Breaking the Lock through Gender Responsive Workplace Practices in e-Commerce at GittiGidiyor

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Abstract

Gender responsive workplace practices which promote economic development progress and

lead to a more sustainable future for the work life are on the agenda globally. Notwithstanding that the importance and promotion of gender responsive workplace practices has been recognized and accelerated in recent years; these practices have not reached the desired level worldwide yet. Thus, it is important to share and increase the number of best practices that businesses should perform on gender equality. Considering the importance of this subject, in the literature, gender responsive workplace practices have not been adequately addressed, especially in developing countries. To fill this gap in the field, in this study, we aim to reveal gender responsive workplace practices by opening a new door on this issue while grounding the subject on the New Institutional Theory and Feminist Institutionalist Paradigm at the macro level, and on the Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) and its sub-branch Diversity and Equality Management Systems (DEMS) at the micro level. Hence, we explain this issue by analyzing it in-depth via a case study in leading gender responsive workplace practices in the context of a developing country, Turkey. The results indicate that gender responsive workplace practices are put into practice by following acquiesce strategy and with SHRM and DEMS.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Gender Responsive Workplace Practices, New Institutional Theory, Feminist Institutionalist Paradigm, SHRM, DEMS, GittiGidiyor

1. Introduction

Gender, which is a concept that is constructed on a social level, varies culturally, and is consciously formed through social, economic and political activities, has been a matter of debate for many years. Gender explains the "social roles" assigned to male and female genders, claiming that all gender perceptions beyond biological sex are determined by society (Demirbilek, 2007). These social roles have created a situation of "inequality" between men and women in the economic, political, cultural and social areas of life due to gender discrimination since the existence of humanity (Ridgeway, 2011). To reduce and even eliminate this inequality, the concepts of "gender equality" and "gender equity" have been at the center of the actions of individuals and organizations at the micro level, societies and international organizations at the macro level for a long time. While gender equality identifies non-discrimination based on the gender of individuals in the use of opportunities, allocation of resources and their use, and access to services, gender equity explains the situation of fairness between men and women in the distribution of responsibilities and earnings.

It is seen that the explanations on gender equality and gender equity vary according to the point of view of the person or institution using the concept (European Commission, 1998, 2009; UNDP, 2014; Council of Europe, 2016, 2019; UNICEF, 2017). In other words, since the institutions that make these definitions have different hierarchies of strategic intent, different features are emphasized in their definitions like the emphasis on equal conditions, equal treatment and equal opportunity; equality in resource allocation; equal value; freedom; difference and diversity; needs, priorities and interests, non-discrimination; gender identity. In this respect, it is seen that gender equality is multidimensional and defined from various perspectives (Wesley et al., 2024; Kanaris and Mujtaba; 2024; Mujtaba and Lawrence, 2024; Acker, 1992). Gender equality is a concept related not to biological differences but to the

unequal position of women and men in society, including paid and unpaid work, income, property, education, health, decision-making, norms, habits, roles attributed to women and men and what is expected of them including social and cultural differences in all areas of life, unfortunately, these differences are disproportionately against women in many areas (Mujtaba, 2023; Ecevit, 2021; Sarwar et al., 2021). Reflections of gender inequality in family, social environment, work life, etc. appear in every part of life. From this point of view, societies, international institutions and actors (such as UN, ILO, UNDP, etc.) set a wide variety of rules, policies, norms and standards to ensure gender equality, including the social, economic and political contexts of the social system, and direct organizations and companies to achieve gender equality with their actions in this direction. Therefore, it is necessary and important to evaluate the issue of gender equality in the context of new institutional theory from a macro perspective (Galea et al., 2015). In this context, how organizations and companies prevail, become important and isomorphic by excluding others (March & Olsen, 1984), and ultimately gain organizational legitimacy (Meyer & Scott, 1983) by adopting the gender equality-based actions of industry sector, society and even internationally formed institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) can be explained by the basic premise of new institutionalism. In addition, deployment of gender mainstreaming strategies (which is the extension of understanding and action towards gender equality to all mainstream policy areas including planning, composing and implementation processes, that is gender responsive monitoring, assessment and evaluation at all stages of policy cycles) of societies, international institutions and actors constitute organizations' and companies' gender responsive actions and policies with the aim of gaining cognitive, moral and/or utilitarian legitimacy, which emerge with strategic human resource management practices. Thus, in today's dynamic work life, ensuring gender equality is accepted as a key factor for the competitiveness, growth and survival of any company. On the other hand, considering that companies affect policies, economies, legal, social and cultural norms and practices, including gender-based power relations, as a part of the social fabric wherever they operate, gender responsive actions and practices of companies are also a prerequisite for overcoming the challenge of reducing poverty, establishing good governance and promoting sustainable development.

Gender equality in the workplace can be achieved when people can access and have equal rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of gender. Indeed, the aim of gender equality in the workplace should be to achieve broadly equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men, while achieving broadly equal outcomes for women and men, not the same outcomes for all. Gender inequality, arose from laws and policies that lack gender equality in the workplace, further hinders economic growth by limiting women's ability to access assets and services, credit or job opportunities. Therefore, to promote gender equality in the workplace, conditions should be set for overall task efficiency to be as high as possible, as well as promoting a fair work environment. Despite the studies carried out in the fields of diversity and participation in work life, issues such as women's participation in the workforce and work life, the inequality of wages and opportunities between the sexes continue to be on the agenda from past to present. Despite the gains achieved till now, the disadvantaged position of women in work life with the pandemic caused gender inequality to deepen (UN, 2020; PwC Women in Work Index, 2020). In this respect, the gender responsive practices of

companies and its mainstreaming will both ensure the legitimacy of them on the one hand and bring this legitimacy to positive organizational outputs (sustainability, competitiveness, employee/customer loyalty, corporate reputation/image, etc.) while also serving the sustainable development of society. In this respect, deployment and dissemination of gender responsive workplace practices is of critical importance. In this study, we aim to examine and analyze gender responsive workplace practices, especially in the context of human resources practices. In line with the purpose of this study, we put forward several research questions as follows:

1. *How to become gender responsive in the workplace?*

2. *What is gender responsive workplace practice?*

3. *How to institutionalize gender responsive workplace practices and which strategy to follow?*

From this point of view, we explain the issue by analyzing it in-depth via conducting a case study that is leading gender responsive workplace practice in the context of Turkey.

