Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Employees in Private Sector in Turkey

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Introduction
Discrimination generally manifests itself as the violation of the “Equality” principle which is the legal and the ethical concept brought by the people by nature and entitled by the people by means of being born as humans.

All persons are born equal; they are all same in terms of being human, and they coexist with their differences with regard to their diverse characteristics. Are discriminations that arise within this coexistence merely an issue of rights and fairness solely with their legal and ethical dimensions; or is it also an issue of “Equality and Justice” which is demanded to be the concern in the center of the politics? Regarding anti-discrimination, when it’s focused on justice issues, political issues and thresholds in overcoming discrimination are considered; when it’s focused on the political issues, the need for legal struggle with political foundations becomes evident. In brief, struggle for equality involves changing normative, in other words, rulemaking structures.

As an issue of both justice and politics, struggle for anti-discrimination consists of multi-dimensional processes including organization of the society, operation of the legal system and suchlike elements. Whether it is focused on the legal issues or the political ones, in the last analysis and beyond all dimensions, discrimination is primarily a “humanitarian” issue which emerges within the relationships between persons. Its mental origins and reasons are human beings.

Discrimination is a common, almost normalized evil which causes individuals and social groups to feel unhappy, “inefficient”, “sick”, “faulty”, “deficient”, “disadvantaged”, and as a result, “wounded” in daily life and in different spheres of life. Victimization is frequently invisible, usual, adopted and even “deserved”; it’s almost an unalterable part of daily life. When mental sources and behavioral consequences of discrimination which are built within the relationships between people are considered, it becomes clear that a certain change in mentality is needed among the individuals and society. For this mental change to take place, mental structures that produce discrimination, power structures that protect it and how discrimination is crystallized in everyday life should be inquired.
People are exposed to negative experiences such as discriminatory attitudes and behaviors as a result of biases. And they are subjected to these just because of the – sometimes assumed - characteristics of the social group that they belong to; rather than the characteristics or the behaviors of that particular person.

We become victims of discrimination due to the characteristics that sometimes we innately have and sometimes we develop in time, due to our belongings and mostly due to our attributes that can’t be changed by our free will. And paradoxically, due to the same reasons, we may discriminate against other people if they don’t belong to our groups. As a result of a social vicious cycle, even though the things below and above change, we all somehow might become either victims or perpetrators of discrimination due to an attribute we have or due to our membership to a group.

Amongst the group characteristics that are targeted, ones that probably face the most vicious consequences are related to gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. The reason for this is that, issues related to gender, sexual orientation and gender identity have had a social and political characteristic throughout the human history and power structures which have been established in this field have been determining economic and social division of labor and distribution and, as a result, these issues have been within the scope of law and politics all the time. Discriminations in these areas can even frequently cause violations of right to life and they can be observed at macro and micro levels in all spheres of life and in all human cultures.

Looking from such a perspective, Kaos GL Association have started a research in order to make discrimination towards sexual orientations and gender identities in working life more visible and to acquire factual evidence from the field. Within this scope; experiences of business owners, executives and human resources specialists and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) private sector employees have been gathered and interpreted. Furthermore, current relevant policies of some big international companies from the USA and Germany have been compiled. Results of our research explicitly reveal the bitterness of the above mentioned issue, and the existence of certain solutions.

Results of the research show that most of the LGBTI private sector employees are obliged to hide their sexual orientations and gender identities in working environments. On the other hand, participants with open identities in terms of their sexual identities stated they had been exposed to or had witnessed many biased attitudes and discriminatory behaviors. Results of our research unfortunately show that in most of the workplaces in Turkey, there are no procedures or practices that would either protect the LGBTI employees from the negative effects of discrimination or meet their special needs. Furthermore, discrimination based on sexual
orientation and gender identity isn’t still included within the protected grounds in the Constitution and the Labor Law, and this remains as the main obstacle, the main legal deficiency against implementation of “Equal Citizenship” principle for Turkey’s LGBTI citizens.

The results of the research show that current situation doesn’t only cause direct or indirect, explicit or implicit discrimination against LGBTI employees, but also prevents them from showing their true performances. Discrimination affects peace in the workplace negatively, and reduces overall workplace efficiency.

Persons having open sexual identities are subjected to discrimination in more explicit ways. However, even when sexual orientation or gender identity aren’t openly expressed; biases, interpretations, implications and guesses can prevent LGBTI people from their full and efficient participation in the employment area, thus, they still may be victimized.

Our research indicates positive findings as well. As a positive result, almost all of our participants gave detailed and concurrent answers to the questions about discrimination against LGBTI employees and measures that should be taken. This fact can be assessed as there is awareness about discrimination. There’s no doubt that choosing to participate in our research is another sign for this awareness. Thus, in the last question, our participants were asked to state if they had other suggestions or opinions. In the answers given to this question, large part of our participants expressed that they believed that awareness raised by this kind of researches would be beneficial in prevention of discrimination against LGBTI labor force in private sector. Generally speaking, this result which manifested itself as the awareness regarding the issue and as the support to changing the current negative situation is a valuable result and it cherishes our hopes for the future.

Answers given to the question, “What do you think that should be the most important and urgent measure to be taken in the workplace against discrimination towards LGBTI employees?”, which was commonly asked to employers, executives, human resources specialists and LGBTI employees, revealed similar opinions of LG-BTI employees and company authorities. Both groups frequently expressed certain activities that should be carried out for awareness raising, social change and change in mentality; and expressed that trainings and similar measures should be in place in the workplaces too. Protective legislation and necessary amendments in the Constitution, the Labor Law and company bylaws were among the expressed measures. The necessity of publicizing these measures to be taken in order to make them visible, and positive discrimination towards LGBTI employees in employment were also emphasized. In addition, public statements of companies indicating that they treat equally to LGBTI employees seemed to be beneficial in achieving the
struggle for anti-discrimination. This kind of public declarations were also found useful for providing real encounters between LGBTI employees and others, and for enriching social dialogue and creating conditions for equal employment and equal citizenship.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity arise from homophobic and transphobic biases that have permeated to every sphere of life. In order to decrease biases, joint efforts of law makers, executives with political authorities and responsibilities, jurisdiction, non-governmental organizations, international institutions, media and people from every walk of life are required. The most efficient methods in struggle for decreasing discrimination and violence are making new laws for equality, amending the existing laws and creating new social norms.

When Turkey is considered, we can say that a multi-directional and rapid social change is observed. Characteristics of the population and the movements in the society make this change more dimensional. Turkey is a country which on the one hand is frequently said to become conservative and on the other hand, said to incorporate pretty creative social dynamics in terms of finding ways and methods for different fractions of the society to express themselves and their problems.

Similar to the countries where rapid and multi-directional changes occur, it’s also frequently stated for Turkey that public authorities and political superstructure don’t reflect country’s social dynamism and social reality. On the other hand, in today’s world where developments in communication technologies directly affect the relations between people, private sector has a bigger potential for faster and deeper change than the public sector in terms of their innovativeness and openness to transformation. Thereby, as for the other human rights issues, private sector also bears tremendous responsibility with regard to improving the working conditions of LGBTI employees and ensuring their efficient participation in employment. Findings of our research provide significant clues which shows that lead might be taken by private sector in this field.

Prof. Dr. Melek Göregenli
November, 2015
From the Viewpoint of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Employees, the Situation of LGBTI Employees in Private Sector in Turkey
A. Research Sample

Within the scope of our research which was conducted via an online survey system named SurveyMonkey Pro, 151 persons stated that they worked in private companies and described their sexual identities as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex.

Other: Energy, animal health, environmental consultancy, pharmaceutical, marketing, consultancy, research and development, chemical industry, civil society, legal counseling, occupational health and safety, organization, international logistics, foreign trade, technology, public relations, office employee.

When the distribution of the sectors in which our participants work is analyzed, it’s seen that informatics, food, education, health and tourism are the most stated ones, respectively. On the other hand, numerous survey participants who indicated under the “Other” option that there were LGBTI employees from many other sectors or working areas too.
When sizes of the companies that our participants work is analyzed, it’s seen that almost half of them (%49) are from companies which have staff numbers between 1-50. On the other hand, almost %13 of our participants work in companies which have more than 1000 employees.

In two-third of the answers, number of years worked in the current workplace was marked as “Newly started” or “1-3” years. Even though they were at lower rates, we also had participants who had been working for longer periods.
When displayed characteristics of our participants were analyzed in terms of their positions, a wide range drew attention. Worker/Service personnel and Specialist were the most frequently worked positions. This finding shows that, while rarity of high or mid-level managers draws attention, there are LGBTI employees in every position in every sector.

While identifying their sexual orientations and gender identities, our participants avoided standard, categorical descriptions, albeit partially. When assessed together, it’s seen that mostly gays and lesbians predominated, followed by bisexual women and men. It’s also seen that we had a certain number of participants who prefer not to identify themselves with a sexual identity, or who identifies themselves with different, transitive categories. Having said that, we didn’t have a participant who stated herself/himself as an “intersex” person.
Almost %39 of the employees who answered our question regarding whether they were open or not in their workplaces in terms of their sexual identities stated as “No, I’m not open.” 39% stated that they were “partially open” and only 22% stated that they were “completely open” in their workplaces in terms of their sexual identities.

**B. Assessments Regarding Job Recruitment Process**

According to the finding of our research, LGBTI employees generally apply to jobs through the career sites on the internet or by recommendation of their acquaintances. These mediums are followed by social media channels. Among LGBTI employees, relatively rare preference for Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) and private employment offices draws attention.
Answers given to the question, “In job adverts, have you ever faced any explicit or implicit criterion or statement that supports or inhibits applications in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex situation? Have you informed the workplace, a NGO or a public body about any case?” indicate that most of the respondents did not face any supporting or disincentive statement regarding sexual identity in job adverts.

However, some of our participants stated that there were expressions in job adverts indicating that “men” or “women” were sought. Similarly, “military service” conditions were asked from time to time which indicated that “men” who should comply with compulsory military requirements were sought.
According to the findings or our research, discrimination is mostly experienced during job interviews. Some of our participants stated that they felt obliged to hide or disguise their sexual identities either because they thought it could have been a reason for not being hired or because they made assumptions out of some behaviors of the recruitment committees. Experiences where job recruiters thought like, “LGBTI employees work better,” were also stated by some respondents.

In general, it can be said that “formal” supportive or disincentive expressions don’t exist in most of the job advertisements, but still, most of the employees prefer to hide their identities.
More than half our participants who answered the question, “Have you ever faced any explicit or implicit discrimination in the interviews or tests during the job recruitment processes; have they ever asked you a question about your sexual identity? Has there been any discriminative – positive or negative – criterion or attitude regarding sexual identity within the scope of interviews and tests?”, stated that they had not face any discrimination. However, when it’s considered that only one-fifth of our participants were open about their sexual orientations or gender identities during the job recruitment processes, this ratio becomes more understandable.

Answers of 40 survey participants who stated that they were exposed to discrimination during job recruitment processes can be grouped in a couple of categories.

1. Even though there’s no explicit verbal or behavioral discrimination during recruitment process; an implicit, disguised discrimination is experienced. Recruiters refer to the appearances or behaviors of our participants and they reach a conclusion about their sexual identities; and afterwards, they display a referential, negative behavior. A few examples from 24 respondents whose answers fit into this category are presented below.

   “Generally, discrimination was displayed implicitly over my attitudes and clothes. Although it isn’t too clear, there are some negative criteria, negative attitudes.” (a bisexual man food sector worker)

   “I have encountered some implicit questions.” (a gay environment laboratorian)

   “I applied with my biological identity. They were very much interested. They called a couple of times and insistently invited me to the interview. Afterwards, I believe I wasn’t hired due to my masculine appearance.” (a
trans man advertisement sector specialist

“I’m exempt from military service because I’m gay. The reason of my exemption was asked during the job interview; I minced words. They smiled saying something like “It’s all right, we understand,” and afterwards, they didn’t call again.” (a gay IT specialist)

“My earrings and gentleness of my speech were mentioned in an insinuating way”. (a gay restaurant/bar worker)

2. On the other hand, 16 of our participants expressed that they had experienced direct discrimination and harassment during job recruitment processes. Statements in this group are less in number than implicit discrimination experiences, however, it should be kept in mind that 82 out of 151 participants hid their sexual identities and only 31 of them were open during job recruitment processes. Another group of 19 persons answered as “My sexual identity is not perceptible anyway,” or “No such situation had occurred.”

Examples from our participants who stated that they had been exposed to direct discrimination during job recruitment are presented below.

“They were generally opposing me. I faced questions which might be deemed as harassment.” (a trans man, mid-level manager in food sector)

“I faced usual, popular homophobic jokes which didn’t ‘directly’ target me.” (a gay IT specialist)

“I was suggested to be more masculine in order to work as an engineer.” (a gay civil engineer)

“I can say that I encountered an explicit contempt and attitude on being feminine during some interviews” (a gay energy sector expert)

“I was warned to act more feminine.” (a trans man teacher)

3. The experiences included in this group are the ones which weren’t considered as an act of “direct discrimination” by the participants; but depending on the context, they can either be seen as “support to LGBTI employees” or as “symbolic discrimination” or abuse of sexual orientation - gender identity. Participants shared that, in some sectors, LGBTI employees are “popular” in a way. So, recruiters particularly prefer or assign employees whose identities are known due to their appearances or behaviors. Even though this approach might be interpreted as a positive one at first glance, depending on the context, it might also mean abuse of sexual orientation or gender identity irrespective of the employee’s will. Examples of the expressions that fit in this category are presented below.
“When it comes to merchandizing and visual works, ‘unfortunately’, my sexual orientation becomes an advantage during the hiring process. However, same affirmation is not seen in the work environment.” (a gay merchandizing expert)

“When you’re a designer, especially when you’re a designer in textile sector, it sometimes becomes a required qualification... It’s kind of a cliché.” (a gay designer)

Apart from the above mentioned expressions which were frequently stated by our participants, women participants also conveyed their experiences of sexist discrimination against themselves. Below is an example.

“Since I’m a woman and I’m married, during the interview, I was reminded that the job had a busy schedule, and it would be difficult for me to do my daily chores and I would face troubles with my husband. These words were repeatedly said by the employers who thought that daily chores belonged to the women.” (a bisexual woman researcher)

In the answers given to the question, “Were you open about your sexual identity during the job application or hiring process? If you weren’t, what have you experienced while hiding your sexual identity; how did you feel?”, it was seen that our participants have quoted not only from the hiring processes, but also from the experiences they had during working period.

