



**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
ADANA ALPARSLAN TÜRKES SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
UNIVERSITY**

**GRADUATE SCHOOL
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT**

**THE MEDIATING ROLES OF SELF-ESTEEM AND WORKPLACE
LONELINESS ON THE EFFECT OF STIGMA CONSCIOUSNESS ON
CAREER SATISFACTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON WOMEN
BANKERS**

GÜLRÜBA KOÇAK

M.A.



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ADANA, 2024

DECLARATION OF CONFORMITY

In this thesis study, which was prepared following the thesis writing rules of Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University Institute of Graduate School, I declare that I provide all the information, documents, evaluations and results in accordance with scientific ethics and moral codes without resorting to any means or assistance that would be contrary to scientific ethics and traditions. I also declare that I refer to all of the articles I used in this study with appropriate references and accept all moral and legal consequences if a situation is found contrary to my statement regarding my work.

16/04/2024

Gülrüba KOÇAK

ÖZET

DAMGALANMA BİLİNCİNİN KARIYER TATMİNİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİNDE BENLİK SAYGISI VE İŞ YERİ YALNIZLIĞININ ARACILIK ROLLERİ: KADIN BANKACILAR ÜZERİNE AMPİRİK BİR ÇALIŞMA

Gülrüba KOÇAK

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Bu çalışmanın amacı damgalanma bilinci, iş yeri yalnızlığı, kariyer tatmini ile benlik saygısı arasındaki doğrudan ve dolaylı ilişkileri ortaya koymaktır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda konu ile ilgili yapılmış olan önceki çalışmalar incelenerek araştırma modeli oluşturulmuş ve araştırma hipotezleri geliştirilmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında geliştirilen bu hipotezlerin sınanması amacıyla anket veri toplama yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, Türkiye’deki özel ve kamu bankalarında görev yapan 363 kadın çalışana anket uygulanmıştır.

Araştırma bulguları, çalışmanın amacına uygun şekilde keşfedici faktör analizi, korelasyon analizi ve hiyerarşik regresyon analizi kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Yapılan analizler sonucu elde edilen bulgular araştırma hipotezlerini büyük ölçüde desteklemektedir. Buna göre, damgalanma bilincinin iş yeri yalnızlığı, kariyer tatmini ve benlik saygısı gibi çalışan tutumlarını yordadığı korelasyon analizi sonucu ortaya konulmuştur. Aynı şekilde, iş yeri yalnızlığı ve benlik saygısının da kariyer tatmininin anlamlı birer yordayıcısı olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca yapılan hiyerarşik regresyon analizi sonucunda, damgalanma bilinci ile kariyer tatmini arasındaki ilişkide iş yeri yalnızlığı ve benlik saygısının kısmi aracı rolü olduğuna dair bulgular elde edilmiştir. Son olarak, elde edilen bu sonuçlar konu ile ilgili literatürde yer alan çalışmalar bağlamında tartışılarak, gerek örgütler gerekse gelecekte yapılacak çalışmalar için bir takım öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Damgalanma Bilinci, Benlik Saygısı, İş Yeri Yalnızlığı, Kariyer Tatmini, Kadın Çalışan

ABSTRACT

THE MEDIATING ROLES OF SELF-ESTEEM AND WORKPLACE LONELINESS ON THE EFFECT OF STIGMA CONSCIOUSNESS ON CAREER SATISFACTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON WOMEN BANKERS

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The aim of this study is to reveal the direct and indirect relationships between stigma consciousness, workplace loneliness, career satisfaction and self-esteem. In line with this purpose, a research model has been established examining previous studies on the subject and research hypotheses have been developed. In order to test these hypotheses developed in the study, questionnaire data collection method was used. A questionnaire has been applied to 363 women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey in this direction.

The research findings were obtained by using exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis and hierarchical regression analysis in line with the purpose of the study. Findings obtained as a result of the analyses support research hypotheses to a large extent. Accordingly, the result of correlation analysis has revealed that stigma consciousness predicted employee attitudes such as workplace loneliness, career satisfaction and self-esteem. Similarly, workplace loneliness and self-esteem were found to be significant predictors of career satisfaction. In addition, as a result of the hierarchical regression analysis, findings were obtained indicating that workplace loneliness and self-esteem has a partial intermediary role in the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction. Finally, these results were discussed in the context of the studies in the relevant literature and several suggestions were made for both organizations and future studies.

Keywords: Stigma Consciousness, Self-Esteem, Workplace Loneliness, Career Satisfaction, Women Employee

This thesis is dedicated to all the women who are working hard to make the world a better place.



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“Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise.”

Victor Hugo

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SC	: Stigma Consciousness
WL	: Workplace Loneliness
CS	: Career Satisfaction
SE	: Self-Esteem
EFA	: Exploratory Factor Analysis
KMO	: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test
SPSS	: Statistical Package for The Social Sciences
TÜİK	: Turkish Statistical Institute
TDK	: Turkish Language Association
Df	: Degrees of Freedom

LIST OF SYMBOLS

R : Correlation Coefficient

r^2 : Variance Explained

χ^2 : Chi-Square

β :Beta

p : Significance



1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing participation of women in business has become an important issue due to their changing positions in society. This has led to intensive studies on the phenomenon of women in business throughout the process of social change from the past to the present. Currently, there is a growing trend of women participating in the labour force and assuming more active roles in business (Esin and Öztürk, 2005; Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005). However, many women still face challenges such as the glass ceiling syndrome, stigmatization, and gender-based discrimination, which can lead to their exclusion from the business world. Gender-based stigmatization is a form of discrimination that working women often face, which can increase the challenges they encounter in business. This type of stigmatization is the underlying cause of many social and economic issues experienced by women in the workplace (Mandıracıoğlu, 1998). Stigmatization can lead to discrimination (Oran and Şenuzun, 2008). Women employees face various challenges in the workplace, including inequalities in basic education and vocational training, job opportunities and promotions, remuneration, social rights, mobbing, and sexual harassment (Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005). There are universal reasons that determine the status of women in working life and cause them to be in poor working conditions. The status of women in working life is determined by traditional and gender roles, patriarchal value judgements and discrimination (Ecevit, 1998).

Individuals shape their judgements according to the society they live in. Although the extent to which the individual is affected by social judgements varies according to the experiences of the individual, the judgements accepted by most of the society affect individuals in different ways both in their inner world and in their professional lives. The results of the society on these individuals are situations such as exclusion, discrimination, labelling and stigmatization (Manstead, 2018). The segment most affected by the stereotypes of society is women. Stigmatization, which is one of the most common problems faced by women, especially in business life, is a multidimensional concept, so it is not possible to make a single definition (Peterson, 2005). Stigmatization, which means the negative labelling and exclusion of a person by the society, is defined by Goffman (1963) as a feature that deeply undermines reputation, while Crocker et al. (1998) define it as the loss of value of social identity. Stigmatization of employees in business life can lead to negative effects such as exclusion, mobbing, increased

workload, marginalisation, preventing people from promotion (Yaman and Güngör, 2013), organisational exclusion, leaving the job (Koçel, 2015), erosion of self-confidence, alienation from work, hopelessness and increased loneliness in the workplace (Stuart, 2004; Yaman and Güngör, 2013), decrease in self-esteem (Scheyett, 2005), decrease in career satisfaction (Dalkıranoglu and Çetinel, 2008).

Loneliness at work, which is one of the negative consequences of stigmatization, is defined as the negative difference between desired and existing relationships at work, and the lack of power to eliminate this difference (Wright et al., 2006). Unlike in daily life, individuals may have difficulties in establishing social relationships and receiving social support in the work environment. This situation may cause the individual to experience feelings of loneliness and exclusion at work (Doğan et al., 2009). Workplace loneliness, defined as the lack of social connections and a sense of isolation in the work environment, can only be experienced in the workplace. Women employees may experience weakened social connections or exclusion due to gender-based stigmatization, which can result in feelings of loneliness and lack of social support (Deniz, 2019). Women employees may encounter obstacles to progressing to leadership positions in the workplace or face scepticism about their abilities. This experience of stigmatization may cause women employees to feel isolated in the workplace (Sharma, 2021).

Self-esteem, which is one of the negative consequences of stigmatization, is the state of accepting and being satisfied with oneself in an existential sense as a result of self-evaluation (Eriş and İkiz, 2013). In other words, a person's self-worth is related to how much they value themselves (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1999). Self-esteem refers to an individual's liking and respect for the characteristics they use to define themselves. It involves positive or negative thoughts and evaluations of oneself. Women employees may experience a decrease in self-esteem when they encounter gender-based stigmatization in the workplace. Such experiences can undermine their self-confidence and negatively affect their self-esteem (Corrigan et al., 2009).

Career satisfaction, which is another variable affected by stigma consciousness, refers to the individual's perceptions of career success and future progress expectations (Nauta et al., 2009). It is defined as satisfaction with the career level that an individual aims to reach. Women employees may experience a decrease in career satisfaction when they face stigmatization and

loneliness at work. Stigmatization can negatively impact the career development and progression of women employees, which in turn can affect their career satisfaction (Kreiner et al., 2022).

Accordingly, the experiences of stigmatization in the workplace and its effects on women constitute the main subject of this study. In this context, the aim of this thesis is to understand the effects of stigmatization on women employees' experiences at work and to reveal the consequences of these effects on workplace loneliness, self-esteem and career satisfaction. This study is considered as an important research that will help to understand the difficulties faced by women employees in business life and the psychological effects of these difficulties. It will also serve as a foundation for comprehending the work experiences of women employees and assessing the psychological consequences of these experiences. The findings can significantly contribute to the formulation of policies that promote gender equality, support women employees, and combat workplace stigmatization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Women In Business Life

Women have actively participated in economic life in different statuses according to the conditions of societies and time. The emergence of women as independent wage earners in the labour market commenced during the latter half of the 18th century. The industrial revolution played a significant role in transforming women's employment. During the industrial revolution, women began working outside their homes in groups and for specific periods of time at machinery (Ekin, 1984). Thanks to technological advancements during this era, women began receiving remuneration for their labour. This led to their participation in economic activities beyond their customary domestic duties after the industrial revolution (Çetin, 2011).

The pervasive patriarchal social culture across societies throughout history has imposed distinct roles, responsibilities, and rights on individuals based on their gender (Kavacıklı, 1999; Tüzen, 2002). The majority of women brought up in accordance with societal values and roles commonly experience a conflict of roles within the family as a result of their professional life. As they believe that family responsibilities are of utmost importance, they opt for part-time employment or resign from their jobs, presuming that their work is the root cause of all family issues (Lippe and Dijk, 2002). Women trying to juggle the responsibilities of family life and work are under a heavy workload and this situation leads to role conflict. Unfair practices exist in the designation of women to management positions, attributed to gender and labour discrimination (Mitra, 2003). Horizontal gender discrimination occurs when male and women employees with similar status and roles in the workplace are assigned different duties and responsibilities. This inequality arises from the fact that the same job does not guarantee equal levels of responsibility, progress, and opportunity. Women employees with lower status and fewer responsibilities face reduced opportunities for career advancement and promotion (Besler and Oruç, 2010).

Another noteworthy aspect regarding meeting women's economic, social, and psychological expectations is the role they occupy in the workplace. While there has been a delay in women's entry into paid employment, it is expected that they will eventually assume senior positions in the workplace as education and training opportunities become more readily available over time.

Despite occasional setbacks during the post-industrialisation era, women's employment has steadily increased. Nevertheless, women's aspirations for success in the workplace and education have not propelled them into senior management positions at an equivalent rate. The fundamental reason behind this situation is the failure to meet the economic, social, and psychological expectations of women at risk of social exclusion in the workplace. Women who do not have their anticipated working life expectations met suffer from diminished self-assurance and individual reluctance to pursue senior roles (Nergiz and Yemen, 2011).

Education is a crucial factor in shaping the working lives and labour force participation of women. The greater the level of education attained, the more skilled the women workforce, and the more substantial the financial rewards they receive (Cazes and Verick, 2013). According to Çelik (2020), the presence of women in working life in our country differs according to the level of education. Women with a high level of education tend to work and do high-level jobs that are considered appropriate by society.

According to data provided by Turkish Statistical Institute, the overall population of Turkey in 2022 amounts to 85 million 279 thousand 553 people consisting of male population was 42 million 704 thousand 112 people and women population was 42 million 575 thousand 441 people. While 50.1% of the total population were males, 49.9% of the total population were women (TÜİK, 2022).

According to the results of the household labor force survey, the labor force participation rate for those aged 15 and over was 51.4% in 2021 in Turkey. This rate was 32.8% for women and 70.3% for men.

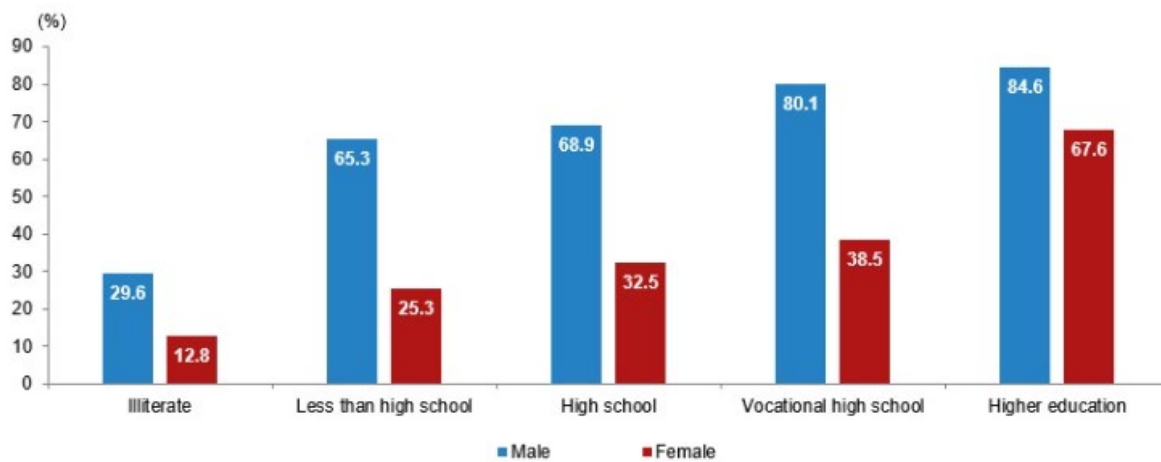
Table 2.1. Selected Indicators By Sex, 2021

	(%)		
	Total	Male	Female
The proportion of illiterate population (25+ age)	3.5	1.0	6.1
The proportion of higher education graduates (25+ age)	23.0	25.1	20.9
Employment rate (15+ age)	45.2	62.8	28.0
Labour force participation rate (15+ age)	51.4	70.3	32.8
Unemployment rate (15+ age)	12.0	10.7	14.7

Source: TurkStat, National Education Statistics Database and Household Labour Force Survey, 2021

When the labor force participation rate was analyzed by level of education, it was seen that the high level of education of women, the more the labor force participation. While the labor force participation rate of illiterate women was 12.8%, the labor force participation rate of women with less than high school education was 25.3%, the labor force participation rate of women with high school graduates was 32.5%, the labor force participation rate of women with vocational or technical high school graduates was 38.5%, and the labor force participation rate of women with higher education graduates was 67.6%.