2. Theoretical Background

Gender Equity, Gender Equality

Although gender is based on the acceptance of a biological basis of femininity and masculinity, there is a pattern that is built on it and that changes according to the social context. Therefore, the differentiation of men and women may appear because of their biological characteristics as well as the society/socio-cultural system in which they live, and people born as male or female with a biological distinction learn their gender-based roles during their upbringing (Gözübüyük Tamer, 2018). These gender-learned roles lead to differences, inequalities, and inequities between women and men in many societies in terms of responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, and decision-making opportunities. On the other hand, this inequality and inequity emerge as a major obstacle to the improvement and development of societies. Because gender equality indicates that women and men have equal opportunities to use their rights and to contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equity, on the other hand, defines a process for achieving gender equality by recognizing that women and men have different needs and interests, and accordingly the need to redistribute power and resources, and by specifying an equivalence in life outcomes for women and men. Thus, in all contexts where gender equality and equity take place, women and men can use their rights with equal opportunities, access the resources they need, accomplish their mission in the production process with their actions and serve social development by utilizing the opportunities for control and decision-making over resources. As a matter of fact, by establishing gender equality and equity in economic, social and political fields, it is seen that these advanced societies are in the status of developed countries.

Gender Equality Mainstreaming Strategy

Gender equality is the main emphasis of the 1st, 2nd and 7th articles of the "Universal

Declaration of Human Rights" proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly's resolution 217A(III) dated 10 December 1948 and this principle of equality is a fundamental principle in terms of human rights, as well as explaining equality in terms of having human dignity. In addition, gender equality is at the center of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) activities and the core of its development approach constitutes UNDP's 5th sustainable development goal. Furthermore, gender equality is also the basis of the "Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value" standard, which is one of the eight basic international labor standards of the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the "Decent Work" approach included in many conventions, especially the ILO Constitution. In this context, these international institutions and organizations (UN, ILO, EC etc.), which are the main factors in ensuring gender equality, institutionalize the rules, norms, policies, standards and values they have established in this context with their actions. Thus, they ensure that gender equality manifests itself in every segment of social life—family, social environment, work life, etc. In other words, these international organizations and institutions ensure the dissemination of rules, norms, policies, standards and values regarding gender equality into the social environment and work life with the mainstreaming strategy.

The mainstreaming strategy of gender equality is a process that encompasses the integration of a gender perspective and the assessment of the impact on women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programs in all areas and at all levels. In short, international organizations and institutions, with the gender equality mainstreaming strategy, make the interests and experiences of both women and men a part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and social fields, aiming to achieve and ensuring equal benefits for women and men while eliminate inequality.

New Institutional Theory, Feminist Institutionalist Paradigm, SHRM, and DEMS through A Lens of Gender Responsive Workplace Practices

One of the most important areas of the manifestation and deployment of gender equality mainstreaming strategy is work life. In this context, the gender equality mainstreaming strategy of international institutions and organizations is achieved through SHRM practices of organizations and companies. In other words, the practices of organizations and companies regarding gender equality, which are among the most important actors of work life, can only be achieved when the mainstreaming strategy is engaged in the business strategies of the organization or company and turned into action with SHRM practices. At this point, companies implement gender equality practices with Diversity and Equality Management Systems, which is the sub-dimension of SHRM. In this respect, we ground the issue of gender equality in the context of the New Institutional Theory and the Feminist Institutionalist Paradigm from a macro perspective, which we consider necessary and important in terms of presenting a new and inclusive perspective, at the micro level, grounding it on the SHRM of companies and its sub-dimension, DEMS.

The New Institutional Theory focuses on how organizations and companies become similar and gain legitimacy by adopting industry, society, and even international institutions best

practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Thus, organizations and companies become institutionalized, that is, certain behaviors and ways of thinking gain a rule-like status (Palmer et. al, 2008). One of the most important themes of the new institutional theory is that organizations and companies increase their chances of survival by consciously or unconsciously trying to gain legitimacy (Deephouse, 1996). Legitimacy is social acceptability. In other words, legitimacy is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995: 574). Therefore, the legitimacy of an organization or company's actions is the degree to which it conforms to the norms, beliefs, values, rules, and laws in its social area. In the new institutional theory, legitimacy is not a resource strategically used by the organization or company to gain or develop reputation, as the resource dependency theory assumes, but rather the result of a spontaneous harmony between organizations/companies and their social environment (Suchman, 1995). In this sense, organizational legitimacy is the degree to which existing institutions make the existence of an organization or company explainable or understandable (Meyer & Scott, 1983). Therefore, legitimacy is a characteristic of institutions that are formed by the interaction of many organizations/companies in the social sphere and penetrate through familiarity (cognitive), morality (moral), and sanctions (prescriptive) (Scott, 1995). In other words, the form of an organization/company becomes institutionalized as organizational/company behavior, or management practice becomes legitimate. As organizations or companies adopt these institutionalized forms or practices, they gain legitimacy and access many sources due to their legitimacy. Another theme of the new institutional theory is that organizations or companies in the same organizational field become isomorphic due to imitative, moral and coercive mechanisms (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The organizational field is a group of organizations/companies that are affected by and affect common institutions, share a common problem and try to solve this problem by conflict or compromise (Scott, 1995; Hoffman, 1999). All organizations or companies participating in this process also form the organizational field related to that problem. The found solutions constitute the rules, norms and assumptions; in short, institutions that are thought to solve the problem. In other words, some practices that solve the problem become legitimate and institutionalized. Organizations/companies with different practices at the beginning also adopt these practices consciously or unconsciously and eventually become isomorphic over time in a certain organizational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). The isomorphism of organizations or companies is the result of their efforts to acquire cognitive, moral, and utilitarian legitimacy through the institutions they adopt. While imitative isomorphism arises from the reactions of organizations/companies to uncertainty (organizations or companies imitate culturally/socially institutionalized and widely adopted patterns in a situation of uncertainty), moral isomorphism arises from organizations or companies adopting practices in their environment that they think/learn to be morally right. Coercive isomorphism, on the other hand, arises from the necessity of organizations/companies to comply with the expectations of other segments to which they are dependent (organizations/companies comply with the expectations of other organizations or institutions on which they are dependent in terms of resources so that their interests are not

harmed) (Özen, 2013).

