pay due to low levels of education or the perception that their utmost role is at home as a mother and home-maker. However, as Özbey (2004) points out it is important to acknowledge that the inequalities in educational opportunities and traditional gender role perceptions seem to prevent even women with higher education levels and higher socio-economic backgrounds from accessing senior managerial positions. Thus, it is vital to understand the gender role perceptions of the women leaders in my research and the socio-economic conditions that have enabled their career success.

This section first looks at the formation of gender role perceptions in childhood, followed by a focus on the gender role socialization of girls and boys in Turkey. Then the section discusses the influence of gender role socialization on career choices and advancement. It explores traditional gender roles placing women at home and modern gender roles that encourage girls and boys to have equal educational and social opportunities although there is limited research on the formation of these gender role perceptions. Most of the literature focuses on the overall gender roles of the Turkish society. There are a few studies focusing on
the modern gender role perceptions and their formation among particular
groups of women. Next, it discusses the education and its influence on the
gender role perceptions in Turkey. However, in the literature, most studies are
based on statistics that show the relationship between education and access to
jobs with high pay and high social status. There is little information on the
gender role perceptions of women from varying socio-economic backgrounds
including modern women. As the sample of this study consists of modern,
urban, educated women, the findings of this study will generate knowledge on
the reported gender perceptions of a particular group of modern urban women –
women business leaders in the fast moving consumer goods sector. Next
section will discuss the major indicators regarding women’s status at work and
the conditions that enable some women to access high level managerial jobs.

2.4 Turkish women at work

Turkish women have started to work outside home and in non-agricultural
sectors since the major industrial developments in Turkey in the 1950s (Makal,
2001). With the help of the modernisation process and migration to the urban
areas, more women have gained educational opportunities and achieved
access to jobs in sectors other than those in the agriculture sector (Kabasakal
et al., 2015). However, women’s participation in employment stands at 30.3% in
Turkey (TÜİK, 2014) compared with the 51.8% employment rate in the EU-28
countries and 51.5% in the OECD countries (OECD Statistics, 2014b).
Moreover, Turkey’s female employment rate is lower than that of a number of
other developing and Muslim-majority countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, and
Egypt (WEF, 2012). As for women’s participation in different sectors of
employment in Turkey, it has been pointed out that since the early 2000s,
women’s employment in the service sector has increased considerably: the
percentage of women working in the service sector doubled and, in the industry,
it increased from 15% to 24% between 2000 and 2014 (TÜİK, 2000, 2014).
However, the agriculture sector is the main sector that women work in: 41% of
the economically active women work in the agriculture sector, 29% work in the
service sector and 24% work in the industry sector (TÜİK, 2014). As the Turkish
Statistics Institute (2013) reports, women’s participation in employment is
particularly low in urban areas with 28%, whereas this rate increases to 36.7% in rural areas.

Several factors have been discussed to explain women’s low participation in employment in Turkey. First, Kağıtçıbaşı and Sunar (1992) argue that women from lower socio-economic status do not get adequate recognition and power for their financial contributions to their households. While the jobs of these women with their low social status do not lead to social recognition, their husbands lose prestige by not being the sole breadwinner of the family (Kağıtçıbaşı and Sunar, 1992). Secondly, as Erkut (1982) points out women are still expected to fulfil household duties regardless of their employment outside the home. Therefore, they find it difficult to balance household and work responsibilities which mostly results in sacrificing employment for women (Erkut, 1982). Thirdly, it is important to acknowledge that most jobs that women with low educational qualifications have are characterized by being in the informal sector with poor work conditions, no social security, and lower wages in comparison with men’s wages (İlkkaracan and Selim, 2007). These challenging socio-economic conditions underlie women’s low participation in employment, and they result in quitting paid work after marriage in Turkey (İlkkaracan & Selim, 2007). According to the Household Labour Force Survey (TÜİK, 2013), women report that the main reason behind their unemployment is their roles as housewives (74%), followed by their family’s intervention in their working (8%).

Thus, the role of women as wives and mothers in a patriarchal culture coupled with increasing urbanization seems to determine women’s participation in employment in Turkey (Dayıoğlu and Kırdağ, 2009). As Kara (2006) points out since gender equality has not been achieved in women’s educational, social and political positions in Turkey, women’s employment has been highly affected by both Islamic traditions and the modernizing secular reforms of the early Republic. According to Kara (2006, p. 131), some Turkish women prefer jobs which are compatible with Islamic culture and values that foster “women’s seclusion and privacy”. Kara states that mostly women work at not qualified and well-paid jobs due to “Islamic based culture” (2006, p. 131).
Women’s employment in Turkey is not only characterized by low participation rates but also the gender wage-gap; Turkey ranked 87th in wage equality out of 131 counties, which is far behind the OECD and European countries (WEF, 2014). Selim and İllkaracan’s comprehensive study (2002) examines the gender equality with respect to wage nationwide with 74,000 workers. They claim that the wage gap results from women’s lower education, experience and tenure as compared to men. For women, flexible working hours and jobs without social security have been found to reduce their wages even further. Selim and İllkaracan (2002) reports that 20% of the wage gap can be explained by the gender of the workers.

Despite women’s low participation in employment and the gender pay gap, Turkish women’s participation in high status professions is high with 13.9%, compared to 7.4% of men in similar professions (TÜİK, 2014). 42% of architects, 40% of lawyers and 43% of professors are women in Turkey (KSGM, 2009). Unfortunately, the high representation in these professions is not reflected in managerial positions. While 6.6% of men work as managers, this rate drops to 2.4% for women managers (TÜİK, 2014). On the other hand, in order to understand the role of gender role perceptions of business leaders in business, it is worthwhile to have a look at women’s representation status in political leadership which may have similar patterns.

Similarly, Turkish women’s participation in the political arena has been lacking. In Turkey, women were given the right to vote and to run in municipal elections in 1930 and in national elections in 1934. Turkish women achieved these political rights much earlier than women in many developed countries. However, the ratio of women in the Parliament was 5% in 2007, 14.4% in 2011 and 14% in the 2015 elections (The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2017). Tansu Çiller was the only woman Prime Minister of Turkey who was in power in the mid-1990s. The reasons of low representation of women are found to be male dominance in politics, the high expense of being a candidate and gender perception that politics is a male business by Özerkmen (Özerkmen, 2008).
However, compared to Europe, Turkey has the highest percentage of women academicians (European Commission, 2009), supporting the idea that Turkish women are more likely to choose high status professional occupations such as becoming doctors, lawyers, architects and academicians where their career advancement is less likely to be blocked by men compared to professions such as management and leadership. Thus, Turkish women are underrepresented in leadership positions similar to the rest of the world. According to recent data, women's participation on boards in the private sector in Turkey is 8% (WEF, 2014) whereas this ratio goes up to 9.3% in the public sector (TÜİK, 2013). Compared to the 1980s, there are positive improvements in the socio-economic position of women and gender equality (Kuzgun and Sevim, 2004). However, women are still underrepresented in the workforce as well as in the leadership positions (Koca, Arslan and As, 2011). Several factors such as family responsibilities (Kuzgun and Sevim, 2004), gender role perceptions and role incongruence (Aycan, 2004; Koca, Arslan and As, 2011; Titrek, Bayrakçı and Güneş 2014) and the organizational culture (Atabek, 1994) are reported to limit women’s career advancement in Turkey. Therefore, gender roles continue to be a limitation for Turkish women, particularly for their advancement to leadership positions which are mostly occupied by men.

Furthermore, Karataş-Özkan, Inal and Özbilgin (2010) claim that traditional gender roles combined with poor education, non-existence of role models and poor network connections create barriers to women’s career advancement. In addition, Sümer (2006) reports those women are perceived to perform lower in task orientation and emotion management than men in Turkish society. Aycan (2004) claims that there are doubts about women’s leadership competencies such as assertiveness, mental capabilities and aspiration to succeed. According to this study, women are not deemed to be good managers because they have family and household duties which are considered as the women’s main responsibility. Supporting these findings, Koca and Öztürk, (2015) and Örücü, Kılıç and Kılıç (2007) claim that the gender role perceptions and stereotypes are the mainly explain women’s low representation in senior management roles in Turkey. In their studies, Koca and Öztürk (2015) also report that management is
seen to be congruent with male qualifications and women managers are not considered to have managerial skills.

On the other hand, Nalbant (2002) acknowledges that the leadership skills of women and men in the banking sector are not perceived to be different in Turkey. However, the participants who perceive differences in leadership skills report that women perform better than men in relationship management whereas men are rated more positively on business success in general. In their study, Özdevecioğlu et al., (2003) claim that women leaders are perceived to be more democratic, people oriented and supportive than male leaders. However, the same study also argues that women leaders have lower self-confidence, and they may be hesitant to manage their teams.

Here it is important to point out that Turkish women in senior managerial positions seem to have different socio-economic conditions than other women in Turkey and their counterparts in the developed countries (Kabasakal et al., 2015). As the only occupational group, female business leaders, who are very few in number, earn more than male senior managers. The wage gap of male managers' wages versus female managers' wages is calculated to be -7.3% (TÜİK, 2010). However, similar to the rest of the women, these women face different conflicts due to their roles as a mother, wife and career woman. However, Kabasakal report that (2000, p. 236), “Top management positions are available only to a restricted group of women in Turkish society. Only those women with a middle or upper socioeconomic background have the opportunity for a high quality and high level education.” This privileged background gives these urban women an advantage to overcome the barriers they encounter as females as well as providing them with the power and prestige which are required for leadership positions (Kabasakal, 2000). Kabasakal also points out that women who belong to middle or upper socio-economic strata have chances to access high level education, and they tend to receive degrees from schools with “Anglo-Saxon” traditions or study abroad (Kabasakal, 2000, p. 234). In her study, Kabasakal (2000) finds that most of these women get married men from upper socio-economic class who provide them further status in order to
advance in their careers. Furthermore, the low-paid domestic helpers provide these women leaders with a support system so that they could overcome the challenges posed by child care and household duties. Another advantage of highly educated, urban educated women was reported by Erkut (1982) who suggested that the urban, modern men are less threatened by women’s academic and career success as compared to their counterparts in rural areas in Turkey. Additionally, there are more maternal employment opportunities for urban and educated women (Ergüder, Kalaycioğlu and Esmer, 1991).

Thus, Turkish women who mostly come from high socio-economic backgrounds are in a better position to manage the conflicts between their work and familial schedules as they can delegate their family care and household duties to their parents and/or domestic helps who provide cheap labour in Turkey (Kabasakal et al., 2015). Furthermore, as Turkish culture is characterized by collectivism it is very common to get the help of parents to fulfil or manage child care and household responsibilities (Kabasakal and Bodur, 2007). Thus, these advantages help women leaders in Turkey to have a support system in order to manage their family and work balance. This can be considered as a great advantage to support Turkish women to advance in their careers as compared to women in other countries. However, it is important to note that this privileged situation only applies to Turkish women who come from middle or upper-class families who later on get higher education. Although, there is a modicum of research about some enabling socio-cultural factors that influence the careers of women as presented above, there is a gap in understanding about the relationship between socio-cultural factors and gender role perceptions and the role of gender role perceptions in career success. In addition, there is very limited information about women leaders who succeed to get top positions in the organizations in Turkey. This study aims to contribute to the existing research by exploring the enabling socio-cultural factors that women leaders think influence their careers as well as the role of their reported gender role perceptions in their career success.
This section provides a brief overview of main indicators on women’s employment in Turkey. After discussing women’s low participation in paid work and the reasons behind this, the section discusses the gender pay gap in Turkey. Then, it provides an overview of the sectors in which women in Turkey work and points to women’s high representation in many professional occupations except for political representation and leadership in senior managerial positions. After this overview, the section touches upon several characteristics and skills that are associated with women senior managers in Turkey. Next, the section discusses some favourable socio-economic conditions that enable women senior managers’ career success. The following section will discuss the career success of Turkish women leaders by exploring three different theories of gender roles and women’s leadership.

### 2.5 The career success of Turkish women leaders

Leadership is defined by House *et al.*, (1999, p. 184) as “the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organization”. On the other hand, the career success is conceptualized by using visible criteria that can be comparable to other people such as upward mobility, the rate of promotions, job title or managerial hierarchy (Heslin, 2005). In this thesis, the visible criterion for career success is defined as the job title such as assuming a leadership role: namely general manager or chief executive officer role in a local or multinational company.

In the literature, leadership is mostly related to attributes that are associated with males (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Coder and Spiller, 2013). Traditionally, men are perceived to be suitable for leadership positions which are considered to require attributes such as assertiveness, achievement and forcefulness (Neubert and Taggar, 2004; Krefting, 2002). However, women are assumed to be strong in relationships and social orientation as leaders (Oakley, 2000). According to Alimo-Metcalfe (2010), women are underrepresented in leadership positions almost in all cultures, organizations and sectors. According to Treasurer, Adelman and Cohn (2013) women themselves limit their career
aspirations to fulfill family and household duties because these duties are more appreciated by society. According to Lovely-Watson (2007), the career limitations for women stem from early gender role perceptions. House, Wright, and Aditya (1997) claim that it is the national cultures that shape the gender role perceptions of women. According to Deaux and Lewis (1984), female and male attributes shape the gender role definitions which define the perceptions about leadership and career advancement. Tharenou and Conroy (1994, as cited in Aycan 2004, p. 457) claim that “individual and situational factors” have a great impact on the career advancement of women professionals. They list individual factors such as “women’s attitudes towards career advancement, work-related demographics, and early socialization” and situational factors such as the work situation including the organizational culture and practices and the home situation including spousal support and familial responsibilities.

In their study in Turkey, Titrek, Bayrakçı, and Güneş (2014) address that Turkish women perceive themselves as equal to men when it comes to assuming a leadership role. However, they also report that there are social challenges that limit their pace on the way to leadership positions. These challenges include socio-cultural factors and traditional gender roles that assign responsibilities such as child care and housework, hindering women’s advancement in their career and access to leadership positions (Titrek, Bayrakçı, and Güneş, 2014). Titrek, Bayrakçı, and Güneş (2014) further note that although in recent years women have achieved more leadership roles in organizations, the concept of women leadership has not been well-accepted by the Turkish society yet. In Turkey, the number of female general managers who participate on boards of the companies listed in the Istanbul Exchange Market (BIST) was only 13 in 2015. This number was 20 in 2012, which dropped to 12 in 2013 (Ararat, Alkan and Aytekin, 2015). Titrek, Bayrakçı, and Güneş (2014) argue that this is because women are not considered to be a good fit for managerial positions, particularly top leadership roles. These stereotypical perspectives have a great impact on women’s career advancement, especially when women are candidates of senior positions. This may result in the “think male, think manager” perspective (Schein, 2007, p. 8) which creates
inequalities in the recruitment, development and promotion opportunities (Titrek, Bayrakçı, and Güneş 2014).

In analysing Turkish women leaders’ gender roles and enabling socio-economic conditions, the following three theories have formed the theoretical framework of this study that appears to best explain the gender roles and leadership positions that have influenced the career progress of women in this study. Firstly, Eagly and Wood's (1991) Social Role Theory argues that gender and social roles are determined by the values, norms, beliefs and behaviours that are recognized by the society. According to the Social Role Theory, there are characteristics that are required for leadership positions. These characteristics are the male ones (Skelly and Johnson, 2011). Women are assumed to be sensitive, caring and nurturing whereas men are expected to be assertive, ambitious and autocratic. Therefore, women leader candidates who are not perceived to be assertive, ambitious and autocratic find it difficult to get promoted. As Lyness and Terrazas’ (2006) study reveals, the gender role expectations about women limit their access to leadership positions.

According to the Social Role Theory (Eagly and Wood, 1991), the gender role perceptions lead women to have a false perception as if they have less leadership skills than men. Also, gender roles lead women to be evaluated as less successful in leadership positions as leadership behaviours are perceived to be incongruent with female attributes (Eagly and Wood, 1991). As a result, Eagly (1987) claims that women are not perceived to be congruent with leadership roles. Thus, they have difficulty in gaining leadership positions. Also, women are not perceived to be effective leaders compared to men, resulting in a prejudice against women and leading to a few numbers of women leaders at the top.

Secondly, the theory that has proved to be useful in thinking about the gender roles of women leaders in Turkey and the socio-economic conditions that enable their career success is the Role Congruity Theory by Eagly and Karau (2002) grounded in the Social Role Theory. However, it goes beyond the Social
Role Theory because it considers the congruity between gender roles and leadership roles as well as the double standards applied to women when they are thought to exhibit leadership qualities and behaviours that are associated with men. Thus, the Role Congruity Theory defines the factors that influence gender role perceptions and the influence of these perceptions on behaviours. The gender roles lead to the prejudice against women leaders, and the prejudice result from gender role perceptions and expectations about leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002). According to this theory, gender role expectations are determined by culture, and women and men are expected to act according to the roles defined by the society (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Eagly and Karau’s (2002) Role Congruity Theory suggests that the gender role expectations of the society have an impact on the perceptions, perspectives and attitudes towards career advancement of men and women. Eagly and Karau (2002) claim that leadership is mostly associated with male attributes. According to the Role Congruity Theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002), the characteristics that are associated with socially acceptable female roles are not perceived to be the characteristics of leadership. Furthermore, McClellan et al., (2008) note that in order to show their leadership characteristics women try to perform behaviours which men usually engage in whereas men avoid behaviours which may be perceived as female attributes. Therefore, gender role perceptions can prevent women from achieving leadership roles due to the perceived gender role congruity (Schein 2007, Lyness and Terrazas, 2006; Jean Lau, 2011).

Eagly and Karau (2002, p. 575) also claim that “Women who are effective leaders tend to violate standards for their gender when they manifest male-stereotypical attributes and fail to manifest female-stereotypical, communal attributes, they may be unfavourably evaluated for their gender role violation, at least by those who endorse traditional gender roles”. The Role Congruity Theory suggests that “women leaders face two challenges: (1) the perception of women as less favourable than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (2) the evaluation of a behaviour that fulfils the prescriptions of a leader role less favourably when it is enacted by a woman” (Eagly and Karau, 2002, p. 573). Thus, when women demonstrate traits that are associated with men and
leadership their behaviours are not considered socially acceptable because they are not congruent with women’s role in society (Eagly and Karau, 2002). However, despite these unfavourable disparities, Taylor et al.’s (2008) study reveal that women are as effective leaders as men although women and men seem to have differences in leadership styles. Research indicate that women leaders are more relationship-oriented and give value to communication and diversity compared to men (Nguyen 2013). Thus, taking into consideration the insights from the Social Role Theory and the Role Congruity Theory, it is possible to argue that several studies (Kabasakal 2000; Aycan 2004; Örücü, Kılıç and Kılıç 2007; Sümer 2006) from Turkey show that gender role perceptions play an important role in the low representation of women leadership in Turkey, and women’s roles in society are not perceived to be congruent with leadership roles.

As for the third theory that has underlined the theoretical framework of this study, Hakim’s Preference Theory (2002) suggests that women are not homogenous in prioritizing their family and their career preferences. Hakim posits that in developed countries such as Britain and USA, women are assumed to have a high degree of choice in their careers. According to Hakim (2002), women’s socio-economic position reflects their own preferences in modern developed countries. Even though she acknowledges the socio-cultural and organizational constraints, Hakim claims that these constraints have a less influence on women’s careers compared to their values and preferences. She further claims that social class and gender have minor effects on women’s careers (Hakim, 2002). Hakim further states that (2002, p. 428) “Lifestyle preferences are a major determinant of fertility, employment patterns, and job choice”.