Table 2.2. Labour force participation rate by sex and level of education, 2021



Source: TurkStat, Household Labour Force Survey, 2021

Throughout human history, the patriarchal social structure has been prevalent, along with the gender binary between men and women (Aytaç et al., 2002). In present times, the number of women actively participating in the workforce is gradually increasing. Consequently, the way in which they are employed in the business sphere and the issues that they encounter are constantly being brought to light. The societal value judgements place limitations on women's participation in the workforce. Due to the challenges faced by women in the workplace, they often opt out of business life (Umutlu and Öztürk, 2020).

Women's exclusion from the workforce takes shape in the form of limited access to job opportunities, as well as facing discrimination in the labour market, ultimately resulting in leaving the workforce altogether (Ecevit, 1995). Women employees often face social factors such as low salaries, lack of social security, economic situation and low education, gender understanding in society, patriarchal mentality. There are two groups of factors that impede

women's engagement in the labour force, namely economic and social. Economic factors include working for meagre wages, and the responsibilities of child-rearing and marriage. Social factors, on the other hand, encompass education levels and relocation from rural to urban regions. Furthermore, instances of gender-based discrimination during recruitment can be regarded as a prime example of socio-cultural barriers that impede women's progress in their careers (Önder, 2013).

Women experience gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, mobbing and remuneration problems at work.

Gender-based discrimination against women in business is founded on evaluations and practices that hinge on a person's gender instead of their personal skills or work performance (Demir, 2011). Women often perceive gender discrimination, where they feel they are treated differently and unfairly compared to men in the workplace. This perception relates to systematic disadvantage for women in business life. To assess whether discrimination is taking place, social comparisons, such as wage increases and promotions are used (Seçer, 2009).

Sexual harassment is the act of causing discomfort, distress, or torment towards someone of the opposite sex in an immoral manner. In a workplace setting, it usually involves individuals who hold financial power or a position of authority causing sexual discomfort and distress through inappropriate attitudes and behaviours (Sarmaşık, 2009). Studies indicate that sexual harassment is experienced by both men and women, but the detrimental effects of sexual harassment are more severe for women. Sexual harassment encompasses not only physical behaviours and actions, but also unwanted words and actions directed at an individual (Akgeyik, 1998).

According to Leymann (1996), mobbing is defined as workplace terrorism, unethical communication, and hostile behaviour systematically targeted by one or more individuals towards another person. Many studies examining the relationship between gender and mobbing show that women are exposed to mobbing more than men (Yılmaz, Özler and Mercan, 2008). The term 'mobbing' is defined by the World Health Organization as a collection of behaviours and attitudes that have a harmful impact on the mental, physical, moral, and social well-being of individuals or groups through the use of force (Akgeyik et al., 2009).

Since jobs deemed suitable for women workers in business tend to entail temporary and low-paying roles, they contribute to restricted women employment figures, a decline in the quality of the women labour force, and a lasting or permanent decrease in women's employment rates (Korkmaz and Korkut, 2012).

Women who strive to balance their career and familial responsibilities encounter challenges such as work-family conflict, household chores, telecommuting and childcare in their personal lives (Kocacık and Gökkaya, 2005). The challenging working conditions, variety of employment forms, unpredictable schedules, and employer pressure hamper women's ability to balance work and family life, leading to difficulties. As a result, employees allocate most of their time to meet work demands, thereby neglecting family responsibilities. Employees who dedicate excessive time to work encounter difficulty fulfilling the obligations of family and home life, including chores such as shopping, childcare, and routine housework (Özmete and Eker, 2012).

2.2. Stigmatization

2.2.1. Definition and conceptual framework of stigmatization

Although stigma originated in sociology, it has since been applied in fields including medicine, health sciences, criminology, psychology, social psychology, and organisational behaviour in a relatively short period (Bos et al., 2013). Stigmatization is a complex concept with various dimensions, therefore it is not possible to make a single and general definition (Peterson, 2005).

The term "stigma" originates from Greek and refers to the physical signs that identify individuals who are socially marginalized due to their immoral behaviour (Weidner, 1981).

Stigmatization, which is etymologically used for the first time in Ancient Greek in the meanings of hole, pierce, wound, scar, is still used today in a sense close to its semantic root, as an expression of shame, degradation, and a poor reputation (Goffman, 1963).

When examining the dictionary definition of stigmatization, it refers to a mark resembling a stain, imperfection, small mark, or birthmark. In its current form, it is defined in the dictionary as a sign of shame or disgrace, a person's reputation being stained or condemned (Webster, 2008).

Stigma refers to the unfavourable attitudes, lower status, and lack of power attributed by society to individuals possessing a particular trait or belonging to a particular group or category. The core meaning of this definition posits that stigmatization refers to commonly held perceptions regarding which qualities and categories are esteemed or derided by society, and how these perceptions shift depending on the circumstances (Herek, 2009).

According to the Turkish Language Association Dictionary, stigmatization is figuratively defined as "a situation that brings shame and discredit to someone" (TDK, 2023).

Goffman (1963), who first formed the theoretical basis of this concept in the literature, emphasise a common definition. Goffman, in his classic book on the phenomenon of stigmatization, "The Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity", defined stigma as a quality with a very high discrediting effect and stigmatization as the reduction of an individual from "a part of the whole, a normal person" within a group or community to a stained and crippled person, a person who has been devalued to the point of not being taken into consideration (Goffman, 1963).

Goffman categorised the concept of stigma with three dimensions. These are (Goffman, 1963);

- Various physical deformations of the body,
- Personal traits considered as weak or abnormal, including mental disorders, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal tendencies, and extreme political views,
- Ethnographic labels, such as ethnicity, nationality, and religion, may be transmitted to all family members through the bond of descent.

A person may encounter not only one but all three types of stigma within the social structure. Various types of stigmatization have arisen subsequent to Goffman's delineation of stigma dimensions. There have been criticisms that these concepts of stigma are insufficient to explain stigmatization. Hinshaw (2007) states that women have faced discrimination and stigmatization throughout history. However, the stigma surrounding the women gender is not included in Goffman's types of stigma and has been overlooked by several authors (Hinshaw, 2007).

Link and Phelan (2001) propose that stigmatization functions as a force for labeling, stereotyping, division, loss of status, and discrimination.

Link and Phelan extended Goffman's stigma concept and assessed it under a distinct classification:

- People label and separate the differences.
- The dominant culture identifies labelled people with undesirable characters.
- The labelled person is excluded from the group and seen as "them" rather than "us".
- The individual who has been labelled undergoes a reduction in status and is subjected to discriminatory behaviour.
- Stigma refers to a social, economic, and political relationship that results in the identification of differences, stereotyping, exclusion, and discrimination (Link and Phelan, 2001).

Link and Phelan propose that an individual who is stigmatized or labelled has suffered from a loss of status and discrimination; however, this component has been omitted from various definitions of stigma. If individuals are labelled, segregated, or identified with an undesirable character, they are rationally considered of little worth and subsequently excluded. This leads to the loss of status and discrimination of the labelled persons (Link and Phelan, 2001).

Crocker et al. (1998) highlighted the occurrence of stigmatization in a social context, resulting from relationships and interactions between individuals. The social identity of those who are stigmatised within a specific group is also devalued (Hogg and Vaughan, 2014).

Jones et al. (1984) interpreted stigmatization as a "sign" of adjectives and stereotypes that cause the stigmatised person to be seen as defective and worthless by the society.

Stigma refers to stigmatization, labelling and black marking due to the existence of a situation that should be ashamed for a person or group other than the situations that society considers 'normal' (Soygür and Özalp, 2005).

Stigma is a concept that arises when a group devalued by society's mainstream carries qualities of disgrace or deficiency (Hinshaw, 2007).

According to another definition, the fact that an individual in a society experiences physical, financial, intellectual, sexual or any other phenomenon with an unequal difference from the general society is a phenomenon that labels the individual and separates him/her from the general social structure (Burke, 2007).

In other words, a stigma is a quality, characteristic or disease that causes the individual to be labelled as unacceptably different from the normal people with whom he/she is in constant interaction and that creates a kind of social sanction (Scambler, 1998).

If we define the phenomenon of stigma in general terms, it refers to situations which individuals or groups may be ashamed of, or situations that are deemed unacceptable in an abnormal way. People who are stigmatised and attributed negative judgements are removed from the society, isolated and efforts are made for their disappearance or they are left to their own devices (Taşkın, 2004).

Stigmatization is a social phenomenon that is characterized by a focus on issues and relationships rather than personal attributes (Major and O'Brien, 2005).

2.2.2. History of stigmatization

The concept of stigma was first used by the Greeks with the marks they carved on the bodies of people, slaves, criminals, traitors, who were considered morally bad and not accepted as normal, or branded them with iron. Individuals who bore these markers throughout their lifetime were readily be distinguished from their peers, as they were deemed contaminated. As a result, this communicated to all that public spaces were to be shunned (Goffman, 1963).

According to Goffman, the Greeks used these signs to reveal that people were morally abnormal in society and to reveal their negative traits. Although the concept of stigma is used close to its original semantic meaning in today's society, it is often employed to represent a form of disgrace instead of the original meaning of physical signs of shame (Goffman, 1963).

Similarly, during the Greek period, prostitutes were required to wear flowered and striped dresses to distinguish themselves from other women in society. Likewise, at the end of the 14th century, figures in the form of red belts or men's hats were drawn on the left arms of prostitutes (Küntay and Erginsoy, 2005).

The origins of stigmatization can be traced back to ancient societies. The caste system in India is a prominent illustration of such social discrimination that has prevailed from ancient times to the present day. It has been observed that there is a serious stigmatization between high caste groups and untouchables who cannot even enter these groups. As a result, it has been observed that while there is a serious decrease in the self-esteem of the untouchables as a result of stigmatization, the self-esteem and distinctive features of the high caste groups have increased accordingly (Jaspal, 2011).

Medical stigmatization has been a prevalent issue throughout history. Societies tend to stigmatize more during epidemics and mental illnesses. People with mental illnesses were the first to experience stigmatization in many societies (Kocabaşoğlu and Aliustaoğlu, 2003). The accepted notion that individuals afflicted with mental illness are controlled by malevolent spirits and pose a threat to their surroundings has enabled us to better understand this situation (Geçtan, 2012; Özyiğit et al., 2004). Initially, society disregards the affirmative qualities of individuals with mental health disorders and instead stigmatises them as "crazy", resulting in a tarnished identity (Bilge and Çam, 2010). In ancient Greece and Rome, epilepsy was considered a frightening condition, whereas leprosy and the plague were deemed as afflictions inflicted by God. Since the early 1900s, cancer has been a source of stigma and discrimination. Despite cancer, tuberculosis, leprosy, syphilis, and epilepsy historically being among diseases that have been stigmatised, AIDS has now taken the top spot as the most stigmatised disease (Oran and Şenuzun, 2008).

Certain illnesses have led to whole nations being stigmatised. For instance, syphilis was referred to as the "French Devil" by Italians and as the "Devil of Naples" by the French (Özdemir, 2010).

Although the history of stigmatization is very old, scientific studies have a very short history (Güngör, 2013).

Goffman was the pioneer in scientifically introducing the concept of stigmatization, and his book published in 1963 was a breakthrough in academia. Based on Goffman's (1963) work, a limited number of scientists delved into the empirical investigation of social stigmatization during the 1960s.

2.2.3. Characteristics of stigmatization

Stigmatization is a set of behaviours that may even lead to the exclusion of certain individuals or groups from society, based on attitudes towards them. Thus, the process of stigmatization commences with labelling, and culminates in discrimination and exclusion (Yıldırım, 2017). Definitions of related concepts would be helpful in this regard.

Labelling: The term 'labelling' refers to the evaluation of an individual's subsequent behaviours and experiences using demographic and characteristic features that have been assigned to them (Weidner, 1981). Labels and stigmatization attached to individuals or groups have an impact on the behaviour of others towards them. As a result, the communication and interaction between individuals or groups with others are influenced by the label that has been attached to them (Bilgin, 2003).

Discrimination: Discrimination is the deprivation of certain rights and benefits by individuals or groups in society due to stigma and prejudice (Bahar, 2007). Discrimination has a behavioural dimension; at the end of all stages, stigmatization is embodied, a process of disadvantageous behaviour and marginalisation of the individual or group (Baron and Graziano, 1991).

Exclusion: Exclusion refers to the act of keeping someone out of a group due to devaluation (Gürses, 2005).

Stigmatization has four distinct features in ongoing social interactions (Crocker et al., 1998);

1. Activation of negative stereotypes
2. Rejection in interpersonal interaction
3. The emergence of discrimination as a result of stigmatization
4. Being economically disadvantaged

Stigmatization is a powerful phenomenon that has extensive consequences for its targets (stigmatised individuals) (Major and O'Brien, 2005). If non-stigmatised individuals have prejudiced or stereotypical views about stigmatised individuals, they may react in a way that is inconsistent with their actual attitudes for various reasons (Hansen, 2001). Stigmatised

individuals are often subject to prejudice, discrimination, and social rejection, but this does not necessarily entail negative reactions from all non-stigmatised individuals.

According to Coleman (1986), the crucial aspect of comprehending the concept of stigmatization is understanding the connection between superiority and inferiority. Stigmatization leads some individuals to perceive themselves as superior to others. However, feelings of superiority and inferiority are two faces of the same coin. For an individual to experience a sense of superiority, it is essential for the opposing party to feel or perceive an inferior status. Many non-stigmatised people need stigmatised individuals to feel good about themselves. Even among stigmatised individuals, stigmatization is created on the basis of the fact that some of them are in a worse situation with a relative comparison (Coleman, 1986).

According to Scambler (1998), although discrimination and unacceptance become active when stigmatization is realised, the mere sense of stigmatization can trigger the fear of discrimination.

2.2.4. Types of stigmatization

Goffman examines stigmatization in three different categories. Deformations and differences in the body take the first type as physical stigmas (Goffman, 2014). This category encompasses various physical abnormalities, socially recognized physical abnormalities, as well as speech and voice impairments. Other instances include non-mental illnesses, particularly diseases that are stigmatized such as infectious diseases and speech impairments like stuttering. Until today, diseases have always been the cause of stigmatization. In recent years, one of the most frequently encountered diseases as a metaphor for evil is cancer. Today, individuals with cancer may face stigmatization from those in their closest circles. Some even conceal their illness from employers in fear of job loss (Sontag, 2005). Weaknesses of will, abnormal passions, perverted rigid beliefs, and personal character defects that are deemed immoral, constitute the second type of stigma. Examples include mental health problems, suicide attempts, drug and alcohol abuse, homosexuality or radical political behaviour. The third type of stigma refers to ethnological stigmas, which include race, nationality, and religious beliefs that can be inherited by other family members (Goffman, 2014). These stigmas are transmitted through genealogy and can be equally transmitted to all members of the community (Kuş Saillard, 2010).