Considering these explanations, it is seen that practices related to gender equality in work life emerge when companies adopt international institutions and gain legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Therefore, the legitimacy of the practices of companies regarding gender equality is the degree of conformity of the values such as commitment, equality, partnership, respect, tolerance, flexibility and self-confidence developed by international institutions and actors (such as UN, ILO, EC etc.) in coordination with workers, employers, governments and non-governmental organizations regarding gender equality (Taranu et al., 2014; Meriläinen et al., 2009). Gender equality focuses on the basic standards such as "Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value" in the Equal Pay Convention (No.100) of the ILO (2008), aiming at eliminating wage discrimination by ensuring that women and men receive the same pay not only for the same or similar work, but also for work of equal value; with norms like "Decent Work", which refers to productive work that brings equal wages, respects human dignity, provides free and safe work conditions, provides social protection for workers and their families, and where all women and men gain equal opportunities and are treated equally. These basic expectations are explained in the 5th sustainable development goal of UN (2015), UNIFEM (2018) and with the law regarding equality, etc., which is the emphasis of articles 1, 2 and 7 of the UN (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this respect, gender mainstreaming strategies of international institutions and actors are aligned, deployed and adopted with the business strategies of companies. As Oliver (1991) explained in the new institutional theory, companies can follow five basic strategies in the face of gender mainstreaming strategies of international institutions and actors-in the face of institutional pressures: Acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation.

The acquiescence strategy of companies regarding gender equality is that they obey the institutional pressures on this issue, either by habit (unconsciously), by imitation or by complying (necessity). In other words, acquiesce strategy is the alignment of the mainstreaming strategies of the values, standards, norms, rules and laws developed by international institutions and actors in coordination with their stakeholders on gender equality, with the business strategies of companies unconsciously, necessarily or by imitation. According to the feminist institutionalist paradigm (Mackay et al., 2010), formal rules such as documented policies, guidelines, programs or initiatives to establish gender equality (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Krook & Mackay, 2011) and mainstreaming strategies, form the institutional pressures (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013), and companies put them into action with DEMS by also imitating them or compulsorily aligning them with business strategies and SHRM; that is, they can adopt an acquiescence strategy regarding gender equality. The acquiescence strategy adopted by companies regarding gender equality is conducted through the integration of business strategies with HR practices, namely SHRM. In this context, with SHRM, norms, standards, rules and values regarding gender equality are transferred to the company's actions through DEMS. Because SHRM provides a strong foundation for DEMS, which supports employee diversity in parallel with business strategies, and ensures employee development by providing equal rights and opportunities, it ultimately leads to improved company performance (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Ali & Konrad, 2017; Patnaik, & Shukla,

2021). The main objectives of DEMS which views the employees as the company's strategic assets (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Armstrong et al., 2010), and focuses on integrating equality and diversity values with the company's business strategies, are to ensure that all employees are treated equally, to ensure that the benefits obtained from the final decision are evaluated fairly by using the creativity brought by their diversity and to eliminate inequalities (Cox & Blake, 1991; Gilbert et al., 1999; Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad et al., 2016). Thus, companies implement DEMS to be gender responsive while aiming to gain utilitarian legitimacy, compliance with laws, regulations and standards (Suchman, 1995; French, 2001; Yang & Konrad, 2011), cognitive and/or moral legitimacy (Dancaster & Baird, 2016; Gyapong et al., 2016). DEMS ensures that the values, norms, standards and rules adopted by the company regarding gender equality are put into practice and the desired company performance is achieved (Cox, 2001; Olsen & Martins, 2012). In other words, DEMS transforms acquiesce strategy into action and establishes the company's gender-responsive discourse and action. In this context, the acquisition of cognitive, utilitarian and moral legitimacy with DEMS, where the company carries out its gender-responsive practices, will enable the company to gain sustainability, competitive advantage, employee/customer loyalty, and positive and strong corporate reputation and image; on the other hand, it will be able to serve the sustainable development of the society to which it is affiliated by creating a peaceful and productive society (Bartz et al., 1990; Gagnon & Cornelius, 2002) with equal opportunities for its employees and effective diversity management (Joshi et al., 2011).

Apart from this, companies can negotiate with international institutions and actors against gender mainstreaming strategies, balance institutional pressures on them, and partially adopt a gender mainstreaming strategy, that is, they implement the compromise strategy (Oliver, 1991). In this context, it can be stated that companies following a compromise strategy will not be fully gender responsive as in companies following an acquiescence strategy that SHRM and DEMS which establish gender equality, will exist partially, not fully.

On the other hand, companies can adopt (dissociate) relevant values, norms, rules, policies and standards on paper in the face of institutional pressures on gender equality and thus avoid external auditing, that is, they implement avoidance strategies. In other words, as Meyer and Rowan (1977) stated in the new institutional theory, companies, in a social environment dominated by the patriarchal order to which they belong and in which gender inequality has been legitimized for decades, in the face of the gender equality strategy that has been mainstreamed by international institutions and actors, can pretend to adopt new gender responsive practices, such as symbolically employing a certain number of female workers, without changing company practices. As stated in the new institutional theory, companies keep these new gender responsive practices, such as equality in recruitment and placement, equal pay for equal work, apart from the current practice and present them on paper as if they were adopted. On the one hand, they gain legitimacy in work life, and on the other hand, they continue their current practices with the old order in which women worked at a disadvantage.

