Senior Executive Women's Views on Female Solidarity:

The Role of Perceived Gender Salience

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Key Topics

- Female managerial careers
- Female solidarity
- Gendered social context
- Patriarchal norms
- Meritocracy

Abstract

The study explores senior female executives' views on supporting female subordinates in managerial careers (i.e., female solidarity). The chapter provides a distinctive approach to female managerial career development by contextualizing the study in Turkey, where several socio-economic trends with competing influences on women's place in society are observed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 Turkish senior executive women. Evidence of support for improving women's representation in the boardroom was limited. Positive views were anchored where gender was most salient: on patriarchal norms that are imposed on most Turkish women and the senior executive women's perceived need to fulfil a moral obligation. The great majority of participants referred to the meritocratic context of managerial careers, which renders gender irrelevant. The findings highlight the role of perceived gender salience of the context on which senior executive women anchor their views. The study also contributes to the current debates on the gendered nature of merit and has implications for policy and practice concerning women's career development through HRM, most notably on standards of merits

Introduction

Despite much progress, women are still underrepresented in the top managerial positions. While attention has been given to the study of glass ceiling, women's struggles in managerial careers do not end as they achieve higher ranks. Female senior executives are often expected to assume the role of change agents for improving women's representation at the top-level management (Mavin, 2006a, 2006b). Such solidarity with female career development (Kanter, 1977) is regarded as the 'women in management mantle' (Mavin, 2006a, 2006b). Those who do not conform to solidarity expectations are labelled as 'Queen Bees' who actively oppress junior women's career development (Rodriguez, 2013) or "as a 'bitch' who stings other women if her power is threatened" (Mavin, 2008, p. 75).

Female solidarity in organizations is often studied from a Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) perspective, according to which we hold multiple social identities on, for instance, personal, family and national levels. We then tend to favor others who belong to the same in-group as ourselves, over out-group members – to the extent of sometimes discriminating against the latter. The solidarity perspective expects senior women to display strong gender-based in-group identification and, therefore, actively support their career advancement by taking the role of change agents (Mavin, 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Mentoring female subordinates, challenging the organizational culture, policies and practices, and actively advocating for women's rights in career advancement are cited as more specific behaviors associated with female solidarity (Korabik & Abbondanza, 2004). It has been shown that female leaders are more likely than male leaders to adopt mentoring (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017) and coaching roles (Ye, Wang, Wendt, Wu, & Euwema, 2016), and to be benevolent toward female subordinates (Arvate, Galilea, & Todescat, 2018). Moreover,

several social initiatives (such as Sisters Mentoring Sisters Program or the Women in Business networks) exist where women are encouraged to network with and mentor each other with the aim of advancing female careers.

Despite stereotypical gender expectations of communality, women in management are not necessarily friends (Mavin, Grandy, & Williams, 2017). For instance, in the workplace, women report being subjected to more female- (rather than male-) instigated incivility (Gabriel, Butts, Yuan, Rosen, & Sliter, 2018). At the very extreme, women "who achieve career success by derogating other women while simultaneously emphasizing their own career commitment and masculine qualities" (Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers & de Groot, 2011, p. 520) are referred to as Queen Bees. This is manifested in gender stereotyping of other women's abilities and career commitment, masculine self-descriptions, and active oppression of women's career advancement (Derks et al., 2011).

Female executives' solidarity behaviors are likely to depend on several factors at multiple levels, such as personality and former experiences of receiving support at the individual level, culture and climate at the organizational level, and other contextual factors. Building on recent calls for better understanding of the gendered context which influences women's career advancement (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2016), this chapter aims to explore the relevance of context in senior executive women's views on female solidarity.

Why Does Context Matter?

Contemporary research on the negative intra-gender relations in organizations gives us reason to explore the role of larger contextual influences. More specifically, the overarching gendered context within which senior women operate may impose the acceptable norms of intra-gender relations. For instance, Veldman, Meussen, Van Laar

and Phalet (2017) show that within organizations positive diversity climate alleviates gender-work identity conflict that results from gender-dissimilarity with the team. On the one hand, although both men and women experience same-sex conflict at work, it is the women who are often penalized in career development (Sheppard & Aquino, 2017). On the other hand, women and minorities in general are penalized with poorer performance ratings if they engage in diversity-valuing behavior in the workplace (Hekman, Johnson, Foo, & Yang, 2017). Reduced cooperation with subordinates among female leaders has been observed when the legitimacy of the female leader's position is questioned, which instigates a cycle of illegitimacy for the female leader (Vial, Napier, & Brescoll, 2016). This suggests that senior executive women's negative intra-gender relations may be due to accepting/satisfying the expectations of the gendered organizational contexts and a response to the social identity threat experienced by women in career advancement (Derks et al., 2016). Moving beyond organizations, in this study we explore justifications based on national context in senior executive women's views on female solidarity.