According to Corrigan and Shapiro (2019), there are two categories of stigma as social and internalized stigma. Social stigma centres around stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory beliefs held by the public in general (Simmons et al., 2015). Social stigmatization happens when a significant portion of society holds onto stereotypes. For instance, if individuals with psychological issues are perceived as threatening, avoidance tendencies arise. Social biases cause various forms of stigmatization, including the separation from other individuals, obstruction of self-determination, and denial of opportunities (Corrigan and Shapiro, 2010). Internalized stigmatization can also be referred to as self-stigmatization and individual stigmatization (Çam and Çuhadar, 2011). It encompasses negative self-perception and self-stigmatization among individuals. Individuals hold negative stereotypes and attitudes towards themselves, which can lead to negative behaviours and emotional reactions (Corrigan and Watson, 2002). Internalized stigmatization is the acceptance of negative societal stereotypes by individuals which leads to their detachment from society, causing them to experience feelings of shame and guilt (Baysal, 2013). Internalisation of stigma in society can lead to severe mistreatment of individuals (Link and Phelan, 2001). Individuals in stigmatised groups experience negative emotions such as shame, humiliation, and inadequacy when internalising these biases. This leads to their social positioning being negatively affected, which results in isolation and a decrease in self-image. Consequently, they distance themselves from society (Corrigan and Rao, 2012; Çam and Çuhadar, 2011).

According to Thornicroft, Rose and Kassam (2007), common features found in social and internalised stigmatization are knowledge errors, ignorance or misinformation, attitude problems, prejudice and behavioural problems (discrimination). According to Corrigan and Watson (2007), prejudice, discrimination and stereotypical beliefs are experienced in both of these types of stigmatization, which are divided into social stigmatization and self-stigmatization (internalised stigmatization). In stigmatization in the field of psychiatry, the types are divided into four as "personal", "perceived" stigmatization, "self-stigmatization" and "structural" stigmatization. Personal stigmatization involves the individual having negative attitudes towards others who are different. Perceived stigmatization refers to an individual's belief that they are subject to negative and discriminatory views or perceptions by others (Griffiths et al., 2004). Self-stigmatization, also known as internalised stigmatization, denotes an individual's view of themselves as deficient or dissimilar (Kamışlı et al., 2016: 201). This

form of stigmatization is linked to the internalization and self-direction of these attitudes by members of the stigmatized group (Corrigan and Rao, 2012). Structural stigmatization involves authorities or organisations offering more limited opportunities to a certain group (Kamış, 2016).

2.2.5. Causes of stigmatization

Prejudice is the breeding ground for the emergence of stigmatization (Oran and Şenuzun, 2008). Through the use of adjectives, individuals are socially classified into distinct groups and categories. Each grouping leads to a distinct image being created in one's imagination, and we tend to attribute stereotypical characteristics to anyone we encounter belonging to that group. While classifications cause generalisations and distortions, they also form the basis of prejudices (St. Clements University, 2014). Personal differences are categorised in stigmatization, resulting in stereotypical experiences of marginalisation, separation, and exclusion, which are cognitively framed using the terms "us" and "them" (Sözen et al., 2013).

When faced with a disturbing or frightening situation, individuals or societies may often resort to the act of alienation, wherein they exclude it from their own awareness (Taşkın, 2004). Thus, societies endeavour to develop measures via social control mechanisms to alleviate uncertainty and live more comfortably by mitigating potential threats. This situation is considered one of the reasons why stigmatization operates as a form of social control. The stigmatization of particular ethnic, racial, or religious groups can be perceived as an attempt to exclude them from competition. Additionally, the devaluation of individuals living with physical disabilities may contribute to limiting their choices (Goffman, 1963).

In social life, the feeling of worthlessness felt or made to be felt against a person who is thought to be different for many reasons can lead to stigma (Giddens, 2000). These causes can be classified as psychogenic, social, and technological factors.

Psychogenic Causes: Feelings play a significant role in the phenomenon of stigmatization. When individuals within a diverse group are facing a more severe and challenging situation, others tend to experience a subconscious sense of relief (Şen, 2011). One group appears to derive a sense of contentment and ease, while the other loses self-worth as a result of being subjected to shame and disharmony (Aydın, 2020). Stigmatization, at its core, is rooted in

adverse attitudes and preconceptions (Çam and Bilge, 2007). For instance, according to Bilge and Çam's (2010) research, mental patients are often subject to stigmatising attitudes based on fear and anger directed towards them.

Social Causes: To comprehend stigmatization, it is imperative to first comprehend people's experiences. It should not be overlooked that individuals are influenced by their social milieu, connections, identities, family setup as well as diseases (Kocabaşoğlu and Aliustaoğlu, 2003). It is widely recognised that diseases have led to stigmatization since the early periods of history. With the fear of diseases, people with low self-esteem in the society, those who are external control oriented and those with high anxiety behave more exclusionary (Bilge and Çam, 2010). On the other hand, the impact of Western culture on the global community throughout the 20th century has eliminated the notion of failure and contributed to the escalation of individualism, consequently leading to an increase in social stigmatization (Üçok, 2003). The development of competitiveness through individualism is increasingly viewed as a catalyst for stigmatization. Competitive behaviours contribute to the degradation of a loving environment, by placing excessive value on external success, resulting in ostentation and an inclination to seek approval (St. Clements University, 2014).

Corrigan and Watson (2002) note that stigmatization tends to occur from those in positions of power towards those without. In particular, women experience greater stigmatization in patriarchal societies. Being women further exacerbates this phenomenon, leading to violations of women's rights, marginalization, and the concealment of their abilities (Kadıoğlu and Hotun Şahin, 2015).

Technological Cause: Possible factors, such as contextual circumstances and temporal variation, diversify the foundations of stigmatization within the social milieu. Failure to adapt to changing circumstances may lead to social exclusion of individuals. For instance, individuals who struggle to adjust to the widespread use of smartphones risk detachment from their surroundings, thus experiencing social isolation. Failure to keep pace with societal progress remains a cause of stigmatization over time (Corrigan et al., 2005). Anxiety triggered by data from multiple communication sources compels individuals to categorise and discriminate to a greater extent than ever before (Haghighat, 2001).

2.2.6. Theories of dealing with stigmatization

Stigmatization frequently impacts the social lives of individuals and their loved ones, resulting in a reduction of their overall quality of life (Koçak and Taylan, 2018).

There are several strategies to deal with stigmatization. The coping mechanisms of an individual may prove insufficient when faced with the perception of threat, constant alertness-induced fatigue, and uncertainty of whether their enduring difficulties are the result of discrimination. For this reason, coping strategies are classified into two distinct categories.

- i. Problem-focused coping; planning, taking direct action, seeking help and distancing from other activities
- ii. Emotionally oriented coping; rejection, reinterpreting events in a positive way and searching for social support (Sevim, 2020)

Individuals who have experienced stigmatization have devised various approaches to manage its impact. Stigmatised individuals employ a withdrawal strategy by decreasing their interactions with non-stigmatised individuals and increasing their interactions with stigmatised individuals, respectively. Another approach is the passing strategy where negative attributes are deliberately withheld to avoid stigma. In accordance with the third approach, exploitation, those who are stigmatised downplay the importance of their stigmatised qualities while emphasising their non-stigmatised qualities to maximise their value. The final approach is known as the victimization strategy. It involves attributing unjustified blame or inference to another person's actions (Ruggolero and Taylor, 1997 as cited in Gifford, 2009).

2.2.7. The consequences of stigmatization

One of the most important consequences of stigmatization is that it causes discrimination. Individuals who experience stigmatization due to discrimination caused by stigmatization are deprived of some rights and social support and live under the threat of being pushed out of society (Oran and Şenuzun, 2008; Arslan and Konuk Şener, 2009). The process of stigmatization harms an individual's psychological well-being by triggering the emergence of self-deprecation, self-loathing, depression, anxiety, and defensiveness (Lipp, 2011).

Since stigmatised individuals have a negative attitude by some people in the society, these people, who are characterised as deviant, become victims of discrimination or targets of prejudice, and their interpersonal relationships and economic status are negatively affected (Crocker and Major, 1998). Stigmatization impacts not only the stigmatised individual but also those who have a personal connection to them such as family, relatives, and friends. Objective research has shown that people associated with stigmatised individuals are unfairly devalued merely due to their proximity to the stigmatised person (Hebl and Mannix, 2003; Neuberg, Smith, Hoffman, and Russell, 1994). The extent of stigmatization is felt in waves depending on the proximity of the individual to the patient (Goffman, 2014). Stigmatization of an individual's family members occur both institutionally and through social exclusion. Examples of this situation include the impediment for relatives of a convicted individual to become civil servants due to security checks and the barriers to working in public institutions (Struening et al., 2001; Mak and Kwok, 2010).

Stigmatised individuals feel distant and excluded from society. This can lead to a decrease in self-esteem, self-confidence, internalisation of stigma, and negative effects on psychological health. Such situations underscore the adverse effects of stigmatization on individuals or groups (Corrigan et al., 2005).

2.3. Workplace Loneliness

2.3.1. Definition of loneliness

Establishing relationships with others is crucial for social beings. It is necessary for all individuals to interact with and establish connections with those around them. Due to various reasons, contemporary conditions pose challenges for interpersonal relationships. As a result, there has been an increase in social isolation leading to a lack of close social ties for many individuals. This lack has led to social deprivation experienced by many (Çakır, 2002).

In its simplest definition, loneliness means being socially distant from other people (Akduru and Semerciöz, 2017). Loneliness is said to develop when individuals feel that they are not understood by others, as stated by Cindiloğlu et al. (2017). As a result, the person may begin to display disharmonious behaviour towards their surroundings, which can lead to feelings of loneliness over time. Loneliness occurs when individuals perceive deficiencies in their social

relationships. This sensation is experienced subjectively when an individual's current social connections fall short of their expectations, or objectively when their social circle lacks adequate friends (Taylor, Peplau and Sears, 2010). Loneliness creates an adverse and unsteady environment for adaptation and resulting in challenges for the affected individual (Özkürkçügil, 1998).

According to Sadler and Johnson's (1980) research, loneliness is a state that signifies a degradation in an individual's inner world relational reality system, is regarded as self-awareness, and typically demonstrates a manner of living that accentuates intense emotions in line. The need for companionship can arise not only in social and communicative contexts but also during work, study, or other activities. Individuals may experience feelings of loneliness in such situations. In this case, loneliness entails social distancing from other individuals, even when surrounded by a large number of people, as opposed to being alone. Loneliness is not synonymous with being alone. Although feelings of loneliness can arise even in crowded environments, they stem from a form of social isolation (Karakaya et al., 2015).

Loneliness is an undesirable phenomenon that is noticable in terms of both the quality and quantity of an individual's social relationships. Notable concepts in the context of loneliness include those (Perlman, Peplau, and Goldston, 1984).

- Loneliness arises from deficiencies and shortcomings in an individual's social connections. It stems from a mismatch between an individual's actual social relations and their social requirements and wishes. Occasionally, it may also result from alterations in individual and social needs.
- Loneliness remains a subjective experience and should be viewed as distinct from social isolation. It is possible to feel lonely despite being surrounded by others.
- Loneliness, while having some negative aspects, also serve as a driving force. However, it is important to note that while it may promote personal growth, it can also lead to stress and uncomfortable situations.

2.3.2. Factors affecting loneliness

Studies on loneliness demonstrate that several factors contribute to loneliness. Previous research has established that age, gender, individual personality traits, as well as familial and friendship relationships play a significant role in the onset and propagation of loneliness (Jones and Hebb, 2003). This section examines the effects of age, gender, family, and personal characteristics on loneliness.

2.3.2.1. Age

Loneliness is acknowledged as a subjective experience that varies in intensity across different age periods. This is due to the individual's personality traits, past experiences and situational factors (Orzeck and Rokach, 2004). Changes in people's life circumstances, lifestyles and preoccupations as they get older lead to an increase or decrease in feelings of loneliness. When age is commonly categorised as young, adult and elderly, Donaldson and Watson (1996) contend that while loneliness can be found in these three age groups, it is more prevalent among the elderly. Kafetsios (2002) conducted research on adults aged between 20 and 66 and concluded that emotional loneliness rises with age, while social loneliness decreases.

Frank and Woodward (1998), who noted that loneliness can occur at any stage of an individual's life, emphasised that adolescents are at risk of experiencing loneliness and noted that loneliness is experienced more intensely and frequently during adolescence. Orzeck and Rokach (2004) pointed out that loneliness is a common experience among adolescents and young adults, and Roscoe and Skomski (1989) pointed out that loneliness is a fundamental problem among young adolescents.

2.3.2.2. Personal characteristics

The personality traits of an individual are a significant factor in experiencing loneliness. Personality is a comprehensive concept that encompasses attitudes, behaviours, abilities, characteristics, speech patterns, physical appearance and adaptation to external factors (Yıldız and Dilmaç, 2012).

Loneliness is significantly linked to low levels of self-esteem and self-criticism (Peplau and Perlman, 1982).

Jones, Carpenter, and Quinnata (1985) categorised the personality variables that cause loneliness as follows:

1. Inadequate social skills (embarrassment, introversion, shyness, inability to be assertive)
2. Emotional arousal and conflict (depression, anxiety, neuroticism)
3. Poor self-perception (low self-esteem, poor social-self-concept)
4. Negativistic attitudes (hostility, external locus of control, pessimistic view and perception towards people, life and society)

2.3.2.3. *Gender*

Gender, as a primary factor in the loneliness process, leads in different experiences of loneliness among males and women.

Roscoe and Skomski (1989), in their study on the loneliness experiences of university students, stated that male students had higher arithmetic means of loneliness scores compared to women students. However, the difference was not deemed significant. Lau and Gruen (1992) found that women tend to experience emotional loneliness to a greater extent than men when they lack reciprocal relationships, either in the form of friendships or emotional connections and men are more likely to experience social loneliness when they lack supportive networks of friends. Demir (1990) found that men experienced significantly higher levels of loneliness compared to women and this could be attributed to differing societal expectations relating to gender roles and emotional expression.

2.3.2.4. *Family*

The family is an essential component of society, fulfilling individuals' basic requirements for emotional and physical nurturing. As one of society's institutions, it has a significant impact on shaping individuals' values and beliefs, influencing both personal and societal development (Özkalp, 2014).

Brennan and Auslander (1979) conducted a study which found that individuals who dislike themselves, lack sympathy for others, exhibit passivity, powerlessness and discomfort in social situations experience loneliness, which they attribute to a lack of emotional attachment, healthy guidance and support in their families.

2.3.3. Causes and effects of loneliness

Michela, Peplau and Weeks (1982) state the following situations as reasons for loneliness.

- *Pessimism*: The person is pessimistic about his or her chances of finding a partner to communicate with.
- *Fear of Rejection*: The individual's fear that he/she will be rejected by another person when he/she communicates with that person.
- *Failure to make an effort*: The individual fails to make an effort to meet or communicate.
- *Unlucky*: The feeling of being unlucky in all circumstances.
- *Lack of knowledge*: The person lacks the skills to initiate friendships and relationships in order to be able to communicate.
- *Shyness*: When an individual is hesitant to communicate.
- *Other Groups/Relationships*: Individuals form friendships or groups and choose to not include others within these circles.
- *Fears of Others*: Individuals around the person are hesitant to establish relationships with other people.
- *Impersonal Situations*: The desire to establish impersonal relationships with the people around the person.
- *Lack of Opportunity*: The individual lacks the ability to form connections with individuals in their surroundings.
- *Reluctance of Others*: The lack of willingness of individuals surrounding the person to cultivate friendships or engage in relationships.
- *Antipathic Personality*: An individual with a character that is disagreeable and disliked by others.