Moreover, by following defiance strategy against the gender mainstreaming strategies of international institutions and actors (Oliver, 1991), companies may dismiss institutional pressures on gender responsive practices, criticize the mainstreaming strategy, and even argue

that these are not rational.

Finally, companies, with their manipulation strategy, can try to control attitudes and behaviors of leaders or representatives of international institutions exerting institutional pressure on gender equality by making them a part of the company, such as including more females on their boards of directors (cooptation) or can change their behavior or attitudes by creating public opinion and even can exert pressure on these segments.

The gender responsive practices of companies can only be put into practice by following acquiesce strategy with SHRM and DEMS. In addition, the avoidance strategies adopted by companies on gender equality eliminates the unity of discourse and action, blurring the evaluation of gender mainstreaming strategy. In addition, research on this subject has revealed that institutional pressures on gender equality in different social contexts do not result in major sanctions on companies, and therefore, gender-responsive workplace practices should be accelerated around the world, especially in developing countries. The 2020 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Equality research and report, covering 153 countries, confirms that women are still largely behind in terms of equal opportunities, outcomes, participation in decision-making and representation in work life compared to men. Especially in developing countries, this gap and inequality is getting deeper. Namely, the representation rate of women in the work life in Turkey is below the world average (ILO, 2020). Again, in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Equality Report (2020), Turkey ranks 132nd among 153 countries in terms of women's representation in senior management roles. In addition, according to the Women in Work Index 2021 research conducted by PwC every year, gender wage inequality is quite high in Turkey compared to developed countries. In Turkey, as of 2018, women are paid 15.6% less than men (ILO, 2020). With this result, it can be stated that many companies in the context of gender equality in Turkey follow avoidance strategy at best. For this reason, it is seen that there is a great necessity of gender responsive company practices, where companies follow acquiescence strategy and act in alignment with SHRM and DEMS policies to establish gender equality in work life in Turkey.

3. Methodology

Methodological Approach

In this study, the qualitative case study methodology was chosen and GittiGidiyor Company, the Turkish division of the "eBay" company was considered as a case, which is a pioneer in gender responsive workplace practices in Turkey. As such, gender responsive practices of GittiGidiyor Company were revealed, by analyzing it considering in-depth interviews and by obtaining the information and documents from them. The reason for choosing the qualitative case study method in this study is that although it is not generalizable, it is frequently used in organizational analysis studies to provide an in-depth view of reality (Yin, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2006) and it also provides an opportunity to test the theories in new contexts (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003). Since the issue of gender equality is grounded in the context of the new institutional theory, SHRM and DEMS in this study provides an opportunity to analyze and test them with the case study method. In addition, understanding the gender responsive workplace practices of eBay Gittigidiyor are important in terms of benchmarking with other

companies in the context of Turkey and thus establishing a basis and an example for the institutionalization of best practices and filling the gap in this field.

Research Design and Context

In this qualitative case study, the research design is flexible, multiple realities are considered, data are collected by the researchers, and participants' views are included as data (Creswell, 2013). Since this study includes descriptions, explanations and judgments related to the case study, it can be described as an evaluative case study. In this case study, gender responsive practices within the company were discussed and the fact that it was a driving force for its dissemination is at the center of the study.

The company GittiGidiyor, which is under the umbrella of eBay, one of the global leaders of e-commerce in the world, is an example of this kind. The reason why the company is subject to the study is because it has gender equality-responsive in-house practices and has rewards for these practices. In this context, the company in question has won this award 4 times in the last 5 years by being awarded the Diversity Special Award twice in a row for its success in establishing a trust area by considering the diversity of its employees. However, in the special awards of the Great Place to Work Institute (GPTW) Institute, it was awarded the prize "Equal Opportunity and Supporting Women Special Award" in 2018, and 2nd rank of "Best Workplaces for Women Special Award" in 2019. In 2020, it received the Grand Prize for Leadership in Human Value from the Human Management Association of Turkey-PERYÖN. It has been included in the list of "Turkey's Best Employers" announced by the GPTW, one of the most prestigious human resources organizations in the world, where employee survey participation is also evaluated for 7 years. However, in 2021, it was selected as Turkey's 2nd Best Employer in the 250-500 employee category.   The case study, which was selected as an example of a gender responsive enterprise in the context of gender equality, is a suitable example to discuss the dissemination of best practices in the context of the private sector.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and documents from GittiGidiyor's website, company news pages and company news in the media and the activity reports on the company's website, which were analyzed through this study's research questions. The interview protocol is included in the Appendix. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the second author of this study including one HR manager, CPCO (Chief People & Culture Officer) and the CEO of GittiGidiyor at the company's meeting room. Before the beginning of interviews, the researcher gave information about the study and granted informed consent form from the managers. They were also informed that they could decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time they wanted. Interviews were first conducted with the HR manager and CPCO which took approximately 2 hours to complete and then were conducted with CEO which took approximately an hour, were recorded using an MP3 recorder. Interviews continued until the questions in the Appendix were answered. The researcher also received the documents supporting their answers to the interview questions from the managers at the end of the interview.

Data Analysis

The data analysis had several stages. First, the data were organized and prepared for analysis. After the initial reading of the transcripts, a first cycle coding method was applied. The first cycle coding method was in vivo coding, which "prioritizes and honors the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2012, p. 74). In vivo coding was applied to both the interview transcripts and the other documents. Next, the second cycle coding method of axial coding was applied. This separated the codes generated during the first cycle coding into conceptual categories, reducing the overall number of codes. Major themes emerged, and these themes were interpreted through the lens of Webber and Scott's (2008) educational entrepreneurship framework.