Delving into the Role of Context: The Case of Turkey

Turkey is among the top 15 countries in the world with the most women sitting on boards (ILO, 2017). Nevertheless, Turkey struggles with gender equality in society and in the workplace. For instance, women still lag behind men in access to education and the labor market (30.4% vs 71.4% for women and men, respectively) (ILO, 2017). Persistently low gender egalitarianism in Turkish society is rooted in patriarchal norms (Gunduz-Hosgor & Smits, 2008) and reflected in strong traditional gender roles, which prescribe the role of the 'breadwinner' to the man and that of the 'homemaker' to the woman (Aycan, 2004a): on average, Turkish women spend nine times more on

household and family care work than men (ILO, 2017). Below, we provide an overview of key socio-economic trends with implications for women's place in Turkish society.

Achieving gender egalitarianism has been a priority of Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey. This ambition was reflected in numerous reforms to the legal system since the establishment of the Republic in 1923 and was likened to "state feminism" (Kabasakal, Aycan, Karakas, & Maden, 2011). Successive legislative changes instilled an emphasis on educating girls as the professionals of the future. This has contributed to favorable increase in participation rates of women in professional positions (Özbilgin & Healy, 2004). However, such positive change had the greatest impact on a small group of elite women, from middle-/upper-class family backgrounds (Zeytinoglu & Bonnabeauis, 2015).

Active government intervention for gender egalitarianism has considerably slowed down with the transition to a neoliberal economy in the 1980s (Zeytinoglu & Bonnabeauis, 2015). A rising tide of conservatism, reflecting religiosity and patriarchal norms, has been observed in Turkish society (Carkoglu & Kalaycioglu, 2009). Within the workplace, this is manifested in multiple ways all of which either exclude women from the labor market (e.g., negative attitudes toward working women) or limit their opportunities (e.g., beliefs about roles most suitable for women) (Zeytinoglu & Bonnabeauis, 2015).

Deregulation of markets since the 1980s has served to weaken the emphasis placed on gender equality (Ozbilgin & Healy, 2004) and heighten that on meritocracy. Meritocratic attitude attributes Turkish women's underrepresentation at senior managerial positions to domestic responsibilities and individual preferences (Tabak, 1997). Lack of policy intervention for achieving gender equality at work in Turkey served to institutionalize gendered organizational contexts and reinforced the male-

breadwinner family structure (Ilkkaracan, 2012).

While the Republican era represented more collectivistic values of "fulfilling a national duty" (Kabasakal et al., 2011, p. 318), more individualistic career motivation is observed since the 1980s (Kabasakal, Karakas, Maden, & Aycan, 2016). Turkish women were found to accept traditional gender roles in negotiating employment and to compensate for structural barriers (e.g., by living close to grandparents for handling childcare responsibilities) (Beşpınar, 2010). Overall, far from demonstrating solidarity, Turkish women utilize individual strategies for negotiating and justifying their labor market position, the majority of which serve to reinforce patriarchal norms (e.g., unmarried women wearing a wedding ring to show they are "under the protection of a man" (Bespinar, 2010, p., 530)). In line with the individualistic career strategies, middle/top level managerial women in Turkey attribute their success largely to individual factors (such as decisiveness and integrity) and perceive no systematic barriers to women's career advancement in Turkey (Aycan, 2004b).

The current government that has been in power since 2002 is known for its Islamist tendencies. Examples of legislation which had considerable implications for women's inclusion and advancement in working life include: generous severance pay for women who voluntarily quit their jobs in the first year of marriage, providing increasing financial support to mothers for each child they produce and paying women minimum wage for elderly care duties at home. A key outcome of these policies is the declining women's labor market participation (from 72% in 1955 to 32.5% in 2016) (Karaalp-Orhan, 2017) and reinforcement of the patriarchal norm that a woman's most suitable roles are that of a wife/mother (Zeytinoglu & Bonnabeauis, 2015). This clearly contradicts the historical Republican and neoliberal trends towards maintaining gender egalitarianism and meritocracy in the workforce, respectively.