Loneliness is a ubiquitous emotional phenomenon experienced by all individuals, albeit reluctantly. Painful feelings may intensify when there's a discrepancy between their desired and actual social interactions. (Sydney, 2014).

Rokach (2004) explained the consequences of loneliness in 7;

- Individuals experiencing loneliness struggle to form social connections and often display contradictory behaviours in their interpersonal relationships.
- Loneliness prevents people from setting boundaries between other people and establishing sincere relationships.
- Loneliness leads to psychological disorders, including excessive anxiety, anger and distraction, that hinder the individual from expressing themselves correctly in social situations and reaching their potential.
- When loneliness is not addressed appropriately and using effective techniques, it can have a detrimental impact on an individual's life.
- Loneliness can lead to poor decision-making at inopportune moments, impacting not only one's social life but also their private and sexual spheres.
- If psychological disorders resulting from loneliness are left untreated, the individual becomes excessively fragile or inflexible.
- Loneliness poses a challenging situation, and even if it is resolved, it can leave indelible emotional scars. The most effective approach to combating loneliness is to establish close personal relationships and integrate oneself within a social environment.

2.3.4. Concept of workplace loneliness

Social relations between individuals are not only established in social settings, but also within the business arena. The desire to form social connections remains present even within an organizational context. Loneliness is a human experience that has far-reaching and fundamental effects. As a result, it can be encountered in many aspects of life, including individual and organisational contexts (Çetin and Alacalar, 2016).

Loneliness in the workplace refers to the isolation individuals experience due to their work and colleagues. This sense of loneliness may persist despite individuals having numerous acquaintances or colleagues at work. Many academic research studies have explored the issue of workplace loneliness. The study of workplace loneliness takes into account the experiences of businesses, institutions, and, most crucially, individuals. Furthermore, employees who suffer from workplace loneliness may experience reduced productivity and performance, which can adversely impact the organization or business in which they operate (Şişman and Turan, 2019).

Wright et al. (2006) defined workplace loneliness, characterising it as an expression of negative aspects of work arising from the quality of social interactions and personal relationships. Social deficiencies and inadequacies in the workplace, coupled with poor quality of interpersonal relationships, lead to feelings of loneliness (Wright, Burt and Strongman, 2006). Loneliness in the organizational context refers to the employee retreating into their own world due to the structure of the organization, disconnecting from communication with others (Bozkurt, 2019).

Despite the observation that individuals who encounter workplace loneliness experience associated emotions like introversion, low self-esteem, and lack of assertiveness (Mahapatra et al., 2020), the feeling of loneliness in the workplace is not a psychological problem, but a situation based on the employee being affected by the characteristics of the working environment (Zhou, 2018).

2.3.5. Dimensions of workplace loneliness

Wright, Burt, and Strongman (2006) analysed the dimensions of workplace loneliness in their study titled "Loneliness at Work Scale (LAWS)". According to Wright et al. (2006), organisational loneliness is examined in two dimensions. The first dimension is "emotional loneliness" and the second dimension is "social loneliness".

2.3.5.1. *Emotional loneliness*

The emotional loneliness dimension assesses the employee's relationship quality with colleagues (Doğan et al., 2009). Weiss (1973) defines emotional loneliness as the absence of emotional connections that arise from comfortable, sincere, and intimate relationships. In terms of emotional loneliness, the communication and bond an individual has with others is more significant than the number of individuals present (quantity) (Koçer et al., 2018). The communication problem, stemming from physical deficiencies in the workplace and psychological barriers between employees, leads to a sense of emotional deprivation among employees (Yüksel, 2005). The belief that one's emotional needs will not be fulfilled motivates individuals to engage in self-deprivation. A lack of attention or misunderstanding towards an individual experiencing emotional loneliness can lead to feelings of sadness (Bozkurt and Bozkurt, 2008). The person puts boundaries between himself/herself and others by thinking that his/her colleagues do not understand him/her (Çetin and Alacalar Çakır, 2016). Individuals who

experience emotional deprivation may become withdrawn from colleagues and withhold their ideas, believing their colleagues will not comprehend them. Those who feel uneasy or anxious in the work environment may also be susceptible to emotional deprivation (Kaplan, 2011).

Individuals experiencing emotional loneliness may display behaviours such as anxiety, panic, touchiness, heightened sensitivity, and misunderstanding of others (Perlman and Peplau, 1981). To alleviate this loneliness phenomenon, it is imperative to establish effective communication with others (Şişman and Turan, 2004).

The primary characteristic of emotional loneliness is the decline in the efficiency of employees and their consideration of resigning from their positions (Mercan et al., 2012).

2.3.5.2. *Social Loneliness*

Unlike the emotional dimension of loneliness, the social dimension of loneliness measures the quantity of the individual's relationships with colleagues (Doğan et al., 2009).

According to Weiss (1973), Vincenzi and Grabosky (1987), social loneliness occurs when one of several conditions is absent, such as social unity, appreciation, and reliable workplace relationships, as well as having someone to consult with at work (Akbaba, 2020).

Social loneliness, which describes negative aspects in social relationships, occurs when an individual is unable to find their place within a social group. This leads to a state of marginalisation for the individual (Karacaoğlu and Yumuk, 2014).

Social loneliness is inevitable in a place where there are no phenomena such as appreciation, establishment of reliable friendship relationships, pioneering, and commitment (Şişman and Turan, 2004). Mercan et al. (2012) argue that social isolation, a facet of loneliness, is primarily rooted in issues concerning communication. It is highlighted that social isolation, a facet of loneliness, is primarily rooted in issues concerning communication (Mercan et al., 2012).

2.3.6. *Causes of workplace loneliness*

Workplace loneliness occurs when employees experience negative differences between existing relationships and the relationships they aspire to develop. This situation persists when these negative differences do not disappear (Wright, 2006).

There are numerous factors that contribute to workplace loneliness in an individual. Wright (2005) identifies these factors as including family support, personality traits, self-confidence, shyness, social support, pessimism, age, self-focus and income. In the workplace, the support an individual receives from colleagues and management reveal their sense of belonging and trust. Conversely, inadequate social support can cause significant worry, leading to feelings of isolation (Wright, 2005). However, employees who perceive they receive the desired level of support in their workplace are more likely to enhance their performance and exhibit extra role behaviours (Sezen, 2014).

Conflict, competition and political tensions between employees at work also contribute to loneliness at work. Such an environment affects even entrepreneurial, self-confident people. Negative, unreliable relationships make people lonely (Wright, 2009).

Taking into account individual and psychological factors, which are among the most emphasised factors in the general definition of loneliness, it can be observed that individuals who are socially withdrawn and have weak social relations experience loneliness both in social and business life (Durmuş, 2007).

Social deficiencies in the workplace manifest due to inadequate social support, isolation, and characteristics that hinder desired quality of interpersonal relationships. For this reason, individuals who lack satisfactory relationships of quality at work experience greater loneliness than the number of fellow workers, colleagues, or customers with whom they have communicated (Wright et al., 2006). Apart from these factors, an employee's low self-confidence, poor communication with colleagues, and personal perception disorders lead to a sense of loneliness in the workplace. Loneliness is a common experience among all employees irrespective of their status. The feeling of loneliness is rooted in individual characteristics rather than people's status (Karaduman, 2013).

2.3.7. Theories of dealing with workplace loneliness

Increasing friendships and social support at work is an effective way of preventing loneliness at work. The study by Dignam, Borrera and West (1986) identified social support from other employees and subordinates in the work environment as a factor in reducing loneliness at work. Chay (1993) highlighted that social support lessens job stress and enhances the welfare of the

working environment. When faced with a work-related issue, an individual's commitment to the organization is increased by knowing that there is someone they can confide in. This ensures their presence in the workplace with willingness, thereby preventing workplace loneliness (Zhou, 2018).

Friendships at work are also important for employees to reduce loneliness at work. Although personal factors may hinder communication with colleagues in busy work environments, employees can alleviate feelings of loneliness by seeking the companionship of a fellow co-worker with whom they share a close relationship and sharing their experiences. Additionally, workplace friendships can enhance job satisfaction and promote individual success (Wright, 2005). Employees require the relevant knowledge and skills to accomplish their tasks and achieve their objectives, or they may necessitate emotional support to alleviate work-related stress. Friendship in the workplace serves as a source of both instrumental and emotional support (Yen et al., 2009).

Organisational training addressing factors that contribute to loneliness can benefit employees. To address issues such as communication breakdowns and lack of social support, employees can participate in communication skills training (Kunt, 2012).

2.3.8. The consequences of workplace loneliness

Workplace loneliness is a condition stemming from the absence of positive interpersonal relationships in the work milieu. Both performing tasks in isolation and inadequate social backing at work manifestly impact the degree of loneliness (Wright et al., 2006). When loneliness transitions into negative thoughts, attitudes and behaviours, it assumes a role that augments anxiety (Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008).

One consequence of workplace loneliness is an adverse impact on employee performance. When an individual experiences loneliness in the work environment, they feel excluded due to weak ties with colleagues (Özçelik and Barsade, 2011). As a result, they feel unsuccessful and inadequate (Wright, 2005).

Workplace loneliness has a range of negative impacts on organisations and institutions. Specifically, employees' productivity and job satisfaction are detrimentally affected by feelings

of loneliness in the workplace (Ertosun and Erdil, 2012). Studies carried out in this context have indicated that workplace loneliness can also be caused by organisational culture (Wright, 2005). Research indicates that inadequate social relationships, which do not provide satisfaction, can result in excessive stress, anxiety, depression and even lead to mental health disorders. The decrease in an individual's work efficiency and performance due to this situation negatively impact the organization (Mercan et al., 2012).

Stress is another factor affecting workplace loneliness. It is seen that there is an increase in the stress rates of individuals who experience loneliness at work (Karaduman, 2013).

Wright (2005) asserted that workplace loneliness has a significant correlation with psychological traits, including attitude, support from colleagues and non-work relationships, managerial support, workload, a culture of fear, community spirit, job satisfaction, perceived work stress, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction.

Further outcomes of loneliness in the workplace may manifest in the form of elevated levels of anxiety, repressed emotions, excessive concern, nervousness, impatience, emotional distance and uncontrolled displays of anger (Adamson and Axmith, 2003).

2.4. Career Satisfaction

2.4.1. Concept of career

Career is commonly defined as a person's job-related positions prior to, during, and following their professional life (Patton and McMahon, 2006).

Career means accepting responsibility, increasing income, gaining social standing and prestige, and being respected as a result of progressing in a job that is chosen by the individual. Therefore, a career encompasses not only the idea of having a job, but also provides individuals with a sense of accomplishment (Akat and Budak, 1994).

Career development involves attaining expertise and experience in a specific job to assume greater responsibilities and prestige (Tortop, 1994). Individuals aspire to attain a higher position by acquiring advantageous experiences and enhancing their skills (Certo and Graf, 1992).

Career refers to an individual's advancement in their chosen occupation over the course of their professional life, encompassing the development of professionalism and the acquisition of experience and skills to attain higher positions (Kıngır and Gün, 2007).

Nowadays, the term career refers to the level of success an individual achieves in their business life. This success directly impacts the level of satisfaction that individuals experience in their careers. As such, it is essential to recognise the significance of employee motivation to achieve professional success and the importance of providing career satisfaction (Köktürk and Yalçın, 2000).

2.4.2. Concept of career satisfaction

When considering professional life, the contentment of individuals with their vocations aids in accomplishing both personal and organizational objectives. With growing recognition that the human factor plays a critical role in the effectiveness and productivity of businesses, the value placed on employees continues to escalate. Individuals seek both materially and morally compensation for their labour and certain requirements within their occupation. The fulfilment of these demands is imperative for attaining satisfaction (Demirdelen and Ulama, 2013).

The notion of job contentment is underpinned by the career decision theory advocated by Holland and Super. Holland posits that job satisfaction stems from one's experiences, competencies, principles, convictions and accomplishments. Super (2014) argues that career satisfaction is influenced by changes within the organisation, the introduction of new innovations, or modifications to job roles (Gürkan and Koçoğlu, 2014).

Career satisfaction refers to an individual's contentment upon reaching their goals in the areas of achievements, income, promotion, and developing new skills throughout their career (Greenhaus, 1990).

An individual's satisfaction with the level of achievement of his/her intended career is defined as career satisfaction (Yüksel, 2005).

Individuals should have both subjective and objective career success in order to be satisfied with their careers. Nowadays, as it would be insufficient to measure an individual's success using objective methods, subjective and objective career success are considered together.

Subjective career success is the evaluation of the level of achievement of the goals set by the individual and his/her achievements. Objective career success, focusing on experience and work, is measured by an individual's salary, promotions and status within the organisation. These elements are key indicators of objective career success (Barnett and Bradley, 2007).

Lounsbury et al. (2007) assert that career satisfaction is the overall evaluation of an individual's work life and an expression of their sentiments towards the work they have performed.

Kumudha and Abraham (2008) suggest that career satisfaction is increased through support programmes covering personal growth, employment information as well as skills development (Burak and Atabek, 2019).

Career satisfaction is regarded as a subjective measure of career success along with job satisfaction in particular studies (Konrad et al., 2000; Heslin, 2005). In fact, career satisfaction and job satisfaction are very similar concepts, but job satisfaction describes the status of an individual's current job or role, while career satisfaction relates to the current career and all roles undertaken (Joao, 2016). The concept that reflects satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a job that provides a job-specific criterion is career satisfaction (Lounsbury et al., 2008).

Making a profit is one of the main reasons why a company exists. It is possible to make profit by providing quality service to the customer and producing quality goods. This also increases customer satisfaction. It should be noted that to ensure the survival of a business, employee and manager contentment with their positions is crucial, as well as the satisfaction of customers. All workers aspire to operate in a setting with minimal issues to gain access to opportunities for career advancement, and to attain both job and career satisfaction (Sarıışık, 2007).

The main focus of career satisfaction is the degree of contentment individuals experience upon attaining their professional objectives. It has been argued that there are five basic factors for employees to achieve career satisfaction. These factors include professional achievements, general career objectives, goals related to income, progression in the profession, and acquiring new skills. The individual's achievement of these basic goals is a determining factor in their overall career satisfaction (Greenhaus et al., 1990).

2.4.3. Factors affecting career satisfaction

The factors that influence career satisfaction are discussed below.

2.4.3.1. Gender

Expectations, attitudes, and perceptions regarding gender play a significant role in career choice and formation for both genders (Özkişi, 2012). Men tend to occupy superior hierarchies compared to women, and gender-based discrimination influences individuals' career trajectories (Işık, 2009). Today, individuals of all genders have career goals. Men, however, experience greater career satisfaction when they progress both vertically and horizontally within their organization and attain higher positions, unlike women. As a result, gender discrimination impacts the careers of individuals (Işık, 2009; Çolak, 2018). Male employees place greater emphasis on their work life, career aspirations, and professional accomplishments than their women counterparts (Küçükusta, 2007). Despite noteworthy progress in women employment, gender inequality persists. Discriminatory practices against women employees persist today, primarily due to situations such as pregnancy, child care, and housework (Ereş, 2006). Therefore, it can be inferred that women's career satisfaction progresses more slowly than men's.

2.4.3.2. Age

The impact of age on individual career satisfaction is significant. Individuals are categorised into different age groups based on their years of life. These age groups shape the individual's life and impact their outlook on business life, personal aspirations, attitudes and expectations in their professional life (Toker, 2007).