The data collection process ended when all lesson study cycles were completed. Meanwhile, audio recordings of individual interviews and whole group discussions were transcribed verbatim by the first author and archived as suggested by Creswell (2013). Data was analyzed by going through the steps in grounded theory coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2013). The researcher read the data several times to familiarize herself with the text. Following the repeated readings, relevant text specific to the research concern was composed by discarding the irrelevant parts in the data set and it was pre-coded (Saldana, 2011). Upon reading the relevant text several times, repeating ideas and similar patterns in the data were detected. All repeating ideas and patterns were categorized under related themes, and themes were organized into theoretical constructs, shedding light on the research questions. Randomly selected parts of the data were also coded by another researcher and the emerging codes and themes were compared. The themes and codes agreed upon by two researchers were included as the main themes and codes used in the results section of the study. The transferability of the study was ensured in two ways.

First, as suggested by Creswell (2013), thick and detailed descriptions were made regarding the participants and the setting of the study so that future researchers could decide whether they could transfer the study to their own settings. Second, participants were purposefully chosen so that they could not only provide the researcher with sufficient information but also represent the typical case that was normal for this study (Patton, 2015).

To ensure that the study was "credible, trustworthy, authentic, balanced about the phenomenon under study, and fair to the people studied" (Patton, 2015, p. 117), several measures were taken. First, as suggested by Merriam (2009), different types of samples and methods of data collection were used to increase the validity of the study. Next, researchers were triangulated. Randomly selected parts of the data were coded by another researcher who was pursuing her PhD in ELT, and her codes and categories were compared with those of the researchers to increase the credibility of the interpretation of the data. In addition, the findings of the study were shared with the participating teachers, and they were asked to inform the researcher if there was anything they wanted to exclude or include. Finally, the study was carried out as the first author's PhD dissertation, so the research design as well as the data collection and analysis process were constantly scrutinized by the members of the academic committee. This enabled the researcher to refine the study considering the comments made, and suggestions given.

4. Gender-Responsiveness at Gittigidiyor

Gittigidiyor's Establishment and Its Organization

As Turkey's leading e-commerce site, GittiGidiyor was established 21 years ago with the aim of providing a safe and enjoyable shopping environment for internet users to develop e-commerce. With its young and dynamic team following the innovations, it is focused on maximizing the user experience. In this context, it has brought the users together with the Zero Risk System, which allows secure shopping with the differences and opportunities provided by e-commerce. As Turkey's first online marketplace with digital transformation in its focus, it entered under the roof of eBay, one of the global leaders of e-commerce in the world in 2011. It has become one of Turkey's most preferred shopping sites with more than 117 thousand sellers and 33 million registered users. It offers millions of products to users in a total of 50 categories from electronics to decoration, from cosmetics to mother and baby products, from fashion to supermarket. It hosts stores of hundreds of major domestic and foreign brands as well as subject-matter experts (SMEs) and individual sellers. As an eBay company, it brings Turkish brands and products together with 185 million active users in 190 countries. It creates new job opportunities for everyone by providing equal opportunities in trade. It brings together those who want to sell what they produce at home, those who dream of opening the products in their own store to the online world, with millions of users on the same platform as big brands.

5. Results

Becoming Gender Responsive in the Workplace

GittiGidiyor has a total of 300 employees where 37% are female and 53% are married. Considering the distribution in terms of generations, 10% of the employees were born as Generation X in 1965-1980, 82% of them were born as Generation Y in 1980-1999, and 8% of them were born after 2000. At the same time, there are 1% foreign employees within the company. 26 female employees are involved in decision-making processes in the manager position. In the last 5 years, 38 men and 14 women have moved to the manager position and 2 female employees have been promoted to the director position. This means that starting from recruitment, employers create equal opportunities for employees, make fair decisions on matters such as career progress, salary processes, and include everyone in the decision-making processes at the same rate. From this point of view, it can be deduced that organizational justice is considered in the positions of women, although the gender distribution is at two extremes based on the ratio of employees in terms of social inequality of the study. To achieve all this, it is critically important and at the forefront that the management staff should be conscious of this issue and that they have been trained to demonstrate correct management practices to maintain status equality. The position-based relationship of employees is a strategic relationship. Taking strategic decisions by the top management in a company imposes a great responsibility on top management.

Gender equality, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation in the business world require equal access of all employees to the opportunities and resources offered by the company.

Ensuring gender equality in the workplace and creating an inclusive work environment is one of the keys that opens the door to both human rights and success. It is an important element to evaluate candidates independently of their gender when conducting interviews for recruitment. Therefore, it is not necessary to ask questions that constitute gender discrimination in recruitment interviews. Managers involved in the recruitment process in GittiGidiyor are provided with "Competency Based Effective Interview Techniques Training". The reason for this is that managers should show sensitivity to issues such as transparency, equality and diversity that they pay attention to in recruitment by adhering to GittiGidiyor principles, philosophies, and values. As a workplace responsive to gender equality, they take care not to ask questions that will cause discrimination in interviews. However, it is important to move away from a discriminatory attitude about salary and to act with an equal pay approach to equal work. Apart from this, another critical issue is the work-life balance. According to the information obtained from the interviews conducted in this context, it is seen that projects that contribute to the empowerment of women in both business and social life and trainings to increase awareness in this regard are organized in GittiGidiyor. It has been determined that women care about being in the business world. In this context, under the leadership of the Women's Initiative Network (WIN) group, which was established on a voluntary basis in 2015 and consists of GittiGidiyor employees, the contribution of women to their empowerment in their career journey with the working environment they provide supports this issue. On the other hand, GittiGidiyor is one of the signatories of the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), created in partnership with the United Nations Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Unit (UN Women) and with the United Nations Global Compact.

The Women's Empowerment Principles consist of 7 main headings (UNIFEM, 2018):

- Providing high-level corporate leadership for gender equality,

- To treat all women and men fairly in business life, to respect human rights and the principle of non-discrimination; to support these principles,

- Ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all female and male employees,

- Supporting women's education, course and professional development opportunities,

- Entrepreneurial development, implementation of supply chain and marketing methods for empowerment of women,

- Promoting equality through social initiatives and advocacy activities,

- Evaluation of achievements related to gender equality and public reporting.

Within the framework of all these principles, they continue to develop themselves and their corporate spheres of influence. The mental health and wellbeing of all male and female employees must always be at the forefront of each organizational policy (Zeeshan et al., 2024; Kendrick et al., 2023). The company GittiGidiyor as a signatory of WEPs has undertaken to comply with these principles to create a healthy and inclusive workplace for all.