In sum, Turkey represents a unique context where strong patriarchal norms govern all areas of life and socio-economic developments have competing impact on women's inclusion in the labor market and career advancement. Such strong gendered social context gives us reason to expect both positive and negative views on supporting female careers. On the one hand, reflecting more Republican views to women's place in society, as the oppressed of the two sexes in everyday life in Turkish society, women in senior executive positions may in fact identify with the other women in organizations and demonstrate positive views on female solidarity with the aim of increasing female representation in top managerial positions. This is already evidenced in the increasing numbers of non-governmental organizations for improving women's place in society (Kabasakal et al., 2016). Maintaining a critical mass in the boardroom has been shown to be of benefit to the Turkish senior executive women, e.g., for feeling more comfortable and being heard in the boardroom (Erkut, Kramer, & Konrad, 2008). On the other hand, as the highly educated, elite members of society, senior executive women are clearly different from the majority of women in Turkey and may not identify with the experiences of other women: they may deny any influence of gender in progression. In this study, we therefore explore which norms senior executive women refer to (if any) for justifying views on female solidarity.

Method

The study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with 29 Turkish female senior managers/executives in Istanbul, Turkey. All participants worked in private sector organizations. The positions they held included two CEOs, 12 general managers, and 15 vice presidents (see Table 1 for a summary). Interviews consisted of four main open-ended questions which covered participants' (1) career history (i.e., previous positions until the day of the interview and barriers faced in progression); (2) their

perception of the barriers women face in career development in Turkey; (3) support for female subordinates' career progression (i.e., whether they support junior women in their organizations; if so, their reasons and the kinds of support they engage in; and (4) views on what can/should be done to facilitate women's career development.

Insert Table 1 around here

We used two-step template analysis (King, 2004) for identifying themes (see Table 2). The first step sorted the transcripts based on participants' positive and negative views on supporting female career development. Building on the socio-political developments in Turkey with implications for women's career development, we actively scanned the transcripts for the Republican; neoliberal; and the Conservatist views that women may use to justify solidarity or lack thereof. Any emerging elements of the context that arose beyond these themes were added to the template. These were industry characteristics, paternalistic organizational culture and diversity programs. Categorizations and themes were compared and negotiated to ensure inter-rater reliability at each step.

To Support or Not to Support: Views on Female Solidarity

Results suggested a clear divide of positive and negative views on supporting female careers. Participants with positive views (supporters) often used the pronoun 'us', whereas those with negative views (non-supporters) used 'them' in discussing female careers. As observed in Table 2 supporters' ($n = 9$) scripts consisted positive views on individual, organizational and national levels of support for female career development. Non-supporters' (n = 20) negative views were largely personal and based on organizational rhetoric with no references to larger national context.

Exploring the Positive Views

Supporters believed that being 'the educated and successful women of this country' (P13) it was their moral obligation to assist younger generations in career development (e.g., 'we are only a handful of women here. There are many more women outside of this bubble' (P16)). Three pointed out that they support positive discrimination 'until the gender gap is closed' (P4). All of the supporters ($n = 9$) referred to the lack of gender equality in Turkey yet reported a positive future outlook for improving women's lives, in society and at work. P17's description below exemplifies this:

> There are many dimensions to women's disadvantaged status. Views that women should not be visible, should be the home-maker and the primary care-giver are still dominant in our country. … We experience discrimination in every aspect of our lives. Centuries of being second-class citizens through gender socialization is still affecting our lives. But I think the future is in the hands of the women (P17).

Supporters repeatedly praised working women for their skills and capabilities and believed that (i) women were more hardworking and dedicated in comparison to men ($n=7$); (ii) motherhood enhances women's managerial capabilities ($n=6$); and (iii) that women in Turkey face serious attitudinal and structural barriers in labor market entry and progression ($n=8$). For instance, P8 discusses women's place in the labor market as:

There are currently no female general managers in insurance. I strongly

believe this will change in the near future. When I was a student, 70% of

my cohort were women, who all ended up in good managerial positions.

We are more ambitious and have a better work ethic than men. … Men are

like short distance runners, whereas women are ready for the marathon

(P8).