Young employees demonstrate greater ambition in achieving their career objectives and improving their knowledge and competencies, with the expectation of obtaining further education, when compared to their older counterparts (Sağdıç and Demirkaya, 2009).

As individuals age, they tend to be more content with their working life. The reason for this could be attributed to improved adaptation to work life with increased experience. Another possibility is that younger individuals may have lower levels of satisfaction during the first years of their work due to heightened expectations for advancement (Toker, 2007).

2.4.3.3. *Education*

The requirements, sentiments and anticipations of an educated employee in the workforce surpass compared to others (Toker, 2007). This is because as educational attainment heightens, employees' perspectives concerning professional life, career prospects, remunerations and working environments enhance as well (Güven et al., 2005). Studies conducted on this subject indicate that economic expectations are the primary factor in shaping an individual's education and experience. Educated individuals aspire to earn higher income within their occupation and seek swift progression within the hierarchical structure (Ng et al., 2005). Individuals with advanced levels of education often hold management positions, leading to higher salaries and job satisfaction. Education is a crucial factor in achieving satisfaction in one's career (Demirdelen and Ulama, 2013).

2.4.3.4. *Marital status*

Research has shown that an individual's marital status impact their career satisfaction. This is because married individuals prioritize their personal life over their professional endeavors. The challenges experienced by married parents in balancing work and family life have an impact on their career satisfaction. Dissatisfaction arises from work-family conflict (Martins et al., 2002).

It is acknowledged that the significance attributed to work life by individuals who undergo a change in marital status and pursue their career as married persons declines. In other words, married persons dedicate less time to vocational activities and prioritise familial obligations (Aykaç, 2010).

Several studies have found a positive correlation between career satisfaction and marital status. Punnet et al. (2007) reported results revealing a higher level of satisfaction amongst married women, who benefit from spousal support compared to their unmarried counterparts.

2.4.3.5. *Title*

There exists a significant connection between the career contentment of an employee and their attributes, including job title, and if the individual is a manager, the managerial position held (Uzunbacak, 2004). While the career satisfaction of an employee shows a proportional

relationship with their management level, those in upper management experience greater satisfaction in both their professional and personal lives (Demirdelen and Ulama, 2013).

2.4.3.6. Experience

The experience of the individual, the length of time in the sector and in the organisation are positively related to the career expectations and career satisfaction of the individual. Career satisfaction is known to be high for individuals who have worked in the same organisation for a long time. Compared to those who constantly change jobs, a person who works in the same job will work more happily as both job commitment and job satisfaction will increase (Demirel and Özçınar, 2009).

2.4.4. The Consequences of career satisfaction

Spurk et al. (2018) have identified withdrawal behaviors, career attitudes, well-being, and health as the outcomes related to career satisfaction. There is an inverse correlation between job satisfaction and withdrawal behaviours. As satisfaction levels rise, individuals display fewer withdrawal behaviours (Stephens, 1994).

Career attitudes encompass an individual's attitudes and behaviours towards their career. This includes variables such as career self-efficacy and career commitment (Spurk et al., 2018).

There is a strong correlation between career satisfaction and career commitment. Enhancing one's career satisfaction leads to a boost in career attitude variables. As an individual's career satisfaction increases, so does their commitment to their career (Shockley, Ureksoy, Rodopman et al., 2015).

The well-being and health of an individual are expressed by variables such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Spurk et al., 2018). Career satisfaction is crucial for an individual's overall life satisfaction. Therefore, if individuals feel content with their careers, they will most likely feel satisfied with their lives (Joo and Lee, 2017).

Satisfaction with one's career enhances both work performance and commitment to the organisation (Yap et al., 2010). Increased career satisfaction correlates with higher levels of work efficiency, innovation, and creativity (Çamur, 2019).

2.5. Self-Esteem

2.5.1. Concept of self

The structure of our ego determines our perception of the world, ourselves, and others, forming the foundation for our existence and impacting all thoughts, emotions and behaviours (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2006).

All individual behaviour is regulated by their way of life. The pillars of one's way of life are comprised of the self-concept, the ideal self, the external world and its expectations, and one's conscientious beliefs derived from their own moral code. The self constitutes the establishment and upkeep of a system striving to furnish the organism with a purposeful existence (Geçtan, 2002).

The self is constituted by the perceptions of an individual's relationships with others and the values attributed to those perceptions (Rogers, 1951). Many parameters in life have an effect on the self. The self comprises a comprehensive framework encompassing one's capabilities, motivations, feelings, principles, recollections, and personality traits. Overall, "self" refers to the process of acknowledging and understanding an individual's emotions, thoughts, and desires, independent of physical characteristics such as identifying personal strengths and weaknesses. As such, the concept of "self" is linked to an individual's positive or negative perception of themselves (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2010).

Rosenberg (1979) provided a definition for the concept of the self as the entirety of an individual's feelings and thoughts that they assign to themselves as an object.

Self-concept is the way of perceiving and evaluating oneself based on life experiences. Beliefs and emotions surrounding one's self are crucial as they allow the individual to align with these beliefs and emotions when faced with events. When individuals possess positive beliefs and feelings towards themselves, they tend to approach daily events with a more optimistic outlook. Conversely, individuals with negative beliefs and feelings tend to exhibit corresponding behaviours (İnanç and Yerlikaya, 2014).

Higgins (1987) proposes a three-dimensional model of the self comprising the actual, ideal, and ought selves. The actual self is the self-concept as perceived by the individual, the ideal self

refers to the self that the individual desires to become, and the ought self represents the self that an individual feels they should become. It has been noted that differences between one's actual self and ideal self can result in feelings of disappointment, dissatisfaction, and sadness. On the other hand, discrepancies between one's actual self and the ought self can lead to feelings of fear, restlessness, and tension.

Self comprises several hierarchically organised structures in a broad conceptual system. Moreover, it encompasses the ego and encompasses a structure with a more comprehensive framework than the ego, displaying superior structural characteristics (Rosenberg, 1979).

2.5.2. Concept of self-esteem

The concept of self-esteem was initially introduced by William James. According to James, the original definition of self-esteem involves comparing one's successes or perceived successes to one's failures in important areas of life. He also highlighted the crucial significance of self-esteem for life processes, underlining its indispensability for healthy self-development and survival while avoiding subjective evaluations (James and Burkhardt, 1983).

According to Rosenberg's (1965) theory of self-esteem, it is a self-belief that can be positive or negative. Positive self-regard is referred to as high self-esteem, while negative self-assessment is low self-esteem (Tus, 2019).

Self-esteem is influenced by the individual's attitude when evaluating themselves. The mood and attitude during this process exert a direct effect on self-esteem. Positive attitudes have a beneficial impact, whereas negative attitudes negatively impact self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979).

Self-esteem is the state of accepting and being satisfied with one's self in the existential sense as a result of self-evaluation (Eriş and İkiz, 2013).

According to Coppersmith (1965), self-esteem is regarded as a rating of positivity or negativity resulting from self-evaluations. Although self-evaluations can have either a positive or negative impact on self-esteem, they possess a dynamic structure as opposed to a static structure. This constitutes a situation where an individual constantly improves through self-regulation (Rhodewalt and Peterson, 2008).

Self-esteem is a product of how an individual views themselves, as well as their expectations of being accepted or rejected. The increase or decrease of self-esteem leads to powerful emotional responses that mirror the successes and failures experienced in an individual's life. Self-esteem is self-perception rather than reality (Baumeister et al., 2003).

For an individual to achieve adequacy, consistency between their ideal self and real self must be present. The ideal self reflects how someone should be, while the real self identifies how someone truly is. The greater the overlap between an individual's two selves, the more positively they perceive themselves, thus creating high self-esteem (Altunay and Öz, 2006). A steady balance between an individual's ideal and real self is a crucial aspect for strong self-esteem (Sevim and Artan, 2021).

2.5.3. High and low self-esteem

Low or high self-esteem manifests in an individual's behaviour throughout their life. Those with high self-esteem hold optimistic attitudes and are more likely to experience peacefulness because they believe they can affect change in challenging circumstances. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to aim for accomplishments below their potential, and they often feel afraid of rejection, leading them to avoid engaging in activities that draw attention to themselves. People with low self-esteem tend to undervalue their abilities and even deny their achievements (Aydın, 2022).

It has been observed that individuals with low self-esteem tend to exhibit inconsistency in their communication with others. Some may seek overly close relationships to prove their superiority, while others may feel incomplete and inadequate, leading them to prefer solitude and avoid communication altogether (Geçtan, 1990).

High self-esteem refers to an individual's positive evaluation of themselves, while low self-esteem indicates a negative perception of one's characteristics, resulting in self-acceptance of the situation (Campbell and Lavalley, 1993).

An individual with a high level of self-esteem desires more success. It has been observed that such individuals are emotionally resilient, challenging to sway, and hold a more optimistic

perspective on life. Individuals with low self-esteem display emotional inconsistency and are susceptible to being impacted by daily events with greater intensity (Hogg and Vaughan, 2014).

Individuals with low self-esteem frequently crave acceptance and approval, yet they consistently harbor doubts about achieving this state. Having high self-esteem does not imply that we are impervious to self-doubt or lack of confidence. It is common for individuals to experience self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy, as a natural byproduct of human consciousness. The experience of such emotions can be viewed as a healthy aspect of personal growth. These individuals set realistic goals for themselves and can achieve them, attribute the source of their success to their own efforts and skills, and are motivated to prepare again and continue from where they left off when they encounter failure (Sevim and Artan, 2021).

2.5.4. Factors affecting self-esteem

When considering self-esteem from a broad perspective, it is a phenomenon that has social, spiritual, and physical components, beginning at birth and influenced by life events in adulthood, as well as subsequent processes. Self-esteem is influenced by various factors in an individual's psychological development, but the family holds the most significant impact (Özkan, 1994). The formation of self-esteem is heavily influenced by the attitudes and behaviours of parents. The family factor plays a vital role in the development of an individual with positive self-esteem (Geçtan, 1990).

The notion that the self is a dynamic process and that an individual's self-esteem is derived from the harmony established with the external environment has been endorsed (Dilek, 2007). The individual's worth is determined by one's possessions, from their partner and friendships to their clothing choices and status in society, as well as their property and assets at hand. In a study conducted by Özkan (1994) in which the factors affecting self-esteem were investigated, it was concluded that self-esteem varies depending on gender, parents' education level, mother's occupation, economic level of the family and the attention received from parents.

As individuals and their partners reach higher levels of education, their self-esteem experiences a corresponding increase. Furthermore, achieving higher income and status within one's profession are also contributing factors to an increase in self-esteem (Korkmaz, 1996).

Individuals can sometimes form their self-evaluations based on societal feedback. If the individual is accepted by their environment, their self-esteem is likely to emerge positively and to a high degree. Conversely, if the individual is not accepted, they experience feelings of anxiety and inferiority, leading to lower self-esteem (Köknel, 1982). Individuals occasionally display a more favourable self-image by comparing themselves to those in a lower social position, or experience negative feelings when comparing themselves to individuals in a higher position (Hogg and Vaughan, 2007).

2.6. The Relationships Between Concepts and The Research Hypotheses

A person who experiences severe stigmatization and discrimination from society may have reduced self-esteem. In addition to decreased self-esteem, stigma can also trigger negative attitudes and behaviours such as demoralisation, social adaptation problems, and shame. Some individuals may even internalise these stigmas to the point of justifying negative prejudices in society (Taşkın, 2007). People who are stigmatised experience lower self-esteem and, as a result, a serious decrease in their quality of life. In fact, people who stigmatise themselves are more unsuccessful at work, at home and in social relationships (Corrigan, 1998).

According to Crocker (1999), it has been observed that individuals who are stigmatised or devalued by others experience a serious deterioration in their personality and especially internalised, fixed and low self-esteem. While not all stigmatised individuals will necessarily experience low self-esteem, research suggests that stigmatization can have a significant negative impact on one's self-esteem. Numerous studies have shown that there is no significant difference in self-esteem between stigmatized and non-stigmatized individuals. Crocker suggests that the research on self-esteem is complicated by numerous variables, even within the same group. Differences such as age, race, gender and educational status stand out as parameters that create a lot of differences within the same group. Furthermore, Crocker (1999) argues that an individual's perception of their situation and the meanings they attach to it can contribute to feelings of stigmatization and subsequently impact their self-esteem.

According to Pajares (1997), individuals tend to seek jobs in which they feel competent and confident, while avoiding those in which they are unsuccessful. Those with high self-esteem believe they have various career options to consider. Therefore, individuals can demonstrate

superior effort in both new career opportunities and their chosen careers by developing themselves in the desired direction (Bandura, 1993). Research on the origins of self-esteem indicates that individuals' perceptions of their self-esteem stem from direct experiences, social models, verbal persuasion, and physiological-psychological states (Bandura, 1997). According to Social Cognitive theory, one of the most important predictors of behaviour is self-esteem (Luszczynska et al., 2005). Individuals with low self-esteem tend to avoid challenging tasks and, when faced with difficulties, tend to focus on their own shortcomings rather than the situation at hand. According to Bandura (1993), individuals with high self-esteem are more persistent in achieving difficult tasks and are focused on the issues to be solved. As a result of believing in their abilities, individuals with high self-esteem also experience an increase in self-confidence (Bandura, 1994). According to Rigotti et al. (2020), employees with high levels of self-esteem are more confident in fulfilling their job responsibilities, leading to greater job satisfaction. According to Bandura (1982), an individual's self-esteem can influence their job choices. People tend to seek out jobs where they feel competent and secure, while avoiding those where they feel inadequate.

In their study, Kim and Jang (2018) found that self-esteem has a positive impact on the quality of working life. The operational definition of career satisfaction includes expressions of individual satisfaction in terms of income and promotion. When Abele and Spurk's (2008) longitudinal study examines the relationship between salary, promotion and salary change variables and self-efficacy, it is found that self-esteem during career development periods is positively reflected in the salary received by the employee, thus increasing the employee's career satisfaction. In addition, employee promotions are among the basic expectations of career development goals. Analysing these logical subordinates is one of the main tasks of the leader, and leaders communicate with their subordinates and define them in a way that increases their perception of self-esteem (Rigotti, et al., 2020).

Stigmatization is a type of behaviour that reduces people to a flawed and despised level and deeply discredits them. When this type of behaviour is seen in the workplace, it can lead to a decrease in productivity. Stigmatization, attitudes and behaviours observed among employees can have a negative impact on workplace performance. When stigmatization in society is experienced in the workplace, it can result in exclusion, isolation and marginalisation.

Stigmatization, sometimes in the form of disclosure of the existing situation, sometimes in the form of slander and gossip, can also be experienced in disrespectful behaviour and unethical situations in the workplace and can cause loneliness in the workplace (Yaman and Güngör, 2013).

Organisational exclusion is one of the consequences of stigmatization at work. In return for group solidarity, some group members may be isolated and segregated. Going one step further, the person may be isolated by being pushed out of the group as a result of not showing interest in him/her among group members or colleagues, ignoring and distancing him/her, and being treated coldly (Koçel, 2015). On the basis of this research, hypotheses H₁, H₂ and H₃ has established.

H₁: Stigma consciousness has a negative effect on self-esteem.

H₂: Self-esteem has a positive effect on career satisfaction.