When answers to this question are grouped, it can be seen that no certain situation is experienced more frequently than the others. Experiences could also vary due to differences in sectors; or whether sexual orientation and gender identity is apparent due to the clothing and behaviors or not; marital status etc.

On the other hand, it’s seen that, when their identities are hidden, trans employees experience a deeper stress and anxiety, and live in a constant fear of disclosure of their identities during any part of the job recruitment process or in the workplace.

Similarly, the situation of being exempt from military service causes some participants to be afraid of their sexual identities to be disclosed against their will.

For example, “being married”, which was mentioned as kind of an advantage by some of our participants, prevented sexual identity from being visible. Similarly, many of our participants might choose to avoid pressures by telling that they had partners who in fact didn’t correspond with their sexual identities – for instance a woman partner or a fiancée for a gay man.

Hiding mechanisms resulted in being ever-cautious in the most private moments, for example even in the toilets. Part of our participants stated that they wouldn’t allow any kind of question or approach regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace.
On the other hand, for another group of survey participants, their sexual identities were completely open and still they didn’t face any pressure. However, this was valid only for certain sectors; it shouldn’t be thought as the general situation.

Some examples regarding situations in which employees kept their sexual identities hidden during hiring process are presented below.

“I wasn’t open; I am still not. I kept my identity hidden as there is a common contempt against people who aren’t heterosexuals.” (a lesbian research and development specialist)

“It was painful to be obliged to hide.” (a gay factory worker)

“I wasn’t open. I faced traditional questions; such as, ‘Don’t you think of getting married?’” (a lesbian publishing house employee)

“I don’t have my hair cut too short. I feel myself like living a double life.” (a lesbian teacher)

“I felt a pressure in me during the recruitment process. There was this pressure of what would happen if they found out.” (a gay publishing house employee)

“As I encountered hate speech in my previous job interview, I kept my identity and my relation with an LGBTI association hidden during the latter. (a bisexual woman education specialist)

“I’m still hidden. I constantly have to spend my time under false pretenses. I have to endure homophobic dialogues in my environment. For example, a person who has established a close relationship with me openly indicated that she was a homophobic and she disgusted/recoiled people who have different sexual identities. She will probably disgust me as well if she knows that I’m bisexual. I can’t be myself and here I spend at least 9 hours a day in the office. I find it difficult to spend my time under false pretenses and I’m afraid that I might someday become the person I pretend to be. I have nightmares due to these conflicts.” (a bisexual woman working as a marketing expert)

“In the service document that I received from Social Security Institution (SGK), it was mentioned that I was a ‘Woman’. I slurped over saying, “There has been a mistake since I have a unisex name”. Since documents regarding military service would also be necessary, I wouldn’t be able to apply this job on my own if it wasn’t by recommendation of an acquaintance because I still didn’t complete my gender transition process.” (a trans man teacher)

“I didn’t tell them because if I were to tell about my situation, they would be more interested in me than my work, and this is a disadvantage for me. They are calling me “Lady” etc. but I have to endure this.” (a trans man food sector worker)
“Since I’m married, it’s a situation that no one would think of. If I was open, it wouldn’t be possible for me to start this job.” (a bisexual woman researcher)

“I was worried that people would find out that I was transgender. Therefore, I had to perform ‘manhood’ more than ever. In order to abstain from disclosing my identity, I told my employer that I didn’t want insurance; and insurance differential wasn’t paid to me either.” (a trans man advertisement sector specialist)

“I thought that, if they knew, it would negatively affect their decision about my recruitment. It wasn’t a good feeling to hide this while I was comfortable about all the other things.” (a bisexual woman education specialist)

“It’s frustrating to be obliged to live with two identities.” (a senior executive lesbian in aviation sector)

“I pretended as much as I could, as if I were on stage. You naturally feel uncomfortable.” (a gay tourism sector personnel)

“I wasn’t open. I’m exempt from the military service. I hid that I was exempted; so I told that I served as a soldier.” (a gay IT assistant specialist)

“I’m still hiding. And I believe they don’t need to know either. I feel like two completely different persons: living my social life and working life separately. In other words, I’m split into two.” (a bisexual man mid-level manager in food sector)

“I wasn’t open. While trying to guess what the person in front of me might be presuming about this subject, I thought if I’d be comfortable in this company or not. The necessity to think such a thing during a job interview is naturally disturbing.” (a “sometimes a woman, sometimes a queer” public relations specialist)

“I wasn’t open but it’s not difficult to understand my sexual identity either. It becomes obvious from my speech, way of dressing, attitudes etc. It was obvious from their looks and sarcasm that people in the job interview also understood, but still I was obliged to hide it; I have never explicitly expressed it. I felt bad. Very bad.” (a lesbian food sector worker)

“When they asked me if I had a partner, I told that I had but I didn’t mention her gender. Afterwards, while I was introducing my partner, I chose to introduce her as my friend.” (a lesbian IT specialist)

“I didn’t act explicitly. I wanted to but I chose not to talk about this subject to avoid the possibility to have difficulties in recruitment process.” (a bisexual man tourism sector personnel)
The question, “Has there been any question, criticism, suggestion or guidance from the employees, company management or public/political actors regarding your sexual identity during or after recruitment process?”, was answered by the participants as displayed in the chart above. Examples of some expressions of our survey participants to this question are presented below. The most remarkable finding from these answers is the heteronormative referrals and pressure. Explicit or implicit pressures in the direction of heterosexuality mostly occur in cases where sexual identity of the LGBTI employee is not explicit, and there is suspicion about it. This kind of a working environment creates psychological and social pressure in addition to the explicit or implicit experiences of discrimination.

“I’m being exposed to cynic glances, laughs, nicknaming, gossips.” (a gay healthcare personnel)

“After I started working, I received feedbacks about my sexual orientation being ‘funny’. A couple of jokes were cracked which were thought to be funny but caused disturbance on my side. There were probably a lot of gossips. This was one of the reasons that caused me feel suffocated in the office. I believe these ignorant, pert relations with low-level perceptions also have a destabilizing effect on me in terms of my socialization. My managers didn’t make direct comments about my sexual orientation, however, I experienced the workplace as a part of the culture in which heterosexism is predominant.” (a queer IT specialist)

“I encounter usual, common homophobic jokes, allegedly not targeted at me(!).” (a gay IT specialist)
“I was obliged to lie since my sex was written in the service scheme received from the Social Security Agency (SGK). I lived very disturbing and worrisome days.” (a trans teacher man)

“I was accused of being too ‘comfortable’.” (a bisexual woman culture sector employee)

“A couple of times, I received criticism and suggestions from the other employees about that I should act more feminine.” (a bisexual woman education specialist)

“There’s a constant curiosity, questioning and pressure as I don’t fit the heterosexual stereotypes. Like; ‘When will you get married? Find someone. Why don’t you have a boyfriend?’” (a lesbian manufacturing sector expert)

“My director in my current workplace told me to pay attention to my behaviors. ‘Which behaviors?’ I responded. He started to grumble like, ‘Well...’ Then I said ‘It’s funny that you’re warning me about things that you can’t explicitly talk about. If you wish, we can meet again when you’re able to express it directly; so that both you and I can relax’; then he laughed. After that day, he never mentioned it again.” (a gay, mid-level manager in construction sector)

“Some women who thought we were close advised me to dress more ‘feminine’. I frequently encountered the question of, ‘Have you ever been with a man?’. Unfortunately, persons who knew about my identity suggested me not to disclose it because for them, it would be a smarter choice. They were likeminded that I would be oppressed and it would pose an obstacle before my career.” (a lesbian healthcare assistant specialist)

“After I started working, my colleagues assumed a weird attitude and made homophobic sentences regarding my participation in the Pride March. And I couldn’t say anything since I desperately needed this job. It still hurts me.” (a lesbian occupational safety specialist)

“Yes, exceedingly! There have been colleagues who wanted to learn the details of my sexual life, managers who asked about my relationship with my family in terms of my sexual orientation. Even how I have sexual intercourse was asked and teased and laughed.” (a gay restaurant worker)
In the answers to the question, “Within the scope of the institutional procedures including promotion, suspension from work, assignment and occupational trainings, are there any rules or bodies which prevent discrimination, mobbing or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity? (For example, equality and discipline committees, regulations, campaign against homophobic and transphobic biases, etc.),” it was generally stated that there were no particular measures regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

On the other hand, it was also stated that, although there were articles against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in the international procedures of some companies, particularly in the ones that have their headquarters in foreign countries; they weren’t valid in the practices in Turkey.

“There are discipline committees, regulations; however, there is no struggle against homophobic and transphobic biases.” (a gay healthcare personnel)

“There are strict and comprehensive rules regarding this issue since I work for an international company.” (a bisexual woman mid-level manager in advertisement sector)

“There are rules in the Global, but there aren’t in Turkey side.” (a gay assistant in pharmaceutical sector)

“Yes, there are. Regarding this issue, we are obliged to comply with the regulations of the headquarter in the foreign country which our company is affiliated to.” (a gay finance expert)
“Since we are a US-based company, there are rules; but in Turkey, everything is left to the discretion and priorities of the managers instead of open committees.” (a gay store employee)

“My company has an international vision which supports the freedom of lives of LGBTI persons”. (a lesbian mid-level manager in food sector)

Some of our participants stated that there were protective articles regarding the issue and there were explicit provisions in the discipline regulations.

“Yes, they exist in the regulations...” (a lesbian international logistics expert)

“There is an article where sexual identity is particularly expressed but we don’t know how it’d be applied because there’s not any open LGBTIs in my company.” (a gay IT specialist)

“Yes, there is protection in my company against all kinds of discrimination.” (a lesbian healthcare personnel)

On the other hand, another group of participants stated that there were articles solely on “gender equality” between “men and women”.

Another remarkable answer group drew attention to a kind of informal protection that were typical in Turkey. A few participants stated that there were no official rules, but managers frequently expressed a protective discourse that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity would not be tolerated.

Only thing is; the director warns the persons who demonstrate transphobic behaviors.” (a trans woman store employee)

A similar distribution can also be observed in the answers given to the question, “Are there any special measures sensitive to sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex situation within the scope of healthcare services provided to the employees by the company? Are there any specialized healthcare or social-psychological support personnel regarding these issues? Are special needs of the transgender people originating from their transition period covered within this scope?”. A lot more participants stated that such a service didn’t exist at all. Answers of some survey participants addressing different situations and practices are presented below.

“There is no homophobia in the company that I work for, but no gender transition period has been encountered either. I wonder too, about how people would react.” (a gay animal health specialist)

“There is a psychological support line; everyone can confidentially consult about any issue they want. If needed, support sessions are provided free of charge.” (mid-level manager in food sector whose sexual identity is “tran-
From the Viewpoint of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Employees, the Situation of LGBTI Employees in Private Sector in Turkey

sitive”, as expressed by the person)

“No, none of them exist. Especially trans issue is a total taboo.” (a bisexual woman marketing expert)

“A friend of ours who is a trans man is working in our Istanbul office and no trouble was made yet but Ankara Office of the same company is horrible. They would never allow such a thing.” (a bisexual woman research personnel)

“They are by no means sensitive. I suggested a gender mainstreaming workshop aimed at other teachers; being disturbed even by the word ‘gender’, they directly dropped the subject.” (a trans man educator)

“No, we are even being exhorted in terms of not allowing the trans people in.” (a gay restaurant/bar employee)

Another question we asked in order to learn the common approaches regarding healthcare was, “When you need health support or referral in the workplace, do you face a – positive or negative – different approach?”. A similar picture is observed in the answers given to this question as well.

A few participants stated that they encountered a positive, supportive approach. In the assessment of the answers given to this question, openness or secrecy of the employee’s sexual identity is also an important factor. When it’s considered that LGBTI employees generally hide their sexualities, it was natural that the participants defined the attitudes towards themselves within the company’s healthcare services as they were “neutral”. However, by the answers given to this question, the
experiences of our participants provided us significant clues regarding; (a) what type of problems not being open about gender identity or sexual orientation cause and (b) the difficulties of living by taking some extra measures for hiding sexual identity and special needs around them.

“I’m benefiting from the advantages of being a “single” person who lives in a different city than her family.” (a lesbian foreign trade expert)

“When I chose internal diseases, the bandage I used in order to hide my breasts became a problem. I had to hold the bandage loose at that time and a woman meaninglessly gushed over the things in front of me. I mentioned that I was disturbed with her behavior. Thinking that she might have seen my identity as a disease, I needed to explain that I was a man. It was rather dull and depressing.” (a trans man healthcare personnel)

“I try not to reveal such tensions I live.” (a bisexual man mid-level manager in food sector)

“Although my sex wasn’t changed in the documents brought by the doctor who came for health check, I marked the ‘male’ section. However, I’m registered to the system as ‘Akın’. It’s a stressful situation. I don’t know if it will cause a problem in official procedures in the future but up to now, I haven’t had a trouble.” (a trans man teacher)

### D. Social Benefits and Activities

In the answers given to the question, “Are there any special measures taken to include LGBTI employees within the scope of social benefits and similar services for employees? (For example, like the supportive attitudes or measures in order to provide family allowance or participation to in-house or outside activities to unmarried partners)”, apart from the very few special practices (only in 4 answers), it was stated that there were no family allowances and practices alike. Again, very few participants (only 3) stated that they were able to participate in social activities outside of the company with their partners.

“Since it’s a small business, that kind of support isn’t provided to anyone.” (a bisexual woman worker in food sector)

“No, there is complete discrimination, particularly about marriage.” (a gay worker in IT sector)

“I wish there were things like that. I can speak openly about this issue because I have a boyfriend. They even condemn that we live together.” (a bisexual woman marketing expert)
“Yes, employees are equally supported in participating in the social activities outside the work.” (a gay worker in entertainment sector)

“Yes, even though there’s no family allowance, I’m being supported in participating in the social activities inside and outside work.” (a gay mid-level manager civil society employee)

“No, there are no equal opportunities at this point. My partner can’t benefit from my private health insurance. When my partner needs help, for example, when she gets sick, I can’t take a day off like heterosexual couples do.” (a lesbian healthcare specialist)

E. Other LGBTI Employees in the Workplace

The answers given to the question, “Are there any LGBTI employees in your workplace whose sexual orientations, gender identities or intersex situations are known? If there is, which positions are they at?”, displays a diverse distribution.