In the employment of women, Hakim (1991, p. 101) claims that “There is a paradox in women’s labour force participation. On the one hand women are concentrated in the lowest grade, least skilled and lowest paid jobs with the poorest employment benefits and prospects. On the other hand, women report high levels of satisfaction with their jobs, often greater satisfaction than that
reported by men with their higher status and better paid jobs”. Hakim (1991) explains this paradox by arguing that women have different expectations from life. She suggests that women mostly choose to assume domestic roles by prioritizing their families and considering work as a support to their husbands. She further explains that women who consider work as their primary goal more than supporting their husbands and families are able to get senior jobs and positions. Hakim (1991) argues that women who prefer domestic roles work for their convenience rather than leadership factors such as status, security, freedom, and confidence. This situation explains women’s satisfaction with low status and low-paid jobs. According to Hakim (1991, p. 114), these women do not aspire to achieve more, and this can be explained from a perspective that women are “self-determining actors rather than people whose behaviour is determined by social constraints and family characteristics”.

According to Hakim’s theory (2002), there are three groups of women who manage their needs and conflicts between their familial roles and careers in different ways: (1) the home-centred women who prefer a home life to work, (2) the work-centred women who prefer the career-oriented life style and (3) the adaptive women who prefer to do some work but do not focus on their careers. Hakim (2002) suggests that women tend to mix-and-match family and work. Hakim claims that the home-centred women prioritize their family life, focusing on their children. She also claims that these women work only if they are in financial difficulty. According to Hakim (2002), the work-centred women tend to be committed to their work, and they prioritize work over their family life. Hakim claims that the majority of the work-centred women are childless. Hakim considers the third group - adaptive women - as not having a commitment to work and claims that they constitute a diverse group in which some of the women marry at a later age or some of them do not marry at all. She explains that these women assume a combination of roles which they adapt to their situations because they consider themselves as secondary earners and their husbands as the main breadwinners. Hakim further argues that the adaptive women are not as committed to their careers as the work-centred women.
It is important to acknowledge that Hakim’s theory (2000) rests on four preconditions: 1) the social and employment market changes such as the contraceptive revolution, gender equality rights, the emergence of white collar jobs which provide choices between family and work life, which are claimed to be valid for modern societies; 2) women have the freedom to choose their lifestyles; they may prefer to be home-centred, work-centred and adaptive; 3) women have different interests which prevent their success and resilience compared to men; and 4) the variety of interests among women is caused by their divided response to social policies. According to Hakim (2003), if the policies regarding fertility and employment were based on the Preference Theory, these policies would be more efficient as the theory suggests considering women as a heterogeneous rather than a homogenous group, e.g. home-centred, adaptive, work-centred (2003).

In short, Hakim’s Preference Theory focuses on the decision making of women in terms of their employment, claiming that women’s career and family life are shaped by their preferences, and this theory is mostly valid in modern societies and developed countries such as the UK, the US and Australia (Hakim, 2002). Many researchers have challenged Hakim’s theory from different aspects, arguing that it is incomplete and oversimplifies human psychology (Crompton and Harris, 1998; McRae, 2003; Kan, 2005; Johnstone and Lee, 2016; Houston and Marks, 2003). Crompton and Harris (1998, p. 145) agree with Hakim that 1) women are not homogenous, and 2) longitudinal data is the best source to examine career preferences over time. However, they argue that longitudinal data “are not reflected in aggregate level statistics describing economic activity (and inactivity) of persons of working age. Statistics relating to employment, unemployment, part-time working and self-employment, etc., do not tell us whether the individuals are classified as ‘committed’, ‘uncommitted’, or whatever. Thus, Hakim uses evidence relating to current labour market activity (or its absence) as an indication of ‘commitment’ - and lack of it” (p.145). According to Crompton and Harris (1998), Hakim’s work does not explain why women fall into the categories that she has defined. Another critique of theirs is
that her work categories rely on a US longitudinal survey in 1987 and it may not
be relevant to other developed countries.

According to Crompton and Harris (1999), women’s career and family lives
have been shaped by both preferences and constraints. In their study with 150
female doctors and bankers from five European countries, they find that doctors
and bankers manage their career and family responsibilities differently.
According to this study, while the doctors experience more flexibility in their
work life, the bankers change their career directions due to factors other than
family such as organizational structuring. Therefore, they conclude that
organizational factors play a role in women’s career lives (Crompton and Harris,
1999). Similarly, Kan’s (2005) research show that women’s career lives are
influenced by both preferences and constraints. In fact, Kan finds that children
have been less of a constraint for work-oriented women compared to other
women. In Kan’s study, the results show that the women who have continuous
full-time jobs tend to be childless. Moreover, Kan’s findings suggest that the
preferences of women have changed in relation to their market experiences
over time. According to Kan’s study, women’s preferences regarding work have
not been stable over time, and the constraints related to their work experience
could be considered as factors affecting women’s career. In Kan’s study, most
of the constraints are related to family and labour market practices. Kan finds
that even the most career-oriented women have discontinuity in their career
lives even though they may be the most committed women to their full-time
jobs. This finding clearly contradicts Hakim’s theory (2002) which claims that
women’s preferences for their careers are the determinant factors in women’s
careers and these preferences do not change over time (2002). According to
Kan (2005, p. 29), Hakim acknowledges that women’s careers are solely based
on their preferences which are “defective “.

As for McRae’s (2003) challenge to Hakim’s theory, McRae claims that the
constraints women face identify the differences in their career stories. McRae
argues that women do not have unconstrained choices. Therefore, McRae
challenges Hakim’s claim that women’s heterogeneous choices shape their
careers. In McRae’s study with British first-time mothers she used longitudinal data, and she found that 90% of her sample either worked part-time or quitted work for a while after their first babies were born. Only 10% of the sample continued to work full-time in the eleven years after the birth of their children. Therefore, McRae concluded that these different groups of British women did not have different gender role attitudes towards family and work (McRae, 2003). According to McRae (2003), some women have no preference in regard to work after childbirth but stay at home to raise their children. However, some women go back to work after they give birth to child due to their financial situations even though they would prefer to stay at home for their children. McRae’s study (2003) also takes the influence of spouses into consideration and explains that socially conservative husbands can prevent women from working even if the women themselves prefer to do so. According to McRae, social class, networks and income levels determine how effectively and comfortably women can manage the constraints and she claims that “preferences alone in other words are only part of the story of most women’s lives” (McRae 2003, p. 334). Finally, McRae (2003) claims that Hakim does not consider macro level constraints and she finds some of Hakim’s hypotheses, especially those related to the adaptive group of women, oversimplified. According to McRae, this is a diverse group of women who do not fall in any of the classifications.

As for McRae’s (2003, p. 324) challenges to Hakim’s Preference Theory, rather than preferences McRae makes use of different combinations such as “a career and children”, “children and a job”, “my family comes first” and “my family is my job” to explain how life choices and constraints shaped women’s careers (p. 324). This conceptualization challenges Hakim’s claim that women’s lifestyles are based on women’s choices. Furthermore, according to McRae (2003) there is little evidence to support the claim that it is the preferences that distinguish the majority from the minority. McRae (2003, p. 328) claims that “All women face constraints in making decisions about their lives” unlike Hakim who argues that women’s pattern of behaviours are unconstrained. McRae (2003, p. 329) also points to the socio-economic inequalities amongst women and the privileges that are enjoyed by some women but not others by stating that “Some
women have substantially better chances than others of overcoming constraints, and hence of living as if they face no constraints” (p.329). Similar to Crompton and Harris (1999), Kan (2005) and McRae (2003), Houston and Marks (2003) also support the proposition that opportunities and constraints shape the family and career lives of women. In their study they find that (Houston and Marks, 2003, p. 209) “the proportions of women who intend to work full-time, part-time or not at all are broadly in line with the proportions proposed by Preference theory”. However, for Houston and Marks (2003) this does not mean that this is women’s free choice but has to do with both women’s constraints and chances.

As well as the critics discussed above, Hakim’s theory also has supporters such as the Australian government which design policies to manage gender inequality, part-time jobs and values and preferences in relation to gender equality by using Hakim’s Theory as a reference. Johnstone and Lee (2016) examine whether the Preference Theory is valid in Australia. In this study, women’s work and family life are examined longitudinally by using four waves of Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health. The results show that women prefer both employment and family life, and most of them changed their preferences over time, which contradicts Hakim’s theory. According to Johnstone and Lee (2016), the Australian evidence does not support the Preference Theory. They conclude that social pressures and constraints influence women’s career preferences. They also argue that women’s employment preferences cannot be simply categorized as home-centred, career-centred and adaptive. They claim that in order to classify the majority of women into these categories, “very loose criteria had to be used” and only few women assume strict work-centred or home-centred roles (Johnstone and Lee, 2016, p. 260).

Similarly, Leahy and Doughney (2006) also argue that Hakim’s Theory is not valid in Australia. They claim that the lifestyle groupings of Hakim are “complex, cognitive, intentional processes that lay behind choices and preference formation and, in particular to the phenomenon of adaptive preferences” (Leahy
and Doughney, 2006, p. 38). They argue that women determine their preferences in response to gender inequality in Australia. Also, they claim that Hakim’s explanation of preferences disregards the presence of constraints in women’s lives. Leahy and Doughney report that Hakim’s Preference Theory fails because women shape their preferences in relation to the constraints they face and make decisions accordingly. Furthermore, Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (2000) claim that Hakim does not consider that preferences can be adaptive in response to the constraints in women’s lives. According to Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (2000), women adjust their aspirations in a way they perceive the world whereas Hakim claims that the lifestyle preferences of women do not change over time.

On the other hand, Acker (2006) notes that even when women prefer career-oriented life styles, senior positions are mostly occupied by men and lower positions by women. Gendered stereotypes such as women have families to take care of, women are not suitable for leadership roles and women are not mobile enough influence women’s chances of leadership roles (Acker, 2006). Moreover, the human resources processes and practices such as recruitment and promotion to senior leadership roles, expatriate assignments and professional development opportunities mostly favour men (Acker, 2006). As Wharton (2005, p. 97) claim “sex segregation at the job level is more extensive than sex segregation at the level of occupations”. Furthermore, the characteristics assigned to men such as strength, aggressiveness and competitiveness constitute the image of many organizations (Wharton, 2005). Therefore, it is not a surprise to see more men in leadership positions. Furthermore, the organizations with linear team structures give more opportunities to women only if women act like men (Wharton, 2005). This means that women adapt their family responsibilities to their work and they work for long hours, and they adopt male stereotypical behaviours. However, when women use power or act assertive in organizations, they are more likely to be categorized as “witches” or “bitches” (Acker, 2006, p. 447).
According to Acker (1990), gender inequality at work is embedded in the structure of work organizations. Acker argues that jobs are designed for men who are considered to be the ideal workers by employers and women are excluded as they have family care and household responsibilities. Acker (1990) claims that there are five processes that generate gender inequality at the workplace which are: (1) the division of labour; (2) organizational policies and processes; (3) organizational culture; (4) relationships and networks; and (5) identities. Acker (1990) argues that organizations encourage loyalty with policies, job designs, processes and career ladders in which gender inequality is embedded. On the other hand, Adler (1993) claims that organizations with male-oriented organizational cultures constitute barriers to women’s advancement to senior positions. Adler further notes that it is very difficult for women to enter a network occupied with men who are used to socializing with their fellow counterparts.

Vallas (2011), on the other hand, points out that since the 1970s; organizations have undergone transformations due to downsizing, restructuring and globalization. Thus, in the current employment market, workers no longer work at one organization but change their jobs and workplace in a couple of years either for better opportunities or as a response to transformations (Vallis, 2011). According to Vallas (2011), the traditional career ladder is no longer valid, but workers have career maps. Williams, Muller and Kilanski (2012, p. 551) claim that “In the new economy, the organizational logic has been replaced by teams, career maps, and networking. These have become principal mechanisms through which gender inequality is reproduced in the new economy”. Williams, Muller and Kilanski claim that networking is easier for men than women because it is easier for men to socialize outside work whereas women prefer or feel forced to spend their time on taking care of their family, which provides a disadvantage for women to access senior positions.

Morrison, on the other hand, points to a different set of challenges for women leaders. According to Morrison (1992) women experience three major pressures in leadership positions: (1) the pressure of the job that requires long working
hours; (2) the pressure of being a role model; and (3) the pressure of family responsibilities and household duties. According to Çelikten (2005), all these pressures are factors that discourage women from aspiring for leadership positions in Turkey. According to Aycan (2002), social expectations such as maintaining family integrity and care also constitute a limitation for women’s career progression in Turkey and prevent women from using their full potential. Another barrier discussed by Aycan (2004) is the difficulty in entering the social networks which are under the control of men. Beydoğan (2001) claims that as women climb the leadership ladder, the barriers that they need to overcome, increase accordingly. These barriers are mostly gender related. Furthermore, in Turkey, women are perceived not to be devoted to working long hours in their organizations, which acts as a limitation to their access to high level management roles (Atay, 1997).

Beydoğan (2001) claims that traditional gender roles categorize women into two types: (1) women with traditional gender roles such as mothers and wives and (2) women with modern gender roles such as career women. Beydoğan (2001) suggests that in Turkish society women with traditional gender roles are the majority so, the men are preferred ones for leadership roles. According to Akkaş (2001), personal characteristics play a role in career advancement too. However, even though there are gender differences in personality characteristics, these are not so evident in senior positions. Akkaş notes that both women and men senior leaders have similar characteristics which are mostly associated with males. Thus, women seem to have no other chance but to adapt to be aggressive and tough, like their male counterparts (Akkaş, 2001).

As for professional women’s own perceptions on their careers success, Carvalho, Özkanlı and Taylor (2012) examined the perceptions of women academicians about their career success in the academia in Portugal and Turkey. In both countries, family responsibilities were perceived to be the main barrier to their career success by the women academicians. Furthermore, senior positions were not found to be attractive as these women academicians preferred to fulfil their motherhood duties and socio-cultural responsibilities and
found that senior positions required more time at work. In another study in Turkey, Sümer (2006) examined the dimensions for successful managers using the Schein Descriptive Index (SDI) and the Role Congruity Theory as a framework. 806 university students from a Turkish university participated in this research in order to rate the SDI adjectives to describe successful middle managers. In her study, Sümer (2006, p. 63) found that “relationship-orientation, task orientation, and emotional stability” were identified to describe a successful middle manager. In this study, women were perceived to be “high in relationship-orientation, relatively low in task-orientation, and relatively low in emotional stability” as compared to men.

However, although the women face several challenges in reaching leadership positions and adopting unfavourable gender role perceptions regarding their roles as female leaders, Aycan (2004) addresses that in Turkey women managers who have international exposure and work experience in the Western countries think that they have certain advantages as compared to their counterparts in the Western world. These women feel that having an open mindset acts as an advantage that helps the women achieve what it takes to be at the top. Aycan notes that this uniqueness is confirmed by these women leaders’ belief that they are a minority within a multinational environment in Turkey. As a minority, these women leaders are admired by the people within the organization and enjoy the support of male leaders who see the potential in them. In fact, these women are proud of being visible as minorities in multinational companies (Aycan, 2004, p. 468). In this study, Aycan argues “that upper-level managers (mostly male) openly encouraged women to have a more active role in management, but this was limited to personal efforts rather than to company policy” (p. 468). According to Aycan (2004), because Turkey is a developing country it is still difficult to find qualified talent. Thus, qualifications become far more important than gender in filling managerial positions, mostly favouring the urban population. Kabasakal (2000) reports that social class is an important factor in these women’s career advancement. Also, the organizational cultures in some Turkish companies foster family friendly applications for women to balance their work and family responsibilities (Aycan, 2004).
To recap, highly educated Turkish women from urban and higher socio-economic backgrounds seem to have more opportunities to choose their own lifestyles and use the social and organizational opportunities they are provided with. Moreover, these conditions allow them to think of novel ways to succeed and devise solutions they can employ to be successful in their careers as women leaders in Turkey. They are in search of finding their places in the business world. It can be suggested that they are experiencing their own challenges to find their way of leadership rather than imitating men (Saraçer et al., 2012). Therefore, Turkish women leaders occupy 8% of the positions on boards, albeit low, a comparable representation to the rates in the Western countries (WEF, 2014).

In short, one of the theories underlying the theoretical framework of this study, Hakim’s Theory (2002) claims that women’s careers and family lives are determined by their preferences in modern and developed countries such as the UK, the US and Australia. According to Hakim (1991, p.114), women are “self-determining actors” and the social-cultural factors and family characteristics have a very limited influence on their career and life preferences. Even if Turkey is not a developed country, the women leaders in my sample were exposed to many opportunities and chances such as having modern and educated families, a Westernised education as well as the multinational company environments similar to the possibilities that women in the developing countries would have. Even though the women in this study constitute a small group in Turkey, they enjoy the privileged socio-economic factors and family characteristics that the majority of the women in the developed countries enjoy. Therefore, Hakim’s theory is relevant to my study in a sense that given the opportunities to the Turkish women, there is a solid ground and perfect test case to investigate the claims of Hakim that the preferences are the main determinants of career behaviours in the Turkish setting. My study also recognizes that many researchers such as Crompton and Harris, (1999), McRae (2003), Houston and Marks (2003), Kan (2005), Leahy and Doughney, 2006) argue that women’s career lives are shaped not only by preferences. Besides the preferences, these
studies support the proposition that opportunities and constraints influence the family and career lives of women as well. Therefore, the findings of this study will help examine the claims of Hakim’s Theory (2002) as to the influence of constraints and opportunities on the career lives and success of women business leaders in Turkey.

This section first discusses the theories that underlie the theoretical framework of this thesis about the gender role perceptions of women leaders in Turkey and the socio-cultural conditions that enable their career success. These three theories are the Social Role Theory, the Role Congruity Theory and the Preference Theory. The section explores the Preference Theory, which rests on the first two theories and expands them based on empirical data, and the challenges to it in detail. This is followed by a discussion of a number of studies from different countries which focuses on the challenges that women leaders face. The section then introduces the challenges of Turkish women leaders in their careers. It ends with pointing out a particular group of Turkish senior women leaders who report finding favourable work conditions and supportive male colleagues in the companies where they work. The next section discusses women’s perceptions on the glass ceiling in their career progress.