H₃: Stigma consciousness has a positive effect on workplace loneliness.

There are not many articles showing the relationship between loneliness at work and job satisfaction. As a result of the review, the studies that reveal the relationship between the two variables are as follows. In Tabancalı's study on teachers in 2016, it was found that workplace loneliness has a negative relationship with career satisfaction (Tabancalı, 2016). In a study conducted on prison staff, a negative relationship was found between loneliness at work and career satisfaction (Aytaç, 2015). It can be seen that the studies of Tabancalı (2016) and Aytaç (2015) showed similar results. In their study, Çifci and Dikmenli (2015) found that the career satisfaction of geography teachers increased while their loneliness at work decreased. Wright (2005) also states that feeling lonely in the organisation can have a negative impact on both individual and organisational effectiveness by affecting the ability to think and make decisions. According to Wright (2005), loneliness at work also has a negative impact on employees' career satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Social psychology defines three main components of stigma: negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (Corrigan and Watson, 2002). For individuals, stigma consists of three main components: cognition, emotion and behaviour. Cognition reflects the negative views of society

and the evaluation of individuals. Negative beliefs about individuals can lead to negative emotional and behavioural responses (Yang et al., 2022).

Career satisfaction is a psychological connection between people and their occupation based on emotional responses to it (Jia et al., 2020), and involves an individual's commitment to their career, occupation, or job (Huang et al., 2019).

Stigmatization is a concept that has extremely negative consequences for both the individual and the organisation. It is a process that is extremely damaging to the individual's psychology, family and quality of life. From an organisational perspective, job dissatisfaction can have a negative impact on motivation. Discrimination, which is a component of stigma, also takes place in business life. Those who face discriminatory practices in business life are mostly assigned to the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder in the organisational structure, to jobs that require less skill and responsibility, are employed with low wages, and face many obstacles to their advancement. This reduces the level of career satisfaction of individuals (Dalkıranoglu and Çetinel, 2008). On the basis of this research, hypotheses H₄ and H₅ has established.

H₄: Workplace loneliness has a negative effect on career satisfaction.

H₅: Stigma consciousness has a negative effect on career satisfaction.

This study aims to examine the direct effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction and the indirect effect of stigma consciousness together with workplace loneliness and self-esteem. The above conceptual framework and empirical studies show direct relationships between these variables. Based on the fact that there are direct relationships between the variables, the following hypotheses were formulated, considering that workplace loneliness and self-esteem may have indirect effects on the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction.

H₆: Workplace loneliness has a mediating role in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction.

H₇: Self-esteem has a mediating role in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction.

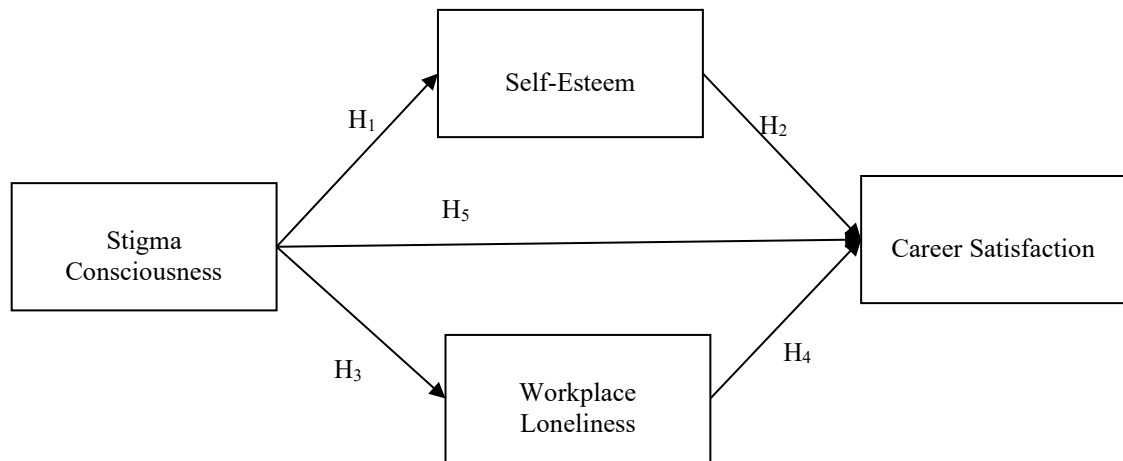


Figure 1: Research Model

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This part of the study discusses the importance and purpose of the research, the main population and sample of the research, the data collection method and tools, and the methods used in the analysis of the data obtained.

3.1. The Purpose and Importance of Research

Stigmatization is a social phenomenon in which individuals or groups that do not conform to normative community values are subjected to prejudices, labels and stereotypes by others. Stigmatization experienced by women in business can cause significant damage to their self-sufficiency and self-esteem. To overcome the challenges they face, women must also struggle against stigmatization. Stigmatization is a behaviour that discredits people. When it occurs in the workplace, it can lead to decreased productivity, isolation, and increased negativity. To enhance women's productivity in business, it is suggested that awareness-raising studies be increased. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the relationship between stigmatization, workplace loneliness, career satisfaction, and self-esteem levels of women in business who experience stigmatization. In this context, the aim of this study is to make a significant contribution to the literature and practice by revealing the direct and indirect relationships between workplace loneliness, career satisfaction and self-esteem of women employees who are exposed to stigma in the banking sector.

3.2. Main Population and Sample Selection

The population of the study consists of women employees working in banks in Turkey. In the study, which aims to collect primary data using the questionnaire method, sampling was chosen because factors such as time and cost constraints make it difficult to reach all women bank employees. Accordingly, the sample was selected using the convenience sampling method and 363 women employees working in banks in Turkey were surveyed.

3.2.1. Demographic features

The implementation phase of the study was carried out between March and July 2023 through questionnaires applied to women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey.

The 31-item questionnaire was administered to a total of 400 people. The collected questionnaires were checked before the analysis and the incomplete and improperly completed questionnaires were excluded from the analysis, and as a result, the data obtained from 363 questionnaires were subjected to the analysis. Accordingly, the distribution of women bank employees participating in the study according to demographic characteristics is shown in Table 3.1.

When analysing the distribution of women bank employees by age group, the 31-35 age group is the largest, accounting for 38% of the total. When analysing the distribution of women bank employees according to their educational background, 52.3% of them have a university degree, 19% have a master's degree and 4.1% have a doctorate; 32% have a total work experience of 6-10 years, 23.4% have a total work experience of 11-15 years and 20.1% have a total work experience of 1-5 years. In terms of length of service in their current organisation, 41% of women bankers have worked in their current organisation for 1-5 years, while 35.5% of them have worked in their current organisation for 6-10 years. Finally, when analysing the distribution of the participants in terms of their titles, 29.2% of them work as administrative staff, 27% as middle managers and 10.7% as senior managers.

Table 3.1. Distribution of participants according to demographic features

Variable		N	%
Age	18-25 years	20	5.5
	26-30 years	67	18.5
	31-35 years	138	38.0
	36-40 years	87	24.0
	41-45 years	44	12.1
	46-50 years	7	1.9
Marital Status	Married	194	53.4
	Single	169	46.6
Education Status	Primary School	6	1.7
	Middle School	43	11.8
	High School	40	11.0
	University	190	52.3
	Master's Degree	69	19.0
	PhD	15	4.1
Current Position	Senior Manager	39	10.7
	Middle Level Manager	98	27.0
	Administrative Staff	106	29.2
	Technical Staff	56	15.4
	Part-time Staff	9	2.5
	Qualified Personnel	55	15.2
Total Working Time	1-5 years	73	20.1
	6-10 years	116	32.0
	11-15 years	85	23.4
	16-20 years	43	11.8
	21-25 years	19	5.2
	26-30 years	27	7.4
Duration of Employment at Current Institution	1-5 years	149	41.0
	6-10 years	129	35.5
	11-15 years	51	14.0
	16-20 years	21	5.8
	21-25 years	6	1.7
	26-30 years	4	1.1
	More than 30 years	3	0.8
Total		363	100

3.2. Data Collection Method and Tool

In this section, the scales used to collect the research data and the process of conducting the research are discussed.

3.3.1. Data collection tools

Before starting the study, the necessary permission was obtained from Adana Alparslan Türkeş Science and Technology University, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee. In order to examine the relationships between the variables covered in the study, data were collected using the questionnaire data technique. In order to create the questionnaire form, as a result of the literature review, the scales that were considered most appropriate to measure working women's perceptions of stigma, loneliness at work, self-esteem and career satisfaction were identified. The scales were translated into Turkish by an academic with a good command of English. Among the expressions in the translation reviewed by the researchers, the most appropriate expressions reflecting the original scale items were identified. The identified statements were translated into English and an English expert evaluated the appropriateness of this version of the scale by comparing it with the original scale. A personal information form designed by the researcher was used to collect personal information from the participants. In this context, the personal information form includes questions about the participants' age, marital status, educational status, current position in the workplace, and total hours worked. The personal information form also included information that the study was voluntary, that participants could withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason, that the data collected would only be used for scientific purposes, and the estimated time needed to complete the questionnaire.

3.3.1.1. Stigma consciousness scale

"The Stigma Consciousness Questionnaire for Women (SCQ form Women)" scale developed by Pinel (1999) was used to measure the stigma consciousness levels of women employees. The one-dimensional scale contains a total of 10 statements. The answers to the statements in the scale were coded as five-point Likert scale as "1=Strongly disagree", "2=Disagree", "3=Unsure", "4=Agree" and "5=Strongly agree". In the study conducted by Pinel (1999), the Cronbach alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.72.

3.3.1.2. Workplace loneliness scale

The short form of the UCLA loneliness scale revised and developed by Neto (1992) was used to measure the workplace loneliness levels of women employees. This scale includes a total of

6 statements. The answers to the statements in the scale were coded as five-point Likert scale as "1=Strongly disagree", "2=Disagree", "3=Disagree", "4=Agree" and "5=Strongly agree". In the study conducted by Neto (2014), the Cronbach alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.82.

3.3.1.3. Career satisfaction scale

"Career Satisfaction Scale" developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990) was used to measure career satisfaction of women employees. The scale consists of 5 items. The answers to the statements in the scale are coded as five-point Likert scale as "1=Strongly disagree", "2=Disagree", "3=Unsure", "4=Agree" and "5=Strongly agree". In the study conducted by Jiang et al. (2001), the Cronbach alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.82, and in the study conducted by Yüksel (2005), the Cronbach alpha value of the scale was found to be 0.83.

3.3.1.4. Self-esteem scale

"Self-Esteem Scale" developed by Rosenberg in 1965 was used to measure the self-esteem level of women employees. The answers to the statements in the scale consisting of 10 items were coded as five-point Likert scale as "1=Strongly disagree", "2=Disagree", "3=Disagree", "4=Agree" and "5=Strongly agree". Half of the questions consist of positive sentences and the other half consist of negative sentences. A high score indicates that the individual has low self-esteem and a low score indicates that the individual has high self-esteem (Korkmaz, 1996). The validity and reliability studies of the scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) in our country were conducted by Füsun Çuhadaroğlu (1986) and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found to be 0.76.

Information on the scales used in the research is given in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Information about the scales used

Scale	Related Work	Number of Expressions
Stigma Consciousness	Pinel (1999)	10
Workplace Loneliness	Neto (1992)	6
Career Satisfaction	Greenhouse et al. (1990)	5
Self-Esteem	Rosenberg (1965)	10

3.3.2. Research process

In the study, where the sample was selected using the convenience sampling method, the survey technique was used to collect the data. The questionnaire used consists of five sections. The first section contains demographic items. In the demographic section there are questions about age, education and marital status. The second section contains the stigma consciousness scale, the third section contains the workplace loneliness scale, the fourth section contains the career satisfaction scale and the fifth section contains the self-esteem scale. The data were collected via the internet and those who abandoned the questionnaires during data collection were not included in the study. Participation was voluntary. It took about 10 minutes to complete the forms.

3.4. Methods Used In The Analysis of The Data Obtained

The data obtained from the questionnaire study was analysed using exploratory factor analysis, pearson correlation and hierarchical regression analysis methods. This section of the study details the analysis methods used in the research.

3.4.1. Exploratory factor analysis

Factor analysis is defined as a multivariate statistical method that examines the binary relationships between all observed variables and aims to reveal latent variables/factors from the measured variables (Osborne, 2014). These new latent variables are called factors or dimensions. In the behavioural sciences, factor analysis can be used to examine the construct validity of measurement tools developed to measure many traits such as personality and development (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

The general purpose of factor analysis is to summarise the data and generally regroup the variables into limited clusters based on common variance so that the relationships and models between variables can be easily understood and interpreted (Yong and Pearce, 2013).

Exploratory factor analysis is a factor analysis used to identify new variables (factors) that are independent of each other from a data set consisting of p number of interrelated variables (Özdamar, 2013). Exploratory factor analysis is used when a researcher wants to analyse which variables come together and discover the number of factors that influence the variables. The basic hypothesis of exploratory factor analysis is that there are m number of common 'latent' factors to be discovered in the data set and the aim is to find the smallest number of common factors to explain the relationships (Yong and Pearce, 2013).

Researchers who want to understand whether the statements in the data collection instrument designed to measure a cognitive or psychological construct (concept) actually measure this construct and to uncover the independent factors related to the construct to be measured try to uncover the construct validity of the data collection instrument with exploratory factor analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

In order to apply exploratory factor analysis to a dataset, the data must meet some conditions. These conditions are listed as follows (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2015):

1. EFA is performed on parametric data. The measurements of the variables should be made at least at the level of equal interval scale.
2. The variables should be normally distributed. Multivariate normality should also be checked.
3. Relationships between variables should be linear. There should be a moderate correlation between the variables in the correlation matrix checked for factor extraction.
4. The EFA method requires at least three variables. There should be at least three variables under each factor.
5. The sample size for the EFA method should be at an acceptable level.

Using the correlation matrix calculated to determine the relationships between the variables in the data set obtained under these conditions, the variables with a strong relationship between them are grouped into the same factor. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and the Barlett sphericity test are used to check whether the data set is suitable for factor analysis. The KMO test examines whether the data set is suitable for factor analysis. For factor analysis to be appropriate, the value obtained as a result of the KMO test must be greater than 0.60. If this value is less than 0.50, factor analysis cannot be applied. The Barlett test examines whether there is a relationship between variables based on partial correlation, i.e. the suitability of the data matrix. If the p-value of the χ^2 test statistic obtained as a result of this test is less than 0.05, the data are a multiple normally distributed main cluster and are suitable for analysis (Field, 2009).

3.4.2. Pearson correlation and hierarchical regression analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is a method used to find and interpret the degree of relationship between two different variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient requires that the two variables are continuous and that the variables are normally distributed together. A Pearson correlation coefficient calculated for two variables can be interpreted in terms of strength (low-medium-high), direction (positive-negative), variance explained (r^2), statistical significance and practical significance (Büyüköztürk, 2011).

The existence of a relationship between two or more variables does not imply a cause and effect relationship. The correlation coefficient provides information about the direction and strength of the relationship between variables. It shows whether there is a relationship between the variables, and if so, whether this relationship is too much, that is, whether it is strong or weak, and whether one of the values of a variable increases while the other increases or decreases (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2015).