A remarkable number of participants stated that there were LGBTI employees at every level of their workplaces; at same level with them, at a different position or in other units/offices of the company. This finding is also consistent with the answers to our question on respondent’s openness about his/her sexual identity in the workplace: There are LGBTI employees at every level and in every occupation in the working life. Some examples from the statements of the survey participants are presented below.
“There are. They work at the same position with me.” (a gay advertisement sector specialist)

“There are; two friends of mine. One of them is a shift manager, other is a team member.” (a bisexual woman worker in food sector)

“Yes, there a few gay employees and I know them; some of them are in open communication.” (a gay mid-level manager in finance sector)

“Yes, they are also engineers like me.” (a gay in IT sector)

“No. Maybe. I once had a married friend who claimed to be a bisexual. We were working at similar positions.” (a specialist in IT sector whose gender identity is “transitive”, as expressed by that person)

“There are two hidden persons as well. Management and personnel don’t know them.” (a lesbian education specialist)

“Yes, there is but only I know. Sales representative. (a trans assistant expert in food sector)

“One of them being trans, one of them intersex and two of them gays, there are 4 more employees. They are not at executive levels. They are either specialists or assistant specialists.” (a gay IT specialist)

**F. Experiences of Discrimination towards LGBTI Employees in the Workplace**

One of our questions about experiences of discrimination and testimonies in the workplace has been, “In your workplace, have you ever witnessed any sexual identity discrimination which occurred from top levels to bottom levels or among the employees working at the same level – but you weren’t involved?”. 

![Discrimination cases based on sexual identity which were witnessed by the employee but occurred between other persons (open ended; 151 respondents)](image-url)
Generally, discriminatory discourses were underlined as much as the discriminatory practices in the answers given to this question. This finding shows that discriminatory speeches, jokes, innuendos and similar things that are faced in different areas of the social life have an exact reflection on the working life as well. In addition, gossips and comments mixed with mockery and contempt that target private life are frequently encountered in working spheres too. It can be said that, these behaviors, where an explicit act of discrimination is avoided, may be categorized as “symbolic discrimination”. Examples of expressions are presented below.

“In our debates, I observed that being gay or lesbian was a fear element. There is a perception like, ‘participating in the Pride March equals to being gay or lesbian; being gay or lesbian equals to something dangerous’.” (a lesbian editor in IT sector)

“While I haven’t witnessed any negative behavior against individuals, I witnessed that homophobic comments on common issues were made. I frequently witness those.” (a bisexual man mid-level manager in advertising sector)

“I haven’t witnessed a particular discrimination case yet. Everyone can freely express that they are homophobic anyway! I think even expressing this loud is indeed discrimination. Because they are not questioning if there is a person in that environment who is not heterosexual. They directly neglect that.” (a bisexual woman marketing expert)

“Yes, I’ve witnessed some. Generally, people are talking unpleasant things behind one’s back.” (a trans man worker in food sector)

“I haven’t encountered a case targeted to a certain person but there’s an intern who mentions about being transphobic without hesitation and claims that it’s a fear like fear of heights.” (a queer store employee)

“I have witnessed that hate speeches were comfortably expressed in public spaces within the scope of freedom of expression.” (a gay expert in construction sector)

“Sometimes when this issue is mentioned during our conversations, it ends up with saying, ‘This conversation is becoming vulgar, isn’t there any other topic to talk about?’” (a bisexual man mid-level manager in food sector)

“Yes, of course there are. Discriminatory, hate speeches asserting that it’s immoral, it’s a sin, it affects society and even the customers, and many other similar sentences.” (a lesbian worker in food sector)

Apart from the ones who shared their experiences of indirect, symbolic discrimination and hate speech, 24 survey participants stated that they witnessed directly discriminatory institutional practices against other LGBTI employees.
“A person was warned to obey the dress code.” (gay service personnel in transportation/aviation sector)

“Disclosure of the situation of a gay employee resulted in him being dismissed but they made it look like his sexual orientation wasn’t the real reason for his dismissal.” (a lesbian senior executive in transportation/aviation sector)

“I overheard a plan to dismiss a gay employee not because he was gay but by finding another excuse.” (a gay IT specialist)

“I suggested a gay friend of mine as a teacher. For some reason, although we had a teacher shortage which should have been solved immediately, he wasn’t allowed to enter children’s classrooms and he wasn’t even hired. They didn’t want my friend because he was eminently feminine.” (a gay educational specialist)

“A feminine friend of mine couldn’t get the promotion for the department he wanted; he was promoted to another department. As the reason, his femininity was put forward.” (a gay customer advisor in banking/finance sector)

As it’s also seen in other questions, answers given by our participants regarding discriminatory practices and speeches reveal another finding. Gender-based discrimination against women on the basis of sexist ideologies develops in parallel and intertwines with discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. In their answers, our participants expressed their testimonies also in this direction.

“Men are pigs. They talk while staring at the breasts of women. All women are enemies to each other; if one of them by chance wears a low-cut dress, they call every name in the book behind her.” (a lesbian import specialist)

“It’s a frequent occasion that one of the male managers comes to the meetings solely with women participants ‘by coincidence’ and talks like, ‘Wow. Looks like it’s a women’s matinee’.” (a bisexual woman attorney)

“There’s gender discrimination but somehow by the book. Career paths of women are very challenging.” (a lesbian manufacturing sector expert)

“There’s an incredible discrimination regarding equality of women and men. Under these circumstances, LGBTI persons get their share as well.” (a trans man merchandizing specialist)

In another question, participants were asked to assess discriminatory behaviors and approaches that directly targeted them.
Answers given to the question, “In your workplace, have you ever faced a case of discrimination, mobbing or harassment from your superiors or peer employees directly targeted at you based on your sexual identity? How did the processes develop?”, are grouped below.

Experiences presented in the first group address discriminatory speeches and directly discriminatory institutional practices. As it’ll be displayed in the examples below, some of the employees had to leave their jobs “willingly” as a result of discrimination in their workplaces. In many of the examples, it’s expressed that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is faced in professional promotions and assignments.

“I was exposed to discrimination and mobbing. From place to place, it became verbal violence and abuse as well. I didn’t make a complaint about the issue; I quit the job.” (a bisexual man food sector worker)

“I faced a couple of jokes about my sexual orientation. I felt uncomfortable about that. I acted in a manner which manifested my discomfort in my own way. Like saying “Ha?” sharply and as vulgar as possible. Or like staring at their eyes. Or like not greeting them. Afterwards, I quit the job.” (a specialist in IT sector whose gender identity is “transitive”, as expressed by the person)

“My reasons to join the Pride March were questioned. What was actually desired to be questioned was whether I was lesbian or not. And I told that I joined that March because I was a human being and I supported gays and lesbians in their cause. Once, while I was fiddling with my phone, someone recklessly said, ‘She must be looking for girls’.” (a lesbian mid-level manager in IT sector)
“A directress in my former workplace found out my identity and started mobbing because my transition had begun. Yes, everything started after that.” (a trans man teacher)

“You encounter eyeolating. You are harassed in various ways in terms of having breasts, whether you have a penis or not, your beard condition. You live many difficulties particularly about your name.” (a trans man food sector worker)

“Questions like ‘Are you a girl or a man?’, etc. Or, constantly being called a ‘girl’ even though I mention that I am a man.” (a trans man tourism sector personnel)

“I didn’t encounter anything but a couple of verbal (high-school style) abuse. For example, one day while it was raining, a rainbow appeared. While I was taking its photograph, someone said ‘Of course you like these things’.” (a gay IT specialist)

“I experienced too many insults and harassments from the customers but I’ve never been protected by the management. On the top of it, I encountered suggestions like, ‘What should we do? You should have gotten used to these; so stop whining’.” (a trans woman store employee)

“I frequently face troubles with the name written on my identity card which ignores my transsexualism. Even this alone has been traumatic. Since the employees in the workplace frequently changes, I constantly have to introduce myself again and again.” (a trans healthcare personnel)

“Although I’ve mentioned that I was disturbed, some of the male employees still call me ‘darling, baby’.” (a gay restaurant/bar worker)

“Of course there is discrimination. Even though I’m better at a duty, they don’t even include me in the subject because I’m masculine. Other people either get promotions or are referred.” (a lesbian food sector worker)

A few number of the survey participants stated that they faced discrimination at discourse or behavioral level, told this situation to their superiors, and an attitude in their favor was taken. As a result, discriminatory acts ended. These positive examples indicate that if institutional attitudes are developed against the reflections of discrimination throughout the society, it can be fought against and discrimination in workplace can be eliminated.

“Some impertinent persons among my colleagues commented for the cloth I wear or the earring I put on. In response, the store manager held a meeting with the persons who had discriminatory speeches and warned them with suspending from work.” (a gay merchandizing specialist)
“While my colleague was talking to me, he talked like a girl. My chief who has heard this called my colleague and talked to him while I wasn’t with them. Since then, my colleague pays attention while talking to me.” (a gay aviation sector personnel)

“Generally, whenever they do something unintentionally, if you warn or explain or tell them, they won’t do that again.” (a pansexual mid-level manager in organization sector)

When answers given to this question are assessed as a whole, it’s seen that almost one-third of our participants stated that they haven’t encountered a discriminatory act. This ratio should be taken into consideration while recalling the fact that being open or not open in terms of sexual identity affects the experiences of the participants. Similar to the answers given to the others, responses to this question also indicate that gender-based discrimination reinforces discrimination based on sexual orientation and sexual identity.

G. Relation Between Workplace Discrimination, Job Satisfaction and Performance

Almost all of our participants stated that, discriminatory and biased environment in the workplaces did have an impact on their job satisfaction and efficiency. This negative and concrete impact manifests itself in various ways. Answers of our participants to the question reveal this impact as presented below.

“Of course it does have an impact. Not being able to work with an open identity constitutes the main problem.” (a lesbian publishing house employee)

“Just like the heterosexual people, I may argue with my partner as well. In such cases, my day becomes hell since I can’t share that with anyone while they can console each other.” (a gay factory worker)

“It’s affecting negatively. I’m unnecessarily left in a position of controlling my behaviors.” (a bisexual food sector worker)

“Sometimes, the stress I live unavoidably affects my performance. I’m not stressed out because of possible attacks; I’m stressed out because I know that if homophobic employees find out my identity, they will use degrading words behind my back.” (a gay IT sector personnel)

“Sometimes I feel suffocated. I get pissed off as I see how much I’m being faced down. In such periods, both my efficiency and satisfaction hit rock bottom. When people (even some LGBTIs) find out that I’m bisexual, they
have some traditional ideas. ‘She’s sleeping with everyone’, ‘greedy’, ‘she doesn’t know how to choose’, ‘immoral’, ‘wow, girl-to-girl sex, superb!’ etc. I was exposed to such reactions so many times that I can’t open myself due to the fear of encountering them again. And as long as I can’t open myself, I continue living these crises 1-2 times a week.” (a bisexual woman marketing expert)

“It affects, naturally. There’s this fear of being disclosed or degraded. Then what? I can’t help thinking about how they would look at me and how they would assume an attitude.” (a gay assistant specialist in publishing sector)

“I am worried if someone would understand at any time because my transition isn’t completed yet. I didn’t receive my blue identity yet but I’m about to it. I get stressed during official paper works when I mark the male section.” (a trans man teacher)

“It affects, of course. When the guys call me ‘lady, girl’ or with my identity name, millions of thoughts pass through my mind in that 3-5 seconds. At the same time, I’m trying to focus on working. This kind of things affect my motivation but I’m trying to restrain this as much as possible. I have to manage this until I complete transition.” (a trans man food sector worker)

“I’m worried about its very possible reiterations and when everyone goes out to drink something, I generally don’t go with them.” (a bisexual woman who works as a specialist in culture/arts sector)

“I might have the risk to leave my job if something bad happens to me.” (a gay bank personnel)

“I can’t go to the gym or the changing room in the workplace due to the fear of facing discrimination.” (a gay IT specialist)

“It didn’t affect my job efficiency or my satisfaction but it negatively affected my social relations in the workplace.” (a queer store personnel)

“Generally, I can’t be comfortable in the workplace; I’m trying to keep my distance with my colleagues as well. And it highly reduces my job satisfaction.” (a bisexual woman education specialist)

“It makes me anxious. I’m afraid of being fired if they learn my identity.” (a lesbian working in chemical industry as a specialist)

“It’s effecting negatively. Being obliged to pretend consumes my energy.” (a lesbian working in manufacturing sector as an expert)

“Rather than the workplace, lately, increasing violence towards us in the country has increased my concerns. I’m making too much effort to prevent it from affecting my performance.” (a bisexual woman working in education sector as a mid-level manager)

“I’m obliged to be more careful; I’m afraid to leave my telephone on the
Statements and experiences of our participants show that discriminatory speeches and practices reduce job satisfaction and performance in a couple of ways, and due to a couple of reasons.

Firstly, people’s inability to act naturally and automatically, and their continuous efforts to “control” their attitudes and actions, trying constantly to hide themselves from curious eyes have an impact on their performance in a deteriorating way. It affects focusing on the job throughout the working day. Hiding sexual identity can cause anxiety, distrust and distraction at work; and this disturbs concentration. As it’s seen in the statements of the participants, this situation isn’t only limited to the workplace and the working hours; the fear of disclosure of sexual identity causes to feel under control out of the office as well. Briefly, it causes a whole life to be experienced in a way that one seems and acts like a different person. As a result, feeling anxious, restrained and cautious in general affect the life satisfaction, and the job satisfaction.

For our participants who are open in their workplaces about their sexual orientation or gender identity, there are negative feelings which are sometimes brought out of the work as a result of the discrimination experienced in the office. Implicative looks, hate speech and harassments which appear in implicit or explicit manners are naturally reflected on their social life and private life; and it prevents the workplace from nourishing and cultivating social life and private life. As some of our participants mentioned, experiences of discrimination in the workplace sometimes make them feel obliged to leave their jobs.