2.6 Women’s perceptions of the glass ceiling

According to Eagly and Karau’s (2002) Social Congruity Theory, women are perceived not to be congruent with leadership roles as they are mostly expected to perform behaviours that would align with communal characteristics. In addition, Eagly and Karau state that female leaders are evaluated as less successful when they demonstrate traits that are associated with men and leadership which is not well received as such behaviour is not seen as congruent with women’s role in society. Such prejudices form the foundation of the glass ceiling phenomenon and unfortunately many women as well as men accept these prejudices (Eagly and Karau, 2002).
Similarly, according to Schein (2007), one important challenge for women leaders is the perception that leadership resonates with being male. This creates a bias against potential women leaders. The bias exists in the provision of professional development opportunities as well as the selection and promotion for senior roles (Schein, 2007). Most of leadership positions are occupied by male leaders with the perception that women do not possess the necessary skills for leadership positions (Schein, 2007). Taylor et al., (2008) claim that gender inequality, traditional gender roles and resistance to change are the major barriers to women leadership. Oakley (2000, p. 321) states that “The barriers that prevent women from ascending to senior management positions in large corporations have often been described by the metaphor the glass ceiling”. He notes that the glass ceiling is more evident for senior leadership positions. According to Oakley, there are two different sets of explanations for the lack of women in senior management roles. He explains that the first category comprises of barriers created by corporate practices concerning the favourable treatment of males over females in recruitment, retention and promotion. The second category of explanations, however, are more rooted in socio-cultural and psycho-dynamic factors, concerning issues such as stereotyping, power relations, leadership styles and tokenism. Thus, Oakley (2000) claims that company policies and human resources practices are significant reasons for the glass ceiling phenomenon that hampers the career advancement of women to top positions in organizations. Oakley (2000, p. 323) argues that “behavioural double-binds, communication and leadership styles, old boy networks, tokenism, and differing male and female attitudes toward power are other behavioural and cultural explanations”. Furthermore, in his study, Oakley (2000) finds that the linguistic style plays an important part in communication with people at top positions. According to Oakley, women are recognized as too aggressive if they use the same linguistic style as men.

Adopting a similar line of argument, Tabak (1997) states that social factors such as acceptable behaviours and attitudes regarding gender roles limit women’s career advancement to leadership positions, acting as a glass ceiling for women leaders. In Turkey, such behaviours and attitudes are mostly based on the
cultural constraints which are dictated by the society. Moreover, according to Kabasakal (1991), women’s own perceptions and attitudes about leadership traits may also prevent them from advancing to leadership positions. Kabasakal explains that some women find it difficult to identify themselves with the leadership traits that are male traits by the society. Besides, women encounter greater obstacles as compared to men and they must manage “isolation, sex-stereotyping and performance pressure” in order to achieve leadership positions (Akpınar-Sposito, 2013, p. 489). According to Akpınar-Sposito, there are many women leaders who are not willing to be promoted to upper levels of leadership as they do not want to deal with more work-related politics and longer working hours. Moreover, Akpınar-Sposito claims that travelling, geographical mobility and networking could be barriers to women’s access to leadership positions. Mostly, women are the followers of their spouses in terms of geographical mobility rather than getting their husbands to accept their mobility so that they can assume leadership roles. Moreover, men have better chances of accessing to the networks which are important to develop the relationships needed for leadership (Akpınar-Sposito, 2013)

Thus, the glass ceiling can be explained as a “visible and invisible obstacle which separates the professional and organizational hierarchical level for women. In particular, women who believe that the glass ceiling will operate to their disadvantage may be less likely to apply for open positions than equally qualified men” (Akpınar-Sposito, 2013, p. 491). According to Akpınar-Sposito, such perceptions about promotion decisions need to be addressed by organizations that are willing to tackle the inequalities resulting from the glass ceiling phenomena. Such inequalities include interpersonal, individual and organizational limitations women face at the workplace more than men (Aycan, 2004). According to Mathur-Helm (2006), the glass ceiling phenomenon is exacerbated by the company culture and policies and male values as well as the socio-cultural and individual factors which exclude many women from leadership positions in the organizations. Mathura-Helm claims that gender inequality in organizational life, displayed through work practices and socio-
cultural norms which do not favour women, prevents women from reaching the top echelons of power at the workplace.

As for the practices that would support women’s access to leadership positions, according to Elacqua et al. (2009), mentoring can contribute to the career success of women whilst the lack of mentors, role models, networking and friends in leadership positions limits or slows down the advancement of women to leadership positions. In addition, they argue that organizational factors such as recruitment standards and promotion practices favouring men result in the differential treatment of women in the organizations, particularly for leadership positions. According to Jackson (2001), such practices lead women to feel the need to work harder than men and over perform repeatedly in order to prove themselves in the organizations.

On the other hand, Kumra and Vinnicombe (2008) argue that women are disadvantaged in terms of proactively managing their career advancement such as developing networking and self-promotion which play a critical role in achieving promotions to the top leadership positions. Furthermore, they argue that women are disadvantaged as they need to adapt themselves to the success criteria set by male values and styles. However, when middle and senior women managers in Turkey are asked they do not declare any gender inequality issues at the workplace (Aycan, 2004). According to Aycan (2004, 468), “The fact that successful women did not experience the glass-ceiling does not mean that it does not exist. The barriers may be too subtle to detect. Alternatively, these women may have developed strategies to overcome these barriers early in their careers”. Aycan argues that it is also possible that women may have a need to attribute their success to personal factors. Similarly, they may believe that they reach their aspired status so that they could minimize the feeling of relative deprivation.

In her study, Wrigley (2002) identifies five factors that contributes to the glass ceiling of women in public relations and communication management: denial, gender role socialization, historical precedence, women turning against women
and corporate culture. According to Wrigley (2002, 42), the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling is a complicated process and it “stems from the fact that women cope with cognitive dissonance about the glass ceiling by using an inconsistency reduction strategy such as denial”. She also argues that even successful women may deny the glass ceiling and attribute their success to their hard work and abilities. According to Wrigley (2002, 27), the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling by women is an important factor that prevents the resolution of the glass ceiling problem. Wrigley (2002, 27) introduces a new concept called “negotiated resignation” which is used to explain women’s denial of the existence of a glass ceiling at their workplaces. Wrigley’s (2002) concept of “negotiated resignation” can be classified into three factors: denial, resignation, and acceptance. The women in her study deny the existence of glass ceiling for women but also describe their own experiences of it. In her study, Wrigley identifies these contradictory comments about the glass ceiling in the interviews with women who have not achieved leadership positions. Therefore, Wrigley argues that the beliefs based on negotiated resignation lead women to resign themselves in progressing in their career when the glass ceiling exists at their organizations. Thus, this form of denial and resignation leads women to give up their aspirations for leadership. According to Wrigley (2002) women consider unwillingness to be promoted to leadership roles as a rational option, which results in the acceptance of the glass ceiling by these women.

In addition, Wrigley (2002) suggests that gender role socialization which has historical precedence contributes to the glass ceiling. The findings of Wrigley’s study show that gender role socialization is an important factor which influences women’s and men’s perceptions of the success of women at the workplace. Wrigley notes that historical precedence is also a factor in terms of networking. “The good old boy network” is evident in rendering women’s socialization to networking more difficult (Wrigley, 2002, p. 39). For Wrigley, another factor that contribute to the glass ceiling is the corporate work culture which promotes less gender inequality and renders women’s access to leadership roles.
Moreover, Smith, Crittenden and Caputi (2012) claim that “a woman’s decision not to seek promotions might be for valid reasons, such as discrimination if they seek leadership roles” (p. 71). Smith, Crittenden and Caputi (2012), note that women’s beliefs about the glass ceiling are based on four factors: denial, resignation and acceptance as also suggested by Wrigley (2002), followed by resilience which is identified as the fourth factor by Smith, Crittenden and Caputi. They find that resilience is considered by the women in their study as an essential component to break through the glass ceiling. The four factors in their study - denial, resignation, acceptance and resilience - are incorporated to develop a new instrument that measures women’s beliefs about glass ceilings. This instrument is named as Career Pathways Survey which is used to understand women’s beliefs about glass ceilings quantitatively.

In Turkey, women’s representation at executive level does not exceed 8% in the private sector (WEF, 2004) and 9-10% in the public sector (TÜİK, 2013). Thus, Turkish women are underrepresented at executive levels in all sectors, pointing to the existence of the glass ceiling in Turkey. These a few women move beyond the glass ceiling into the leadership roles although the representation is far below that of their male colleagues. There is an untapped source of female talent for leadership roles in Turkey. However, for women aiming the leadership the barriers such as traditional gender role perceptions, stereotypes and company practices still exist. These barriers are “often compounded by cultural values and traditional gender roles and explained the differences in management/leadership styles between men and women” (Akpınar-Sposito, 2013, p. 497). According to Akpinar-Sposito, women who use leadership styles that are used by men are most likely to be successful in leadership roles. As for the obstacles to women’s leadership in Turkey, in their study with 200 employees; 103 male and 97 female, Örücü, Kılıç and Kılıç (2007) found that women were perceived to have fewer leadership capabilities and more familial responsibilities compared to men, which posed as the main obstacles to women’s leadership. In addition, the term the queen bee syndrome, which is defined as the phenomenon that women who have been successful in getting top positions in male-oriented organizations are less likely to favour other
women’s advancement, is reported to be an important barrier to women’s leadership (Örücü, Kılıç and Kılıç, 2007). According to Örücü, Kılıç and Kılıç, some women leaders do not to favour women to get leadership positions due to jealousy which limited the advancement of some women to reach top positions.

However, despite the glass ceiling, Öğüt (2006) reports that the number of women leaders in Turkey increases although women’s’ career advancement is slower compared to men. In addition, women encounter gender related barriers which are explained through the concept of glass ceiling. According to Aycan (2004), long working hours, the difficulties related to physical mobility and networking are the causes that women put forward as the barriers to their career development in Turkey. Furthermore, Aycan notes that Turkish women managers “had to convince themselves first that was okay not to personally fulfil domestic duties, but instead to get assistance from family or paid help” (2004, p. 473). According to Öğüt (200), Turkish women are risk averse which creates barriers to these women’s reaching senior leadership roles. According to Öğüt, although women are assumed to have a high sense of responsibility to deal with the details regarding their jobs, this becomes a disadvantage as they lose the big picture by concentrating too much on details. What is more, women are considered to be emotional and subjective which gives the impression that women are not good at handling their emotions in Turkey (Öğüt, 2006).

As for the common characteristics of women leaders in Turkey, they are reported to “feel the urge to maintain low visibility, and they avoid public appearances, a too feminine appearance and controversial ideas…Top women have strong personalities…They seem to be using this strength in a strategy that is not threatening to the male establishment but that helps them to open individual paths to success” (Kabasakal, 2000, p. 237). In addition, Kabasakal claims that women leaders perceive their role far beyond the traditional role in Turkish society because they do not consider their role only as wives and mothers but also as career women.
As for the increasing number of women senior leaders in Turkey, in Tabak’s study (1989) in 500 largest manufacturing companies in Turkey, 3% of the top leadership positions were occupied by women. In 2014, the share of Turkish women on boards is 8% (WEF, 2014) in the private sector and 9.3% in the public sector (TÜİK, 2013). Thus, there are more women who work hard to gain leadership positions and manage to access them compared to the past (Titrek, Bayrakçı and Güneş, 2014). The fact that more women enter the workforce and occupy top leadership positions will contribute to the economic and socio-cultural development of Turkey. In Turkey, previous research study women managers’ career developments focusing on education (Çelikten, 2005), banking (Woodward and Özbilgin, 1999) and business (Aycan, 2004; Titrek, Bayrakçı and Güneş, 2014). Furthermore, there is a very limited number of studies that focus on Turkish female business leaders (Kabasakal, 2000; Ararat, Alkan and Aytekin, 2015). Also, there is very little research (Aycan, 2004) seeking for understanding the career advancement of women managers in the socio-cultural context of Turkey. There is no study focusing on how women leaders perceive their socio-cultural environment in Turkey. Thus, there is a gap in the literature which needs to be addressed in order to understand how women leaders perceive their gender roles that drive them to pursue leadership roles in the socio-cultural context of Turkey. As a result, this study aims to understand the gender role perceptions of Turkish women business leaders with respect to the enabling socio-cultural factors that they think influenced their career success.

In this chapter, firstly, the historical background that has influenced women’s socio-economic, political and educational conditions is overviewed. Secondly, gender role perceptions and the influence of these perceptions for women are presented. In this part, gender socialization of girls and boys, the traditional gender roles placing women at home and modern gender roles which provide equal education and career opportunities for women are discussed. Then, the critical role of education in the formation of gender roles and the career development of women is discussed. Thirdly, the main indicators of women’s status, the reasons of women’s low employment and the conditions that enable
some women to get leadership positions are overviewed. This is followed by the discussion about the gender pay gap favouring men and the overview of the sectors where women work, noting the high representation of women in professional occupations except leadership in the political and business arenas. Then, the characteristics and the skills associated with women leaders are presented and a number of socio-economic conditions such as the support of parents and spouses that enable women’s career success are discussed.

Fourthly, the three theories underlying the theoretical framework of this study about the gender role perceptions of women leaders in Turkey and the socio-cultural conditions enabling their career success are explored. These three theories are the Social Role Theory, the Role Congruity Theory and the Preference Theory. These theories are discussed in detail, particularly for Hakim’s Preference Theory. This is followed by a number of studies highlighting the challenges that women leaders from different countries face in their path to career success. Then, the challenges of Turkish women leaders are introduced. Also, some favourable work conditions such as supportive male colleagues are presented. Lastly, women’s perceptions about the glass ceiling are explored. In this part, the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling by Turkish women is discussed, noting that this does not mean that the glass ceiling does not exist.

The next section introduces the research methodology and methods and the sample, followed by a discussion as to why this methodology and analysis are chosen to explore the research questions.
Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This study aims to explore Turkish women leaders’ self-reported gender role perceptions with respect to the socio-cultural factors that make these perceptions available for women leaders in the fast-moving consumer goods sector. This study asks the following research questions:

1) What are the reported enabling socio-cultural factors that make women leaders in Turkey more likely to formulate more favourable gender role perceptions towards career success?
2) What are the reported enabling socio-cultural factors that support Turkish women leaders’ access to leadership positions?

This chapter first introduces the qualitative methodology adopted by the study, considering reality as multiple and socially constructed and the researcher and research participants as co-constructing knowledge in the research process (Mason, 2011). Then, the chapter discusses the use of interviewing in qualitative methodology and explains why semi-structured interviewing is used as the main research method to explore women leaders’ gender role perceptions and the socio-cultural factors making these perceptions available. The chapter then describes how the interviews with the research participants are conducted, and thematic analysis is used for the analysis and interpretation of data. The chapter also discusses the concept of reflexivity and how it is used and put into action in this study, with the researcher attempting to become aware of her socio-economic and cultural background, biases and preferences in the research process.

3.2 Research methodology and methods

In this study, qualitative methodology is used in order to answer the research questions. According to Mason (2011), qualitative research is an interpretivist approach. Qualitative research is interpretivist as it relates to how the world is understood and interpreted in the social context which is seen as multi-layered
Qualitative research is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 7) as an “interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counter disciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the social and physical sciences. It is multi pragmatic in focus.”

Qualitative methodology considers reality as multiple and in a continuous change. Also, qualitative methodology assumes human behaviours to be determined by personal experiences, beliefs and perceptions (Cresswell, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 3) note that “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world”, which helps researcher explore many dimensions and understand experiences and give meaning to the social world. This is made possible by making use of methodologies that focus on the richness, nuance and multi-dimensionality of the social contexts (Mason, 2011).

As Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 10) note “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions and stress how experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables not processes”. They further point out that qualitative researchers adopting post structural and postmodern perspectives have rejected positivist methods, seeing them as one of the many ways of telling stories about the social world. Compared to the quantitative methodology, qualitative researchers claim that they can get deeper insights by interviewing and making observations (Mason, 2011). Furthermore, qualitative methodology aims to explore every day constraints of the social world, whereas quantitative research focuses on specific cases or issues (Mason, 2011) Likewise, qualitative research gives great importance to deep insights and descriptions of the social world whereas quantitative research avoids detailed descriptions in order not to prevent generalizations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).
In qualitative research, interviews are amongst the most commonly used methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 696) defined the interviewing method as “two or more people are involved in this process, and their exchanges lead to the creation of a collaborative effort called interview”. In qualitative interviewing, people’s thoughts, beliefs, experiences, interactions and most importantly their perceptions represent their social reality and the data is analysed in a way that reflects people’s social reality (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Also, as interviewing is a social interaction, the qualitative paradigm finds it important to ask situational questions rather than abstract ones (Mason, 2011). Furthermore, the interviewing method is used to give more freedom and flexibility to both the interviewer and the interviewee for research ethics (Mason, 2011).

According to Insch, Moore and Murphy (1997) interviewing can help to understand complex phenomena where many social, cultural and traditional factors are intertwined with one another. They note that interviews can provide deep, nuanced and complex information that can explain social phenomena. Interviewing is also useful when the data is sensitive or difficult to get with other research methods where talking and listening to people might be the only way to get reliable information (Insch, Moore and Murphy, 1997). Interviewing is one of the research methods that is used to produce in-depth and nuanced knowledge which reflects different perspectives (Insch, Moore and Murphy, 1997). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) further note that interviewing and the data produced via interviewing can also be used to advocate for the interviewee, aiming to inform social policies that can improve the interviewee’s life conditions.

In the interviewing method, the researcher is the instrument herself/himself (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, the reliability of the study highly depends on the researcher unlike in the quantitative research methodology where the reliability of the research relies on the instrument construction (Cresswell, 2003). According to Creswell, the qualitative data gathering, and analysis is a time-consuming process and the results are sometimes difficult to generalize due to the small scale of participants, and it can be biased due to the researcher effect.
That is why, in a qualitative research the researcher should be reflexive. Namely, the researcher should become aware of her/his socio-economic position, privileges, biases, interests, and personal background as reflexivity is very important in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003).

The aim of interviewing is to understand individuals or groups of people (Mason, 2011). Interviewing can be used for therapeutic purposes as well as in marketing research, political opinion research and academic research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Interviewing involves holistic analysis rather than correlations, numbers and trends (Mason, 2011). Although it is difficult to ask questions and get answers, interviewing is one of the most effective methods to understand people (Mason, 2011). According to Mason, the most common use of interviewing includes individual face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews and telephone interviewing (Mason, 2011).

Interviewing can be in the form of structured or unstructured interviews; structured interviews consist of pre-determined questions with a variety of categories (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). According to Denzin and Lincoln, structured interviews provide less flexibility in answering and asking questions whereby all the participants are asked the same order of questions in a standard manner. Telephone interviews, household interviews and interviews at malls are typical structured interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Compared to structured interviews, unstructured interviews provide more depth as they contain open-ended questions which aim to capture the complexity of the members of the society without any categorization which may limit the investigation under consideration (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). As Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 699) note “interviews are interactional encounters and that the nature of the social dynamic of the interview shapes the nature of the knowledge generated”. They also note that one cannot separate social interaction from the interview. Furthermore, an effective interaction provides deep, rich and reliable data (Mason, 2011). Given the benefits of qualitative interviewing as discussed above, the semi-structured interviewing method was used to address the research questions under investigation in this study. The
research questions of this study are related to gender role perceptions and career success which may be sensitive subjects for the participants. For example, women top executives might want to relate their success not to gender-related issues but to their individual efforts. Gender perceptions are formed because of many social and cultural factors in Turkey which can be explored in its complexity and richness with qualitative interviewing.

Therefore, the semi-structured interviewing is found as the most appropriate method for the research questions due to the following reasons: (1) it is well-suited to produce deep and multi-faceted insights to understand women leaders’ gender role perceptions and their perspectives on the role of these perceptions in their career success; (2) it has the potential to provide rich insights that help to understand the complex socio-cultural factors that the top women executives report as the enabling factors for their career success; and (3) it has the potential to create a social interaction that is important for trusting and open research relationships that can produce reliable and unbiased information.

In this study, semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted with twenty women leaders with the purpose of exploring their gender role perceptions and the socio-cultural factors that made these roles available, leading to their career success. In answering the research questions, the semi interviewing method helped to develop a trusting social interaction with the women leaders, enabling them to express their gender role perceptions which can be difficult and sensitive to discuss. Also, semi-structured interviewing gave the research participants the opportunity to reflect on the socio-cultural factors that influenced their gender role perceptions and career success. This method was also useful to locate the gender role perceptions reported by the participants within the broader socio-cultural realities of Turkey.