Most supporters revealed experiencing attitudinal and/or organizational barriers

in career progression (e.g., explicit biases in recruitment and selection such as questions

about family planning intentions). These barriers are attributed to lack of trust in

women's capabilities, commitment and authority. They, therefore, argued that

managerial career progression for men and women in Turkey is 'not a game of equals.'

P17's experience below illustrates this:

When I first started here there was a gentleman who headed sales and

marketing. After about a month he said to me 'I like you a lot. I think you

can produce great work. However, I have to resign as I cannot work for a

female manager. It's nothing personal.' I wished him good luck (P17).

Curiously, none of the supporters revealed intentions/actions to personally

challenge the status quo inside organizations (e.g., 'I don't believe that personal

advocacy makes any difference. I don't believe personal initiatives will go far. Societies

need to change. Strength in numbers! Particularly in a country like ours, you really need

to put a good fight' (P23)). Their support was reflected in intentions to actively argue

for women's rights in Turkey and to support women in their personal development upon

retirement. Most (*n*=6) were members of voluntary organizations. Those who supported

positive discrimination at the workplace were also more strongly involved in these societal initiatives (e.g., 'I was personally involved in the recent changes to civil code in Turkey. I also attended the women's congress in Belgium. I never give up on this battle' (P4)). Five stated that they mentor female subordinates, particularly in lobbying tactics to increase their visibility and in managing inter-personal relations within the organization.

Exploring the Negative Views

Negative views on female solidarity were more prevalent among the sample; twenty participants revealed varying degrees of negative views on female solidarity in managerial careers. The overarching theme was meritocracy and how performance-based decision-making within organizations renders gender irrelevant. Nevertheless, within such meritocracy-based arguments, participants also discussed (i) women's need to put in more effort than men; (ii) their own personal sacrifices; and (iii) certain organizational (e.g., diversity programs and paternalistic cultures) and industry/organization characteristics (e.g., female-dominated industries). At the very extreme, a minority ($n=5$) of participants discussed meritocracy while demeaning women's attributes and life choices. These participants showed stronger negative views on female solidarity than those who only based their discussion on meritocracy.

Impact of meritocracy. Non-supporters discussed the irrelevance of gender for career progression (e.g., 'There is no distinction between men and women. You leave your women-ness and men-ness outside and show consistently good performance' (P10)). Although individual performance was argued as the key to promotion and progression, managerial discretion in performance ratings was also mentioned ($n=4$). Such subjective rating system within what is described 'as a highly objective system'

(P25) appears to have been internalized. For instance, P9 describes a 'highly transparent' performance management system, where performance criteria are agreed between the employee and the manager. She then introduces managerial discretion:

> The manager only has 15% discretion over your performance ratings. This may be where discrimination occurs, but I don't think any manager would use this for discriminating against women. I have never seen this happen (P9).

Organizational performance/profits were discussed (*n*=9) in justifying the importance of merit. It was argued that support, including some of those mandated by law (e.g., maternity leave) contradicts organizational goals and does not make 'business sense', as organizations 'want to hold onto people who demonstrate good performance, regardless of gender' (P14). Nine (out of 20 non-supporters) engaged in mentoring of both men and women. This was another way of underlining the role of employee performance on organizational profits ('this is both for the organization's and my own benefit, because they'll perform better' (P3)).

Personal sacrifices and meritocracy. A minority of non-supporters (*n*=6) discussed the sacrifices they made for their career in their justification of how meritocracy works in favor of women's progression. For instance, P12 discusses below her negative reaction toward policies favoring women (e.g., positive discrimination and/or gender quotas):

> It was a costly journey to the top and I paid all my dues. … Such policies supporting women cannot apply for progression to top level management. If you want to reach the highest level in organizations, then you need to be ready to pay the price (P12).

The sacrifices made were mostly around keeping family life distinct from work life (e.g., having to take very short maternity leave, missing children's special occasions) and prioritizing work over family (e.g., 'if the woman's priorities are work and career, then you can't even begin to imagine that she had kids at home' (P6)). Two participants revealed that they made a conscious decision not to have children in order to progress. For instance, P5 justifies lack of support for female solidarity by arguing that marriage and children are personal problems:

> Maybe if I were married, my husband may not let me travel for work or stay up late. This would be my problem, not my organization's problem. The root of the problem would be my personal life, not my organization's policies (P5).