**H. Sensitivity of the Workplace to LGBTI Rights**

Katılımcılarımızın, çalıştıkları işyerlerini, haklara ve ayrımcılıklara karşı duyarlılık açısından genel olarak değerlendirmeleri için, “İşyerinize genel olarak LGBTİ haklarına duyarlılık konusunda bir not vereniz ne kadar olmuştur?” şeklinde bir soru sorulmuştur. Katılımcılarımızın bu soruya verdiği yanıtların dağılımı aşağıdaki tabloda görülmektedir.
As it’s seen in the chart, 42% of our participants gave 0 and 1 points (out of 4) for the companies they work in. Almost 29% on the other hand gave 2; in this sense, they found their companies as “average” in comparison with the general market conditions. As a result, 71% of our participants found LGBTI-sensitivity of their workplaces as average or below. Only 15% of our participants assessed their companies as highly positive. As we have also observed among the answers to the previous questions, there is a few number of private sector companies which are sensitive to the human rights of LGBTI employees.
In another question, private sector employees who participated in our research were asked about how they interpreted the “reasons” of discrimination in workplace based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

As they may be followed from the examples given below, part of the answers given to the question shows that it might cause some misunderstandings. A group of participants thought that the question implied “discrimination might have a rightful, legitimate” reason; they mentioned that it could even bring internalized homophobia to mind. However, the reason of asking this question was to reveal the appearances of the discrimination in the light of the answers given also to the other questions. The answers of this question have indeed provided so enlightening information.

Examples from the answers to this question are presented below.

- “If it’s a foreign corporation like ours, there is this fear of what would customers think and say, particularly in the positions where you deal with the customers in person.” (a gay working in advertisement sector as a specialist)
- “Homophobia, biases of people.” (a bisexual woman working in media sector as a specialist)
- “Unfortunately, bad examples in the society.” (a gay mid-level manager in merchandizing sector)
- “Biases, teachings, marginalizing opinions.” (a lesbian food sector worker)
“Nobody having a real idea about this issue is the main reason of promoting and amplifying those biases.” (a lesbian mid-level manager in media sector)

“The perception of the society. Being afraid of the society even though you have a distinctive feature in your appearance that reveals your sexual identity and your employer approves that.” (a lesbian assistant specialist in a publishing house)

“Conservatism; being against diversity.” (a gay mid-level manager in banking sector)

“There can’t be any reason; they can only be visionless and anachronistic. They should be able to have an idea about the distinct intelligences among LGBTI’s by looking at the LGBTI figures that are successful in their works. I can give one of the founders of Facebook, Chris Hughes, CEO of Apple etc. as references. Though, I don’t have to give examples of people who have gained huge successes in the capitalist system. There’s ignorance about this issue. If they aren’t employing LGBTI’s, they might be drowning in their biases. As I have observed among the society, there’s a sense that codes you as a ‘a sex craving creature’ as soon as you tell you’re a LGBTI. They think that you continuously seek sex. This deviation, this distortion is in the LGBTI sense of LGBTI’s as well. Although heterosexuals make sex as well, they may not be perceived merely as ‘sex hunters, creatures weak against sex’.” (IT specialist who has transitive sexual identity)

“To me, the biggest reason in our company is that mechanic institutionalism which makes people feel like their feelings have been removed. Politics and religion aren’t discussed too much; one should definitely be a Kemalist; people always act so ‘professional’, etc. There is no place in this company for those who are not professionals (allegedly). And according to those people, if a person is expressing her/his sexual orientation explicitly, it shows that this person isn’t a professional and is mixing work with private life. I mean, I believe they might employ bisexuals, gays and lesbians who can keep their lives ‘separate from the office’. But I don’t think they would EVER employ a trans person.” (a bisexual woman marketing expert)

“I work for the education sector, where one should pay attention even under ‘normal’ circumstances. It’s important to dress, act, behave in a way that students would take you as a role model. Even though no problem would occur for the school management, if it’s known, some parents wouldn’t want you due to their ignorance; they would most probably cause trouble.” (a trans man teacher)

“Worrying that the prestige of the company might get affected negatively. Worrying that the name of the company, the brand might appear in the social media, press or search engines together with the LGBTI’s.” (a gay IT specialist)

“Common prejudices. Thinking that, a LGBTI person who is thought to be ‘funny’ wouldn’t be a good employee; that they would be unreliable; that they wouldn’t be able to ensure the safety of that person; that they would be exposed to pressure from the business environment as the company or as the employer…” (a trans advertisement sector specialist)

“Lack of protective laws and quotas. Insufficiency of ensuring safety of gays and lesbians with open identities since there’s no person legally defined as a gay/lesbian citizen. Penetration of religious pressure to everywhere; secession from the
secular state. Jamming of LGBTI activism between sexual freedom, identity politics and liberal currents; LGBTI activism being sociologically baseless and distant from class politics, labor movements.” (a lesbian manufacturing sector expert)

“Our sexual identities, orientations are disturbing these people. None cares about the works we have completed, us as a workforce. They employ us according to our sexual identities, orientations; not according to our workforce.”

(a gay working in manufacturing sector as a worker)

“This question made me feel uncomfortable. It seems like it’s measuring internalized homophobia.” (a gay IT assistant specialist)

Views of our participants regarding the reasons of discrimination in workplace are largely gathered in two groups.

Answers in the first group articulate on the interpretations of the common homophobic-transphobic ideologies in the society and how they reflect on the workplaces. Ignorance, lack of knowledge and conservatism in general reflects on the conditions for employment and working environments as well.

Another topic that could be included in this group is the common lack of knowledge in the society in terms of sexual orientations and gender identities. This leads to unnecessary, sometimes disturbing even harassing stares, questions, approaches that violate privacy and freedoms. Furthermore, when lack of knowledge about sexual identities unites with biases, it introduces essentialist beliefs that presume gays, lesbians and trans people may manifest abnormal tendencies like “sick” or “pervert”.

A small part of the survey participants believed that workplace discrimination aroused from certain negative examples regarding sexual orientation and gender identity which were socially “visible”. It would be appropriate to assess this opinion together with the arguments about why examples regarded as “negative” are made more visible than the ones regarded as “positive”; and even with the arguments about how those “positive” examples are determined; and why negative heterosexual examples don’t lead to discrimination against heterosexuals.

According to some of the survey participants, employers present one of the most important reasons of their discriminatory approaches as if it’s a “rational” approach: To them, LGBTI employees wouldn’t be welcomed by their customers and the working life, and this would cause a fall in their profits. According to some answers on the other hand, reverse version of this opinion or approach is valid as well. Some of our participants stated that some employers particularly preferred to employ lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans personnel, assuming that these people had some “unique” characteristics. Moreover, there are many researches from the advanced economies showing that equality and diversity policies that include LGBTI’s in the workplace significantly increase peace, efficiency and profitability ratios in the workplace.
I. Recommendations for Measures against Discrimination towards LGBTI Employees

In the last section of our questionnaire, we asked our participants the question, “For you, what are the most important and urgent measures that should be taken to combat discrimination against LGBTI employees?”. Hereby, they were suggested to write their ideas about the most effective measures. Answers given to this question are presented in the chart given below. As it will be seen by the chart, large parts of our participants have considerations and recommendation that also refer to the Constitution, national legislation and company regulations.
As it’s seen in the chart, an important part of the answers given by our participants is about “informing” employers and other employees about the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities. It’s thought that when “lack of information” - which is largely mentioned as the key reason for discrimination - is eliminated, at least people might be able to fight against the discrimination arising from that ground. As one of our participants stated, “Compulsory seminars like occupational safety seminars should be given and it should be told that LGBTI’s are ‘normal’.”

Regular seminars, workshops and informing channels should be created. While this kind of awareness raising activities should aim to ensure an overall transformation in the wider society; at the same time, they should regularly be conducted in the workplaces and should be made obligatory through regulations.

A large part of our participants stated that national legislation is required; even Constitutional recognition is needed for prevention of discrimination in the workplace. It’s particularly emphasized that protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity should be included in the Labor Law and in all legal regulations regarding working life.

“Unless our rights are included in the Constitution in writing, I don’t think the remedies we find will be effective.” (a lesbian working in a publishing house as an expert)

“First and foremost: prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity explicitly in the Constitution. Protecting sexual orientation and gender identity under the Labor Law and legal regulations regarding working life. Conducting trainings against discrimination in which correct information about LGBTI’s will be given to the company owners, managers and employees.” (a gay medical doctor)

“Enacting a law that includes sanctions for the companies that discriminate.” (a lesbian teacher)

“Taking it into the scope of mobbing and adding sexual orientation and gender identity details to the bylaws of the corporations.” (a gay mid-level manager in food sector)

“ Hate crimes should be definitely included in the bylaws of the companies and should be applied in an impeccable, deterrent way. For partnerships outside marriage, rights similar to the ones given to the married couples should be entitled as well.” (a gay IT sector personnel)

“ At the constitutional level, decisions should be strictly taken in order to prevent violence attempts targeting LGBTI persons. If it’s not possible, I think it’d be right for the private companies to include gays, lesbians and trans people in their own regulations. These things work only when they are reflected on written sources. Unfortunately...” (a trans man teacher)
Another suggestion in order to prevent discrimination was about the affirmative action (positive discrimination) arrangements. Some of our participants thought that quotas and similar actions would not only prevent discrimination in working life, but would also lead to real encounters and real experiences as a result of inclusion of more LGBTI employees in working life.

Another measure mentioned by the survey participants was about the disincentive measures against discrimination. They emphasized that discrimination targeting LGBTI employees should be legally punished in a more accurate, decisive and deterrent way.

Some Quotations from the Survey Participants

“We are a group of 6 people and we started a practice in our office. Whenever someone says something sexist, homophobic or racist, we take 1 TL from that person. We will give that money we collect to an institution. Our language is too masculine; our purpose is to get rid of that. This practice has served its purpose very well and has started to spread throughout the company. It's been very good.”

“I believe that new generation’s approach to LGBTIs is very positive and there’s still hope but a great majority of society is biased, intolerant and most importantly, ignorant. And the way to eliminate this is education.”

“I believe our lives would be easier to some extent if companies that might enable us to work didn’t shut their doors in our faces.”

“Even the idea of such a research study is superb... As a result, although there are clearer and more precise rules and regulations in public institutions, unfortunately, private sector employees can’t even objectify their experiences.”

“Insurance is the field where trans people live troubles. As you know, a trans person naturally doesn’t want to apply for an insurance policy since her/his name doesn’t reflect that person. In this regard, the state has a huge responsibility but as we know, these responsibilities aren’t fulfilled. When you enter a place, being open as a transgender causes eyeloating. People scope you out or say ‘Look, that person is a woman or a man,’ and laugh at you. This ruins your life.”

“For example, workplaces make the occupational safety arrangements only because it’s a legal obligation and they do it only for show. Arrangements regarding LGBTI people can become widespread only if it becomes a legal
obligation but even then, it would be only for show in most of the workplaces. Legislative regulations might serve as a catalyst for social change but in the end, it’s not a magic wand; therefore, an activism that creates the transformation from the grassroots is also very important.”

“It’s very difficult and backbreaking to be hidden in the workplace. For that reason alone, I can't leave my current work and look for a new job at the moment; only because I feel comfortable about this issue. But in fact, I should have equal access to all opportunities.”

“Name section that may cause ethnic discrimination, age section that may cause age discrimination, gender section that may cause sexual discrimination should be omitted from all personal backgrounds; people should be called for job interviews on the basis of their education and their work experiences.”

“The biggest problem is the fact that people don't have information or they have wrong information about gays and lesbians. I was the first gay friend of the people in the workplace to whom I disclosed my identity and they stated that they’ve learnt most of the things about being gay from me. As they became more aware of the subject, as they had gay and lesbian friends and acquaintances, they started to be annoyed with the discrimination based on sexual identity and become more supportive. Increasing the visibility will pave the way for the heterosexuals who are stuck in their worlds and can't have correct information about gays and lesbians.”

“God loves us. I know and I feel it.”

“Everything will be better. Neither Turkey is the old Turkey, nor the World is the old World. : )”
From the Viewpoint of Employers, Managers and Human Resources Specialists, The Situation of LGBTI Employees in Private Sector in Turkey
A. Research Sample

1 persons who answered “Yes” to our question, “Are you an employer, senior executive or human resources specialist in a private company operating in Turkey?”, participated in the survey that we conducted via an online survey system named SurveyMonkey Pro. These persons were working for the above-mentioned professional positions in 24 different companies.

By taking sectoral diversity and company sizes into account, being 30 foreign and 10 Turkish, 40 companies in total were invited to contribute to our survey. Two-thirds of the invited foreign companies were the international companies listed at the top rankings of Corporate Equality Index (CEI) which is published annually with regard to LGBTI equality in the workplaces by the US-based non-governmental organization called Human Rights Campaign (HRC).1 While information on the survey participants is anonymous, in view of the scores we have obtained, we have seen that almost half of the said CEI companies didn’t respond to our research.

When the distribution of the sectors of the survey participants is evaluated, it’s seen that highest participation was from chemical industry which was followed by consumer durables, food and advertisement, respectively. With contribution from 16 different working areas, it can be said that our research has attained the aim of reflecting sectoral diversity.
It’s seen that a balanced diversity has been attained in terms of the number of employees of the companies in which the participants work (number of personnel in their Turkey branches was taken into account). With regard to the number of employees, a wide range of companies participated in our research.

Through the answers given to the question, “How many years has your company been carrying out activities in Turkey?”, it was seen that great majority of the companies that participated in our survey had been carrying out activities for at least 10 years. 29% of the companies had been active in Turkey for over 40 years, and 75% of them for more than 10 years. These high rates might be interpreted as these companies have high institutionalization and governance capacities. Operation periods of the remaining companies (%16) varied between 1 year and 10 years.
Distribution of the participants according to their positions in the companies can be seen in the above given chart. As it’s seen, almost two-third of our participants worked either as mid-level managers or as human resources specialists.

**B. Assessments regarding Job Recruitment Process**

Distribution of the answers given to our question, “Through which mediums do you circulate your adverts during personnel recruitment process?”, can be seen in the below given chart.
As it’s displayed in the chart above, career sites on the internet and social media outlets were the most frequently used mediums. It draws attention that, although recommendation by acquaintances was common as well, traditional media was less frequently preferred. Another finding is that company authorities used more than one channel during personnel recruitment processes. When compared with the answers given to the other survey targeting LGBTI employees within the scope of the same research, it draws attention that usage of Turkish Employment Agency and private employment agencies by the companies is rather high when compared with their usage rates among LGBTI employees.
The purpose of the next question was to find out if any statements used in job adverts included any kind of discriminatory element regarding LGBTI candidates. In general, answers given to the question, “Do you think there is any criterion or statement in your job adverts which might be perceived as supportive or disincen-
tive for application of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex (LGBTI) employees?”, might be summarized as ‘No disincentive statement is used, but no promoting or encouraging expression is included either’.