The relationship between two variables can occur in three ways. In cases where there is no relationship between the dependent and independent variables and the variables do not affect each other, there is a linear "no relationship" between the two variables. If the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is in the same direction, i.e. if the independent variable increases, the dependent variables also increase, or if the independent variable

decreases, the other variables also decrease, there is a "positive relationship" between the variables. On the other hand, if the relationship between the dependent and independent variables is in the opposite direction, that is, if the independent variable increases, the dependent variables decrease, or if the independent variable decreases, the other variables increase, there is a "negative relationship" between the variables (Sümbüloğlu and Akdağ, 2007).

The correlation coefficient (r) indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables and takes values between -1 and +1. A correlation coefficient close to +1 indicates a perfect positive linear relationship between two variables, while a correlation coefficient close to -1 indicates a perfect negative linear relationship between two variables. If the correlation coefficient is close to 0 (zero), there is no significant relationship between the variables (Lindley, 1987).

In the second stage of the analysis conducted to test the mediating effect of workplace loneliness and self-esteem in the relationship between stigma awareness and career satisfaction of working women, regression analysis with mediator variable (mediator) proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. Variables that transmit or mediate the effect of the independent variable to the dependent variable are called mediator variables and these variables help explain the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2015).

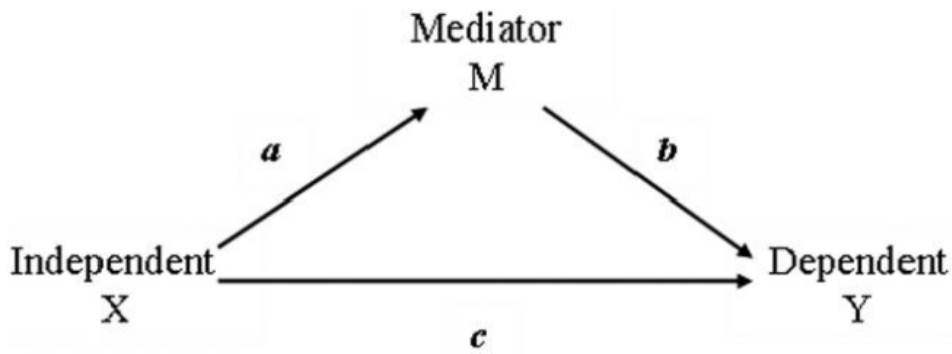


Figure 2. Baron and Kenny Mediation Effect Model

Source: Baron and Kenny, 1986

Baron and Kenny (1986) stated that the following three conditions should be met for a variable to be a mediator variable (Figure 2):

- (1) The independent variable (stigma consciousness) should have a significant effect on the mediating variable (workplace loneliness, self-esteem);
- (2) The independent variable (stigma consciousness) should have an effect on the dependent variable (career satisfaction);
- (3) When the mediating variable (workplace loneliness, self-esteem) is included in the regression analysis in the second step, the effect of the independent variable (stigma consciousness) on the dependent variable (career satisfaction) decreases, while the mediating variable should have a significant effect on the dependent variable.

In the final stage, if the significant effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable completely disappears as a result of the inclusion of the intermediate variable in the analysis, it can be said that there is a "full mediation effect", and if the significant effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable decreases, it can be said that there is a "partial mediation effect" (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section of the study presents the findings related to the analysis of the data obtained as a result of the questionnaire study. Accordingly, exploratory factor analysis, reliability and validity results, pearson correlation analysis, mediation tests and hypothesis tests are presented.

4.1. Reliability and Factor Analysis of Measurement Tools

Reliability refers to how accurately a measurement tool measures what it measures. The most widely used method for finding reliability coefficients in psychological measurement is Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The Cronbach's Alpha value determines whether the items in the measurement tools are consistent with each other and whether they measure the concept in question (Cronbach, 1951). Although it varies according to the measurement tool, the lowest recommended Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is set at 0.70 (Panayides, 2013). However, in practice, the scale is generally assessed as unreliable if $\alpha < 0.40$, low reliable if $0.40 \leq \alpha < 0.60$, highly reliable if $0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.80$, and very reliable if $0.80 \leq \alpha \leq 1$ (Uzgören, 2012). Accordingly, as can be seen in Table 5, the Cronbach's Alpha values of all scales used in the study are above 0.70, indicating that the scales are highly reliable.

The EFA method was used to determine the construct validity of the scales used in the study. Before applying factor analysis to a data set, the KMO test should be performed to check whether the data set is suitable for factor analysis. Accordingly, as a result of the analysis, the KMO was found to be 0.926 and this value indicates a very good level of sample fit. Furthermore, according to Bartlett's sphericity test, $\chi^2 = 12215.667$, degrees of freedom 465, $p < 0.01$ significance level is statistically significant. Accordingly, the current data set is a multiple normally distributed main cluster and is suitable for factor analysis.

Table 4.1. Factor and reliability analysis of the scale

Components	Component Loadings	Cronbach Alpha
Component 1: Stigma Consciousness		0,947
SC1 Stereotypes about women have not affected me. ®	0,840	
SC2 I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypically female. ®	0,866	
SC3 When interacting with men, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a woman.	0,747	
SC4 Most men do not judge women on the basis of their gender. ®	0,823	
SC5 My being female does not influence how men act with me. ®	0,848	
SC6 I almost never think about the fact that I am female when I interact with men. ®	0,772	
SC7 My being female does not influence how people act with me. ®	0,846	
SC8 Most men have a lot more sexist thoughts than they actually express.	0,738	
SC9 I often think that men are unfairly accused of being sexist. ®	0,774	
SC10 Most men have a problem viewing women as equals.	0,731	
Component 2: Workplace Loneliness		0,926
WL1 I lack companionship.	0,831	
WL2 I feel part of a group of friends. ®	0,829	
WL3 I feel left out.	0,836	
WL4 I feel isolated.	0,869	
WL5 I am unhappy being so withdrawn.	0,844	
WL6 People are around me but not with me.	0,867	
Component 3: Career Satisfaction		0,902
CS1 I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.	0,752	
CS2 I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.	0,828	
CS3 I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income.	0,826	
CS4 I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.	0,738	
CS5 I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.	0,699	

Component 3: Self-Esteem		0,914
SE1 On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	0,846	
SE2 At times I think I am no good at all. ®	0,850	
SE3 I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	0,821	
SE4 I am able to do things as well as most other people.	0, 854	
SE5 I feel I do not have much to be proud of. ®	0,772	
SE6 I certainly feel useless at times. ®	0,869	
SE7 I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	0,859	
SE8 I wish I could have more respect for myself. ®	0,758	
SE9 All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. ®	0, 774	
SE10 I take a positive attitude toward myself.	0,777	
Total Variance Explained:		%74,46
KMO :		0,926
Bartlett Sphericity Test:		$\chi^2 = 12215,667$; df = 465; p = 0,00

As seen in Table 4.1. a total of 4 factors emerged in the study and the eigenvalues of these factors were 1 and greater than 1. In addition, it was found that these factors explained 74.46% of the variance. As a result of the EFA, it can be seen that the factor loadings of all the items in the scales have high values. Factor loadings are the correlation of an item and the observed variable with the relevant factor. The square of the factor load of the item within the factor indicates how much of the variance in the relevant factor it explains. A low mean factor load of an item means that the item is insufficient to explain the relevant factor. It is generally recommended that factor loadings should be greater than 0.32. Accordingly, factor loadings between 0.32-0.5 are classified as low, 0.5-0.6 as good, 0.6-0.7 as high, and 0.7 and above as excellent factor loadings (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2015).

4.2. The Relationship of Stigma Consciousness with Workplace Loneliness, Career Satisfaction and Self-Esteem

Pearson correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between stigma awareness and workplace loneliness, career satisfaction and self-esteem. In this context, the results of the pearson correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Results of pearson correlation analysis

	1	2	3	4
1. Stigma Consciousness	1			
2. Workplace Loneliness	,318**	1		
3. Career Satisfaction	-,374**	-,414**	1	
4. Self-Esteem	-,398**	-,444**	,596**	1

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 significance level.

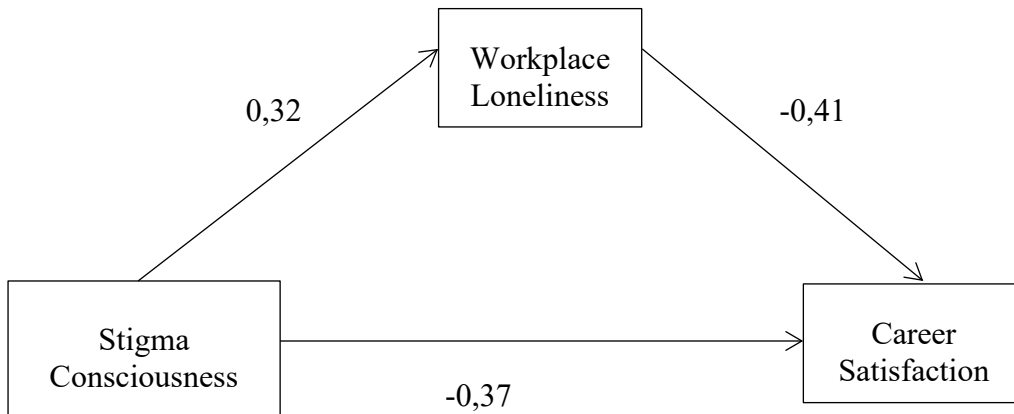
According to the results of the correlation analysis, which shows the degree of relationship between the two variables, it was found that there was a statistically significant relationship between stigma consciousness, which was taken as an independent variable in the study, and workplace loneliness ($r=0.318$, $p<0.01$) in a positive direction, between career satisfaction ($r=-0.374$, $p<0.01$) in a negative direction, and between self-esteem ($r=-0.398$, $p<0.01$) in a negative direction. Based on these results, it was concluded that an increase in stigma awareness leads to an increase in loneliness at work, but a decrease in career satisfaction and self-esteem. It was found that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between self-esteem and career satisfaction ($r=0.596$, $p<0.01$) and a statistically significant negative relationship between workplace loneliness and career satisfaction ($r=-0.414$, $p<0.01$). Based on these results, it was concluded that an increase in self-esteem leads to an increase in career satisfaction, and an increase in workplace loneliness leads to a decrease in career satisfaction.

Accordingly, hypotheses H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄ and H₅ developed in the study are accepted.

4.3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Results

In the second stage of the analysis, which was conducted to test the mediating effect of workplace loneliness and self-esteem on the effect of stigma consciousness of women bank employees on career satisfaction, the three-stage regression analysis proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used.

- a. Mediating role of workplace loneliness in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction



Stage 1: The effect of the independent variable on the intermediate variable: At this stage, the results of the regression analysis showing the effect of stigma awareness on loneliness at work are presented in Table 4.3

Table 4.3. Regression analysis showing the effect of stigma consciousness on workplace loneliness

r² = 0,101	Beta	Standart error	Sig.
Constant	1,911	0,165	,000
Stigma Consciousness	0,372	0,058	,000

When analysing the results of the hierarchical regression analysis, the beta coefficient of stigma consciousness has found to be 0.372 ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, it is seen that stigma consciousness of women bank employees has an effect on workplace loneliness. Thus, the first condition suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) for the existence of a mediating variable, that the independent variable (stigma consciousness) has an effect on the mediating variable (workplace loneliness), has been met.

Stage 2: The effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable: In the second stage of the analysis, the regression analysis results showing the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction are given in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Regression analysis showing the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction

r² = 0,140	Beta	Standart error	Sig.
Constant	4,096	0,128	,000
Stigma Consciousness	-0,347	0,045	,000

In the second stage where the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction was examined, the beta coefficient has found as -0.347 ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, it is seen that stigma consciousness of women bank employees has an effect on their career satisfaction levels. Therefore, the second condition suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) for the existence of mediation effect, which is the condition that the independent variable has an effect on the dependent variable, is also met.

Stage 3: The effect of independent and mediating variables on the dependent variable: In the last stage of the analysis, the regression analysis results showing the effect of stigma consciousness and workplace loneliness together on career satisfaction are presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. Hierarchical regression analysis showing the mediating effect of workplace loneliness in the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction

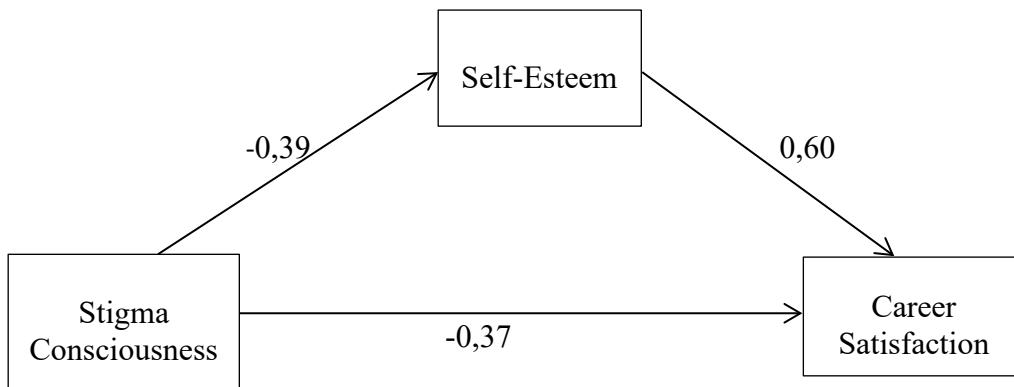
r² = 0,237	Beta	Standart error	Sig.
Constant	4,594	0,141	,000
Stigma Consciousness	-0,250	0,045	,000
Workplace Loneliness	-0,260	0,038	,000

In the last stage of the analysis, when the independent variable and the mediating variable were included in the regression analysis together, it has found that the effect of the independent variable, stigma consciousness, on career satisfaction decreased due to the mediation of workplace loneliness ($\beta = -0.250$, $p < 0.01$) and the mediating variable, workplace loneliness,

significantly affected career satisfaction ($\beta=-0.260$, $p<0.01$). However, with the inclusion of the mediating variable in the model, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable was significant although it decreased. Therefore, in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction, workplace loneliness has a partial mediation effect, not a full mediation effect. Therefore, when the mediating variable (workplace loneliness) is included in the regression analysis in the second step, the third condition suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) for the existence of the mediation effect, which is that the effect of the independent variable (stigma consciousness) on the dependent variable (career satisfaction) decreases, while the condition that the mediating variable has a significant effect on the dependent variable is also met.

Sobel Test was conducted to test the statistical significance of the difference of the mediation effect of workplace loneliness from zero in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction. Sobel test is performed to test the significance of the mediation effect and to determine how much the mediating variable contributes to the total effect in the outcome variable. In the Sobel test, the z value of the mediation effect is obtained by dividing the mediation effect obtained as a result of the hierarchical regression analysis by the standard error and this value is compared to a standard normal distribution to test significance. If the z value is greater than 1.96, it is concluded that the mediation effect is significant (Yay, 2016). When the test results ($z:4,565$ sh: $0,022$, $p<,001$) using the SOBEL macro developed by Andrew Hayes for the SPSS package programme are evaluated, it is seen that the partial mediation effect of workplace loneliness on the effect of stigma consciousness on the career satisfaction levels of women bank employees is confirmed. Accordingly, although workplace loneliness has a mediating effect in the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction, it is not the only mediating variable in this relationship, other variables also have a mediating role in this relationship.