Other workplace characteristics that make gender irrelevant. In addition to meritocracy, there was also a discussion of industry as a differentiator of whether gender is a problem. Particularly those in multinational corporations (MNCs) discussed diversity programs being in place. A minority of participants also discussed paternalistic cultures (in SMEs) as removing gender as an issue at the workplace.

Six participants in female-dominated industries (e.g., textile and recruitment) discussed how the industry itself was an advantage for women. Women were praised for stereotypical characteristics, especially their communal attributes (e.g., 'Women are much better at customer relations. This provides an advantage in our industry. Although top management is mostly men.' (P2)).

13

Alongside industry characteristics, some non-supporters (*n*=4, all in MNCs) also discussed how Turkey is doing much better compared to the developed world. Both references to industry and international comparisons were used to describe the gender problem as existing elsewhere. P13's comparison of her colleagues in the US and the UK with her position in Turkey exemplifies this:

> Because if you look at our managers in parts of the US or in London, you can't see too many women at top management. Men are dominant because these are men's jobs. Certain organizations have unwritten rules and these include degrading women. This is more prominent elsewhere in the US/the UK in comparison to Turkey (P13).

All but one of the 13 participants from MNCs mentioned that their organization had in place diversity and/or flexible working programs but the focal point of these was to maintain employee commitment at lower levels in the organization (e.g., 'To be perfectly honest with you it is difficult for these systems to be genuine. ... If the woman is ambitious, she won't care for these. She will put in the maximum effort, not flexible but hard effort' (P25)). There was also the belief (*n*=4) that such support would disadvantage the women because men do not need these initiatives to progress (e.g., 'it would make [women] look weak in the eyes of the organization' (P9)).

In justifying why gender is not an issue in their organizations, some non-supporters (*n=4*) referred to the paternalistic work culture. Participants argued that being like a family, particularly for SMEs, means that employees can reveal and discuss anything with the knowledge that management will listen and help. Non-supporters mentioned that no female subordinates reported any concerns due to being a woman and

career progression. This was therefore justification for lack of support for female solidarity.

Gender stereotyping of other women. Another reason for not supporting female career development was women's underrepresentation was attributed to their own attributes and/or choices. A minority of participants (*n=4*) discussed how some women do not have the confidence to break the patriarchal expectations and this was depicted as their main weakness. At a very broad level P3 summarizes her views on women's lack of progression in managerial careers as follows:

> If women stop seeing themselves as second class citizens they can actually go far. Turkish women enjoy being comfortable. They think 'it's OK if I don't earn as much or even work, because my husband will take care of me.'... There are barriers women set for themselves. … Moreover, men are more rational at work. Whereas women can be very emotional and take things personally. I see women's lack of progress as their own incompetence and lack of motivation – especially if they are being emotional about this (P3).

Gender stereotypical attributes were also discussed by five women as influencing women's progression. Jobs for men and women were mentioned both in relation to women's household responsibilities (e.g., childcare), marital status (e.g., husband may not give permission for travel) and women's abilities. For instance, P5 summarizes this below for the insurance industry:

> At the lowest levels we have 60-70% women. Men dominate top levels. Men choose more operational roles. Men are more ambitious and approach work with better discipline, especially under pressure. Some

men also stay up late, for instance, until 4am in the morning without worrying about permission from the wife! Women are better at routine work, which doesn't require much decision-making (P5).

Implications for Understanding Senior Executive Women's Views on Female Solidarity

This study explored how senior executive women contextualized their views on female solidarity. In our analyses, we actively searched for themes relevant for fulfilling a duty (the Republican view), meritocracy (neoliberal view) and patriarchy and/or religion (the Conservatist view). Neoliberal, meritocratic values were more prominent in justification of negative views on female solidarity. Republication values were referred to in support of female solidarity. Hence, we have reason to argue that perceived gender salience of organizational and national context is relevant for understanding senior executive female's views on female solidarity.

Gender becomes salient as men and women interact (Tatli, Ozturk, & Woo, 2017). Within the workplace, Kanter (1977) argues that as women reach top positions in organizations their visibility as the members of the minority group increases and hence gender becomes more salient. From a social identity theory perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), previous research argues that women may perceive identity threat due to such visibility, especially in sexist organizational cultures, which may negatively influence their support for the junior women in the organization (Derks et al., 2016; Sterk, Meeussen, & Van Laar, 2018). For most women at top managerial positions, issues of legitimacy of power and tokenism due to male-dominance of organizations are relevant (Vial et al., 2016). The findings show that when women anchor their views on the meritocratic context which expects men and women to be treated equally, they are

less likely to be positive about female solidarity. A neoliberal/meritocratic justification was the most common in the study.