In addition, some of our participants highlighted that, even though there was nothing emphasized regarding gender in their adverts, if the “nature” of the work “re-
quired” a preference for any kind of a gender, this detail was regarded by the recruiters “afterwards”.

In one of the answers which is quoted below, it was stated that a special attention was paid to gender identity in the survey participant’s company: Gender section in the job advert of the company has been rearranged as a positive measure for trans employees.

We don’t think that there’s any kind of statement in our job adverts that would pre-
vent LGBTI individuals from applying. Besides, we have removed the gender box from the job application form on our website and we believe that by doing this, we prevent trans individuals from feeling uncomfortable.” (a mid-level manager in a legal counseling company)

On the other hand, another participant shared that they underlined that “the company provides equal opportunities in recruitment” within their job adverts as a particular measure against discrimination.

As the company of one of our participants who gave a comprehensive answer to the question sets a good example, her entire statement is quoted below. It could be sug-
gested that “gender identity” regarding transgender people and “intersex situation”
of the person might be included within the scope of the below mentioned institutional approach in order to expand its framework for protection against discrimination and the positive message given.

“Booklet on the Working Principles of our Group constitutes the ethics codes of our company. It’s given mandatorily to every person who is newly recruited. Afterwards, regular trainings are also given. Definition of equality is explicitly given in this booklet and in the trainings. In our company, we ensure equality in recruiting, business relationship process, salary, participation to training, promotion, retirement and in all other employment conditions. We find it unacceptable to discriminate on grounds of factors like race, color, gender, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, political opinion or affiliation, ethnic identity, health situation, family responsibilities, union activities or membership, physical disability or age. We treat every employee with honor and respect. Thus, we don’t include any kind of expression that might cause discrimination in our human resources practices and forms. We adopt an equal approach in our human resources policies and practices like recruiting, promotion, transfer, rotation, salary. We find it unacceptable in any way to discriminate on grounds of on reasons like language, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, political opinion, belief, religion, age, physical disability.” (a mid-level manager in merchandizing sector)

Words of one of our participants who stated that while there were no direct discriminatory expressions in their job adverts, there was a possibility of occurrence of discrimination during recruitment process are as given below.

“No supporting or inhibiting statement or criteria exists. But if there is a preference for the position as ‘woman’ or ‘man’, even though it isn’t mentioned in the adverts, elimination of the candidates is done in line with that preference. Similarly, if it’s perceived that a candidate has a ‘different’ sexual orientation, such person may be eliminated by persons who conduct the job interview; and the reason remains hidden.”

**Is there any statement regarding sexual identity in the recruitment interviews or tests? (open ended; 31 respondents)**

- No: 25
- During the interview, one can be open about her/his sexual identity: 3
- Questions regarding gender may be asked: 4
Another question regarding recruitment process was, “Are there any checks in interviews or tests during the recruitment process that would show sensitivity on sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex situation; are there any questions asked directly or indirectly? Are there any discriminatory criteria in the interviews or tests regarding sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex situation?”. Similar with the previous question, answers given to this question were mostly like “No, there isn’t.” However, a participant pointed out that there might be situations where sexual identity of the employee might be taken into consideration as a criterion while position of the employee got determined:

“No, there isn’t, and we have such employees. The criterion we consider is the answer of the question: ‘As per the environment where the employee will work, may the general population cause trouble for that employee?’. For example, if a masculine working culture predominates in the environment in which the employee will enter as a production specialist, and if the team is a closed one in terms of culture, we might consider not assigning that person to that environment.” (a human resources specialist from consumer durables sector)

Another participant pointed out that even though procedures in recruitment aren’t discriminatory in terms of gender identity or sexual orientation, the process might go in this direction.

“The ‘gender’ category, marital status etc. in the background forms are already discriminatory enough but they seem as ‘normal’. When the chain of interviews in a hiring process is considered (consulting firm, HR department, executive, etc.), an interviewer at some level who actually doesn’t want to question these might feel obliged to question these. ‘Are you married?’ ‘Do you live with your parents’? etc. It’s obvious that these questions might force LGBTI persons; and if they share their existing conditions without hiding, I believe in Turkey it’s not likely not to be eliminated from hiring process. No one is obliged to share such personal information and preferences but in Turkey, people estimate them even though they don’t ask directly.” (a human resources specialist from a human resources counseling company)
Almost 75% of our participants answered the question, “During the job application or personnel recruitment processes, have you ever encountered lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex employees and them being open in terms of their sexual identities? How did you proceed afterwards?”, as “No, we haven’t.” This ratio corresponds with the finding coming from the other survey, that a great part of LGBTI employees hide their sexual identities during job recruitment processes.

On the other hand, 25% of our participants has encountered LGBTI employees during hiring processes. They conveyed their experiences as presented below.

“We have encountered, and currently we are working together with that person.” (a mid-level manager in advertisement sector)

“No difficulty has been experienced. The evaluation was made on the basis of job experience; and competence for the job was the criteria.” (a senior executive in advertisement sector)

In some answers on the other hand, it was stated that applicants with open LGBTI identities were found unfavorable for the jobs but the actual reason wasn’t sexual identity discrimination.

“There was an application. We wanted to evaluate the recruitment but the candidate wasn’t found technically qualified and wasn’t accepted.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

The participant, who previously mentioned in detail that they had clear and comprehensive official procedures against discrimination in the answer we have quoted as a whole, gave a similar response to this question as well.
“We haven’t encountered during recruitment processes. We have no question or an instruction that would determine this or would make candidates reveal their sexual identities. Sexual orientation and gender identity are clearly defined in our code and thus, discrimination during the business relations can be by no means accepted. We have employees who are open in terms of their sexual identities during their employment. No case has been brought up as our working environment and working principles explicitly define equal treatment to all identities. Our employees are free either to reveal or not to reveal their sexual identities; no one is obliged to express or hide their sexual orientation or gender identity. In order to create a working environment in which our employees can freely express themselves, and to prevent them from feeling obliged to hide their sexual identities due to social oppression or a norm, we conduct trainings and awareness activities under the titles of ‘non-discrimination’ and ‘working principles’ within the scope of our ‘democracy in workplace’ activities.” (a mid-level manager in merchandizing sector)

The answer of another survey participant points out an important positive step in terms of supporting LGBTI employees. Public statements indicating that companies treat equally to LGBTI employees may be beneficial in the struggle for anti-discrimination and equal employment.

“The answer of another survey participant points out an important positive step in terms of supporting LGBTI employees. Public statements indicating that companies treat equally to LGBTI employees may be beneficial in the struggle for anti-discrimination and equal employment.

“After the activities we carry out since 2014 in order to draw attention to the situation and equality of LGBTI persons particularly in working life, we had a candidate in 2015 who stated that he had become aware of such activities and applied particularly for that reason. The candidate wasn’t employed since she/he couldn’t match the graduation criteria but this had nothing to do with her/his identity. Actually, LGBTI employees with open identities currently work in our office.” (a mid-level manager in legal counseling sector)

Along with the few positive answers, examples pointing out implicit or explicit sexual identity discrimination were stated as well.

“During the recruitment process of a person, the decision might be given by considering how that person will be met by the team. However, we have LGBTI employees.” (a human resources specialist in financial audit and counseling sector)

“Despite all opposition from my friends, I referred my candidate to the company which I give consultancy services. That person was hired and still continues to work there. I didn’t ask anything about her/his sexual identity; neither did the company I referred to. And that person didn’t have to make an explanation. But I saw people being eliminated by others, I expressed my objection but there was nothing I could do.” (a human resources specialist in financial audit and counseling sector)

“Evaluation of a candidate who was considered to be gay resulted negatively in the department since it was thought that his management style would be weak.” (a human resources specialist in consumer durables sector)
All but one of the participants answered the question, “During or after the hiring process, have you ever received any question, criticism or a suggestion from other employees, company management or public/political actors regarding sexual identity of applicants or employed LGBTI persons?” as “Yes, I have.” The statement of the participant who said “Yes” is as presented below:

“Sexual orientation is never spoken about; there is a different perception like, ‘This woman is good but too masculine,’ or ‘I think he’s gay’... When this judgment is made, consultants hesitate over evaluating such candidate.” (a human resources specialist in financial audit and counseling sector)

As it may be understood from the above given statements, discrimination against employees with open identities is experienced in more visible, more open ways. At the same time, interpretations and predictions may cause discrimination also in situations where sexual identity is not open. These approaches show that indications of sexual orientation or gender identity may be reasons for explicit or hidden forms of discrimination in working life.

**C. Institutional Protection against Discrimination**

One of the questions we asked to understand the current situation about protection against sexual identity discrimination in corporate regulations and procedures was, “Are there any rules or committees that would prevent discrimination, mobbing or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity within your corporate procedures that cover promotion, assignment, suspension from work and occupational trainings?(For example equality and discipline committees, regulations, activities against homophobic and transphobic biases, etc.)”.

![Graph illustrating the responses to the question](image-url)
Answers given to this question show that in general, there are no procedures, committees or rules specific to protection on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Instead, there are usually rules and committees with regard to general disciplinary provisions and/or “code of ethics”, and all employees are bound with these rules.

Answers indicating existing rules against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the company constituted almost one-third of the answers. Great majority of these answers were received from survey participants working in foreign-based companies. On the other hand, as it was also stated by the survey participants that such protections on the “global” level mostly weren’t active or widely-known in Turkey offices.

Having said that, a part of the answers underlined that there were “gender” equality rules and policies in place which in fact didn’t explicitly demonstrate corporate sensitivity to the equality of LGBTI employees.

“As per the intercompany procedures we use, we have a discipline committee that proceeds against any kind of discrimination including gender.” (a human resources specialist in consumer durables sector)

Below are some examples from the survey participants who stated that their companies explicitly and accurately prohibited discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

“We have an ethics policy; and in this policy, it’s clearly explained that sexual ‘preference’ of a person shouldn’t affect that person’s career.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

“We provide a compulsory training regarding this issue under “Diversity & Inclusion” title and it is a mandatory training.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

“It’s included in our Equality and Discipline Committee activities and our Code of Conduct which determines our business manners. We also have an ‘Internal Auditor’ regarding this issue in our company.” (a mid-level manager in consumer durables sector)

“In the last two years, the company started to carry out activities focusing this issue while raising awareness on Diversity and Inclusion.” (a mid-level manager in automotive sector)

“We have a committee named ‘Diversity Committee’ in our office. It carries out regular activities not only for LGBTI persons, but also for safeguarding women employees and ethnical and cultural minorities to prevent them from being exposed to any kind of discrimination due to their identities, and to draw attention to equality.” (a mid-level manager in legal counseling sector)

1 The word “preference” was italicized by the editor of this book.
Almost all of the answers given to the question, “Within the scope of the health benefits provided to your employees by your company, are there any special measures sensitive to sexual orientation or gender identity? Are there any health or social-psychological support personnel specialized on this subject? Are special needs of transgender people arising from their gender transition process covered within this framework?”, indicated that there were no particular measures regarding this issue; healthcare staff or units weren’t specialized in this matter either. On the other hand, one participant stated that there might be such arrangements in their international center but certainly not in their Turkey office yet.

“Health support is provided to everyone but I don’t know if there’s an additional support that applies to LGBTs. At least in Turkey office, I don’t think there is any. But there may be a support in global.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

Besides, there were a few statements indicating that there were “general health” support in place, and special needs of LGBTIs might be expected to be covered under them. However, healthcare personnel specialized in gender transition process, or special measures taken for special and different needs of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender or intersex weren’t mentioned at all in those answers. One of our participants emphasized a detail that might demonstrate one of the impediments regarding this issue.

“In terms of health support, we don’t have them in place yet because insurance companies in Turkey still don’t include such coverage in their insurance policies either.” (a mid-level manager in legal counseling sector)

Only one participant stated that he wasn’t sure about health support but there were special measures with regard to social-psychological support services:

“There is a social-psychological support unit. Trans people have the opportunity to receive social-psychological support during their transition processes. I don’t know the scope of health support though.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

### D. Social Benefits and Activities

Social benefits and activities are areas where discriminatory situations are frequently experienced. Social benefits or activities are generally shaped within the framework of civil law and around the notions of “heterosexual family” or “heterosexual couples”. As a result, relationships of LGBTI couples aren’t legally and/or socially recognized in great majority of corporations. Therefore, this kind of social benefits or activities which are not sensitive to LGBTI employers or their partners might in fact automatically cause discrimination as well.
Similar answers given to the others, answers given to the question, “Within the scope of social benefits and similar services provided for your employees, are there any special measures taken for inclusion of LGBTI employees? (For example measures for providing family allowances to non-married partners or supporting participation of them to social activities inside and outside the company, etc.)”, indicated that there was no special measure or policy in this area.

Most of our participants stated that, “Everyone is treated equally.” However, equality in this area may in fact turn into practices that make LGBTI employees invisible who actually need a positively “different” treatment. In addition, while there was no sensitivity towards special practices regarding social benefits, there was a relatively better attitude in terms of participation in social activities. A few number of our participants stated that there was an attitude in their companies that promoted “actual equality” by encouraging participation of LGBTI employees to social activities.

“Gay and lesbian couples can participate in the social activities inside and outside the company; there is no limitation.” (a human resources specialist in chemical industry)

“Social benefits aren’t included in company criteria. In social activities, we try to ensure participation of all employees without making any discrimination.” (a human resources specialist in logistics sector)
“LGBTI persons working in our office with open identities can comfortably come to the social activities of the office with their partners and introduce them to other persons. 2 of our 5 LGBTI employees are open and 1 of them is married. The married person attended our last New Year’s Eve party together with the spouse. Furthermore, we also offer to pay marriage premium to the LGBTI employees who marry in a foreign company, just as we provide it to heterosexual employees.” (a mid-level manager in legal counseling sector)

On the other hand, another remarkable finding is about the LGBTI-sensitive policies of international companies. These inclusive policies of international companies which are in place in their Global centers or in Europe or the United States don’t exist at the same level in Turkey. This indicates a special condition which we have encountered in the answers given to the other questions as well.