In this study, twenty women top executives from both multinational and local large-size organisations in the fast moving consumer goods sector were interviewed. A pool of eighty names of women executives were provided by
More Women On Boards Mentorship Program of Mentor Leadership Development Company which is a very well-known private company specialized in designing development programs for women leaders and matching these women leaders with mentors from both multinational and local companies in Turkey. The researcher decided to contact them as many corporations, both local and multinational, work with this company in order to develop and promote their women leaders. From the pool of eighty women business leaders’ names provided by this company, forty-six were from the fast moving consumer goods sectors. From these forty-six names, twenty three - half of the names - were chosen ensuring random selection and they were contacted via an informing letter (please refer to Appendix A) to invite them for an interview appointment. Among the women executives who were contacted, three declined the request for an interview due to their heavy workload. Thus the remaining twenty women managers were interviewed by arranging an appointment at their earliest convenience. Then, the interviews took place at the cafes near their workplaces. The ages of the participants ranged from forty to fifty-five. Overall, they were highly educated women who had either had university education or completed postgraduate studies abroad. Furthermore, they either graduated from foreign high schools or from prestigious universities in Turkey where the medium of instruction is in English. The research participants mostly graduated from the business administration, economics or engineering departments of reputable universities in Turkey. Thirteen out of twenty women leaders were married with children and those with children had two children at the most. Four women leaders were divorced with children. Their position titles included general manager and chief executive officer roles. Please refer to Appendix D for the demographic characteristics of the women leaders in the sample.

In this study, the senior women leaders were from modern, urban population who had grown up in the big cities of Turkey such as İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir. The sample consisted of women who come from the modern, urban population of Turkey and who belong to upper socio-economic status. The fathers of the women in this study were reported to have university education and they also came from high socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of the participants
reported to have educated but non-working mothers, even though there are women leaders who stated that they have working mothers. Sixteen out of twenty women leaders reported to have non-working mothers whereas only four of the women leaders declared to have working mothers. The majority of the married leaders reported to have husbands from urban and upper socio-economic class backgrounds with high professional status. The participants of this study come from privileged backgrounds as explained above which provides them opportunities that can be considered as almost unconstrained. This unique situation provides an unconstrained case to test Hakim’s Preference Theory.

The top executive women’s contact details were provided by the Mentor Leadership Development Company. The researcher contacted women leaders with an informing letter (please refer to Appendix A) about the study. Later on, the secretaries of the women leaders who accepted the invitation were contacted to arrange the research interviews. The details of the research procedures are presented in the following section.

### 3.3 Procedures

In-depth, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with women leaders took one and half hours on average. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions about women leaders’ gender role perceptions and career histories. The open discussion included probing questions about women’s gender role perceptions and the role of these in their career success. Prior to the research interviews, a pilot study (please refer to Appendix C) consisting of four women leaders was conducted in order to test the semi-structured interview guide and the terminology used in Turkish. As a result of the pilot study (Appendix C), the interview guide was simplified and some questions were revised to focus on the gender role perceptions in the context of socio-cultural factors. The revision of the interview guide was undertaken to reformulate the interview questions more specifically for the inquiry under study (please refer to Appendix B).
The interview was designed to be descriptive and exploratory so that it covered all the aspects of the research questions. The researcher tried not to guide the interview interaction and gave room to the participants to reflect on the questions asked and explain their perspectives freely. Being aware of the importance of reflexivity, the researcher was mindful of her values and subjective judgments influencing my interviews and analysis. The interviews were tape-recorded with the informed consent of the participants and transcribed by the researcher herself. The participants were contacted via e-mail informing them about the purpose of study, providing information about the study and asking for their cooperation. The letter informed the participants about the anonymity and the confidentiality of the study. In addition, the letter underlined the fact that the interview was on a voluntary basis and the women could refuse participation in the research or refuse the tape-recording of the interviews. Two unrecorded interviews were excluded from the analysis. The researcher provided information about her background and the reasons of conducting this research at the beginning of the interviews. The researcher also informed the respondents about their rights about data protection and confidentiality. In the information letter, the women leaders were requested to inform their secretaries about not talking about their participation in this research in order to ensure confidentiality. The participants were also assured that they would be provided with information about the findings of the study when it was finalized. To ensure anonymity, the names of the women leaders were not used in this thesis or in the audio recording and the tapes are stored in a safe place for confidentiality purposes. The respondents were assured that the information they provided would not be disclosed or used for purposes other than this research. The respondent’s privacy and the sensitivity of the topic were also considered by the researcher. The sensitive parts of the interviews were not recorded when it was so requested by the participant. The interviews were conducted in cafes near the participants’ offices to maintain confidentiality. The interviews were conducted in an informal and trusting environment. The interviewer attempted to be a flexible and active listener. The interviewer probed when necessary in order to gather deeper insights such as probing to find out
the reasons behind the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling women leaders face in their working environment.

The interviews with the women leaders were conducted in Turkish and were translated into English by the researcher. The participants’ quotations were presented under the relevant themes in the data analysis and discussion chapters. To ensure confidentiality, each leader was provided with a number.

3.4 Reflexivity

“Reflexivity refers to deliberate awareness involving both a contemplative stance and intentional activity aimed at recognizing differentness and generating knowledge” (Enosh and Ben-Ari, 2016, p. 578). According to these researchers, differentness means the discovery of incongruent information that needs to be investigated and understood. Therefore, they claim that the researchers need to consider the implicit information rather than what is already self-evident. In this respect, the researchers find the incongruities and identify them as the new source of knowledge. These researchers suggest that incongruities have contradictions and opposites. Thus, they seem to argue that these contradictions challenge what we already know and inspire us to explore new insights (Enosh and Ben-Ari, 2016). Therefore, the role of the researcher involves getting accurate insights from the participants, and the reliability of the study relies mainly on the researcher himself/herself. Also, the researcher are expected to be aware of her/his socio-economic position, privileges, biases, interests, personal background etc. as reflexivity is very important in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003).

According to Bryman (2008, p. 682) the social researcher “should be reflective about the implications of their methods, values, biases and decisions for the knowledge of the social world they generate. Relatedly, reflexivity entails a sensitivity to the researcher’s cultural, political and social context”. In this respect, it is important to note that in the first place, the researcher has chosen to study gender role perceptions of women business leaders as she has a special interest in understanding the processes involved in women’s becoming
business leaders in the corporations in Turkey. In addition, the researcher's gender, socio-economic class and educational and professional background are similar to the successful women leaders she interviews for this study. Therefore, in this research, the researcher is aware of the influence of reflexivity on the data collection and analysis.

In the research process, the similar background of the researcher helped the researcher to build the trust relationships with the participants. The similar socio-economic background and the educational background of the researcher helped to define the interview questions in the first place. However, being aware of reflexivity, the researcher acknowledged that some of these questions might be leading. For this reason, the pilot interviews helped to modify some leading aspects in the interview questions. Also, as the researcher had similar backgrounds and working environment with the research participants, the researcher assumed that the women leaders would talk about their experiences with the glass ceiling phenomenon. On the contrary, the women leaders almost denied that it existed. On one hand, they did not admit that they were exposed to gender discrimination but they described it as such. The researcher interviewed the participants by asking open-ended questions and probed deeply when she found out contradictions in the search for new insights. New information such as denying the glass ceiling phenomenon was probed when the women leaders went on to describe it as such despite their denial. Another contradiction found during data collection was that the women leaders reported to feel under to pressure by the male figures in their lives to succeed first at school and later on at the workplace. The researcher found this contradictory since they did not complain about the pressure even though they described it as such. In this situation, the researcher behaved naturally and kept an open mind so that the women leaders could feel comfortable and not get offended by the researcher's background or influenced by her assumption that they should have been bothered by the pressure of the male figures in their lives. In one research interview with a woman leader, such an attitude enabled the research participant to admit that she talked with the researcher more than she had planned to. Then, she asked the researcher if she was a psychologist believing
that she had provided more information in her interview than she had planned
due to the researcher’s profession. Later, this woman leader explained further
that she was exposed to gender discrimination by his previous male boss who
had told her in a business meeting that she should deal with knitting rather than
doing business, which he seemed to consider a joke. She added that she
became the general manager of this male boss, meaning that he directly
reported to her in this new position. In this respect, the background of the
researcher and her awareness of it supported this participant to build a trust
relationship and express her thoughts freely.

By being reflexive, the researcher became aware of the assumptions explained
above and the researcher did not let these influence the interpretation of
women’s interview data. The women leaders were also reassured about the
confidentiality and the ethical considerations of this study so that they could feel
confident to talk and express their perceptions freely. Furthermore, the
researcher asked the interview questions in order to understand the research
questions from different perspectives and to ensure that they had the
consistency to explore the research questions thoroughly. Additionally, the
findings of the study were linked with the existing literature and discussed to
find out the similarities and differences as new findings. In addition, the
knowledge generated in this study is limited to the women leaders at the point
of time when they were interviewed considering the socio-cultural factors that
were influential in this time period.

3.5 Data analysis

Interviewing is not only about data gathering but also it involves active
interaction (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Semi-structured interviewing provides
both structure and flexibility to the research interaction, producing a deeper
understanding of the perspectives under question (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).
The data-gathering process in qualitative semi-structured interviewing is flexible
as the researcher can probe and ask more questions in order to gather deeper
insights (Mason, 2011). An informal style, thematic and narrative approach and
interactional dialogue can help generate rich and deep data to address research
questions (Mason, 2011). In addition, it is important to consider the particular socio-cultural contexts of the participants and the socio-cultural contexts of the participants in Turkey to understand the insights and give meaning to the information provided by the women leaders in this research.

Data analysis in qualitative research is based on understanding complex and sensitive issues in their own contexts (Mason, 2011). In this respect, thematic analysis is best suited to explain a specific group under investigation (Jofee, 2012). In this study, the women leaders are a specific group with a common background who have become successful in their careers. In this thesis, this group of women’s gender role perceptions are the phenomena to be explored. Therefore, in this study, thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data from the interviews with women leaders.

Thematic analysis is a process whereby data is used to define the themes by identifying the most repeated patterns (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4). Boyatzis defines a theme “as a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon”. In thematic analysis, researchers analyse data in order to make meaning out of the accounts of experiences and behaviours (Insch, Moore and Murphy, 1997). “Thematic analyses seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes” (Stirling, 2001, p. 387). This can be considered as the power of thematic analysis. In this research, thematic analysis helps identify and analyse the themes, enable the exploration of the socio-cultural factors which support the formation of gender role perceptions determining the beliefs and attitudes toward career success.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006 as cited in Jofee, 2012), thematic analysis aims to define and analyse the patterns of meanings. This method determines the themes which describe the inquiry under consideration. Jofee (2012) defines a theme as a pattern in the analysis. It can contain manifest content - that is something directly observable such as mentions of stigma across a
series of interview transcripts. Thematic analysis can be patterns that have both explicit and implicit meanings (Jofee, 2012). Some themes need to be interpreted as these themes have more underlying meanings to be explored (Jofee, 2012). In addition, thematic analysis plays an important role in order to understand symbolic meanings and emotions that determine attitudes and behaviours (Jofee, 2012). Furthermore, thematic analysis is systematic and transparent as it relies on themes and deep analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Boyztzis (1998) defines three steps involved in thematic analysis: (1) sampling and design; (2) developing themes and a code; and (3) validating and using a code. According to Stirling, (2001, p. 390), “the full process of analysis can be split into three broad stages: (a) the reduction or breakdown of the text, (b) the exploration of the text and (c) the integration of the exploration”. Stirling acknowledges that although all three stages involve interpretation, each state accomplishes a more abstract level of analysis which can be difficult to differentiate. Thus, he suggests six steps to present the abstraction process in thematic analysis: (1) coding the material; (2) identifying the themes; (3) developing thematic networks; (4) understanding the thematic networks; (5) summarizing the thematic networks; and (6) defining the patterns.

Thematic analysis is best suited to examine a group’s conceptualization of an inquiry under consideration (Hartman and Conklin, 2012). In this study, this conceptualization related to the gender role perceptions of women leaders and their career success. In this study, thematic analysis was used to identify the common themes of gender role perceptions of women leaders that enabled them to be business leaders in a developing country. The reported gender role perceptions of the women top executives were captured by using thematic analysis which could analyse the underlying meanings while remaining systematic.

In data analysis, the process that was followed was: (1) after the interviews with the women leaders, the data was coded by the researcher; (2) the
repeated codes were categorized to identify the themes; (3) the identified themes were analysed in order to understand the gender role perceptions that were reported by the business women leaders; and (4) the data was examined to identify the themes that the women leaders reported as enabling socio-cultural factors for their career success whereby the reported insights were interpreted and arguments were developed based on the findings of this study. Through data analysis, eight themes were identified as presented in the following Data Analysis chapter. In the following chapter, these themes are presented in a way that present top women leaders’ reported quotations along with the analysis of the findings for each them.
Chapter 4 Data analysis

4.1 Introduction

The interview data has been analysed by using thematic analysis and the derived themes are presented in this chapter, supported with extracts from the interviews with women leaders. Each theme is elaborated on and presented with interview extracts and insights provided by the research participants. This chapter teases out some of the connections between the themes derived from the interview data and the existing literature on women leaders’ gender roles and career success, exploring these connections further in the last chapter Discussion and Conclusion.

Thematic analysis gives rise to the following themes which are discussed separately after this brief introduction.

a. **The role model of the modern society and social pride:** Women leaders in this study are reported to be seen as the role models of modern Turkey. This theme discusses how the importance of achieving success and managing their roles in the family and at work led the women leaders to see themselves as role models respected by the people around them and to gain support for representing a more progressive and modern image of leadership and society. This theme also discusses how social recognition is very important within a collectivistic society, linked with the pride harboured for women senior leaders within their social circle. The theme also touches upon how this pride creates a desire in women leaders to strive for success and social standing.

b. **Parents, particularly fathers, as role models and mentors for women leaders:** Women leaders’ parents are role models, and they coach and mentor women senior leaders in their own right. This theme discusses how women leaders talk about their mothers and more commonly their fathers supporting the women and promoting a mindset of equality and looking for possibilities. This theme shows how the parents of women leaders help their daughters by being their mentors and raising them with the belief that it is acceptable for women to look for roles outside their traditional gender roles.
c. **Westernized education and the role of educational achievement in career success:** This theme discusses how women leaders chose to attend prestigious schools and universities that teach Western education curricula and follow the Anglo-Saxon tradition. The theme also explores how women leaders in their overwhelming majority complete their postgraduate studies abroad, mainly in the US, mostly in business and engineering. This theme discusses how their parents’ financial support is crucial for women leaders to achieve the necessary education and resources to pursue their career undistracted by the more traditional obligations of their roles as women. The theme explains how the parents’ financial capability facilitates the education and socio-economic conditions of women so that they could thrive at the school and the workplace.

d. **Work-focused and resilient attitude:** This theme is about senior women leaders’ attitudes to work, including being focused and results-oriented. The theme also discusses the resilience of these women at work and how they attribute their career success to their hard work.

e. **The support system:** This theme shows how the support system works on a practical and emotional level. It discusses the social support network that the women leaders have, including their husbands, parents, and professional help that women leaders benefit from in carrying out their childcare and household responsibilities. This theme discusses how the work environment provides valuable opportunities and support for the career development of senior women leaders. It discusses how the commitment of multinational companies to promote women coincide with the aspirations of women to be successful at work and leads to the companies to support these highly-skilled and qualified women for senior positions.

f. **Traditional gender roles / gender occupations in Turkey:** This theme is about the cultural and societal norms about women’s gender roles and the work and life choices that are deemed appropriate for women in these roles. The theme shows the ways in which women leaders actively and purposefully operate outside of the normative principles of the traditional roles in their particular contexts.

g. **Women’s attitudes towards leadership:** This theme discusses women’s approach to the leadership and compares it to the leadership styles of men. The
theme discusses how women wish to be confident at taking up roles with more responsibilities and finds that men adopt more challenging roles than women. This theme also discusses how women leaders explain that they are more hesitant to take up more responsibilities without careful consideration, leading them to be risk averse in taking big steps in their careers. The theme shows how women relate this hesitance to the lack of women role models as leaders. Furthermore, it presents how, the gap between women’s and men’s leadership achievements is still very large despite the significant presence of women in senior leader positions in Turkey. The theme shows how most of the women leaders in this study have decided to follow a more intermediary path of balanced working and family life, resulting in the slow progress in their careers despite the company quotas favouring women’s leadership positions.

h. The glass ceiling in the organizations: This theme reveals how gender inequality operates at the workplace and how women leaders confront it by considering themselves as capable leaders although they report that they are expected to work harder to prove themselves as capable leaders. The women are not mobile mostly, and they do not consider themselves successful at developing the network which men benefit from.
4.2 The emerging themes in the journey to leadership

The thematic analysis of interview data reveals that the driving force for women leaders' career success comes from the social and cultural factors that are organized as themes in the data analysis part below. The themes are presented below, supported with interview extracts and linked with the relevant literature on women’s leadership success and gender roles. The relative strength of women’s views are indicated in the related themes below. However, the views are majority views if not indicated by the researcher.

4.2.1 The role model of the modern society and social pride

This theme explains how women leaders in this study consider themselves as the representatives of the modern Turkish women. All of the women leaders taking part in the study defined themselves as women who could stand on their own feet and balance their family and work responsibilities with their families’ support. Also, these women reported that their financial capability to buy domestic help enabled them to perform their duties equally well as
professionals and mothers. According to these leaders, they could pursue their ideals and gain success and respect in their work environment as models of the modern society. The majority of women leaders also explained that as mothers, they were expected to perform their care duties not only towards their husbands and children but also towards their immediate and extended family members. Nevertheless, they saw their home and family life as central to their identity as reported by these women leaders:

Previously, women used to only work at home. I represent modern women in Turkish society. I am a successful career woman and a mother at the same time (Leader 11, Multinational, General Manager).

I am proud to be a general manager and a mother of two children. (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).

Besides being a mother, I have responsibilities as a wife as well. Also, I have to take care of my parents and my mother-in-law (Leader 7, Multinational, General Manager)

As Kağıtçıbaşı (2005) argues, the modern Turkish society has changed women’s role perceptions by creating expectations beyond their family responsibilities. According to her, the expectations of the modern Turkish society created role models for women who could gain professional success outside home while they fulfil their obligations towards their families and society at the same time. Kağıtçıbaşı argues that such role perceptions lead women to seek public roles in the business world although this means that they are supposed to work hard and struggle in fulfilling their duties due to the double burden; family and work responsibilities. She notes that through their efforts to function effectively at their professional and family positions, women are respected and accepted by the modern society (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). Thus, women leaders in this study adopted the gender roles and expectations of the modern Turkish society, and their perceptions of their roles allowed them to assume leadership roles.

As a minority view, the single women leaders in my sample considered themselves as Turkish women who had the preference not to marry and have
children. These women considered themselves as career women who only focus on their careers as reported by these women leaders:

I am a modern Turkish woman. It is my choice not to get married. I am married to my job (Leader 18, Multinational, General Manager).

I only focused on my career. I do not regret it (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).