The study's findings can be also discussed in line with the ongoing debate on the standards of merit for female career development. As also observed in this study, a discourse of meritocracy denies gender as relevant in managerial progression (Lewis & Simpson, 2010). Decisions based on merit (e.g., education, skills and work performance) are regarded as relatively objective and fair allocation of resources and distribution of rewards (Kumra, 2017). Meritocracy is therefore assumed to be the rational choice in decision-making and emphasizes the importance of a 'level playing field' and hard work for progression in managerial careers. This places the blame on women's underrepresentation in top managerial positions to personal choice and preference, and may undermine the reasons for the gender problem (Broadbridge & Simpson, 2011; Hakim, 2002). There is an element of subjectivity in determining the standards of merit (e.g., Simpson & Kumra, 2016; Thornton, 2007; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012).

Merit that is void of the social context replicates the attributes of the dominant group and therefore runs the danger of reinforcing existing inequalities. For instance, Banihani and Syed (2020) show how in Jordan women's opportunities for work engagement, a key determinant of work performance, are limited due to patriarchal expectations, e.g., not being able to work late hours. Most non-supporters in our study discussed meritocracy alongside women's need for impression management to convince the decision-makers against stereotypical attributes (e.g., rational decision-making) and gender role expectations (e.g., prioritizing family over work). Confirming previous research which shows that discourses of meritocracy as diluted by impression management in order to appear as ambitious and available as male counterparts (Kumra

& Vinnicombe, 2010) and mediated by personal choice (Simpson, Ross-Smith, & Lewis, 2010), we may question the level playing field associated with notions of meritocracy in Turkey's neoliberal context.

There were also some striking findings which we did not anticipate. Firstly, there was a clear divide between positive and negative views on female solidarity. The former is anchored in where gender is most visible in everyday life (i.e., on the patriarchal values of Turkish society), while the latter is anchored in where gender is regarded as most irrelevant (i.e., on meritocracy). The former was also more likely to mention gender-related obstacles they experienced in their own progression. These findings may be explained in future research by the upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which argues that senior executives' agency on different employee-related issues is largely influenced by the way they interpret the problem, based on their individual characteristics, such as values. For instance, we observed the patriarchal context to be evident in most scripts, both among supporters and non-supporters (e.g., in references to Turkish women's need to put in extra effort to breaking patriarchal expectations, such as needing permission from the husband for work-related travel). For non-supporters these were not recognized as barriers against women's career progression. Hence, the difference between positive and negative views is not in experience of the patriarchal context but on whether women find this relevant for organizational careers based on experience.

Secondly, although we observed differences in views, none of the participants in this study reported solidarity behaviors within their organizations as assumed by SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986): that women actively cooperate in increasing female in-group representation at the top management level (Kanter, 1977). We also did not record any evidence of active oppression of female subordinates'

18

careers, as would be described by the 'Queen Bee' syndrome (although this was not actively asked about in the interviews). There was, however, some reference to the perceived inefficiency of individual endeavors in challenging organizational cultures. Future research may benefit from extending the theoretical lens to take into account the perceived behavioral control/self-efficacy women have for influencing women's career development. This may help control for possible reservations due to tokenism.

Lastly, our findings show no evidence of strong patriarchal values held by senior women in justification of views on female solidarity. In our theorizing we associated such strong gender-based values with the rising Conservatist/Islamist tendencies in Turkish society and discussed the implications for women's labor market participation, let alone progression. We can speculate here that the sample may be somewhat skewed, in that those women who hold strong patriarchal values may choose to (or be oppressed to) either stay at home or take up lower levels jobs that do not interfere with family life.

Practical implications

Initiatives, such as diversity/flexible-working programs, may work for the benefit of women at lower skilled work, in terms of providing continuous employment. They were, however, perceived to be incompatible with managerial careers by the majority of participants in this study. Watts (2009) calls this the 'diversity paradox'; one that has limited application for women aiming for senior managerial positions yet serves to the wellbeing of those at the lower levels. Especially in a high gender salient context such as Turkey, welfare reforms may be more important in tackling the issue of women's employment and career progression, alongside organizational interventions for (un)conscious bias.