“Yes there are, but I’m not sure if they exist in Turkey.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

“In European countries, yes there are, but in Turkey office, there’s no such practice.” (a senior executive in automotive sector)

E. Experiences of Discrimination against LGBTI Employees

With the purpose of understanding how and in which areas direct and indirect discrimination against LGBTI employees occurs, a series of questions was asked to employers, managers and human resources specialists within the scope of our research.
First of these questions was, “In your workplace, are there any LGBTI employees whose sexual orientations or gender identities are known? If there are, in which positions do these persons work?”. 7 out of 31 respondents stated that they had employees in their workplaces with open identities in terms of their sexual orientation or gender identity. One of these persons worked as an art director, one as an architect, two as senior executives, two as mid-level managers and one as an editor. No person with open sexual identity was reported in the positions of expert, assistant expert or worker, service personnel. It can be thought that LGBTI persons prefer less to work with open identities at those mid and base level positions.

Almost two-third of our participants stated that there wasn’t any open person among their employees in terms of their sexual orientation or gender identity. On the other hand, some of these participants thought that there was a possibility of having LGBTI employees – who were hiding their identities.

However, 3 of our survey participants stated that they knew there were LGBTI employees in their companies, but that they were preferring to hide their identities. At this point, a key finding in our survey which was conducted among LGBTI employees may be remembered: Only 33 out of 151 LGBTI employees who participated in the survey stated that they were completely open in their workplaces with regard to their sexual identities; while 59 of them stated that they were partially open and 59 were completely hidden.

To the question, “In your workplace, have you ever witnessed any sexual identity discrimination case which developed from top levels to bottom levels or among the employees working at the same level? What was the course of the proceeding?”, the participants mostly answered as “No” or “I haven’t witnessed directly”. It should be remembered that, upon the question with similar content in the survey targeted LGBTI employees, a remarkable number of LGBTI employees stated that
they faced homophobic and transphobic speeches which were “not directly targeting a particular person but targeting the general”. On the other hand, in this survey, less number of testimonies about discriminatory speeches targeting the general LGBTI population, or a specific person were shared. For example:

“I saw with my own eyes that inappropriate jokes, innuendos were targeted at our friends. Or I heard that there were gossips.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

“Not necessarily a discrimination; but until a few years ago, there were incomprehensibilities and approaches that could have been interpreted as offences due to lack of information. However, as our employees learnt about the issue by means of the activities we carried out in last two years, such kind of incidents completely finished.” (a mid-level manager in legal counseling sector)

**F. Institutional Initiatives against Discrimination**

In one of our previous questions, one of our participants stated that a public declaration of the company which was against discrimination towards LGBTIs positively affected job applications of LGBTI employees. On the track of a similar approach, in this section of our questionnaire, questions aiming to get opinions of our participants regarding the combat against discrimination were asked.

The first question was, “Has your company made a public statement regarding discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity?”. Out of 31, only 2 participants gave positive response to this question. In their answers, importance of increasing sensitivity and visibility on discrimination towards LGBTI people were also mentioned with regard to the collective struggle against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. As it has been seen, in addition to written or verbal official statements, symbolic yet visible approaches are also important in the fight against discrimination.

“We have an equitable approach and diversity is important for us.” (a human resources specialist in financial audit and counseling sector)

“Even though our company hasn’t make a public statement yet, it showcased its position on this issue by hanging a rainbow flag over its office building during 2015 Pride Week.” (a mid-level manager in a legal counseling company)

Making contacts with NGO’s working in the field is another way to improve skills in fight against discrimination in working life and to make these kind of fair approaches publicly visible. However, most of our participants said “No” to the question, “Do you have any contact or cooperation with NGO’s working in LGBTI rights issues”, which we asked in order to understand private sector companies’ capacity and will for cooperating with
NGOs in this field. 4 participants who answered this question as “Yes” stated that they made contacts with NGO’s like Kaos GL, LambdaIstanbul, LİSTAG and SPoD. One of our survey participants also mentioned about his personal support as an activist.

“I follow NGO’s via social media. Whenever an activity or an organization is carried out, I try to participate as much as I can.” (a mid-level manager in a financial audit and counseling company)

G. Evaluation and Suggestions about Discrimination against LGBTI Employees

In the last section of our research, a couple of questions were asked in order to learn about the general remarks and suggestions of our participants.

The first question in this section was, “If you score your workplace about its sensitivity to LGBTI rights, out of 4, what would your score be?”. Even though in the answers given to the previous questions, it was mostly stated that there were no particular and effective measures, procedures or a practice about struggle against discrimination, 48% of our participants gave 3 or 4 to the companies they worked for. While 45% of the participants marked either 1 or 2; only 2 of our participants marked 0 in order to state that there were no positive, supportive, pro-active policies or customs in their workplaces.
The question, “What might be the main reasons for employers or company executives to abstain from employing LGBTI persons?”, was also targeted to LGBTI private sector employees through the other survey within the scope of our research. Apart from the strong emphasis of LGBTI employees on the “lack of explicit protection under the Constitution, the Labor Law and workplace regulations”, answers given by both groups largely resemble. Just like the LGBTI employees; large majority of employers, managers and human resources specialists pointed out the discriminatory social mindset based on biases. The reason which was frequently stated and underlined by both groups was “avoiding reactions and negative approaches from the other employees that might arise due to employing LGBTI personnel”. On the other hand, some of our participants highlighted “administrative frailties” regarding lack of apprehension of the importance of the issue and solution development.
“This is a vicious circle. Even though I want to act differently, within the hierarchy or by the flow, I’m forced to act like others. For example, if I send an LGBTI person to a customer company for an interview by also revealing that person’s sexual identity, I might get serious reactions; I might seesaw in this situation. I might avoid the conflict by giving information as “Woman” or “Man”. But for instance if I think it might be perceptible even if it’s not expressed, I might eliminate the candidate because of the fear of getting reaction. It’s not easy to show such courage.” (a human resources specialist in a human resources consultancy company)

The second important category which draws attention among the answers given to this question is the consideration or assumption that employing LGBTI personnel may cause some troubles in the workplace, and discrimination cases may not be overcome. Adoption of these bias also by the company management and not including this issue in the priorities of the company as a result was shown as a reason as well.

“There is an excessive number of homophobic employees in the workplace. So, they are afraid that if they employ LGBTI persons, they might ruin the dynamics within the company. Company doesn’t consider this issue as a priority. They don’t care about this issue.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

“Administrative frailties regarding keeping the harmony in the team.” (a human resources specialist in consumer durables sector)

“In general, the reason might be the attitudes and behaviors disturbing the other employees.” (a senior executive in construction-architecture sector)

In only one answer, it was stated that the reason for the companies to avoid from employing LGBTI personnel was that “these persons highlighted their sexualities”. Answers which had tendencies to include similar essentialist and interiorized homophobia-transphobia were given by a few number of LGBTI employees as well, through the other survey.

“Sometimes, it’s because these persons highlight their sexual identities too much.” (a mid-level manager in consumer durables sector)

This understanding might directly or indirectly indicate an expectation from LGBTI employees to act in a manner that should by no means reveal their sexual identities. However, “highlighting their heterosexuality” isn’t considered as an obstacle for the other employees to be employed. Yet more, full conformity with the “heterosexual woman” and “heterosexual man” roles reigning in the society is in some cases the precondition of the employment of a person; in the contrary case, it might be an indication of the weakness of the employee.

Two participants stated that they had no answer to give to this question because they had never encountered this kind of a situation.
Answers given to the question, “What do you think that should be the most important and urgent measure to be taken in the workplace against discrimination targeting LGBTI employees?”, which was also asked to LGBTI employees, indicate similarities between both target groups of the research. Like LGBTI employees; employers, company managers and human resources specialists most frequently expressed certain activities that should be carried out for awareness raising and change in mentality; and expressed that trainings and similar measures should be in place in the workplaces as well as others spheres of social life.

Among the others, only two participants stated that legislative measures were important and the Labor Law should provide protection against the discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. As a remarkable point; when compared to the answers of LGBTI employees, lack of legislation was mentioned by the company authorities and the human resources specialists at significantly lower levels.

Finally, the importance of publicizing protective and promoting measures in order to make them visible, and affirmative action (positive discrimination) towards LGBTI employees in employment were emphasized.

Only one participant argued that not highlighting sexual orientation in workplaces might be an appropriate measure. Some examples from the expressions of survey participants are presented below.
“Aforementioned measures in this survey might be taken and publicized.” (a mid-level manager in advertisement sector)

“A supportive speech, announcement, etc. should be explicitly declared by the company executives.” (a mid-level manager in manufacturing sector)

“Employing LGBTI employees and standing solidly behind them in all cases; giving support to them (positive discrimination).” (a senior executive in advertisement sector)

“First of all, it’s needed to ensure social education and tolerance. To educate and convey the message to the people that, ‘People being different from each other isn’t a weird or shameful situation’. I believe that afterwards, perspectives and attitudes towards LGBTI employees will change anyway.” (a human resources specialist in logistics sector)

“For instance, as in England, all information like age, gender, marital status, photograph which are personal and which causes discrimination should be removed from the job recruitment forms. Even the name shouldn’t be in the forms; in order to ensure an evaluation entirely based on the application number and to ensure focusing on educational background and job experience.” (a mid-level manager in insurance sector)

“Increasing social recognition activities in this area. Screening the film, ‘My Child (Benim Çocuğum)’ as many times as possible; sharing that film through the social media.” (a mid-level manager in a financial audit and consultancy company)

“The fact that ‘sexual identities of the persons aren’t related to the duties they perform’ should be imposed to all employees.” (a senior executive in press sector)

“Keeping in mind that Rome wasn’t built in a day, taking the risk to get reactions and never giving up telling people about these issues. This is the personal one. Big companies on the other hand can succeed this by training programs, relevant procedures and activities that will lead to acceptance. Like the application of Dow Corning.” (a human resources specialist in financial audit and consultancy sector)

“Only a labor law that will focus on this issue and that will be strictly applied can clear this situation up.” (a senior executive in construction-architecture sector)

“While there is no such situation in our company, this doesn’t mean that it won’t be in future either. Therefore, we planned to prevent a possible future discrimination by extending our Global Network to Turkey. The important need in other workplaces to prevent this will be education and correct information.” (a mid-level manager in chemical sector)
“It would be enough if no one expressed their sexual preferences\(^2\) in workplaces.” (a human resources specialist in financial audit and consultancy sector)

Almost all of our participants gave detailed and concurrent answers to this question. As a positive result, this fact can be assessed as there is awareness regarding discrimination. There’s no doubt that choosing to participate in our research is another sign for this awareness. Thus, in the last question, our participants were asked to state if they have other suggestions or opinions. In the answers given to this question, the large part of our participants expressed that they believed even only this research would be beneficial as a first step in prevention of workplace discrimination against LGBTI employees in workplace.

“I’m against all kinds of discrimination. Either LGBTIs or single, married, women, men, children or animals; it doesn’t make a difference. We all are a part of this society and we have a value. As the country, there is much progress to be made but as I see that there are people around me who think like the way I think, I believe that we will succeed this as a society as well.”
(a mid-level manager in chemical sector)

\(^2\) The word “preferences” was italicized by the editor of this book.
Approaches from the USA-based and Germany-based Companies regarding Rights of LGBTI Employees
A. Background

Being able to express our sexual orientations and gender identities and to be effective participants of social life and working life without being discriminated is an inseparable part of the human dignity. Universal Declaration of Human Rights starts with the Article presented below:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Despite the technological development in today’s world and socio-economic development associated with it, people face numerous examples of discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In some countries, depending on the public and private sector sensitivities, struggle against sexual identity discrimination is built on a heteronormative sense of gender. In countries in which principals of democratic public administration and rule of law are more prevailing, discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) persons is recognized by the laws; and their universal human rights are protected and supported on the basis of their gender as well as on the basis of their sexual orientations and gender identities.

For persons to sustain their lives with human dignity, they need to have workplaces which are free from all kinds of discrimination. Working life starts firstly with the person’s entrance to the education channel that person desires, and afterwards, continues with the person’s freedom to apply for a job. This freedom should last with equal treatment in terms of recruitment and should be supported with the equal social rights and activities provided both by the working environment from the first date of employment.

In the report of the conference organized by European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 2008, types of discriminations based on sexual orientation and gender identity were exemplified as below.

- LGBT persons experience a refusal of employment and dismissal, as well as discrimination in access to employment, training and promotion.
- LGBT people are often invisible and fear ‘coming out’ in case they are discrim-
inated against in areas such as promotion, career development and access to training etc. This can also result in self-exclusion, whereby a LGBT person may avoid certain jobs or employment for fear of discrimination.

- Homophobic bullying and harassment is not an uncommon experience for LGBT people at work and workplace equality actions are important to ensuring that there is a workplace culture of respect and dignity.

- Benefits that are enjoyed by heterosexual partners denies same-sex partners, for example, paternity and parental leave, relocation, caring for a sick partner or bereavement leave, educational or other benefits for employees and their families, goods and services provided free of charge or at a discount, survivors pension schemes or benefits from life insurance, and health-care insurance for employees and their families.

All these types of discrimination mentioned in the abovementioned report cause LGBTI employees to be distant from steady business life. This exclusion brings social inequality with it.

As a result of heteronormative and heterosexist perception and inducement, it’s not a coincidence that today, the first occupations that come to mind when LGBTI persons are thought are entertainment sector, tourism and advertisement. Both in social life and in working life, a perception and an attitude develops as the obstacles before LGBTI persons.

In today’s global world, international companies which pay regard to the interests of the countries but at the same time make no compromises from their universal values can convey their business practices to the countries as a whole. These principles and practices should be applied to the country and to the sector in which the company operates to the degree that national laws and relevant secondary regulations allow.

This report compiles approaches of selected USA-based and Germany-based companies operating in Turkey with regard to LGBTI rights and LGBTI employees. Companies that are subject to the report were selected among the most known companies in terms of their fields of activity in Turkey, and their reputations. During the study, English websites of each company were reviewed first. Regarding the German companies, their German websites were browsed in the light of certain keywords. The research was focused on companies’ activity reports, institutional administration documents and press releases. Then, our study continued on popular search engines on internet again by using those keywords. Since companies with limited information were generally from Germany, an e-mail was sent separately to each company with an explanation on that “we have contacted them within the scope of a research carried out by a Turkish NGO in order to analyze situations of LGBTI individuals in the workplaces”. After the mail, the institutions usually either directed us to the information given on their websites or didn’t reply. Only one com-
Our study includes analysis of 15 companies; being 6 from the USA and 9 from Germany. Our findings indicate that there is a high level of awareness within these companies regarding sexual identity issue; and that each company shows sensitivity about gender diversity within the context of sustainability and diversity.