According to all of the women leaders in my sample, the social need to be recognized as successful business women and find one’s place as modern Turkish women in society have critical importance. According to the majority of women’s accounts they need to prove that they are worth the respect and the recognition within their social circles. Within these social circles, women leaders are appreciated as role models with a highly appreciated social standing. The women leaders’ accounts suggested that they had the confidence and ambition to be successful, accompanied with the desire to be recognized and appreciated by their social circle:

I am proud of myself. I consider myself as a successful modern Turkish woman (Leader 4, Local, General Manager).

I am proud not to give up my work. I am in the list of the most successful Turkish women leaders. My parents and my husband are also proud of me. (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).

I am respected in my social circle as the ideal modern woman. My friends admire my career success and motherhood (Leader 6, Multinational, General Manager)

In my social circle, I am the only woman who stretched the limits to be a General Manager. This gives me a sense of pride. I have a privileged position among my friends. I am in a different league due to my leadership position. I am always in the business magazines as one of the most successful 50 women leaders (Leader 13, Multinational, General Manager).

The analysis of interview data reveals that the pride of women leaders’ parents and their social circles’ of their success creates favourable social conditions for
women whereby they are offered support in fulfilling their traditional obligations as mothers and home-makers.

4.2.2 Parents, particularly fathers, as role models and mentors for women leaders

This theme explains how women leaders’ mothers and fathers function as role models who inspire the women leaders with their mindset and attitudes towards work and life. When women leaders were asked to give information about their parents, they talked about non-traditional fathers who promoted equality among genders and encouraged their daughters to realize their dreams. The majority of the women leaders explained that their mothers or grandmothers also became figures in supporting their career choices and success. In the interviews, the women leaders reported that the working mothers became role models for themselves, whereas the non-working mothers promoted a mindset for their daughters which urged them not to be fully dependent on their spouses and families emotionally and financially as reported by the majority of the participants:

*My grandmother was a strong woman who was respected by society. I grew up with the perception that “I can be whoever I want to be”. She has always encouraged us to work hard and stand on our own feet (Leader 10, Multinational, General Manager).*

*My mother was a modern working woman. She was a fighter. I have always wanted to be like her (Leader 15, Local, General Manager).*

*My mother was not working. She encouraged us to be career women and do our best but not be housewives (Leader 2, Multinational, General Manager).*

The interviewees spoke about their parents as the ambassadors of modern Turkish society. These women leaders stated that even in the case of mothers who did not work (16 out of 20 women leaders had non-working mothers), they actively taught their daughters to take control of their careers and lifestyles. Thus, paralleling with Hakim’s (2000) argument it can be claimed that if women are provided with opportunities and possibilities, particularly in the developed countries, they are more likely to choose professional careers. However, it is
also important to acknowledge that the external constraints and changes in women’s lives over the span of their lives also have an impact on women’s career choices.

In this study, the traditional roles ascribed to women are described as part of the external constraints which the women overcome with the support of their parents so that they can be confident in their social circles and overcome the barriers in their journeys to leadership. The findings showed that the fathers believed that it was acceptable for women to operate outside of strict traditional roles assigned to them. Almost all the women’s accounts showed that their mothers encouraged and supported their daughters to be strong and persistent, urging their daughters to reach their full potential as working women. All the participants in this study explained that particularly their fathers shaped their perceptions towards gender equality, promoting their belief that women could be both mothers and business women at the same time. Also, the fathers acted as mentors and role models, guiding the women leaders in developing their career paths in the business world. Women explained the influence of their parents, especially fathers, on their gender roles and career success as follows:

*My father has always encouraged me to reach my ideals. He is a modern Turkish man supporting Atatürk’s ideals. He has always been a supporter of gender equality (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager)*

*I am the daughter of a working mother and a liberal father. I have learned to be financially independent and intellectual from my father. They also encouraged me to choose my own life style. (Leader 1, Multinational, General Manager).*

*My father inspired me to study Finance at school. He always encourages me to ask for more and never give up. He believes that women can be good mothers and successful business women at the same time. So do I (Leader 5, Local, General Manager).*

*Throughout my education and career, my father has been a key actor as a role model and supporter. Both my father and mother always advise me to be strong and resilient (Leader 11, Multinational, General Manager).*
Two-thirds of the women leaders in my study also reported that their fathers were critical judges of their success and achievements in their education and careers. The father figures were described as disciplined, supportive but rigid with no tolerance for failure by these participants. These fathers were reported to have high expectations of success from their daughters in their education and professional careers. These women leaders explained that they needed to be successful to satisfy the expectations of their fathers. They mentioned that if they were not successful their fathers would be disappointed.

*My father has always supported me. I feel trusted even though I always feel the pressure to perform according to high standards (Leader 5, Local, General Manager).*

*I need to perform my best. My father trusts me and I cannot let him down. He is like my teacher. He is a disciplined man with high expectations. He is still my mentor (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).*

*My father is almost a continuation of our education system which is highly demanding of us to perform (Leader 2, Multinational, General Manager).*

As exemplified in the interview extract above, two-thirds of the women reported seeing their father as their teachers, feeling the need to perform to satisfy the expectations of their fathers. It can be suggested that women’s accounts of their fathers’ high expectations of them are grounded in the highly competitive Turkish education system where the students are expected to study hard and make no errors in national placement exams in order to be placed in prestigious schools (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2004; Gök, 2010). The analysis of women leaders’ interview data suggests that parents, particularly fathers, play a critical role in defining the gender role perceptions of women leaders, leading them to seek high levels of achievement in their education and professional careers.

**4.2.3 Westernized education and the role of educational achievement in career success**

This theme is about women leaders’ opportunity to receive education in high schools and universities in Turkey and abroad that follow the Western education
curricula and “Anglo-Saxon” traditions such as Robert College, Tarsus American College, Üsküdar American College, Boğaziçi University and Bilkent University (please refer to Appendix D). In order to get acceptance from these Western education-oriented high schools and universities, the women leaders in this study needed to pass examinations either approved by or equivalent to the Western education system, US American or European. Women leaders mentioned that not only did they enrol in prestigious educational institutions in Turkey such as Robert College, Üsküdar American College or Boğaziçi University but they also achieved a high academic performance during their schooling years. Amongst the participants of this study, 13 out of 20 women leaders graduated from Boğaziçi University which was considered to be one of the most prestigious universities in Turkey. Furthermore, the majority of the women leaders in this study achieved engineering and business undergraduate degrees. The majority of the leaders (16 out of 20) received business and economic degrees; two of them studied industrial engineering and the remaining two women leaders graduated from social sciences departments. Furthermore, in addition to the education they received in Turkey, 7 out of 20 of these women leaders received university education, mostly postgraduate, either in the US or in a European country.

The majority of the women’s accounts suggested that their parents had a great influence on the education of their daughters as they were knowledgeable about the education system at the time, and they were highly educated. All of the women leaders stated that they had educated fathers who were from middle or higher socio-economic backgrounds. As expressed by the leaders:

*In my family, success means hard work and education. My father is a medical doctor. After graduating from Boğaziçi University, I got an MBA degree* (Leader 10, Multinational, General Manager).

*Both my mother and father were teachers. I got my Master degree in the US* (Leader 3, Multinational, General Manager).

*My dad had a PhD. He also encouraged me to have a doctorate degree* (Leader 17, Multinational, General Manager).
According to these participants, education confirmed that they had an equal intellectual capability with men and thus they could potentially have the same social opportunities as men in the modern world. These women reported that education was critical in their career progress and in becoming role models for their children. According to the majority of the leaders, their education provided them with the confidence to be distinguished among their peers and to overcome the barriers on their way to leadership.

*My family always tells me that girls and boys are equal. At school, my teachers also treated boys and girls as equals. That is what I have learnt. I also feel that we are equal.* (Leader 15, Local, General Manager).

*Education plays a critical role to differentiate yourself from your competitors in the journey to leadership. My father told me I could reach the top regardless of my gender* (Leader 3, Multinational, General Manager).

*In my foreign high school, I was exposed to the Western mindset which helped us to have a successful career. At school, I learned that there are many opportunities for me in my life. It is my choice to be a General Manager. I was a top student at school. I preferred to be at the top in my career life as well.* (Leader 1, Multinational, General Manager).

In addition, the type and nature of education these women have play a critical role in their career choices and progress. Following the encouragement of their parents, the women leaders in my sample have preferred to study business, economics or engineering at university which are considered to be male professions (Özbey, 2004). Some of the leaders (7 out of 20) studied abroad to pursue postgraduate degrees. Their accounts showed that their education gave them a unique advantage to be successful in their careers and at work. Women’s accounts support Rankin and Aytaç’s (2006) claim that the Westernised education of women plays a highly important role in the social and economic status of these women. The schools providing Westernised education have promoted an environment where men and women are equal. Furthermore, women’s accounts are in line with Rankin and Aytaç’s (2006) argument that the social and economic circumstances and cultural preferences of families influence their decisions about girls’ education in Turkey.
Furthermore, the financial capability of women leaders’ parents facilitated the level and quality of education women leaders in this study could achieve. Most of the women leaders argued that they had the advantage of having educated and financially supportive parents. These highly advantaged conditions helped the women leaders in this study be successful at school. They explained this as follows:

*My father is a doctor. He financed all of my studies (Leader 3, Multinational, General Manager).*

*My father’s financial situation supported me to study abroad. He is a professor in a reputable university. He encouraged me to have my Master’s degree in the US (Leader 19, Multinational, General Manager).*

Furthermore, almost all of the women leaders in this study explained that at school they realised that they could be as successful as men. This realisation and achievement at school enhanced their perception that they could be successful in different areas of life.

*I graduated from the university as the first runner. This helped me to believe that I can be successful at the top positions in the business world as well (Leader 9), Multinational, General Manager.*

On the other hand, two-thirds of the women leaders reported that throughout their schooling, they felt under pressure to perform to a very high standard and that their schooling system did not tolerate mistakes, supporting Şimşek and Yıldırım’s (2004) point about the highly competitive and stress-laden educational system in Turkey. Women leaders’ accounts suggested they felt the need to set themselves high performance standards, achieve the necessary results without any mistakes since the school days because this was how the success was defined at school:

*In the high school entrance exam, if you make more than two mistakes you cannot enter foreign schools. This is the same system in the university exam as well. As a student, you are not allowed to make
mistakes. You need to perform at the highest level in order to be considered as successful (Leader 20, Local, General Manager).

Our education system forces students to perform. My father used to tell me “you need to perform the highest at school” (Leader 1, Multinational, General Manager).

If you graduate from a foreign high school or study abroad you are one step ahead in your journey to leadership (Leader 2, Multinational, General Manager).

Thus the education system mentioned in women’s accounts above seems to reinforce the need to perform to highest standards. The mistakes are not considered as learning opportunities. In the entrance exams for high schools and universities, students are supposed not to make mistakes in order to enter high schools and universities with good standards. The competition is so fierce that students who get two or three wrong answers in the entrance exam may not be accepted by the high school or university she aims to attend. As demonstrated by women’s interview extracts, these attitudes are reinforced at school which are nurtured at home by parents, particularly fathers.

4.2.4 Work-focused and resilient attitude

This theme discusses women leaders’ attitudes to their careers which can be defined as work- and success-oriented. Despite the motherhood and household responsibilities that are ascribed to them as part of traditional gender roles, these women acted against the traditional norms and acted determinedly to focus on their careers. Their work-focused and resilient attitude opened the doors of career success for the women in my study.

The participants in this study argued that work has a special meaning for them. Almost all the participants considered life without work impossible to live. They defined themselves as hard working and resilient. They regarded career progress as having a great importance in their lives. Even though the majority of the women leaders in this study alleged that their families are their priority, they also saw their work as the focus of their lives. Furthermore, they considered themselves as minorities in the men’s world. Almost all of the women’s
accounts demonstrated that they had considered themselves as fighters in the business world as the work was associated with power:

\[ Work \text{ is important. It means power. My family is my priority. However, I cannot live without my work} \] (Leader 15, Local, General Manager).

\[ \text{Once, my boss said: “You can connect the two sides of the Bosphorus Bridge. You are that powerful”. (Leader 1, Multinational, Multinational, General Manager).} \]

\[ \text{My career success relies on my career-focused behaviour. I had to stand on my own feet as a warrior. I work hard and never give up} \] (Leader 11, Multinational, General Manager).

\[ \text{Working women are still minorities. I worked hard to get the leadership position} \] (Leader 4, Local, General Manager).

Also, two-thirds of the women leaders defined career success as something they needed to achieve in order not to disappoint people whom they care most in their lives: fathers and male bosses who trusted them and had great expectations from them because their male bosses at work believed them, and they trained them how to be successful at work. These women leaders talked about the male figures at their workplaces as people who valued them as individuals regardless of their gender and acted as teachers to them in their careers:

\[ I \text{ had to prove myself at work. I needed to work hard to perform. I could not let down my father and my boss who trusted me} \] (Leader 19, Multinational, General Manager).

\[ I \text{ have not noticed any gender discrimination from my boss. He always acted as a mentor who had high expectations of me. He taught me how to be a leader at work. He had a high sense of discipline and I felt that I could not disappoint him. I had to work hard} \] (Leader 18, Multinational, General Manager).

According to the women leaders, career success defined their identities as modern Turkish women. They thought that they were open to new developments in their careers:
My work defines who I am as a woman. I am a success-oriented, modern Turkish woman who is open to developments and opportunities (Leader 10, Multinational, General Manager).

These findings support Crompton and Harris (1999) and Rae (2003) who argue that Hakim’s claims (2000) are only part of the story when it comes to women’s preferences for career choices. Hakim may be right in a sense that if women are provided with opportunities and possibilities, especially in the developed countries, they will have more chances to choose amongst different degrees of employment. However, even in the developed countries, there are many scholars such as Crompton and Harris (1999), Rae (2003), Kan (2005) who argue that women’s lives are shaped by not only their preferences but also their life conditions and constraints. My findings support the argument that even though the women preferred to be there, their life conditions of the women enabled them to have access to a great number of possibilities. Their advantageous socio-economic conditions allowed them to gain opportunities for success in their careers. However, the social and organizational constraints shaped the career lives of the women leaders in my study. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that Hakim’s theory is incomplete. The findings are in line with the arguments of Crompton and Harris (1999), Rae (2003), Kan (2005), that it is not only the preferences but also the constraints shape women’s careers and family lifestyles. In this study, the constraints are mostly related to family and the organizations women work in. The accounts of women leaders in this study showed that family was prioritized over their work; women leaders were not as physically mobile as they desired to be and they had less exposure to business networks, which limited or delayed their progress as leaders.

The findings of my study also showed that the expectations of the women’s parents, particularly fathers, and male bosses put a significant amount of pressure on women to perform well and excel at school and work later. In a way, the expectations of their fathers and bosses acted as reinforcement of women leaders’ success. In a sense, for these women leaders in my study, becoming unsuccessful at school and work was not an option. All the women’s accounts suggested that the support that was crucial for their success was
provided generously by their parents and the family network so that women leaders can prioritise their career, which is elaborated on in the next theme.

4.2.5 The support system

In the research interviews, women leaders in this study were asked what was expected from them in relation to their gender roles in the society. The analysis of interview data acknowledged that the perceptions of women leaders about society’s gender role expectations from them were very similar. Although all the women leaders categorised themselves as modern Turkish women, their first priority had been their family responsibilities. All of them, except the single women leaders, reported that they had been obliged to balance their responsibilities at home and work. They also explained that this dual responsibility was too much of a burden on their shoulders:

As a mother, I am responsible for child care and household duties. This is my priority and also respected by the society. I am also a successful General Manager. Sometimes I feel so much pressure on my shoulders (Leader 17, Multinational, General Manager).

I need to have a work–life balance. So far, I have managed to have a balance even though it is difficult (Leader 8, Local, General Manager).

Women’s accounts, except for the single women leaders, reveal that the child care and family responsibilities are priority because it is socially acceptable. However, despite the social norms these women state that they have delegated the child care and household duties to their support system, either to a nanny or their mothers. These women’s accounts reveal that the participants in this study can get domestic help. Thus, they are substantially free from household chores and practicalities. Although these women leaders express that their families are their priorities, their challenge is to work outside home and become successful as career women. As declared by these women, prioritising family is socially acceptable in their social circle. The findings imply that the women leaders need their social support system to survive in the business world and to prove themselves as career women to the society. Therefore, the support system in the form of professional help and parents’ help is considered to be a necessity and socially convenient by all of the women leaders:
The family is my priority. However, I cannot breathe if I cannot work. I have a good support system; my mother and nanny take care of my household responsibilities. This has a great impact on my career success (Leader 15 Local, General Manager).

Even though the society expects you to take care of children and household responsibilities, I get the support of my parents and professional help to manage these domestic duties (Leader 2, Multinational, General Manager).

Work is my place. I delegate child care and household duties to professional help. This helps me to concentrate on my work. I believe that my good support system has played an important role in my career success (Leader 17, Multinational, General Manager).

The theme about the support system has a critical importance as the favourable conditions created by the support system pave the way for women leaders’ career success. According to the findings the support system provides the relief which women leaders need in order to feel at ease in their business life. Women’s accounts show that this support mainly comes from four sources: (1) supportive husbands, (2) supportive parents, (3) professional help and (4) the multinational environment. Also, the findings suggest that even though the women leaders acknowledge their predicament as women who are expected to carry out both work and household duties, they do not overtly criticise this predicament as a factor holding women back from public life. The reason behind women’s not criticising the double work burden overtly is that they have the means to delegate their care and household responsibilities to a support system, which comprises either of domestic help, parents and family support or both. This support system exists to alleviate many of the women leaders’ domestic responsibilities with regards to caring for home and children, giving them more time and independence outside home. In fact, the phenomenon of domestic help has always been available for women from higher socio-economic classes in Turkey whereas the family support in child care is based on the cultural structures (Ev Eksenli Çalışan Kadınlar Çalışma Grubu, 2017).

As for the social support provided to women leaders by their husbands, even though the women have assumed the main responsibility for child care and
household chores, the majority of the married participants – 11 out of 13 married women leaders – reported that their husbands provided support in child care. According to the women leaders, although they have been assuming the majority of the household responsibilities, the husbands’ support and tolerance vis-à-vis the more traditional expectations helped them to act more freely in their professional fields and be less involved in the day-to-day running of the household. Almost all of the married women leaders stated that they felt relief thanks to their partners and broader family who understood and respected the women’s roles as claimed by the majority of the leaders:

*My husband is a great support. We share the responsibilities of child care. He wakes up in order to take care of children at night. For social activities, he has the responsibility to arrange and organize the events* (Leader 5, Local, General Manager).

*We share the responsibilities with my husband. He deals with technical issues. I really feel supported and recognised by my husband.* (Leader 16, Multinational, General Manager).

*My husband is not a typical Turkish man. He cooks and takes care of the children. I feel understood and supported. This makes me feel appreciated.* (Leader 17, Multinational, General Manager).

Thus, the data analysis suggests that it is acceptable for the married women leaders in this study to delegate part of their own care and household responsibilities to their husbands because the husbands do not see women only within their traditional roles and acknowledge the responsibilities their wives have outside home. Most of the women leaders’ accounts showed that they received social support in familial responsibilities from their parents as well. According to the married leaders of this study, their parents’ support continued after they got married and had children. These women leaders explained that their parents either took care of their children when they were at work or coordinate the professional help to fulfil the child care and household duties. Majority of the women’s accounts showed that this delegation of responsibilities provided a degree of relief for the women leaders in this study:

*My mother coordinates our nanny and makes sure that everything is in order at home. She has been a great help in my life. It is good to feel
her continuous support. I have relied on her in every step of my life (Leader 16, Multinational, General Manager).