- b. The mediating role of self-esteem in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction



Stage 1: The effect of the independent variable on the intermediate variable: At this stage, the regression analysis results showing the effect of stigma consciousness on self-esteem are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6. Regression analysis showing the effect of stigma consciousness on self-esteem

$r^2 = 0,159$	Beta	Standart error	Sig.
Constant	4,419	0,125	,000
Stigma Consciousness	-0,367	0,044	,000

When analysing the results of the hierarchical regression analysis, the beta coefficient of stigma consciousness has found to be -0.367 ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, it is seen that stigma consciousness of women bank employees has an effect on self-esteem. Thus, the first condition suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) for the existence of a mediating variable, that the independent variable (stigma consciousness) has an effect on the mediating variable (self-esteem), has been met.

Stage 2: The effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable: In the second stage of the analysis, the regression analysis results showing the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction are given in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. Regression analysis showing the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction

r² = 0,140	Beta	Standart error	Sig.
Constant	4,096	0,128	,000
Stigma Consciousness	-0,347	0,045	,000

In the second stage where the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction was examined, the beta coefficient was found as -0.347 ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, it is seen that stigma consciousness of women bank employees has an effect on their career satisfaction levels. Therefore, the second condition suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) for the existence of mediation effect, which is the condition that the independent variable has an effect on the dependent variable, is also met.

Stage 3: The effect of independent and mediating variables on the dependent variable: In the last stage of the analysis, the regression analysis results showing the effect of stigma consciousness and workplace loneliness together on career satisfaction are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8. Hierarchical regression analysis showing the mediating effect of self-esteem in the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction

r² = 0,378	Beta	Standart error	Sig.
Constant	1,729	0,229	,000
Stigma Consciousness	-0,150	0,042	,000
Self-Esteem	0,536	0,046	,000

In the third stage, in which the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction together with self-esteem was examined, it was observed that the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction decreased due to the mediation of self-esteem ($\beta = -0,150$, $p < 0,01$) and the mediating variable, self-esteem, significantly affected career satisfaction ($\beta = 0,536$, $p < 0,01$). However, with the inclusion of the mediating variable in the model, the effect of the

independent variable on the dependent variable was significant although it decreased. Therefore, in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction, self-esteem has a partial mediation effect, not a full mediation effect.

Sobel Test was conducted to test the statistical significance of the difference of the mediating effect of self-esteem from zero in the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction. When the test results ($z:7,162$, $sh:0,031$, $p<,001$) are evaluated, it is seen that the partial mediation effect of self-esteem on the effect of stigma consciousness on career satisfaction level of women bank employees is confirmed. This result reveals that although self-esteem has a mediating effect in the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction level, it is not the only mediating variable in this relationship and other variables also have a mediating role in this relationship.

5. CONCLUSION

This section of the study discusses the results of the research on the impact of stigma consciousness on workplace loneliness, career satisfaction and self-esteem of women bank employees. In this direction, the findings of the study are evaluated and discussed in the context of related studies in the literature and suggestions for future studies are also included.

5.1. Conclusions and Recommendations

Today, the participation of women in the workforce is steadily increasing. As women's position in society changes, they are increasingly entering the business world. This has led to the phenomenon of women in business becoming an important issue that has been extensively studied. In this context, the challenges faced by women in business and their employment status are constantly being revealed. Societal value judgements often impose limitations on women's participation in the workforce. Stereotypical ideas such as "women should stay at home, women should take care of children, women should serve their husbands and families, women should not work in every job" cause women who want to work to experience conflict. Given the challenges that women face in the workplace, many choose to leave their jobs.

In adapting to today's information society, women striving for equal opportunities in the workplace emphasise their independence, while also fulfilling traditional roles as a housewife, mother, and wife. However, these social roles may hinder their pursuit of independence. Many women encounter various challenges in the business world, including the glass ceiling syndrome, stigmatization, and gender-based discrimination, which can lead to their exclusion from the workforce. Gender-based discrimination can lead to stigmatization of working women, which can exacerbate the challenges they face in the workplace. Gender-based stigmatization is often the underlying cause of many social and economic challenges faced by women in the workplace.

This study aims to investigate the effect of stigma consciousness of women bank employees on workplace loneliness, career satisfaction and self-esteem, with workplace loneliness and self-esteem as mediating variables. In line with this purpose, a research model has been established examining previous studies on the subject and research hypotheses have been developed. The

data used to test these hypotheses developed within the scope of the study have been collected using the questionnaire method. A questionnaire has been applied to 363 women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey in this direction. The study employed factor analysis to analyse the data and determine the construct validity of the scales used. Correlation analysis was used to establish the relationships between variables, and regression analysis was applied to test the mediation effect using a mediating variable. The results are summarised below:

- It has determined that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between stigma consciousness and self-esteem ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, women employees with high stigma consciousness has low self-esteem, while women employees with low stigma consciousness has high self-esteem. In other words, as discrimination against women employees, which is a form of stigmatization, increases, their self-esteem decreases. The results of this study on women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey are consistent with previous research (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers and Jackson, 2008; Verkuyten, 1998). These studies have found an association between low self-esteem and high perceived discrimination. Stigmatization, which reflects perceived discrimination, has been suggested to be related to personal self-esteem. Kuzgun (2002) highlights the significance of an individual's social environment on their self-esteem. Positive evaluations of an individual can enhance their self-worth.
- It has determined that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between self-esteem and career satisfaction ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, it is concluded that an increase in self-esteem will lead to an increase in career satisfaction. The results of this study on women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey are consistent with previous research (Kim and Jang, 2018, Abele and Spurk, 2008, Cheng et al., 2020, Zhou et al., 2021, Caesens and Stinglhamber, 2014, Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel, 2009). According to Bandura (1993), individuals with high self-esteem are more persistent in achieving difficult tasks and are focused on problem-solving. This belief in their abilities also increases their self-confidence (Bandura, 1994). Rigotti et al. (2020) found that employees with high levels of self-esteem are more self-assured in completing their job responsibilities and are therefore more satisfied with their careers.

- The study has found a statistically significant relationship between stigma consciousness and workplace loneliness ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, while women employees with higher stigma consciousness feel more lonely at work, women employees with lower stigma consciousness feel less lonely at work. The results of this study on women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey are consistent with previous research (Anderson and Harvey, 1988; Jones, Freemon and Goswick, 1981; Russell, Peplau and Cutrona, 1980). When evaluating stigmatization from an organizational perspective, it is often included in concepts such as workplace incivility, rude behavior, emotional abuse, social exclusion, and discrimination. In fact, stigmatization can be seen as the root cause of all of these negative behaviors (Yaman, 2009). Stigmatization, which includes negative behaviors towards women, can lead to feelings of loneliness among women employees.
- It has determined that there has a statistically significant negative relationship between workplace loneliness and career satisfaction ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, it is concluded that women employees who feel lonely at work have lower career satisfaction levels, while women employees who do not feel lonely at work have higher career satisfaction levels. The results of this study on women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey are consistent with previous research (Tabancalı, 2016, Aytaç, 2015, Cifci and Dikmenli, 2015). Wright (2005) argues that experiencing loneliness within an organisation can have adverse effects on both individual and organisational effectiveness, as it can impair decision-making abilities. According to Wright (2005), workplace loneliness can negatively impact employees' career satisfaction and organisational commitment.
- It has determined that there is a statistically significant negative relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction ($p < 0.01$). Accordingly, while the career satisfaction level of women employees with high stigma consciousness will decrease, the career satisfaction level of women employees with low stigma consciousness will increase. The results of this study on women employees working in private and public banks in Turkey are consistent with previous research (Koru Uzokurt, 2019, Meyer and Allen, 1991, Gül and Beyşenova, 2018). The main reason why women are stigmatised in the workplace is because of societal stereotypes. These are stereotypes such as

"women should stay at home, women should take care of children, women should serve their husbands and families, women should not work in every job" and thus women escape from working life. Research suggests that women's sense of commitment to their work and career can be increased when they feel valued in the business world and when efforts are made to support them (Koru Uz Kurt, 2019). Sexist stereotypes can discourage women from pursuing a career by creating the perception that success is unattainable (Gül and Beyşenova, 2018). In an environment where gender roles are not discussed, individuals may feel more self-confident and work towards achieving their career goals (İnandı and Tunç, 2012).

- It has been revealed that workplace loneliness has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction. Accordingly, the increase in the level of stigma consciousness of employees increases workplace loneliness and as a result, their career satisfaction levels decrease. Therefore, the perception of stigmatization consciousness among women employees accelerates their workplace loneliness and reduces their career satisfaction levels.
- It was revealed that self-esteem has a partial mediating effect in the relationship between stigma consciousness and career satisfaction. Accordingly, an increase in the level of stigma consciousness decreases employees' self-esteem and as a result, their career satisfaction levels decrease. Therefore, the perception of stigmatization consciousness in women employees leads to a decrease in their self-esteem and reduces their level of career satisfaction.

Currently, women are making progress in the business world, but their empowerment is hindered by various obstacles. These include the glass ceiling syndrome, stigmatization, and gender-based discrimination, which often force women out of the workforce. It is seen that women are exposed to more stigmatization and discrimination due to cultural codes related to gender inequality in relation to cultural structure, which Goffman (1963) also mentioned as one of the reasons for stigmatization. This study examines the impact of stigmatization on women employees' workplace experiences and investigates its consequences on workplace loneliness, career satisfaction, and self-esteem.

In the current society, where social differences are increasingly apparent and categorisation is on the rise, the issue of stigmatization is becoming more prevalent. It is crucial to address stigmatization in all social fields. To combat identity threat triggered by stigmatization, individuals can employ various strategies (Miller and Major, 2000; Major and O'Brien, 2005). In the management of stigmatization, changing the cultural patterns that are valid in different societies is one of the studies that should be done first.

In order to recognise and prevent stigmatization, it is necessary to raise social awareness and change the perspective dictated by stereotypes. In order to evaluate the issue on an equal level, it is necessary to accept that these stereotypes and the discrimination that results from them are experienced. Professional staff should be more sensitive and fair when dealing with these issues, as it is difficult to change societal attitudes. Without this sensitivity, a social worker using a solution-oriented approach may not achieve the desired outcome.

In workplaces where stigmatization is experienced, solutions should be developed by both stigmatized individuals and managers. Stigmatized individuals may develop defense mechanisms, such as denial, finding reasons, projection, sublimation, identification, and internalization, to protect themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously (Geçtan, 2012). Managers have a significant responsibility in managing stigmatization in the workplace. They can guide employees by understanding the organizational culture, values, and norms. Managers should create a working environment that is free from prejudices and gossip by providing equal and fair treatment, demonstrating effective leadership qualities, keeping communication channels open with employees, developing positive relationships, and considering their opinions (Yaman, 2009). As stigmatization can have a profound impact on individuals, their families, and wider society, it is essential to take steps to prevent it in various social environments, including the family, workplace, and healthcare institutions.

Organising activities, seminars, and group work that address the issue of stigmatization in community responsibility projects can be beneficial for individuals, particularly those in university and professional settings. Such studies can help clarify one's own ideas and prompt self-reflection on the question of whether their beliefs are truly their own.

As with any research, this study also has limitations. The first constraint of the study, the assumption that the participants answered the questions in the questionnaire form objectively and impartially, can be considered as a constraint in this study, as in all other studies where data are collected by questionnaire technique. Another limitation of the study is that some employees refused to answer the questions due to the voluntary nature of the survey. This is an important limitation of the study as discrimination is a highly sensitive issue and the lack of transparency from some participants may affect the validity of the results. Finally, the research comprises a sample group of women working in the banking sector. Therefore, the research data are only valid for this specific sample group and cannot be generalised to the wider population.

The study is expected to make a valuable contribution to the sector and future academic research. The first suggestion that can be made for future studies is that although the bank employees included in the research have the power to represent the universe, since the generalisation power of the research results may be weak, the sample group should be enlarged in order to reach different results. It is important to consider that the research is evaluated solely based on the data obtained within a specific time frame. The survey is cross-sectional. This means that we can only measure the attitudes and behaviours of women at the time of the survey. Another suggestion is that it is thought that such studies to be conducted in the future will be beneficial in terms of the research subject in different sectors where women labour force is dense. In future studies of the subject, a sectoral comparison can be made. Additionally, the concepts under investigation can be studied in relation to other topics in organizational behavior.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Survey Form

Dear participants

This study aims to evaluate the relationship between stigma consciousness, workplace loneliness, career satisfaction and self-esteem levels of women banker who are exposed to stigma while being positioned in business life. It does not have any commercial purpose. Your personal information will be kept completely confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes.

Thank you for participating in the research.

Gülrüba KOÇAK

I. Demographic Data

Age ☐ 18-25 years ☐ 26-30 years ☐ 31-35 years ☐ 36-40 years ☐ 41-45 years ☐ 46-50 years

Marital Status ☐ Married ☐ Single

Education Status ☐ Primary School ☐ Middle School ☐ High School ☐ University ☐ Master's Degree ☐ PhD

Current Position ☐ Senior Manager ☐ Middle Level Manager ☐ Administrative Staff ☐ Technical Staff ☐ Part-Time Staff ☐ Qualified Personnel

Total Working Time ☐ 1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ 16-20 years ☐ 21-25 years ☐ 26-30 years

Duration of Employment at Current Institution ☐ 1-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ 16-20 years ☐ 21-25 years ☐ 26-30 years ☐ More than 30 years

- II. Please indicate your level of agreement on each of the following statements about “Stigma Consciousness”. (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Undecided (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.**

STIGMA CONSCIOUSNESS					
	1	2	3	4	5
1.Stereotypes about women have not affected me.					
2.I never worry that my behaviors will be viewed as stereotypically female.					
3.When interacting with men, I feel like they interpret all my behaviors in terms of the fact that I am a woman.					
4. Most men do not judge women on the basis of their gender.					
5.My being female does not influence how men act with me.					
6.I almost never think about the fact that I am female when I interact with men.					
7.My being female does not influence how people act with me.					
8.Most men have a lot more sexist thoughts than they actually express.					
9.I often think that men are unfairly accused of being sexist.					
10.Most men have a problem viewing women as equals.					

- III. Please indicate your level of agreement on each of the following statements about “Workplace Loneliness”. (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Undecided (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.**

WORKPLACE LONELINESS					
	1	2	3	4	5
11.I lack companionship.					
12.I feel part of a group of friends.					
13.I feel left out.					
14.I feel isolated.					
15.I am unhappy being so withdrawn.					
16.People are around me but not with me.					

- IV. Please indicate your level of agreement on each of the following statements about "Career Satisfaction". (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Undecided (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.**

CAREER SATISFACTION					
	1	2	3	4	5
17. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.					
18. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.					
19. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income.					
20. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.					
21. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.					

- V. Please indicate your level of agreement on each of the following statements about "Self-Esteem". (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Undecided (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree.**

SELF-ESTEEM					
	1	2	3	4	5
22. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.					
23. At times I think I am no good at all.					
24. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.					
25. I am able to do things as well as most other people.					
26. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.					
27. I certainly feel useless at times.					
28. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.					
29. I wish I could have more respect for myself.					
30. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.					
31. I take a positive attitude toward myself.					