The study indicates that particularly USA companies lists their LGBTI rights activities on their internet sites in a more orderly, systematic, accessible and detailed manner. Likewise, in the light of the information gathered from their websites, it’s seen that institutional support of American companies proceeds with a more inclusive level when compared to German companies. Besides, it was observed that German companies showcased their sensitivity according to the country conditions both in national and international markets, including the USA. The reason that there are less intercompany regulations in German companies than USA companies can also be interpreted as because the laws and institutions of both European Union and Germany have strong and consistent will regarding discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Tanju Ş. Serdengeçti, November, 2015

B. The USA-based Companies

The Dow Chemical Company

Dow, which has been in Turkish market for over 40 years, is one of the world’s leading companies with their good practice examples for LGBTI employees. There are 7 “Employee Networks” within Dow. These networks help employees on information sharing between each other according to their common interests, supports them for professional development and meet the top-level leadership needs where necessary. One of these networks is a LGBT network named “Gays, Lesbians & Allies at Dow – GLAD”. As for the other networks, GLAD is also supported by a senior executive. Through the activities of GLAD, Dow has been making contribution to many activities, giving scholarships and hereby supporting LGBT awareness in working life on the basis of equality. We can summarize the activities that have been carried out by Dow for many years as below.

- According to the Corporate Equality Index which has been issued by Human Rights Campaign (HRC) every year, Dow scored 100 out of 100 in 2016 and was recorded as the “Best Place to Work for LGBT Equality”. Dow has continuously been scoring 100 since 2005.
• GLAD has been giving scholarships in science and technology field by supporting the national association named “Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)” through Dow. At the same time, Dow is one of the institutional supporters of PFLAG.

• Dow is one of the supporters of a nonprofit foundation named OUTstanding which is open to membership of senior LGBT executives.

• In 2013, Dow was granted the “Workplace Excellence Award” which is given by an LGBT association named Out and Equal. In 2015, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Official of the company, Howard Ungerleider was granted the Champion Award. Ungerleider also works as administrative level supporter of GLAD. Dow is still one of the institutional supporters of Out and Equal.

• Dow institutionally supported the Equal Marriage issue which has been recognized by the Supreme Court in USA on June 26th, 2015 as a legal right in all states. With this purpose, Dow signed a joint support statement together with 379 corporate companies and organizations.

• Dow has been actively supporting the “Employee Non-Discrimination Act Law Draft” which remains on the agenda of the US Senate and the House of Representatives. This law draft illegalizes discrimination in employment based on gender identity and sexual orientation. This law draft has been on the agenda of the US Congress for many years but hasn’t been approved by The House of Representatives and US Senate.

• Dow was selected as the 2nd best company as per the survey results carried out within the scope of “International Business Equality” study which was conducted all around the world by “International Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce” in 2012.

• As per the results of the survey carried out by “Workplace Pride Foundation” in 2014 for the first time, Dow was among the first 5 companies with its activities for the efficient participation of LGBT individuals to the working life. The first companies including Dow and their scores out of 100 were: IBM (86%), Dow (80%), BNP Paribas (76%), Shell (73%) and CiscoSystems (67%). Dow is currently one of the institutional supporters of the Foundation.

Brief Information about the Company – The Dow Chemical Company

Kimya sektöründe, 180 ülkede faaliyet gösteren DOW 1897 yılında kurulmuştur. Şirketin merkezi Michigan, ABD’dedir. 45 yıldır Türkiye’de de faaliyet gösteren DOW’un dünya üzerinde yaklaşık 53.000 çalışanı bulunmaktadır. Şirketin 2014 yılı cırosu 58 milyar dolardan fazladır.
Coca Cola Company

Coca Cola is a nonalcoholic beverage producer which has a significant share in Turkey. It has been carrying out activities in Turkey over 50 years. The company has conducted significant activities for rights and full inclusion of LGBT employees in the workplace, has considered LGBT rights as one of the main issues in the fight against discrimination and has achieved a great success in this. Coca Cola embraces its philosophy which also protects LGBT rights within the framework of prohibiting discrimination in workplace and evaluating the social differences on the basis of human rights. In this regard, equal opportunities principle has been considered as a common ground for every Coca Cola employee regardless of language, religion, race, gender etc. In this direction, as in all other employee rights based on human rights, sexual orientation is also a value which Coca Cola emphasizes sensitively. Through its organization named “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally (LGBTA)” Coca Cola has been carrying out activities for LGBT employees to participate in the working life equally without being discriminated. By this means, they have ensured a mechanism based on equality through which LGBT employees and LGBT rights defenders can express themselves in Coca Cola Company. This mechanism makes significant contribution to the success of the strategic priorities of the company. We can briefly summarize the results of the works which have been carried out by Coca Cola as below.

• Coca Cola scored 100 out of 100 in the 2016 Corporate Equality Index ranking. This result is the 10th successive full score of Coca Cola.

• Through a policy that was started in 2011, Coca Cola put the US-based Workplace Gender Transition Guideline into effect and enabled health support including transgender people.

• Coca Cola has stated that, being effective from 2015, they will be supporting tax-based losses of gays and lesbians which arises from health rights related issues of their “same sex” partners/spouses. This policy will be organized in a way that it will also be applicable in the states in which same sex marriage isn’t recognized.

• Coca Cola has supported many Pride Marches in various locations of USA, has supported marches and long-distance runs organized to provide awareness on HIV/AIDS.

• In addition to being one of the main supporters of Human Rights Campaign (HRC), Coca Cola also supported the 2014 Gay Games and International Gay and Lesbian Journalists Convention 2014 as a sponsor.
• Coca Cola has carried out joint projects with “Gay & Lesbian Alliance against Defamation” in order to support LGBT communities.

**Brief Information about the Company – The Coca Cola Company**

Coca Cola, which was founded in 1886 and has been carrying out activities in Turkey since 1964, makes sale in beverage sector in over 200 countries. 2014 turnover of the company is 46 billion Dollars and it has 129.200 employees. 65.300 of these employees are in USA and number of employees reaches up to 700.000 when combined with its bottling business partners.

**Levi Strauss & Co**

As a company which has been carrying out activities in Turkey for about 30 years, Levi Strauss is a ready-made clothing company known around the world with its activities about LGBT issue. The acquirements of the company, as a result of good practices for LGBT employees can be exemplified as below.

• They supported “National Center for Lesbian Rights” and “The San Francisco LGBT Community Center” within the scope of human rights and social equality activities.

• In a significant part of their politics and advocacy activities, they have been lobbying for the “Employee Non-Discrimination Act Law Draft” to be approved by the Congress and have been supporting the efforts in this direction.

• Considering the right to marry within the scope of human rights and gender equality, they support the activities in this field. They decorated the mannequins with white ribbons which is the solidarity sign of equal marriage in order to protest the decision that legalized the equal marriage in California. Within the scope of 2014 Pride Month, they celebrated their supports for LGBT rights for over 30 years by introducing a rainbow themed collection.

• Except from the first year of issuance of the Index in which they scored 86, in the advancing years, in the Corporate Equality Index, they scored 100 full score consecutively for 13 years, including 2016.

• Together with Human Rights Campaign, they prepared visuals for the showcase glasses as well as manufactured special design t-shirts in order to support marriage equality.

• In March 2015, they made a joint declaration together with GAP, another ready-
made clothing company, and called other clothing companies to give their support against increasing number of law drafts on national levels against LGBTs.

• Before the decision of the US Supreme Court, they signed a statement with the purpose of recognition of equal marriage together with 378 companies across the country. The company has been defending their activities in this field for many years with the approach that everybody has right to marry on the basis of gender equality.

• As a supporter of LGBT rights, they made opening speeches as the Vice President in the meetings of the LGBT association named Out & Equal; and they actively supported the activities of the LGBT association named “White Knot for Equality” for recognition of equal marriage.

• Furthermore, in 2014, they sponsored the award ceremony in New York of the LGBT association named “Athlete Ally” which conducts activities against homophobia and transphobia in sports. Athlete Ally has been carrying out activities to raise awareness against homophobia and transphobia in the sports field (individuals, sports clubs, etc.) by preparing campaigns, trainings and programs.

**Brief Information about the Company – Levi Strauss**

Levi Strauss was founded in 1853 in San Francisco, California, USA and they have headquarters in San Francisco, Brussels and in Singapore. The company has been in Turkish market since 1987 and they make sale in over 110 countries. 2014 turnover of the company is 4,8 billion Dollars and they have 15,000 employees around the world.

**IBM**

As one of the leading information technologies company in the world, IBM has carried out significant activities with the purpose of raising awareness on LGBT issue. There are over 230 “Diversity Network Groups” in IBM. These groups work to ensure people to express their sexual orientations, countries, cultures and other characteristics; and to improve themselves while they’re protecting their differences in working life. One of these groups is “The Employee Alliance for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Empowerment at IBM – EAGLE”. EAGLE was founded in 1995 in order to strengthen LGBT rights in IBM. It’s an employee union with over 55 communities around the world. They have been working for the existence and
protection of an environment in which LGBT employees can express themselves safely and freely. Within this context, EAGLE develops relations with LGBT bodies outside of the company (unions, associations, etc.) and carries out activities to defend LGBT rights not only in working life, but also in society.

Another subject IBM gives importance is the issue of providing LGBT individuals wages and other aids/supports same as the ones provided to heterosexual individuals, unless it’s explicitly prohibited by the relevant law. IBM has been organizing leadership development programs in order to clear the way for their LGBT employees and allows successful LGBT employees by promoting them to mid and high level management. We can list some of the achievements of IBM in the light of their ongoing works as below.

• They have scored 100 out of 100 in Corporate Equality Index consecutively for 13 years. IBM scored 86 only in 2002 in which the index was issued for the first time and afterwards, they continuously completed with full score. In addition to this success, IBM is one of the active supporters of Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

• Since 2001, they have won many awards in the Outie Awards given by Out & Equal either in company category and/or in LGBT employee category and/or in intercompany active network groups category and/or in the category in which people who are not LGBTs but actively working for LGBT rights. IBM is one of the active supporters of Out & Equal.

• According to the results of Workplace Pride 2014 Global Benchmark Survey, conducted firstly in 2014 by a Holland LGBT organization Workplace Pride Foundation, IBM scored 86 and was selected as a company which included the highest level of LGBT employees. IBM is one of the active supporters of Workplace Pride Foundation which does significant works regarding LGBT rights.

• IBM is one of the active supporters of a non-profit association named OUTstanding which is open to membership of senior LGBT executives.

• In 2015, IBM was selected as one of the best 10 workplaces by “The Global Workplace Equality Index” which has regularly been conducted by Stonewall since 2005. Furthermore, IBM took place in the “Top Performers” list of Stonewall. This list is formed through a selection of the companies among the ones that took place in “top 10 employers” list in the last 5 years. Total number of companies which managed to be in this list until 2015 is only 8.

• The network, namely Voelklinger Kreis which was founded by the gay and lesbian managers and entrepreneurs in Germany, gives the MaxSpohr Award every
other year to the companies which has shown examples of good practices. Voelklinger Kreis gave this to IBM in 2010.

- One of the vice presidents of IBM, Claudia Brind-Woody took place in the “100 Women We Love” list selected by Go Magazine in 2010 and took place in “Most Influential 100 LGBT Persons” list of World Pride Power in 2012. Brind-Woody worked in the board of directors of Out & Equal as well.

- In 2014, IBM was included in the top 10 companies for LGBT’s by the US-based publisher named Diversity Inc. that carries out lobbying activities for protection of diversity. Furthermore, for 12 years, IBM has taken place in the first 50 companies list issued by Diversity Inc.

- IBM is one of the 11 founding companies which support National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

- Within the scope of protection of LGBT rights, IBM cooperated with GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) in 2012. Within the scope of this cooperation, IBM called all its employees around the world and asked them to visit a school of their choice and make a contribution to that school to prevent the violence against LGBT individuals. This call has been supported by over 15 countries and it still continues with the leadership of the employees.

- In parallel to all these works, IBM is an important supporter of equal marriage as well. As a continuation of this support, IBM also supported the equality decision given by US Supreme Court through their social media accounts.

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**Brief Information about the Company – **International Business Machines (IBM) Corp

IBM is a US-based company which was founded in 1911. Being one of the leading companies in informatics, information technologies and software sector, IBM started its activities in Turkey in 1935. IBM carries out activities in over 170 countries and in 2014, it had 92,8 billion Dollars turnover with its 379,592 employees.

**Starbucks**

Starbucks carries out activities in beverage sector and has a history of being a supporter of LGBT rights issue for many years. General approach of the company is that it considers its employees as “partners” and sees their development in the center of institutional development. They have been carrying out significant works with the efforts of their “partners” with a institution culture of sharing regardless of discrimination on language, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity.
“Starbucks Partner Pride Alliance Network” of Starbucks is one of the biggest personnel groups of the USA and was founded to raise awareness about LGBT rights, to support inclusion of LGBT employees in working life and to support the associations and forums out of the company working in this field. This organization consists of Starbucks employees. We can summarize the outputs of the works of this organization on LGBT rights as below.

- Starbucks scored 100 out of 100 in the 2016 Corporate Equality Index ranking. In this index, Starbucks scored 86 between 2002 and 2005, 85 in 2006 and 100 between 2008 and 2011. Although it fell to the level of 90 points between 2011 and 2014, it scored 100 again in 2015 and in 2016.

- Within the scope of its “Supplier Diversity Program”, Starbucks aims to diversify the places that it buys materials from as much as possible. For this purpose, it shows sensitivity in getting services from unions and similar approved suppliers. Adding the companies to its suppliers list upon certifying them, Starbucks added National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce among these structures and showed its support to LGBT rights explicitly.

- Being one of the companies that gave intensive support to lobbying activities on equal marriage, in 2013, Starbucks signed a statement supporting this issue.

- In 2014, Starbucks gave support to Seattle Pride Week by hanging a rainbow flag to its Headquarters for the first time in its history.

- It celebrated the liberalization of equal marriage in USA by the Supreme Court through a video message prepared by its General Manager, Howard Schultz. Starbucks is a company which carries out lobbying activities regarding equal marriage and which supports the structures working in this field.

- In 2011 and 2012, Starbucks sponsored an LGBT community named Earth Gay, which was making activism on environmental issues.

- Starbucks sponsored the meeting named Fab Planet Summit 2014 which was organized in 2014 for the first time and in which LGBT people gathered to discuss on the issues of environment, society and identities.