My parents are very supportive. Therefore, I feel confident that my children are getting a good care and my household responsibilities are under control (Leader 14, Local, General Manager).

In the summer, my parents take the responsibility of the children. They have always supported me since my early ages. This makes me feel confident (Leader 5, Local, General Manager).

All the women leaders’ accounts suggested that their parents’ support was a consistent and reliable element in their lives, contributing to their career success in significant ways. The parents’ help with children suggested that parents, especially fathers, held non-traditional views about men’s and women’s roles. In addition to the support they received from their parents and husbands, according to the married women leaders, reliable professional helpers were crucial for their work and life balance since they delegated their child care and household responsibilities to the professional helpers. However, these women leaders’ accounts showed that they were still responsible for the planning and coordinating household duties like an orchestra conductor:

The support system is critical for my career success. I make all the coordination related to child care and household duties. Then, the professional helpers follow my instructions (Leader 15, Local, General Manager).

I have a good support system. For day care, we have a nanny. Also, my mother checks on the nanny regularly. Therefore, I feel confident that the children are well taken care of. (Leader 3, Multinational, General Manager).

Although it is necessary to coordinate the work carried out by professional helpers, for all the married women leaders with children in this study, the most important challenge seems to be not this obligation to orchestrate the work done for them but their responsibilities towards their children. Although having supportive husbands was a great support, women leaders stated that they felt more burdens on their shoulders after they had children. This situation created confusion for them, followed by the feelings of guilt. Around half of the women
reported that it took more time to achieve leadership positions compared to
their male colleagues due to their domestic and child care responsibilities:

_Sometimes, it is difficult to balance work and family life. I get confused
as to what to concentrate on. If I spend more time at work, then I feel
guilty for not spending enough time with my children (Leader 9,
Multinational, General Manager)._  

_Compared with men, it took me longer to get a leadership position due
to my responsibilities at home. I have children to take care of besides
my career. Of course, I would have wished to get a senior role years
ago (Leader 17, Multinational, General Manager)._  

Only two married women leaders in this study stated that their husbands did not
support the child care and household responsibilities due to their heavy
workload. However, they expressed that these husbands supported the women
leaders’ career success although they could not personally help with the
household duties.

_My husband cannot help me with child care and household
responsibilities. He has no time. He is a lawyer. However, he gives me
all the emotional support to advance in my career (Leader 13,
Multinational, General Manager)._  

The analysis of interview data showed that, on one hand, these women leaders
would like to advance in their careers. On the other hand, some of them felt
guilty for not fulfilling their responsibilities towards their children as they would
like to. Furthermore, balancing work and household responsibilities, even if this
only means orchestrating the work which professional helpers and parents did
for them, poses difficulties for women. This continued to put pressure on the
shoulders of the Turkish women leaders, preventing them from moving quickly
in their careers.

On the other hand, the multinational companies provided opportunities and
support for women to develop professionally and advance in their careers.
According to the two-thirds of the women leaders, multinational companies
operated as schools for them, providing the base for their career success.
Women’s accounts also showed that multinational companies provided them with a discipline to work hard and be career-focused. These women explained that they were supported and trained by these organizations to be their future leaders. They reported that their male bosses acted as mentors who became their role models, guiding them to have a successful career in leadership. Some of these women leaders were recruited by local companies in Turkey in order to transfer the multinational companies’ work cultures to their organization. As reported by the majority of the participants:

My company was a school for me. I developed myself to be a leader in this company. My male boss showed me how to be a good leader (Leader 16, Multinational, General Manager).

I am lucky to have worked for my company for years. This experience counts as a doctorate degree from a reputable university (Leader 10, Multinational, General Manager).

I acquired my marketing and leadership skills in my previous multinational company. Now, I work for a local company as the General Manager. I was hired to transfer my multinational experience and mindset (Leader 8, Local, General Manager).

In addition, around half of the women’s accounts revealed that as the talent was scarce, and this situation created a favourable environment for women who worked hard and developed their competencies for leadership positions. Also, the multinational organizational culture provided an environment where women were supported to be career-focused and resilient. Therefore, this supportive multinational business environment opened the doors of career success for women who had the qualifications and willingness to get senior positions. As Aycan (2004) noted, the multinational companies provided an exposure to the Western values, beliefs and perceptions about gender roles in Turkish society. In addition, in the study these companies provided opportunities for the women to develop themselves and achieve senior positions. Around half of the women’s accounts suggest that multinational companies have started to give women possibilities to balance their work and life as well:
Nowadays, the multinationals give much importance to balance the work and family life of women. This is a new trend (Leader 12, Multinational, General Manager).

In my time, there were not many talents. Therefore, this situation created senior leadership opportunities for talented, hard-working women in Turkey. (Leader 2, Multinational, General Manager).

In my company, if you work hard, focus on your work and be resilient, then the doors are always open for top positions where the talent is scarce. Obviously, you then have more chances to get a leadership position (Leader 13, Multinational, General Manager).

What is more, around half of the women leaders reported that they were given the opportunity to create their own style of leadership in these multinational organizations:

I have finally found my way of leadership. My company supported me to be a leader (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).

I have developed my own style of leadership. I think that my company empowers me to have my own leadership style; both result- and people- oriented (Leader 19, Multinational, General Manager).

Women leaders’ accounts show that the culture of the multinational companies provide an environment where women can develop themselves to assume leadership roles. In addition, around half of the women leaders’ accounts suggest that the company cultures have changed gradually, and they have created space where individual styles of management are respected and women leaders can develop their own preferred styles in these organizations.

4.2.6 Traditional gender roles / gender occupations in Turkey

In Turkey, the gender roles are quite distinct due to the cultural norms of a traditional, secular Muslim society (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). In my study, all of the women leaders reported that their families were their priority as expected by the society. All of them also argued that women were not associated with leadership in Turkish society yet:

As a woman, my main duty is to be a good mother (Leader 1, Multinational, General Manager).
People are not used to seeing women leaders in our society (Leader 16, Multinational, General Manager).

Most of the women leaders’ accounts showed that women are expected to be emotional, risk averse and non-assertive, especially when they perform roles other than their traditional ones as expressed by women leaders:

People think that women take things personal and emotional. Women are expected to be hesitant to take risks unlike men. What is more, women are not considered to be self-confident (Leader 10, Multinational, General Manager).

Almost all the women leaders’ accounts also show that women are not expected to be aggressive and tough whereas they are perceived to be relationship-oriented and nurturing. Two-thirds of the women leaders in this study claim that their performance is evaluated against traits such as aggressiveness, toughness and result-orientation. According to these leaders, these traits are mostly male traits:

Women are soft and men are tough. This is the perception in the society. Women are perceived to be humanistic, and relationship-oriented. (Leader 16, Multinational, General Manager).

Men are considered to be aggressive and tough unlike women by the society (Leader 3, Multinational, General Manager).

As explained by the Social Congruity Theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002), the expectations from women leaders in relation to their gender roles are not congruent with the leadership roles. According to this theory, gender role perceptions limit women’s advancement to leadership roles. Likewise, the majority of the women leaders in this study argue that there has been prejudice against certain occupations in Turkey. According to these leaders, marketing, finance and human resources have been considered as women’s professions whereas sales, manufacturing and general management roles are seen as men’s jobs. As reported by the leaders:
Women’s jobs, men’s jobs…Women’s jobs are considered to be in human resources, marketing and finance by the society. However, men’s jobs are perceived to be sales, engineering, manufacturing and general management (Leader 1, Multinational, General Manager).

The message is simple: as a woman, it is not appropriate for you to sell products or be a leader. This is how it is perceived by the society (Leader 7, Multinational, General Manager).

Women are not associated with leadership roles in Turkey (Leader 6, Multinational, General Manager).

These women’s accounts also suggest that the traditional mindset perceives women to be emotional and risk averse which makes them inconsistent with leadership roles:

As a traditional belief, women are considered to be risk averse and emotional. This is not associated with leadership (Leader 9, Multinational General Manager).

The findings of this study are in line with the Social Role Theory (1987) and Social Congruity Theory (2002) in that the power of society and culture influence gender role perceptions. As Öğüt (2006) claims that the prejudices against women continue to be powerful at the workplace. In the current study, the women leaders in Turkey went beyond the traditional roles ascribed to them. They disregarded the stereotypes and succeeded in achieving top positions at their workplaces. Furthermore, in my sample, the women leaders preferred to study business, economics or engineering majors (please refer to Appendix D) which are considered to lead to male professions (Cook, Heppner and O’Brien, 2002). They had high socioeconomic status, providing them with opportunities to be educated at reputable schools and find high-status jobs with big companies. However, it can be suggested that traditional socio-cultural factors still limited the advancement of women leaders in their careers in Turkey.

4.2.7 Women’s attitudes towards leadership

The majority of the participants claimed that women needed to feel that they were fully ready in order to move forward in their careers. According to these
participants, they needed to prove themselves so that they could feel confident about their move to higher positions:

Women also do not raise their hands until they are 100% ready. It takes time for women to trust themselves. Women need to prove themselves over and over again. (Leader 17, Multinational, General Manager).

If I am ready by 70%, I do not accept the offer. I wait until I make sure that I am fully ready (Leader 10, Multinational, General Manager).

I admire the male leaders' bold approach to taking risks. It has never been easy for me to take high risks (Leader 5, Local, General Manager).

Majority of the women’s accounts suggest that they are far more cautious about their level of readiness, and they see themselves different than men in this regard, often appearing to admire men’s capability to take up roles as opposed to their own timid or risk averse approach. However, around half of the women leaders also reported that they were in search of their authentic leadership style, expressed as follows:

In my early years of leadership, I used to be risk averse. However, now I have developed my way of leadership. I take calculated risks as needed. This is my way and I consider myself as a good leader with an authentic style (Leader 13, Multinational, General Manager).

I have my authentic style of leadership. I have developed it by experience (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).

Mostly, women leaders suggested that their slower pace in career advancement compared to men could be normal since they had family responsibilities. Also, they reported that mobility and networking were critical factors in getting leadership positions. Almost all of the leaders considered themselves as not good at networking and they were mostly not mobile due to family responsibilities:

I refused a senior leadership role in New York. I could not be mobile due to family reasons (Leader 4, Local, General Manager).
My network is not strong. I prefer enjoying my time with my family rather than spending time to have a good network (Leader 16, Multinational, General Manager).

If I were a man, I would have got the General Manager position years ago. Actually, I am OK with it as I have two children to take care of. Women have small steps (Leader 17, Multinational General Manager).

Although all these women leaders went beyond their traditional gender roles and overcame many social constraints in order to have senior leadership positions, there were limits on their careers that delayed their career advancement or close off some professional opportunities to them. Women leaders in my study seemed to have accepted some of these limits in order to focus on their familial responsibilities.

The majority of the women leaders reported that they had a few or no role female models to help form their expectations about work which forced them to take small and sure steps. They also suggested that this situation prevented them from reaching senior positions or getting promotions as quickly as they should have:

I had no women role models. I take things step by step (Leader 15, Local, General Manager).

I am one of the few top women in Turkey. However, I did not have a woman role model or mentor who could help me (Leader 2, Multinational, General Manager).

Two-thirds of the women’s accounts showed that due to the lack of female role models, women leaders in this study were more hesitant to take on more responsibility as they were not sure what to expect and what to target. This led them to be risk averse in taking steps in their careers. These women leaders claimed that this was the case for men who were readier to take risks.

If you ask me to assume a new challenging role, I will not take it if I am not ready 100%. I am hesitant to take it. I do not have a role model to see if that would be feasible (Leader 5, Local, General Manager).
I need to be 100-120% ready for a new opportunity. However, if men are ready by 50 or 70%, they raise their hand for the opportunity (Leader 10, Multinational, General Manager).

In her study, Aycan (2004) reported that the women leaders in her study received the support of their male bosses not because of company policies but because of the personal efforts of the male bosses. Similarly, most of the women leaders in my study also reported that their male bosses were their role models and mentors in an individual capacity and not due to company policy, still opening women’s path to leadership:

I always get support from my male bosses (Leader 6, Multinational, General Manager).

My male boss is my mentor. He opened my way and supported me along the way (Leader 4, Local, General Manager).

Women leaders’ accounts suggest that there are now more women in Turkey who get support and achieve leadership positions. Although there have been improvements, women’s leadership is still in an initial stage as reported by the participants. According to these participants, there is a long way to go and even though there are attempts to improve women’s participation in leadership, this is not reflected in the numbers yet:

We are in the initial stage now. The improvements started 5-7 years ago (Leader 18, Multinational, General Manager).

There is a long way to go for gender equality. The gender perceptions are difficult to change. There is awareness for sure (Leader 2, Multinational, General Manager).

In most of the companies, the leadership positions are still dominated by men where their rules are in the play (Titrek, Bayrakçi and Güneş, 2014). At the same time, even though it is not at the desired level, there is a significant degree of awareness about the significance of providing career opportunities for women. In most of the multinational companies there are quotas for women to be represented as board members. Furthermore, in many multinational companies, the statistics regarding women’s employment are reported to the
upper levels to make sure that women are represented in the management. In addition, many organizations established Women’s Councils and Women Development Programs in the process of supporting the career advancement of women. However, although Turkish women have a degree of representation in leadership positions that is comparable to that of many European countries, the improvements are slow (Kabasakal et al., 2015).

4.2.8 The glass ceiling in the organizations

When asked if they had experienced gender inequality at the workplace, the majority of the women leaders in this study reported that they did not experience major discrimination or the glass ceiling phenomenon at work. However, almost all of the women leaders argued that they had to prove themselves over and over again, admitting that this was not the case for their male counterparts. These women leaders explained this by suggesting that the organizations had a tendency to follow the classic model of preferring male leaders over women and thus put their trust in male leadership more. However, majority of the women did not identify this as discrimination against women or that women were not given enough possibilities to progress:

*Even though I needed to prove myself over and over again, I have not noticed any gender discrimination in my company. (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).*

*I have not witnessed a glass ceiling in my company. However, the company does not trust women as they trust men. This has been the common belief for ages. Therefore, they have the tendency to trust the leadership competencies of men more than women (Leader 13, Multinational, General Manager).*

Thus, the women leaders talked about the need to prove themselves repeatedly unlike their male counterparts as also claimed by Jackson (2001); they explained how men were trusted more over women for senior positions; and all they reported difficulties in networking, mobility and fulfilling family responsibilities. However, they also asserted that they did not experience a glass ceiling in their companies. This contradictory statement could be the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling which women leaders in this study
seemed to prefer to ignore and downplay. The findings of this study suggest that even though the preference for success is there, the women leaders in this study tend to disregard the social and organizational challenges preventing them from taking higher steps. This can explain why the women leaders deny the gender discrimination but still continue to complain about the difficulties they encounter at the workplace. Furthermore, they are more cautious and more prudent than men when it comes to taking on responsibility, most likely driven by the fact that there are no female role models in their workplaces. Therefore, when it comes to taking the next step, women do so only when they are sure that they are ready. These findings also support the claims of Wrigley (2002) and Smith, Crittenden and Caputi (2012) that denial, resignation and acceptance contribute to the glass ceiling.

Nevertheless, only one women leader in this study reported that she was exposed to gender discrimination by her boss. However, she also denied that there was a glass ceiling at her company, claiming that she managed to reach the top position which pointed to the lack of a glass ceiling at her workplace. As expressed by this woman:

*I was exposed to gender discrimination by my boss. In a meeting, he told his colleague to bring me materials for knitting, meaning that I do not know how to do business as a woman. Now, this gentleman reports to me (Leader 9, Multinational, General Manager).*

In the light of the perceptions of the top executives in my study, it can be suggested the exposure to a modern way of thinking, Western education and a more liberal approach of women’s roles, combined with support and mentoring from the family and encouragement for career success from within the work environment, inspire women leaders to choose and strive for success and recognition in the work arena.

Despite the traditional culture and norms of the society, these women developed their careers as business leaders. Even though they had dual responsibilities, they managed to have both business success and a family life which was considered to be their main duty by the society. In this traditional
context, it was difficult for women to directly oppose the norms of the society. This was one of the reasons why the women leaders denied that they experienced the glass ceiling phenomenon at their workplaces and seemed to normalise the discriminatory processes through which men were promoted as leaders instead of women. They seemed to feel the need to balance the traditions and the modernity as they needed to balance their work and family life.

The results from this study describe herein reveal that that the women leaders have had the opportunity to be exposed to ideas, cultures and opportunities which help them redefine the dominant gender role expectations. Despite the socio-cultural norms of a traditional developing country, the socio-economic conditions of these women have allowed them to have more exposure to what is possible even though the preference of career success needs to be there for their career success. The life conditions of the participants provide them with a privileged socio-economic background. The women leaders in this study are from urban modern families who belong to high socio-economic status. Their parents are mostly educated and have a high social standing such as having professional backgrounds as doctors, professors and senior leaders. Therefore, as Kan (2005, p. 29) argues women’s careers are not only shaped by their preferences but their life conditions and constraints as well. In my research, the constraints are mostly related to the family and company practices similar to the results reported by Kan (2005).

Therefore, it can be suggested that Hakim’s theory is “defective” (Kan, 2005, p. 29) and preferences alone are only “part of the story of most women’s lives” (McRae 2003, p. 334). However, the more women in this study were exposed to ideas promoting gender equality, Western cultures and possibilities, the more they developed the desire to prefer careers even in a developing country such as Turkey. In Turkey specifically, a combination of conditions influenced the gender role perceptions of the women who participated in my study. The exposure to Western liberal ideas in their education and social settings supported by male mentoring and male models including their fathers and
senior male colleagues as role models created a unique situation for women to desire career advancement and develop the confidence to assume leadership positions. Importantly, these conditions took place within a collectivistic cultural context (Kağıtçibaşı, 2005) that empowered and supported these women to succeed in their careers while creating a vision of the modern Turkish women.

To sum up according to participants of the study modern gender role perceptions, education that propels modern and Westernized exposure, and male mentoring, particularly fathers’ guidance towards gender equality, and career aspirations combined with preference for success as defined in Hakim’s Theory provide the conditions for the career success of Turkish women leaders. In this study, the Westernised exposure is defined as the perceptions that promote more gender equality so that women see their roles as both mothers and career women; women have financial independence; and women can focus on individual success. Furthermore, the women leaders in this study report that the glass ceiling does not exist even though they describe it as real. In the light of the analysis of the themes, the women leaders report a preference for career progress in accordance with Hakim’s Theory but they explain that social, family and personal conditions are also important in shaping their life and career decisions as modern Turkish women. They report that education propels a Westernised exposure, combined with the financial and emotional support of their liberal modern families whose support makes it possible for women leaders to take advantage of the opportunities in the work environment. Women leaders in this study also describe the importance of male figures, particularly their fathers, in shaping their gender role perceptions towards gender equality and the importance of being successful in career regardless of gender. They perceive their own role as a combination of both being a leader and a mother at the same time. As professionals, they explicitly deny the existence of a glass ceiling but simultaneously describe circumstances that indicate that there is a glass ceiling, without acknowledging it as such.
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

First, this chapter summarizes the findings of the study regarding the reported gender role perceptions in relation to the socio-cultural factors that the women leaders think contribute to their career success. Then, these findings are discussed in relation to the existing research and theories on women’s gender roles and career success. This chapter also highlights the contributions of this study to the existing literature. Second, this chapter discusses the implications of the findings of this study to Hakim’s Theory. Also, it discusses the relevance of Hakim’s Theory in Turkey which is a developing country, given that these women are provided with privileged opportunities similar to their counterparts in the developed countries. Thirdly, the chapter discusses the implications of this study on women’s leadership in Turkey. It discusses the possible implications of the findings for human resources practices in order to help women get leadership roles in the organizations. Fourthly, the chapter suggests further research for the development of women leadership in Turkey including further research on not only urban and educated women but also traditional and rural women to represent the overall Turkish society better. Lastly, the chapter ends with a discussion on the limitations of this study, highlighting the limitations related to the urban sample of the study and the self-reported results.