Chapter Take-Aways

- Perceived gender salience informs senior female executives' views on female solidarity in managerial careers. Patriarchal norms that prescribe clear gendered distribution of roles are omnipresent in Turkey.

- Meritocratic values are associated with negative views on female solidarity, while Republican values are relevant for support.

- The evidence for female solidarity and women being natural allies in management is limited.

- At the organizational level, gendered context of larger society may be considered in assigning standards of merit.

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Tables

Table 1: Sample Description

	Position [a]	Sector	Ownership [b]	Size [c]	Age	Marital status [d]	Children
P1	VP	Finance	N	L	58	M	2
P2	GM	Tourism	MN	L	41	D	0
P3	GM	Tourism	MN	L	50	M	1
P4	GM	Public relations	N	S/M	50	D	1
P5	VP	Finance	N	L	37	S	0
P6	VP	ICT	MN	L	52	M	2
P7	GM	Textile	N	S/M	50	M	1
P8	VP	Finance	N	L	40	M	1
P9	VP	Education	N	SME	53	D	1
P10	VP	Finance	N	L	47	M	1
P11	VP	Entertainment	N	SME	47	D	1
P12	GM	HR	MN	L	33	S	0
P13	VP	Finance	MN	L	50	M	2
P14	GM	Finance	MN	L	40	M	1
P15	CEO	PR	N	SME	47	D	1
P16	GM	Health	FO	SME	34	S	0
P17	GM	Entertainment	N	SME	44	S	1
P18	VP	Finance	N	L	50	M	1
P19	VP	Manufacturing	MN	L	46	M	0
P20	GM	Finance	MN	L	46	M	2
P21	CEO	Advertising	N	SME	49	M	2
P22	VP	Finance	MN	L	56	M	1
P23	VP	Fast Moving Goods	MN	L	41	S	0
P24	VP	Advertising	N	L	38	M	1
P25	GM	Finance	MN	L	46	M	2
P26	GM	Advertising	MN	L	57	S	0
P27	VP	ICT	N	L	43	S	1
P28	VP	Fast Moving Goods	N	L	41	M	1
P29	GM	ICT	MN	L	39	M	2

Note. [a] VP=vice president, GM=general manager, CEO=chief executive officer; [b] MN=multinational, N=national, FO=family owned; [c] M=married, S=single, D=divorced; [d] S=Small, M=medium, L=large

Table 2: Template analysis

Step 1: Positive views for supporting female career development		
	Illustrative positive quotes	**Illustrative negative quotes**
Individual level	I definitely have a discriminatory attitude. I'm a feminist. I believe in positive discrimination, until we close the gender gap.	There are people I actively mentor, but this includes both men and women. I enjoy doing this, too. As much as I can, I am trying to transfer my experience but it's really up to the individual. This is not about gender, it's about personal development.
Organisational level	Communication within organisations is very important. These days there are plenty of media to communicate the importance of overcoming the barriers women face in careers. There are HR magazines, websites, social media etc. The message needs to focus on raising awareness on the barriers women face. I think communication is very important.	This is where senior management's values become very important. If the organisation values equal opportunities not only on gender but also on other characteristics and is open to diversity, then as much as possible performance should be based on measurable criteria to provide opportunities for everyone.
National/policy level	A lot needs to be done at the national level! I support non-governmental organisations. Women need to be educated, then trained. I try to support these initiatives as much as I can. In our society, we need to invest in women and that is partly through educating the men.	N/A
Step 2: Justification of views on female solidarity		

Republican view	Neoliberal view	Patriarchal view
Sense of duty	Merit-based decision making	Complying with the requirements of religion
Own privileged status	Organisational performance	Jobs for men and women
Praising women's abilities and commitment	Attitudinal barriers in women's progression*	Gender stereotyping of other women
Structural barriers in women's progression	Personal sacrifices*	It's the women's weakness
Attitudinal barriers in women's progression	Female-dominated industry is advantageous[+]	
	Turkey vs Western world[+]	
	Paternalistic work culture[+]	
	Diversity programmes in place[+]	

Note. Themes included under Step 2 are those driven from the socio-economic trends in Turkey; * Consolidated theme as a result of inter-rater reliability agreement; [+] other emergent themes