**Brief Information about the Company – Starbucks Corp**

Starbucks Corp was founded in 1971 in Seattle and has been carrying out activities in 65 different countries. Starbucks has been carrying out activities in Turkey since 2003 and it has over 21,000 stores in 65 countries. Starbucks has 191,000 employees around the world and its 2014 turnover is 16.4 billion Dollars.
Microsoft

Microsoft has been carrying out activities in Turkey for over 20 years and it has a long history and significant amount of works on LGBT rights issue. “Gay and Lesbian Employees at Microsoft – GLEAM” is an LGBT employee group of Microsoft which was founded in 1993. GLEAM works to spread the institutional diversity throughout the company by cooperating with executive leadership team under the umbrella of Microsoft and makes contributions to LGBT Pride Month celebrated under the roof of Microsoft and for establishment of LGBT-specific diversity camps and trainings. GLEAM members continue carrying out activities as a structure by spending time together by regular sports and culture activities, which holds meetings on gender together with the leaders of its region, which participates in voluntary actions and encourage organizations to support local LGBT organizations. GLEAM has over 2000 members around the world and each year, the members of GLEA actively participate in the Pride Marches in their countries.

We can summarize the works of Microsoft regarding LGBT rights issue as below.

• In 2015, Microsoft scored 100 out of 100 in Corporate Equality Index. Microsoft has been scoring 100 full scores consecutively for 10 years. Microsoft is also one of the supporters of Human Rights Campaign.

• Microsoft’s LGBT structure GLEAM supported non-profit structures like Microsoft Giving Campaign through the voluntary aids of the employees, sponsored the nationwide dinner of Human Rights Campaign and supported the scholarship dinner of the business organization of LGBT individuals named Greater Seattle Business Association.

• The institution regularly provides service support on software and hardware; and grants hardware to organizations and associations working in LGBT field.

• Microsoft has been actively fighting for the enactment of the Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

• In 2012, one of the founders of Microsoft, Bill Gates donated 100,000 Dollars to a campaign against the referendum for illegalizing equal marriage in Washington State.

• They give scholarship to LGBT students in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields and support works of LGBT students in these fields.

Brief Information about the Company – Microsoft Corp

Microsoft was founded in New Mexico in 1975 and its headquarters is in Washington DC. The company is the leader of software and informatics world. Microsoft carries out activities in 211 countries and has 117,354 employees. 2014 turnover of the company is 86,8 billion Dollars.
C. Germany-based Companies

Bosch

The efforts of Bosch, which is an engineering and electronics company and which was granted the gender equality award of Ministry of Labor and Social Security in Turkey can be summarized as below.

- There are 10 different employee networks of Bosch. One of them is an LGBT employee group named “RBg – Robert Bosch Gay”. The group actually started its activities in 2006 as a voluntary action. In 2012, it became an employee group which was officially recognized by the company. RBg is a group which is open to all LGBT and heterosexual Bosch employees and which has members from 10 different countries. The purpose of RBg is to establish a communication platform for LGBT issues and to raise awareness within the institution. The group has an online discussion group formed for this purpose. In addition, through various networking activities, they create an environment in which employees can discuss the subjects they face in their daily lives regarding sexual identity. Furthermore, RBg represents the institution outside of the company and can share information about the company culture. With its 50 members, RBg made contribution to Pride March which was organized on July 25th, 2015 under the name of “Christopher Street Day”.

- Bosch is one of the first companies in Germany that signed “The Diversity Charter”. This charter was developed first in France; and in 2006, reached the large masses in Germany with the support of the Chancellor and with the voluntary participation of private companies. The charter is in fact is a text which consists of 6 chapters and which guides regarding diversity policies. Regardless of its size, the text can be signed by any private company and the process can be advanced. Bosch signed the charter in 2007.

Brief Information about the Company – Robert Bosch GmbH

Robert Bosch GmbH and Bosch Group which covers 440 affiliated local companies in 50 countries are among the leading technology and service suppliers in the world. Bosch was founded in 1886 in Stuttgart, Germany and started to carry out activities in Turkey in 1910. In 2014, Bosch made sale in the amount of 48,9 billion Euros and as of 2014, Bosch has around 290,000 employees.
Bayer

Although it’s known by the end users with its solutions in health field, Bayer Holding is a holding which carries out activities in fields like health, agronomy, material science as well. Examples of practices of Bayer regarding gender diversity are as below:

• In 2015, Bayer scored 80 out of 100 in Corporate Equality Index. Bayer has taken place in the list since the index was first published in 2002 and scored 29 between 2002 and 2005, 15 in 2006 and 2008, 80 in 2009 and 2010, 85 in 2011 and 90 in 2012. Bayer continued to score 80 in the index in the advancing years but its score fell to 75 in 2015.

• Bayer is one of the active supporters of the LGBT association named Out & Equal.

• There are networks and groups in Bayer offices in USA in which employees are able to share their experiences in various fields and support their personal developments. Bayer gives 5,000 Dollars annual budget to each group and these groups can shape as per the choices of persons. Their main goal is to represent the diversity in their workplaces. One of these networks is an LGBT group named “Angle B”. Mission of this group is to ensure inclusion of the employees in the workplace through a safe and supportive manner, to be in touch with other employees who share their sensitivities, to make workfellows who might be “role models” and to ensure employees to work without compromising in terms of their sexual identities.

• Within the scope of “It Gets Better” project, Berkeley employees of the Angle B members compiled a video message against exclusion that gay and lesbian adolescents face.

• Bayer signed “The Diversity Charter” in 2009.

• Bayer has also examples of good practices in many different countries other than Germany where its headquarter is located, and in USA. One of the most recent of these practices is that in June 2015, Bayer has committed that they will support improvement of LGBT rights in 10 basic topics in Brazil. Some of these fields are as below.

• Sensitivity will be shown regarding recognition of and reverence for LGBT rights at the president and management levels.

• Equal opportunities and fair approaches will be ensured for LGBT people.
• Social awareness on LGBT rights and awareness raising activities in this line will be supported.

• In marketing, sales and communication channels, an approach will be shown that will respect LGBT individuals and that won’t allow discrimination on the basis of their sexual identities.

• Similarly, the situation will be followed in the post-sales processes as well.

• LGBT persons will be carefully supported in value chain and supplier dimension of the business as well.

**Brief Information about the Company – Bayer AG**

Bayer was founded in 1863 in Barmen, Germany and has been carrying out activities in Turkey since 1954. Being one of the leader companies in pharmaceutical and chemical sector, Bayer carries out activities in 101 countries. The company has 118.900 employees around the world and 2014 turnover of the company is 42 billion Euros.

**Boehringer - Ingelheim**

Being one of the leader companies in pharmaceutical sector, Boehringer-Ingelheim has carried out significant activities regarding LGBT practices. The company has prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in its corporate policies both in Germany and in the USA. Within the wage and health insurance approaches and social-cultural activities of the company, married/registered or unmarried LGBT couples have the same rights as heterosexual employees. A couple of examples within the scope of these works are as below:

• Since it has been firstly listed in Corporate Equality Index (CEI) in 2008, it scored 100 full points including 2016, except for 2012 when it scored 90.

• One of the many different social groups of the company is an LGBT group named “Working with Pride”. The group was selected as one of the finalists for Out & Equal Workplace Awards in 2013.

• It supported Stonewall Columbus Pride 2015 as the “Silver Sponsor”.

• The German website of the company began its broadcasting life on October 1st, 2015 with a new interface bearing a section that supports LGBT structure.

• Boehringer-Ingelheim signed “The Diversity Charter” in 2012.
Boehringer-Ingelheim AG & Co. KG.

Having its headquarters in Ingelheim, Germany where it was founded in 1885 and carrying out activities in pharmaceutical sector in 50 different countries, Boehringer-Ingelheim has been active in Turkey since 1994. With 13,3 billion Euros net sales amount in 2014 and hosting 47,400 employees, Boehringer-Ingelheim is one of the top 20 pharmaceutical companies in the world.

Siemens

Siemens is a company that carries out activities in many different sectors. In its intercompany processes and in its supplier networks, the company sensitively puts emphasis on the gender equality within the framework of its “Code of Conduct”. It demands from the suppliers to take measures against any kind of gender inequality and harassment and discrimination in this direction. A couple of outstanding practices of the company regarding this issue are as below.

• One of the exemplary USA groups of Siemens which is listed among the “diversity and influence” policies is the “LGBT Employee Group”.

• Siemens has signed “The Diversity Charter” in 2010.

• Between 2002 and 2006, when Siemens was listed in Corporate Equality Index with its “Siemens Energy & Automation Inc.” Unit, Siemens scored 80 points. Siemens wasn’t listed in the index in another year.

• In 2015, Siemens supported the Pride March named “Christopher Street Day”.

• One of the USA networks of Siemens is an LGBT network. This network allows employees both to form a common platform with the persons who have similar areas of interest and to receive personal development support during their career processes.

Siemens AG

Siemens was founded in 1847 and its two headquarters are located in Berlin and Munich. Activities of Siemens in Turkey started in Ottoman Era (1856). Currently carrying out activities in 190 countries, Siemens has about 343,000 employees. As a global player in electrification, automation, digitalization and health sectors, 2014 turnover of Siemens is 71,9 billion Euros.
BASF

BASF is one of the biggest companies in the world. BASF has extensive works on LGBT rights and some outstanding examples can be summarized as below:

- There are 8 employees’ groups in BASF. One of them is an LGBT employee group named “ALLchemie”. Group was established not only for LGBT individuals but also everyone who believes in the importance of diversity in working life and who considers this as a value.

- ALLchemie sponsors North Carolina Gay & Lesbian Film Festival.

- In 2007, BASF accepted “The Diversity Charter”.

- In 2015, BASF took the 28th place in top 50 list of Diversity Inc. It took 26th place in 2014 and 31st place in 2013. BASF took the 10th place in the ranking of Diversity Council.

Brief Information about the Company – BASF

BASF was founded in 1865 in Germany and it carries out activities in chemicals, paint, petroleum and gas fields. Carrying out activities in more than 80 countries, BASF started its activities in Turkey in 1969. Turnover of BASF in 2014 is 74,3 billion Dollars and it has about 112,000 employees around the world.

Lufthansa

Having their headquarters in Germany, Lufthansa is the largest airline in Europe. The company is known for being sensitive about LGBT rights in terms of both its employees and its passengers. A couple of approaches of the company can be listed as below:

- Lufthansa has sponsored and donated to New York and Los Angeles activities of the organization named The Trevor Project which works to prevent LGBT individuals from any crisis they might experience and to prevent them from committing suicide.

- They provide special discounts for the locations which are preferred by the LGBT passangers in summer season.

- Due to their positive approaches to gays, they were granted the “Best Gay Travel Offer” Award by the international gay magazine Mate.
• They created a joint working area together with the gay and lesbian tour guide named Navigaytour and established a closer relation with LGBT community.

• They were selected as “The Most Favorite International Airline” by the LGBT magazine named The Our Traveler.

• Lufthansa signed “The Diversity Charter” in 2014.

**Brief Information about the Company – Deutsche Lufthansa AG**

Lufthansa was founded in 1926 in Köln, Germany and it’s the largest airline in Europe. Having 271 flight points in 107 countries around the world, Lufthansa started to carry out activities in Turkey in 1989. In Turkey, Lufthansa founded SunExpress in partnership with Turkish Airlines. Lufthansa has 118,781 employees around the world and 2014 turnover of the company is 30 billion Euros.

**Volkswagen**

Being one of the most important automotive companies in the world, Volkswagen has a positive approach towards anti-discrimination policies and within this context, towards LGBT individuals. In this regard, some approaches of the company can be exemplified as below.

• By the equal opportunity and equal approach principle, the company has prohibited any kind of discrimination including sexual identity discrimination among its employees.

• It played a proactive part in Volkswagen Financial Service AG in terms of respecting the rights of gay and lesbian employees.

• The company is one of the supporters of Out & Equal.

• In 2002, when the Corporate Equality Index was issued for the first time, Volkswagen scored 29 and in the next three years, it scored 71, 86 and 86, respectively. From 2006 on the other hand, it scored 100 full points ever year including 2016.

• The company was deemed as “LGBT Friendly Automobile Company” by Gay-wheels.

**Brief Information about the Company – Volkswagen AG**

Being one of the established companies in automotive sector, Volkswagen was founded in 1937 in Germany. Its headquarters is in Wolfsburg and it carries out activities in 49 countries. It has 592.00 employees around the world and 2014 turnover of the company is about 202 billion Euros.

**BMW**

BMW is one of the leading luxury automobile, motorcycle and engine manufacturers in the world. Including sexual orientation and gender identity, the company has prohibited discrimination in the workplace. Some of the steps taken by BMW are listed below:

- It’s one of the sponsors of The LGBT Bar Association.
- It was added to LGBT Friendly Automobile Companies list by Gaywheels.

**Brief Information about the Company – Bayerische Motoren Werke AG**

BMW was founded in 1916 in Germany and it’s a company which carries out activities in automotive sector with its headquarters in Munich. Carrying out activities in more than 140 countries, BMW started its activities in Turkey in 1984. 2014 turnover of BMW is 80.4 billion Euros and it has 116.324 employees around the world.

**Deutsche Bank**

As a leading company regarding LGBT rights, Deutsche Bank has carried out significant activities in connection with the fight against discrimination. Some of the examples of the works of the company can be listed as below.

- In 2006, it has been one of the first 4 companies who signed Diversity Charter as the “Founder”, which was established in order to ensure an environment which is free from any kind of bias and discrimination including gender.
- It’s one of the supporters of the nonprofit foundation named OUTstanding which is open to membership of senior LGBT executives.
- It has been carrying out activities for LGBT employees together with “dbPride” which is one of the LGBT employee unions. Through the union, it both conducts
awareness raising activities aimed at LGBT employees and establishes communications with LGBT organizations and supports civil society activities.

- Since 2003 when it was listed in Corporate Equality Index for the first time, every year, it continuously scored 100 full points.

- It’s one of the members of Pride in Diversity which is the first and only nonprofit organization in Australia which works for inclusion of LGBT individuals in working environments.

- It supports the activities of Out & Equal.

Brief Information about the Company – Deutsche Bank AG

Being the largest bank of Germany in terms of turnover and number of employees, Deutsche Bank AG was founded in 1870. Its headquarters is located in Frankfurt and it carries out activities in over 70 countries with its 98,138 employees. Activities of the company in Turkey started in 1909. 2014 turnover of the company is about 32 billion Euros.