5.2 Summary of the findings and discussion

Under the scope of this study, twenty women leaders in the fast moving consumer goods sector were interviewed in order to understand their gender role perceptions with respect to enabling socio-cultural factors that influenced their career success. Living in a more modern social environment than many people in Turkey, these women have been exposed to a social environment where there are less traditional rules, less social pressure and less criticism for their non-traditional behaviours (Sunar and Fişek, 2005). In their social environment, they perceive their role to be both mothers and career women. They do not define themselves as career women as it is classified by Hakim (2002), describing women who focus only on their careers. Most of the women
leaders in this study have created a work-life balance where it is possible to be a leader and have a family life at the same time.

Since 1923, the socio-cultural context in Turkey has started to change in favour of women considering the equal social and economic rights, opportunities in education, and social responsibilities in the public sphere and working conditions. These have been big steps for the modernisation of women in Turkey. Furthermore, since 1965, Turkey has signed agreements to promote gender equality in education, employment and politics in the process of modernisation and harmonisation with the EU (Kabasakal et al., 2015).

As Kağıtçibaşı (2005) claims that modern society has changed women’s gender role perceptions by creating expectations beyond family responsibilities, with socio-cultural factors playing a critical role in influencing these perceptions in Turkey. Aycan (2004, p. 148) highlights the importance of socio-cultural factors by stating that “In the Turkish culture, inequality especially with respect to gender roles constitutes a potential barrier to women’s career advancement in Turkey. Traditional gender roles are such that women are primarily responsible for family care”. Aycan further argues that the cultural norms towards gender act as barriers throughout women’s progress in the career ladder in Turkey. In the traditional part of the population, gender inequality exists, and it creates a distinct division of labour roles: women at home and men at work (Fişek, 1993). According to Esmer (1991), men are the main bread-winners whereas women’s primary responsibility is their family in the traditional sections of Turkey. However, these conditions are moderated amongst the educated urban population (Sunar, 2002). It can be argued that in Turkey mostly middle and high-income groups have been affected by the Westernisation ideology of Atatürk’s reforms that promote equal gender roles for women (Kardam and Toksöz, 2004).

As explored in the discussion on the influence of modernity on women’s gender role perceptions in Turkey, the women leaders in this study perceive themselves as the role models of modern Turkish society that succeed in their
roles outside of the home while keeping their familial and professional responsibilities in balance. These women leaders explained that the modern gender role perceptions they adopted open the doors to leadership positions in the business world even though this required hard work at the work place and struggle to carry out professional and familial obligations. However, these women leaders are accepted and respected by society (Kağıtçibaşı, 2005). Therefore, the perception of women’s gender roles has changed to allow them to assume leadership roles although their role is not unequivocally supported by society as a whole but only by the modern sections of the society, and particularly by women leaders’ more progressive social environments.

The women leaders in this study reported that their families and social circles shared the same aspirations with them and found ways to support and even pushed them to succeed initially in education and afterwards in their careers. According to these women leaders, the supportive roles of their families and social circles included mentoring them in their path to educational and professional success, transferring their own values and resilience and work-focused mindset towards achievement. This mindset was reported to help the women leaders be strong and resilient, combined with their privileged educational background which provided opportunities for leadership roles. Parents, particularly fathers, were reported to act as mentors for the women leaders while their families and husbands provided the necessary practical and emotional support, such as helping with household responsibilities and trusting the women’s capacity to achieve success, which helped women move ahead in their careers.

The women leaders reported that their social status allowed them on one hand to delegate their traditional female role responsibilities such as child care and household duties, while on the other hand it enabled them to be recognised as successful individuals. They explained that this gave them a sense of empowerment but also the responsibility to climb the career ladder steadily and perform to the highest level. Thus, the women leaders in this study felt the pressure to have a prestigious social status as leaders while they also have had
the responsibilities of their family on their shoulders. Women leaders further reported that even though they transferred some of their responsibilities to their support systems consisting of their husbands, parents and professional helpers, they still felt guilty for not spending enough time with their children. This is in parallel with the findings of Aycan (2004, p. 467) who reported that there were women managers who “felt guilty for not fulfilling their wifely and motherly duties”.

The findings of this study show that the women leaders’ parents do not only serve as role models or financial providers for women’s education in prestigious schools, but they are also people who have a strong vision for their daughters’ future and actively encourage their daughters to have faith in themselves and take bold steps forward in their careers. The fathers play a critical role in defining the expectations from the modern woman role which shape the educational and career choices of the women in this study to a significant extent. As the Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) suggests, the newly define role expectations impact on the gender role perceptions of these women. The findings of this study showed that the women in this study were raised with a mindset reinforcing the belief that in their public roles outside the house, at school or at work, they needed to do their best and aim for success. This mindset encouraged the women to work hard to prove themselves and reach their potentials despite the barriers on their paths which is also noted by Jackson (2001) who addresses that women need to prove themselves repeatedly in order to advance in their careers. Moreover, in this study the women’s education made them gain a modern mindset and Western values which offered the insight that they had the possibilities to make their own life choices, and they had the capacity to take advantage of the opportunities in different areas of their lives.

Thus, it can be argued that as stated by Tan et al., (2008), education plays a key role in increasing the employability of women in high quality jobs in Turkey. There are differences in the areas that female and male students prefer to study in university education in Turkey: female students mostly enrol in social
sciences and applied social sciences programmes while male students prefer technical sciences (TÜİK, 2014). However, in this research, the women leaders study engineering, business or economics which are predominantly considered as male fields opening the doors of leadership for the participants of this research.

Furthermore, even though the education gap diminishes in primary and secondary education, women’s participation in the labour market has not increased in the recent years (WEF, 2014), which makes women’s access to higher status professional positions more difficult in general. In this study, the women leaders reported that being a high achiever in school helped them realise that they could achieve success in other areas of their lives. This points out the importance of supporting girls’ educational success at school because school success provides the girls with the confidence to strive for similar success in other areas in their lives later. Thus, the findings of this study reveal the importance of academic success for girls and young women in reinforcing and empowering gender role perceptions.

The findings of this research also showed that women’s socio-economic backgrounds helped them understand that the possibilities outside home are many and potentially achievable. This helped them overcome the barriers that would have otherwise thwarted their attempts to achieve top positions. This finding is parallel to the argument that the senior roles in the workplaces in Turkey are limited to a group of women who come from middle or upper socio-economic backgrounds (Kabasakal, 2000). In this study, it was found that women leaders’ privileged backgrounds and higher social status provided them with the education, self-confidence, network connections and social exposure that were needed for leadership positions as noted by Kabasakal et al., (2015) and Aycan (2004). The findings also indicate that it is accepted by society that women leaders delegate child care and family responsibilities to different figures in their social support system. This support system provides a platform where women’s responsibilities are delegated to their parents, husbands and professional helpers even though the women themselves are still responsible.
for managing the support system. The findings of this study show that women leaders find this support system necessary for spending quality time with their children as well as feeling confident that their children are well taken care of, which seems to provide the time and peace of mind they need for their career success. Aycan (2004) notes that the support system plays a critical role in Turkish women’s career success. Furthermore, living in a collectivist society, Turkish women can rely on their families for childcare as opposed to more individualistic societies (Kabasakal et al., 2015). Additionally, in Turkey, women from higher socio-economic backgrounds have the advantage of finding cheap domestic labour which can be very expensive in the developed countries¹.

Therefore, as argued by Sunar, (2002), the women leaders in this study have less pressure related to family responsibilities as compared to the women from more traditional backgrounds. Because they have privileged backgrounds they have had more opportunities to choose their work and life styles. They can be considered as career-oriented rather than family-focused although they are not career-oriented in the sense that is described by Hakim (2000). First, the majority of the women leaders in my study have children. Yet, they cannot be depicted as the mothers Hakim describe as mothers who treat their children as a “weekend hobby” (2000, p. 164). The women in my study have found ways to balance their work and family responsibilities, mostly with the help of their support system. This is acceptable in their social circles as long as they balance their work and family responsibilities. Thus, as pointed out by Esmer (1991), the Turkish society finds women’s employment outside the house acceptable if women do not neglect their family responsibilities.

The findings show that the multinational company environments emerge as an important enabling factor in women leaders’ career progress in Turkey. The women leaders reported that the multinational companies formed a base for their careers success, providing them with exposure to western values, the

¹ While pointing out the importance of the pool of cheap domestic helpers for the career success of women leaders in Turkey, I also acknowledge the significance of supporting home-based workers to earn decent wages, with social security and good working conditions.
discipline to work hard and development opportunities to advance in their careers. They reported that their male mentors at the workplace acted as role models and mentors who played a critical role in their career success, find them as important male figures in their careers after their fathers. The women in this study also reported to receive mentoring and support from within their organizations. At the same time, the organizations’ need for talent seems to have opened opportunities for women with the necessary qualifications to progress to leadership positions. Under these circumstances, the women leaders in this study feel unique, distinguished, recognised and appreciated within their social circles and the broader society. They reported that they found room and support in order to develop their skills and capabilities as well as creating their own models of leadership in time. As Aycan (2004) reported that the multinational companies provided an environment for women where western values and gender role perceptions were in place. In addition, the multinationals provided a supportive environment for women who had the preference and qualifications for leadership roles.

In the analysis of the data, traditional gender roles/ gender occupations, women’s attitudes towards leadership, the lack of women role models as senior leaders, the glass ceiling in the organizations and women leadership being in an initial stage are the themes that emerge as constraints that shape women’s life styles and choices in this study. The Social Congruity Theory (Eagly and Karau, 2002) argues that the dominant gender role perceptions lead to the misleading perception that women have less leadership skills than men and leadership is not congruent with women’s roles in the society. This seems to be the traditional gender role perception in Turkey as well, explored in this thesis within the themes that pose barriers to women’s leadership. Titrek, Bayракçit and Güneş (2014) argue that Turkish women have the potential to be leaders and they have the required leadership skills. However, the traditional gender role perceptions such as women being primarily responsible for family care, where the family includes husband and children as well as parents and in-laws, are found to be barriers to assuming leadership roles. Similarly, scholars such as Lyness and Terrazas (2006) note those women’s less traditional perceptions
about gender roles and socio-cultural values are positively correlated with career success. The women leaders in this study understand that they are expected to take care of their family members, and they have accepted this societal perception of themselves. Their advantage is that they have their social support network that helps them fulfil this duty. However, the women in this study also find work vital to their life and gaining success in their career highly important.

Even though the women leaders in this study are highly successful performers, there are challenges along the way such as the double work burden, traditional gender role perceptions of the people they work with and the lack of female role models, which make it difficult for them to identify and judge the feasibility of the opportunities that they can aspire to women leaders. However, the women also report that in a man’s world they manage to adapt their own style of leadership, sourcing energy both from their families and extended social circles, all of which expect them to succeed. However, these improvements in terms of women’s leadership are in an initial stage. To be able to promote more women to top positions in the following years such as mentorship programs, talent management programs to identify and develop women leaders and human resources policies and practices to promote more women leaders there are many steps to be taken. Also, it is important to increase the awareness of both women and men aware about the glass ceiling phenomenon and find the ways to resolve it.

On the other hand, despite the challenges and barriers, the privileged backgrounds of the women leaders in this study give them the means and the confidence to comfortably occupy these positions. In parallel to the findings of Wrigley (2002), even though the women leaders in this study think that they are slow in getting promoted to higher positions compared to their male counterparts, and they feel the need to prove themselves repeatedly as noted by Jackson (2001), they justify this situation with their family responsibilities which they assume to be normal. Thus, the women leaders in this study recognise the glass ceiling but prefer to deny it and justify this inequality with
the effect of their familial responsibilities. Even though the women executives complain about gender inequalities at the workplace and consider themselves as disadvantaged in networking, physical mobility and self-promotion as noted by Kumra and Vinnicombe (2008) and Akpınar-Sposito, 2013, they deny the existence of the glass ceiling phenomenon. They understand they have been able to choose their careers due to the socio-economic and organisational possibilities provided by their families and multinational companies.

However, some of the socio-cultural factors and company practices which are in play put limit on their career progression and slow down them in reaching their career destinations, which they do not identify as discrimination or examples of gender inequality. When asked explicitly about the existence of the glass ceiling, the women leaders in this study acknowledge its existence for women in general. However, they do not consider it as a significant barrier to their own career progression due to their mindset that when it comes to career advancement they are confident that they will perform to satisfy expectations when they take up more responsibility. Therefore, they do not refer to it as an inhibitor, almost denying that the glass ceiling or gender discrimination exist in their organizations. It is almost as if they manage their own expectations without reducing their ambitions.

In the analysis of the data, the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling seems to stem from a combination of factors which were also explained by Wrigley (2002). The first factor is that the women leaders in this study might get social recognition from their privileged backgrounds including their modern and educated families, Westernized education and middle or high socio-economic status, which provide them with self-confidence and prestige. Thus, the social recognition they get does not come solely from their leadership role. This finding is consistent with the arguments by Kabasakal et al., (2015) who emphasizes the importance of self-confidence in career success provided by women's privileged backgrounds. The second factor is the acknowledgement of their family responsibilities as a fact of their lives which might imply that it is not gender discrimination but the acceptance of women's family responsibilities that
slow down their career advancement. On the other hand, as Aycan (2004) claims it is possible that the women leaders find ways to manage these obstacles thanks to their privileged backgrounds. Aycan also argues that these women leaders might have a need to attribute their success to their personal characteristics such as their personality and their abilities. On the other hand, although these women leaders report that their social support system enables them to have a family and career balance as reported in the literature, they also mention that they feel guilty that they could not spend enough time with their children. Thus, women’s conflicted feelings about their children might be the influence of traditional gender roles that consider women as the main carers of children. Also, the women leaders in this study do not overtly criticize the double work burden placed on their shoulders which can be seen as the influence of the traditional gender role perceptions even though they consider themselves as modern women. All of these can be considered as probable explanations for the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling in their organizations by the women business leaders in this study.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study support the findings of Wrigley (2002) that denial, resignation, acceptance as well as resilience (Smith, Crittenden and Caputi (2012) contribute to the existence of the glass ceiling. In Wrigley’s study, women report contradictory comments, denying the existence of the glass ceiling while describing it as such. In Wrigley’s study, women who do not get leadership positions make these contradictory comments. As explained by Wrigley (2002), these women resign themselves to the fact that they cannot achieve leadership roles in contexts where the glass ceiling exists. In my study, all the women who succeed in getting the top positions similarly make contradictory comments. Therefore, the data analysis shows that the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling is the case not only for women who are not leaders such as the women participants in Wrigley’s study but also for the women leaders in this study. In addition, some of the women leaders in this study consider the fact that their promotion takes longer than their counterparts as acceptable, thus still denying or rationalizing the existence of the glass ceiling in their contexts. In a way, they resign themselves to achieving
leadership roles more slowly than their male counterparts. As also noted by Wrigley (2002) and Smith, Crittenden and Caputi (2012), the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling by women is a barrier to solving the issue of the glass ceiling in the organizations. Furthermore, in parallel to the findings of Smith, Crittenden and Caputi (2012), the findings of this study also support that having a resilient attitude is also an important factor to break through the glass ceiling in Turkey. Women in this study explain how their hard work and persistence in the face of hardships and constraints enabled their success in the workplace.

5.3 Implications on Hakim’s Theory

Hakim (2002) argues that women are heterogeneous and have different priorities and preferences in balancing their family and work life in modern developed societies such as the UK, the US and Australia. According to her theory, women's careers and life preferences are directly related to their career and life choices. She defines the preferences as the main determinant of life and work choices of women in the developed countries (Hakim 2002).

Hakim’s Preference Theory claims that women’s behaviour patterns are unconstrained, and their preferences shape their career and life choices. In this study, the women leaders are considered to have highly privileged conditions in their particular contexts, which provide a unique unconstrained test case in terms of removing the usual choice constraints and testing Hakim’s claims. The findings suggest that the more women have access to a liberal mindset, a liberal education system, support from their family and social circles and organizational opportunities, the more we can talk about preferences and choices of women to balance their work and family life, even in the developing countries such as Turkey. This finding in a sense supports Hakim's preference theory given that they are provided with possibilities and chances, women can achieve success in their careers if they prefer to assume leadership roles such as the women leaders in the sample of this study. However, the women in this study are not career-oriented as Hakim describe them as prioritising their work over family and most them as being childless (Hakim, 2002). The findings of this
study support the findings of McRae (2003) that there are many women who do not fall into any of Hakim’s (2002) classifications which are work-centred, home-centred and adaptive.

In this study, Turkish women leaders define themselves as mothers and career women at the same time. As representatives of modern Turkey, while they report being admired as working women, they also accept the social perception that they are expected to take care of their family members. Although they report that the family is their priority, they also express that the focus of their lives is their work. In a sense they could not imagine living without their careers, locating it at the centre of their identities as modern women. These women establish a work-life balance where it is possible to be a leader and take care of their family responsibilities at the same time. Considering that 13 out of the 20 participants in this study are married with children, they manage to be both mothers and leaders in their organizations, unlike the work-centred women described by Hakim. The women leaders in my study enjoy privileged socio-economic status, Westernised education, liberal modern families, multinational company environments and supportive parents and husbands as well as cheap domestic help, which help them be both mothers and leaders at the same time. However, although these women leaders are provided with opportunities, almost with no usual choice constraints, they encounter challenges that influence the shape of their careers and life choices.

The findings of this study suggest that even in a test case where women have conditions with almost no constraints, the women leaders report a number of constraints in making choices such as taking a break due to their husbands’ jobs, having to prove themselves over and over again, being evaluated against male values and getting promoted at a slower compared to their male counterparts. Such constraints are also pointed out by McRae (2003), which contradicts Hakim’s Theory. According to Hakim (2002), women’s behaviour patterns are unconstrained. Given the circumstances that these women leaders have privileged backgrounds who are provided with opportunities and supported by their families present a perfect test case for Hakim’s Preference Theory. Still,
the results of this study do not prove Hakim’s claims. This shows that even in an unconstrained test environment women’s career advancement is not only shaped by preferences but also by challenges or constraints they encounter in their career lives. However, even though they encounter with challenges, their work-focused and resilient attitude towards their career is a strong indication of preference as also argued by Hakim. The women in this study have found unique ways to balance work and family lives. On one hand, they prefer to work and achieve leadership roles. On the other hand, they manage their family and household responsibilities. This way, they do not act against the societal expectations but they go beyond the traditional roles while considering themselves as the representatives of the modern Turkish women.