Another finding obtained from the research is the applications made within the framework of recruitment policies. Besides, the practices are made within the framework of recruitment policies. It has been observed that GittiGidiyor, while preparing the job post, pays attention to details such as the language used in the post is not exclusive and does not hinder the women candidates from the application. In addition, a positive discriminatory attitude can be displayed in areas where equality has not yet been achieved. One of the main examples is to set a female candidate quota in recruitment or to give priority to women. On the other hand, they avoid asking questions that do not fall within the scope of the job, just as they do not consider having children in their future. It pays attention not to make contracts that may prevent the exercise of the rights existing in or after the recruitment. After recruitment, everyone is approached equally, and issues such as salary and career advancement are evaluated according to performance regardless of gender. In this context, GittiGidiyor uses tools to measure how inclusive the job description is when preparing job posts. At the same time, it is stated that the perspective on GittiGidiyor studies and equality is also assimilated by employees. In this direction, ideas and suggestions can be easily conveyed to the Employee Experience Department owing to the members of the Employee Assembly consisting of the elected department representatives by voting every year. Thus, they can find solutions and create innovations together. Since they observe egalitarian representation in every field, the decisions made are also the product of this egalitarian approach. They evaluate different perspectives and ideas together and try to prevent discrimination.

At the same time, if GittiGidiyor was evaluated in terms of its management staff, it supports all its colleagues who are candidates for management within the company to develop themselves in this way. At this point, they benefit from training organized globally by eBay and projected locally. However, there is a mentoring program implemented by GittiGidiyor in cooperation with Nielsen. To support the personal and career development of the employees of both companies, they created the "Bridge Program" consisting of GittiGidiyor and Nielsen win teams. Within the program, experienced expert managers and employees from GittiGidiyor and Nielsen are cross-matched and share work-related experience. In this way, mentors understand the perspective of the young generation better and could shed light on the career path of the employees with their own experiences. For mentees, it is another important element of employee development that managers discover different ways of doing business from their perspective and have the chance to improve their leadership skills. Specifically for women, they organize female employees to mentor female students. Thus, it is possible to say that they provide the creation of value for other women. Within the scope of Employee Experience policies, in the recruitment practice implemented under the leadership of the WIN Group, 1 out of 3 candidates in the short lists of managers must be female. In this way, they put gender and equal opportunities into practice during the candidate interviews.

For young candidates, they work by making agreements with many universities on long-term internship opportunities. While making choices from the applicant pool of students, they enable the executive staff to meet with at least one female student candidate. In addition, with eBay's Rise Up program, women employees implement the Rise Up program under the umbrella of Women at eBay empower them in their career journeys and to bring themselves

to the forefront. However, this program, led by WIN employee groups, enable female employees all over the world to interact with each other. Thus, they can exchange experiences in their career journeys. In addition, they receive training that will contribute to expressing themselves better and their work with the help of experts. This program is particularly supportive for female employees preparing for managerial positions and those that are managers.

Gender Responsive Workplace Practices

When we look at the levels of the organization in which they implement policies that are responsive to equality between women and men**,** because of the interviews, it is seen that GittiGidiyor spread its perspective based on gender equality to all areas of the organization. Therefore, there is no situation such as department or position separation. Studies are being carried out to ensure that everyone working in GittiGidiyor acts with this perspective regardless of their level. They spread this understanding to all levels, especially through the training they provide to their managers, and thus they express that they are working for everyone to act with this awareness. Another practice led by GittiGidiyor WIN's employees within the scope of its inclusion policy is GittiGidiyor Parental Manifesto. With this manifesto, which they have created by developing a sustainable model to support diversity and equality in the workplace, they guarantee that the existing wages, positions, and rights of the employees will be protected during the 20-week motherhood and 12-week paternity and adoption leave, and they also provide the parental employees with the following benefits (GittiGidiyor):

- All employees can benefit from the contracted psychological counseling support of the organization free of charge.

- Employees who are or are preparing to be parents can benefit from a variety of training programs ranging from parent education to stress management with their spouses free of charge.

- Employees can get help and counseling from Guidance Mother and Guidance Father networks formed by their colleagues who have gone through similar processes in previous periods.

- Employees can receive information about ongoing business processes from their teams once a month and/or hold one-on-one meetings with their managers if they request during the maternity/paternity leave period.

Another important factor for gender responsive companies is the creation of a code of conduct regulation and the specification of its rules and policies. According to the information obtained from the interview regarding the evaluation of the harmony between the rules of conduct and the purpose of the company at GittiGidiyor, it is seen that they have achieved every success they have achieved as a team and the source of their success is the happiness of the team. Thus, it is determined that they aimed for everyone to share an equal and fair working environment together without any discrimination and that they shaped their practices accordingly for everyone working to adopt this perspective. They emphasized that

companies should share the code of conduct with all their employees. At the same time, in GittiGidiyor, there are policies and expectations related to all human resources procedures as well as sanctions to be imposed on those who behave by bullying, harassment and retaliation. Like any leading firm that wants to survive and have a sustainable competitive advantage, they focus on respecting employees' legal rights (Robert and Mujtaba, 2024). "GittiGidiyor Domestic Violence Policy" is also included in the personnel regulation. Employees who are victims of violence are given important rights and they let them know that these employees are with them with their company policies and feel that their jobs are safe. Company policy stipulates that this element should be considered in the performance evaluations of employees who are subjected to violence and assign responsibility to their managers in this sense. It is observed that domestic violence is a highly sensitive issue within the company. They announced their Domestic Violence Policy in 2019. In this direction, they called on other institutions and organizations to participate in this struggle by forming their own domestic violence policies. With their Business against Domestic Violence (BADV) project, they continued to stand up to both their employees and violence. With the policy they have published, if they have an employee who is a victim of domestic violence, they operate the support mechanisms that person may need. They do not discriminate in recruitment, in dismissal, in wage policy, in benefits under any circumstances. They acknowledge that employees may experience problems such as delayed work and poor performance. At the same time, they evaluate all options related to the solution of performance and safety problems by considering the situation of the employee in all aspects. At least once a year, they organize training for all employees within the company to raise awareness about this issue of violence and to remind their employees of company policies.