According to the findings of this study, Hakim’s theory is incomplete and only a part of the story. Similar to the findings of Crompton and Harris (1999), McRae (2003), Kan (2005), Houston and Marks (2003), the accounts of women leaders in this study show that it is not only the preferences but also the constraints that shape women’s career and family lifestyles. My findings suggest that their high socio-economic class parents urge them to be financially and emotionally independent and support their education. However, especially the fathers put pressure on them to excel in education and the workplace. Therefore, their gender role perceptions involve aiming for excellence, reinforcing the perception that they must not make mistakes but should perform to the highest standards when taking advantage of the opportunities provide to them. The findings show that this is the case at the workplace as well where women are supported by male mentors and work hard to fulfil the expectations of their mentors from them. This is a different kind of pressure and influence that reinforce the women leaders’ efforts to excel in what they do as they feel that it is very important that they are successful. They do not want to disappoint these male figures who trust and support them. It can be argued that the expectations and support provided by fathers and male bosses act as a type of external influence on the career success of the women in my study. This finding supports that not only preferences but also constraints and enabling factors such as social-cultural, family and personal situations determine the career and family choices of
women unlike the claim of Hakim (2002) that the preferences are the main determinants that shape women’s career lives. In addition, Hakim (2002) argues that social class does not have much influence on career success and gender has minor effects on women’s careers. However, the findings of this study show that all the women leaders in the sample of this study are from high socio-economic strata as opposed to the arguments of Hakim. Therefore, different than the arguments of Hakim, the findings of this study contribute to the class critique of Hakim, highlighting the importance of socio-economic class, the value of education and financial conditions of the parents as well as the women leaders themselves, particularly in developing countries such as Turkey. Although randomly selected, all the women leaders are from high socio-economic classes in this study.

In this study, the constraints are mostly related on one hand with family and women’s traditional roles, and on the other with the organizational structures and the traditional thinking about men in leadership roles. Even though Hakim (2002) does not deny the existence of constraints, her theory does not give adequate importance to constraints. Thus, the findings of this study support the arguments of Crompton and Harris (1999), McRae (2003), Houston and Marks (2003) and Kan's (2005) in terms of the significance of constraints in women’s career choices and success.

The traditional gender role perceptions are key reasons for the low representation of women in leadership (Lyness and Terrazas, 2006; Titrek, Bayrakçı and Güneş, 2014; Koca and Öztürk, 2015). In parallel, this study suggests that the modern gender role perceptions and stereotypes towards gender equality have contributed to the career success of Turkish women. The women in this study report that they have as much confidence and ambition to get leadership roles as their male counterparts. In a way, this finding supports Hakim’s argument that women are more likely to prefer their work and life choices if they are provided with a liberal and modern mindset in Western societies. In the analysis of this study, even though there are social and organizational barriers, the non-traditional gender role perceptions provide more
opportunities for women even in developing countries such as Turkey. According to Cartwright (2004), Hakim does not consider a woman or a man as being both home-centred and the main breadwinner. Unlike this conceptualization of Hakim (2002), the women leaders in this study prefer to balance family and work responsibilities.

5.4 Implications on women’s leadership

Although there have been improvements in recent years, women’s leadership is still in an initial stage in Turkey. There are more women leaders than before, and the organizations have women councils, the quota system and key indicators to track in order to improve women’s leadership (Ararat, Alkan and Aytekin, 2015). Although these developments are very promising, it is slow by the women leaders. One important question is whether the next generation of women leaders will face the consequences of the glass ceiling which is now denied by the women leaders in this study. Another important question is whether women’s leadership will be restricted to a group of women who come from urban and higher socio-economic status with privileged backgrounds such as the participants in this study.

The findings of the study suggest that modern gender role perceptions, Western education, the mindset to work hard and be resilient coupled with a support system are the enabling factors for the women leaders in this study. In this study, the women leaders find a unique way to balance their career and family lives with the help of their support system constituted by their parents, husbands, professional help and the multinational company environment. Thus, the findings of this study lead to the recommendation that gender equality, modern gender role perceptions and balancing work and other responsibilities should be taught to girls and young women at an earlier stage in life, starting with primary education. The employers, policy makers and researchers are recommended to make conscious efforts to understand the interests and challenges of women and develop policies and processes that render workplaces and practices more compatible to the work-life balance of women as well as men. The current women leaders are needed to pro-actively act as
mentors and role models to convey their learnings and experiences to the next generation of women leaders. The women leaders acting as mentors may be even more effective than male mentors as they have already experienced the challenges that the upcoming women leaders are likely to experience in their careers.

For the next generation of Turkish women leaders, the socio-cultural factors may be different than those of the current women leaders. Considering the possibility that the next generation will not deny the glass ceiling phenomenon, and that there is a glass ceiling now with the participation of women on boards standing at 8%, the improvement of gender equality will have a great importance even though it will not be achieved easily. Thus, the responsibility of the society is to inspire and support the next generation of women leaders. As Hoobler, Lemmon and Wayne (2011) suggest, women need senior role models to act as change agents and mentors to guide women's perceptions that will help them get the leadership positions. In this respect, the platforms or projects uniting men and women leaders and next generation women leader talents are need to be developed. Also, mentoring programs matching women talents/leaders with male and female mentors might have a highly positive impact on the development of top women executives.

In every culture, socio-cultural factors are difficult to change. Even though women prefer to be themselves in terms of dress and communication style, it is still difficult to break the stereotypes around how to act as a leader. Still, it is the men’s world, and men’s rules define the game (Oakley, 2000). Oakley suggests that the stereotypes regarding leadership need to change to open the doors for women to be promoted as leaders. This requires changes in the organizational culture of the companies to abolish gender discrimination at the workplace. In this respect, the organizations have a lot to do to promote women's leadership and train more women for leadership roles. In Turkey, the companies can enable women to have flexible working hours and work from home so that more women can stay focused on their careers while balancing their home and work
responsibilities. This may help women feel less pressure on their shoulders when they go through double work.

The programs such as “More Women on Boards Mentorship and Development” can assist women in meeting and learning from senior leaders and developing their networks, which is crucial for leadership. Also, women’s leadership performance indicators such as the number of women on boards and the quota of 30% or even 40% women representation in leadership can be important indicators of dedication to women’s leadership development. In addition, the difficulty in mobility can be solved with programs or projects fostering virtual teams and short term international assignments for cultural diversity and international exposure. Furthermore, in Turkey, the women leaders need to feel that they are trusted by the society, and equal opportunities with their male counterparts are provided for them too because this is motivational for women. Furthermore, the government programmes or quotas for women can be a significant step in promoting women’s participation on boards as well, which can serve as a role model for the private sector. Increasing the number of female students who get governmental scholarships for studying abroad, and supporting the professional development of these women in their workplaces in Turkey have a positive influence on the perception of women’s leadership in society even though this process takes time.

Moreover, it is critical to provide women with a modern way of life, modern gender role perceptions and opportunities to make their own life choices like the conditions in liberal developed countries. The women in Turkey should be provided with opportunities to succeed at work and role models who motivate them to be successful. The women in Turkey need to be encouraged to have career success if they prefer to choose a career-focused lifestyle. The education of women has undoubtedly very critical role in helping the women have a modern mindset as well as providing them with the qualifications and skills which are vital to choose the occupations involving leadership roles. My findings show that male figures - the fathers and bosses - have a strong influence on the career choices and development of women. While supporting
the career advancement of the women leaders as role models and mentors the male figures influence the women in the study by putting pressure on them to perform the leadership roles. Therefore, a male mentoring model can be highly useful to promote women’s leadership in the organizations. Furthermore, the women in my study report that because they do not have female role models they are not able to judge risks and opportunities well, which slows down their career progress. Therefore, further research is needed to find out which aspects of male mentorship and female mentorship women managers will find more beneficial. Depending on the needs of women managers, one can design male leadership programs or female leadership programs or a combination of the two.

In addition, the human resources actions that regulate organisations and work to provide “workplace support and planning” can help more women manage the constraints they experience in order to get leadership positions as suggested by Houston and Marks (2003, p. 102). As Oakley (2000) acknowledges there is a necessity to change the organisational cultures of the companies to promote more gender equality at workplace. Furthermore, human resources practices should be revised to recruit and promote more women to senior positions under equal terms in the organizations. Such practices can be promoted within social responsibility projects supported by different private organisations and government institutions. In addition, talent management programs promoting gender equality and career planning which pave the way for leadership roles might be influential in increasing women’s participation in leadership positions, which would contribute to not only the socialization of women but also the socio-economic wellbeing of the society.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

Further research is recommended to understand the socio-cultural actors that influence the gender role perceptions on a larger scale in terms of sample and various methodologies in Turkey. Further research is needed to be carried out not only with women leaders in urban groups but also in small cities to find out
the enabling factors in their settings as well as the constraints. It is important to understand how we can build on the enabling factors in order to support the career success of women. In building on the enabling factors, we also need to identify what role the government policies and institutions can play in order to help women get leadership roles. Further research is also needed with educated and urban families as well as with traditional families in order to explore how parents’ modern gender role perceptions influence the gender role perceptions of women.

The effects of education on the gender role perceptions of women is another area that needs to be explored. It is important to understand whether the Turkish education system provides the modern mindset and skills that support women’s career development for leadership roles not only in urban but also rural areas of Turkey. It is also important to explore the role of the education system which is based on no tolerance for mistakes and puts pressure on women as well as men to perform to the highest level and be successful first at school and later at work. It is important to understand if this system works differently for women and men. It is vital to explore the ways in which the male figures - the fathers and bosses - put pressure on women on their school performance and excellence at school and at work later in today’s Turkey. It is also important to understand the reasons behind this pressure on their performance at the highest level. It is also vital to investigate the role of female figures such as mothers, female bosses or other inspirational female figures in women’s careers. Also, it would be interesting to find out whether these female figures put pressure on young girls and women professionals to perform in the same way with their male counterparts who have done for the women leaders in the study.

Further research is also needed to examine the social and political trends in the society to understand the changes in the gender role perceptions in both urban modern and rural traditional populations better. Such research needs to investigate how the social trends develop in parallel to the political ones and influence modern Turkish women’s images. It is crucial to conduct research to
find out the implications of the recent conservative political conditions and its effects on the socio-cultural factors. Furthermore, future research needs to explore how these factors are perceived by the next generation of women leaders as well as the overall Turkish society. It is important to understand the implications of socio-cultural factors on the gender role perceptions and how these perceptions influence women’s exposure to Western cultures, new ideas, and modern mindsets. The influence of government policies on the education system and the role of the education system in the formation of gender role perceptions is another strand of research that should be focused on in order to understand how these socio-cultural and political processes influence Turkish women’s probability to achieve leadership positions.

Research is also needed to find out how multinational and national organisations transform their structures and cultures in terms of gender equality. Such research needs to explore the existence of the glass ceiling and the different forms it takes in the companies. It is also important to explore the changes in the political arena and the ways in which such changes influence women’s perceptions about the glass ceilings. Such research can help us understand why some women leaders, such as the ones in this study, deny having experienced the glass ceiling in their organizations. It would also enable us to identify whether the glass ceiling is more visible due to the emerging political changes.

To verify the results of this study, further research examining the role of male mentors in the career success of women and the male mentorship system is recommended. It is important to understand whether male mentors are more effective in encouraging, developing and supporting women’s career advancement to leadership roles in the organizations. It is also important to understand the ways in which male mentors are found more effective by female managers. It is also important to research why women in this study do not mention female mentors and why they do not report if they get support from female mentors. It would also be interesting to find out whether the women
leaders in this study would mentor the next generation of women leaders and what their motivations and expectations would be in acting as mentors.

The findings of this study rely on the self-reports of the participants who are from a particular sector which will be discussed as part of the limitations of this study in the following part. Further research studies with different methods including a longitudinal study to explore the changing gender role perceptions and career preferences over time are recommended not only with women leaders but with future leaders as well. Also, there may be variations across different sectors. Therefore, research studies to understand the role of gender roles perceptions in career success need to be conducted in different sectors and not only in big organizations but also small companies in order to capture the socio-economic class differences. Additionally, the research can be extended to explore the barriers limiting the career success of women leaders. Furthermore, research studies with an ethnographic approach would provide important insights into the conditions and dynamics at the workplaces of women leaders, showing how day-to-day experiences of company practices and cultures and the double work burden influence women’s career progress. Such ethnographic research would involve observing and interviewing not only the mentioned sample but also their colleagues, friends and families in order to gain deeper insights. These insights can generate knowledge on women’s leadership based on different sources and perspectives, helping us judge the reliability of the findings.

In this study, women’s leadership styles and women’s experiences of leadership are not explored as research questions focus on the gender role perceptions and the socio-cultural factors that make these perceptions available. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the leadership styles and experiences of women as leaders. There is a need to understand the leadership styles and attitudes towards women in their journey to leadership. It is important to explore the behaviours, attitudes, styles, communication, dress codes and values women perceive to help them achieve leadership roles. Also, it is worthwhile to explore women leaders’ experiences with their bosses, subordinates and
particularly their women counterparts. The women in my sample report that they get support from their male bosses. This finding demonstrates the need to conduct research on female bosses: How do women encounter problems with their male bosses or how do they get support from the female bosses?

It is also important to understand how women perceive different leadership styles and how they would like to lead. Such research could explore whether women feel the need to lead like men or they have different leadership styles. It is equally important to explore women’s experiences of leadership and the conditions they consider as challenging their leadership styles. Other suggestions for further research would include research that looks into women leaders’ interests and the governmental and workplace policies and practices that can be developed to help them be successful leaders and have a healthy work-life balance. Such studies and insights from these studies are needed in order to define policies, processes and regulations for employers, governments and future women leaders that would support women’s advancement in leadership.

Further research is also needed to explore the glass ceiling phenomena even further. It is important to understand how the denial of the existence of a glass ceiling can affect the career advancement of women. As noted by Wrigley (2002), it is important to investigate the ways that would help women become more aware of the glass ceiling and the support they can get to move beyond it.

Given the socio-economic and cultural, political context of Turkey, the findings of this study need to be interpreted in their unique, particular context. Since the early 2000s, the conservative right-wing party has been in power. In this period, the role of women as mothers and wives have been promoted which has increased the existing gender inequality in Turkey. The implications of these changes and the gender role perceptions are likely to alter the aspirations and career and family expectations of Turkish women, affecting the modern Turkey. Further research is needed to capture this dynamic as it is changing, requiring potentially following women of different backgrounds and belief systems over
time, understanding how they deal with the changing society and manage the relationships between their families, careers and gender roles.

5.6 Limitations of the study

This study has investigated the role of gender role perceptions of Turkish women leaders in their particular socio-cultural contexts. The findings of this study rely on the self-reports of twenty top women executives in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector. These women are selected from the Mentor Leadership Development Company which is a private company known to design development programs for women executives and match these women leaders with mentors from both multinational and local companies in Turkey. Therefore, the findings of this study rely on these women's perceptions and cover one sector, albeit key and potentially among the most dynamic working environments for women leaders. As such, the study is limited to these women’s reports of their experiences and based on what they perceive as the factors driving their career success. It is not possible to evaluate these findings within a cause and effect paradigm. These findings need to be evaluated in their particular socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. However, this study constitutes a basis from which we can derive hypotheses, but these hypotheses need to be further explored in an extended research program and with statistical methods to cover for possible bias, such as industry/working sectors and socio-economic backgrounds. Such an extended study would be able to provide details on the hypotheses developed in this research study; it would also be able to derive relative importance among the drivers that influence success in women’s career paths, explore further how barriers (internal and external) manifest themselves and relate to different types of industries and socio-economic backgrounds of women.

In addition to mentioned above the limitations of this study are (1) the sample has been elected from the list of women leaders whose companies have been investing on the development of women leadership in their organizations; (2) the sample has been chosen from one source where women’s backgrounds might be similar; (3) the participants might over report or underreport their
perceptions so that their responses were socially desirable; (4) the findings of the study might be misleading if the participants are not honest about their perceptions even though the women leaders are assured that this study is anonymous and their perceptions are not going to singled out; and (5) the sample of this study come from the urban and educated part of the population which does not represent the overall Turkish society.

To overcome the limitations, a longitudinal study which consists of both qualitative and quantitative research methods is proposed for further research. In addition, conducting research with women from small organizations and different cities may help overcome the limitation of having women from similar backgrounds and socio-economic class. Furthermore, working with a sample of participants from different sectors is recommended for further research to identify the differences related to the sectors.
Appendices

Appendix A

Invitation/consent letter was sent to the participants summarising research aims

Dear (women leader),

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study for my doctorate dissertation. I am conducting interviews with Turkish women leaders as part of a research study to increase our understanding of the role of gender role perceptions in the career success of business women leaders. As a woman leader, you are in an ideal position to give us valuable first-hand information from your own perspective.

The interview takes around 45 minutes and is very informal. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perceptions on being a woman leader in a Turkey. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

Your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to deeper understanding of women leadership in Turkey. If you are interested, I am happy to share the findings with you.

If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Kind regards,

Özlem Ada
Appendix B

Questions that led the interviews with the women leaders

1. How do you see the role of women in today’s society? How has this changed in the years?
   a. In the family
   b. In working life
2. How in your view women’s role are different from men’s. What has changed over time?
3. How about the professional life? What has changed vs. the past for the two genders?
4. What is the role of your profession in your life?
5. What is your story?
6. What were the challenges initially? How did you overcome?
7. Are these challenges valid for your male counterpart?
8. What do you consider success in professional life? How would this differ from a man’s perception in an equivalent position?
9. What would you say are key elements in the way you lead and manage? How would this differ from a man’s management style?
10. How is having a senior position at work is contributing to your life?
    a. How would the equivalent work for a man? What are the differences?
11. If you were to become a mentor to another woman who you wish to make her succeed and become a leader herself, what aspects would you coach her with?
12. What makes women leaders successful in your view?
13. What of the life work balance? How do you deal with that?
    a. How would this differ from a woman that works in a less senior position?
    b. How would this work from a man at senior leader position
14. There is lately and on-going push from multinational companies to encourage women to senior leaders position. How feasible is that in your view? Do you think women will take the opportunity and why/why not?
Appendix C

Questions of the Pilot Study

1. Please tell me about your role as a woman in the society? What are your responsibilities and priorities? As a wife and mother? As a woman leader?

2. How your role responsibilities and priorities as a woman, wife, mother and leader differ from men in the society?

3. How do you perceive Turkish women’s place in the workplace? What are your perceptions about gender equality at work and home?

4. What are your perceptions about women representation at leadership positions?

5. What are the reasons for choosing your current profession? When you have made your career choice? What are your perceptions about career choices of women and men? Are there differences among women and men career choices?

6. What are the reasons for your preference in favour of FMCG sector?

7. How do you define career success?

8. Let’s talk about your career story? Why you have chosen your current profession? Who influenced you? Why you have chosen FMCG sector?

9. How did you get your position? What challenges did you face? How it affected your domestic role?

9. How you climbed the career ladders to become a leader? As a woman, what are the challenges you face in the journey of career advancement to a leader position at work and at home?

10. How did you manage to overcome these challenges? What perceptions helped you to achieve career success?

11. As a woman leader, how do you define your leadership style? How does your leadership style differ from men? Please tell me your perceptions.

12. As a woman leader, how do you define your leadership characteristics? How does your traits differ from men leaders? Please tell me your perceptions.

13. In your perception, what are your suggestions to working women who would like to reach top positions?
Appendix D

Information about the participants

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