However, they attach importance to providing a peaceful and happy working environment with a "human-oriented" perspective at GittiGidiyor. They argue that the basis of the sustainable success of their platforms is always happy employees who aim for the best. In addition to supporting employees in terms of work and enabling them to develop in their careers, they also enable them to create value emotionally and socially. They are aware that people working in an institution that enables and supports them to develop themselves will have a much higher level of trust and commitment in their institutions and they care about creating this feeling (Kanari and Mujtaba, 2024). Equality, diversity, inclusion, and trust culture are among the values that form the basis of corporate identity. At GittiGidiyor, they act with the awareness that diversity creates wealth within the organization. It is seen that this understanding made GittiGidiyor one of the most desired companies to work with and supported employer brand strategies.

When the greatest achievement and/or experience that make GittiGidiyor proud of their gender diversity in their workplace is assessed, it is determined that they received many awards such as Grand Prize for Leadership in Human Value by the Human Management Association of Turkey, PERYÖN in 2020 with the sensitivity they showed in this regard. In addition, it is observed that they have been included in the "Turkey's Best Employers" list announced by the Great Place to Work Institute (GPTW), one of the most prestigious human resources organizations in the world, where employee survey participation is also evaluated

for 7 years. It is seen that they were selected as Turkey's Top 2nd Employers in the category of 250-500 employees in 2021. In addition, with their success in establishing a trust area by considering the diversity of employees, they were awarded the Diversity Special Award twice in a row and received this award 4 times in the last 5 years. Apart from that, in the special awards of the GPTW Institute, in 2018, they received the "Equal Opportunity and Supporting Women Special Award" and in 2019, they received the 2nd "Best Workplaces for Women Special Award".

As a result of the interviews, it is seen that GittiGidiyor has a corporate culture that supports gender equality. It has been observed that they do not allow discrimination against religion, language, race, culture, worldview, gender identity, and sexual orientation in the workplace. Their corporate policies also clearly reveal these perspectives and act in accordance with their corporate culture. Everyone working in GittiGidiyor can be included in the groups of employees they create specifically for diversity perspective and interests. There are 10 different employee groups in the company. These include 3 groups operating in the field of diversity and inclusiveness, as well as groups specific to their fields of interest such as photographs, theaters, books, games, nature/sustainability, and animals. These are also specified as Women's Initiative Network, Hand in Hand and United in Pride. WIN aims to attract women to contribute to their empowerment in business and social life and to raise awareness of gender equality. Hand in Hand aims to draw attention to the difficulties faced by individuals with disabilities in their working lives. United in Pride, on the other hand, conducts studies aimed at raising awareness about the barriers faced by LGBTI individuals in business life.

However, they monitor female/male employment rates at all levels, including the management staff. They aim to reach the level of equal representation. There is an obligation to interview at least 1 female candidate in recruitment. If the number of women in the relevant department is high, the same approach applies to male candidates. At the same time, they are among the founding members of the Women in Tech Association (WTech) established in 2019 to support women's employment in the technology sector. With WTech, which plays an active role in the Board of Directors, they organize events and make university visits, reaching tens of thousands of young people. They aim to raise awareness on issues such as gender equality and women's employment in technology.

Another issue is the potential challenges stemming from inequality between women and men. Gender stereotypes created by society may cause inequality in all areas of life in the roles assigned to women and men. These norms also determine our social life, business life, status and responsibilities by guiding us on what we could and could not do. Therefore, they significantly affect our access to resources and opportunities.   This is a situation that limits both women and men. While the perspectives of women restricting the field of mobility are dominant, stereotypes are imposed on men about how they are expected to act according to their gender. This causes the cycle of inequality to continue in this way. Thus, gender responsive workplace practices need to be promoted to overcome gender inequality between women and men in work life.

6. Discussion

In this study, we aimed to explain the examination of gender responsive workplace practices with a case study. With the purpose of this study, we considered "gittigidiyor.com", the Turkish division of the "eBay" company as a case, which is a pioneer in gender responsive company practices. Our findings revealed that GittiGidiyor Company's gender responsive workplace practices is achieved through the engagement of the gender mainstreaming strategy in their business strategies and turning into action with their SHRM practices due to being a signatory of WEPs. Regarding this, it is determined that GittiGidiyor Company implements gender equality practices with DEMS. In addition, it is seen that GittiGidiyor obeys the WEPs by action because all eBay's worldwide organizations are subject to WEPs. In other words, from the perspectives of new institutional theory and feminist institutionalist paradigm, GittiGidiyor implements the acquiesce strategy regarding gender equality through alignment of the gender equality mainstreaming strategies of the values, standards, norms and principles developed by UN, UNIFEM and ILO in coordination with their stakeholders on gender equality, with their business strategies unconsciously and adopting them with SHRM and putting them into practice with DEMS. That is to say, GittiGidiyor implements the acquiescence strategy regarding gender equality through the integration of their business strategies with SHRM and in turn, their values, norms, code of conduct and standards are transferred to their actions through DEMS. DEMS at GittiGidiyor integrates equality and diversity values with the company's business strategies and ensures that benefits obtained from the final decision are evaluated fairly by using the creativity brought by their diversity and thus eliminates inequalities. Hence, the results revealed that GittiGidiyor gained utilitarian legitimacy through the extensive implementation of DEMS by complying with the laws, regulations, standards and principles of the UN, UNIFEM and ILO. Moreover, results showed that with the awards received regarding gender equality, GittiGidiyor also gained cognitive and moral legitimacy through DEMS. In this context, GittiGidiyor's acquisition of cognitive, utilitarian and moral legitimacy with DEMS, where it carries out its gender responsive practices, enables this company to gain competitive advantage, employee and customer loyalty, and positive and strong corporate reputation and image; on the other hand, it serves the sustainable development of the society to which it is affiliated by creating a peaceful and productive work environment with equal opportunities for its employees and effective diversity management. Therefore, it is seen that GittiGidiyor institutionalized its gender responsive workplace practices by following acquiesce strategy in Turkey. Thus, gender responsive workplace practices of GittiGidiyor, which is one of the best practices in Turkey on gender equality, are important in terms of benchmarking with other companies in the context of Turkey and thus establishing a basis and an example case for the institutionalization of these practices and filling the gap in this field.

The results of the case study, both as an extension of organizational justice, and the fact that status equality has been achieved, positively affect the level of work life satisfaction of the employees and emphasize work efficiency in a positive way in parallel with literature. As a premise of corporate social responsibility, it also includes the responsibility of the institution on employees, especially in the governance systems where the management and

communication relationship are at the forefront. At this point, hearing the voices of employees can help institutions transform to both encourage participation and keep up with current changes. Today, the ability to copy technology, especially in environments where the speed is very high, encourages the preservation of originality through employees. Achieving organizational justice in this regard also helps in retaining original talents for strategic human resources management. We focus on employee involvement, equal opportunity employment, equal opportunity diversity management, workplace gender equality, "gender equality" corporate social responsibility, and employer branding strategy of SHRM as presenting important challenges for current researchers and future scholars.

Restricting the freedom of people to choose their paths in life due to their gender prevents them from revealing their true and full potential. Many people face difficulties arising from gender inequality in different periods of their lives. In business life, this can be a lower wage compared to the opposite sex where you do the same job. Due to some judgments, it may affect the decision in your choice of profession. Women are the ones who experience the most negativity in this regard. It can be given as an example that they are dismissed from work during the motherhood process and have less representation rate at the leadership level. Due to arguments related to gender roles, it can be restricted in both the raw public and private spheres, economically, politically, and socially. This inequality situation emerges as a factor that breaks people's motivation and affects their moods both in society and in business life. In GittiGidiyor, the aim is to prevent the difficulties arising from these patterns from an institutional perspective based on equality, diversity and inclusion within the company and to support social awareness with a social responsibility perspective.

In general, when women are not adequately supported in the institutions they work in, they may experience difficulties in moving away from business life or reaching their career goals. It will be an important step for institutions to support more in this regard, to reject approaches that distract women from business life and to implement practices that will help them to become an employer who is responsive to gender equality. In addition, it is important to establish a safe environment where employees can explain this without hesitation in response to any discrimination and harassment that may occur in the workplace. It is the employer's responsibility to prevent all kinds of violence, harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Measures and sanction mechanisms must be in place against such situations. For this, first, a climate should be created in which people can comfortably express their ideas or problems. In addition, to improve this issue by listening to the suggestions of existing employees, it is a matter for the employer to continue to renew and learn at any time. It is possible for businesses that implement SHRM systems in accordance with the vision of the business to gain a sustainable competitive advantage. In addition, businesses need to adopt the best HR practices on gender equality. The number of companies that are signatories of the "Women's Empowerment Principles" determined within the scope of activities carried out to ensure gender equality should be increased, and the work carried out by governments and companies in this direction should be supported.

7. Conclusion

In this case, we focused on how to be gender sensitive in the workplace and what gender sensitive workplace practices are. Therefore, we evaluated the subject from the perspective of the practices of human resources departments. The results of a similar study suggest that human resources leaders should initiate bridges between companies' boards of directors and HR, targeting wider equality access. Moreover, human resources interventions have been found to be important to improve gender representation on company boards. Another result of this research is the promotion of cultural change with diversity focusing on mentoring and talent management.   Our case study supports this situation of aiming for gender equality as well as equity, while providing a robust mentoring system.   Future research may compare the sensitivity to gender equality of businesses that do and do not implement strategic human resources management. One limitation of the study is that a global company that pioneered gender-responsive workplace practices in the context of Turkey. Majority of companies in the context of gender equality in Turkey follow avoidance strategy at best. For this reason, there is a great necessity of gender responsive company practices, which companies follow acquiescence strategy and act in alignment with SHRM and DEMS practices and recommendations to establish gender equality at all levels of work.

Institutional pressures on gender equality in different social contexts do not result in major sanctions on companies, and therefore, gender-sensitive workplace practices should be accelerated around the world, especially in developing countries. Since equitable e-commerce best practices are at the infancy stage in some regions of Turkey and data is limited in this area, the implementation of gender responsive practices would add more comparative data for future research as well as other companies in the region or industry. As the data becomes available, future researchers and consultants should highlight the uniqueness and effectiveness of GittiGidiyor's approach and how it can be practiced by other organizations as they aim to increase their employees' satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

Overall, gender responsive practices that are successfully implemented by businesses should be made publicly available so others can collectively and quickly overcome existing inequities. Employers and human resources departments must work on joint action plans. These activities should aim to keep social awareness on gender equality at the highest level in all national and international organizations throughout society.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

Questions revealing the gender responsive of companies:

1. How can a firm create a gender responsive workplace?

2. What are the recruitment strategies to increase gender equality and/or gender diversity? (What are the policies applied during and after the recruitment process?)

3. At which levels of your company do you apply policies responsive to the equality of women and men? (Management level, human resources level, levels of all departments, etc.)

4. Does your company have a code of conduct?

Qualitative Questions revealing potential gender (in)equality in the workplace:

1. What is your company's vision of the workplace responsive to gender equality? Why does your company need a code of conduct?

2. What kind of harmony do you foresee between the code of conduct and the purpose of your company?

3. What is the best achievement and/or experience that makes you proud of your gender diversity in your workplace?

4. What do you think are the (potential) challenges stemming from inequality between women and men?

Quantitative Questions:

1. How many employees do you have? What are their profiles? Please indicate their gender, age, nationality, and marital status.

2. Do you have any female employees in the decision-making processes? If so, how many?

3. How many men and how many women have been promoted to a senior position in the company's last five years?

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