

**A PINK-COLLAR CASE:
PSEUDO-PROFESSIONALIZATION OF DIRECT SELLING
AMONG WOMEN
MASTER THESIS
Ayşe Gizem GÜNEŞ
Eskişehir, 2019**

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FINAL APPROVAL FOR THESIS

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ÖZET

BİR PEMBE YAKA DURUMU:

DOĞRUDAN SATIŞIN KADINLAR ARASINDA SÖZDE MESLEKLEŞMESİ

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Danışman: Dr. Ozan AĞLARGÖZ

Bu çalışmanın temel amaçlarından biri, doğrudan satış yapan bir şirkette çalışan kadın satış temsilcilerinin işlerini ne ölçüde meslek olarak değerlendirdiklerini incelemektir. Buna ek olarak, bu çalışma doğrudan satışın pembe yaka bir iş olarak kabul edilip edilmemesi gerektiğini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu amaçlara ulaşmak için, farklı doğrudan satış şirketlerinden on kadın çalışan ile görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Ayrıca, nitel araştırma yöntemi ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler bu çalışma için seçilmiş ve uygulanmıştır. Daha sonra görüşmeler analiz edilip, sonuca ulaşılması için ana temalar belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak, doğrudan satış belirli koşullar altında kadınlar için bir meslek olabilir ve bu sektörde çalışan kadın çalışanların sayısının çok fazla olması nedeniyle bir pembe yaka mesleği olarak da değerlendirilebilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Doğrudan Satış, Pembe Yaka, Meslekleşme, Meslek

ABSTRACT
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One of the main aims of this study is to examine to what extent female sales representatives who work in a direct selling company consider their job as a profession. In addition to that, this study aimed to investigate if direct selling should be considered as a pink-collar job or not. In order to achieve these objectives, interviews with ten female direct sellers from different direct selling companies were conducted. Also, the qualitative research method and semi-structured interviews were chosen and applied for this study. After that, the interviews have been analyzed and main themes have been determined to come to a conclusion. In conclusion, direct selling can be a profession for women under the specific circumstances and it can be also considered as a pink-labor profession because of the high number of female direct sellers who work in this sector.

Keywords: Direct selling, Pink-collar, Professionalization, Profession

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23.08.2019

ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYGUNLUK BEYANNAMESİ

Bu tezin bana ait, özgün bir çalışma olduğunu; çalışmamın hazırlık, veri toplama, analiz ve bilgilerin sunumu olmak üzere tüm aşamalarında bilimsel etik ilke ve kurallara uygun davrandığımı; bu çalışma kapsamında elde edilen tüm veri ve bilgiler için kaynak gösterdiğimi ve bu kaynaklara kaynakçada yer verdiğimi; bu çalışmamın Anadolu Üniversitesi tarafından kullanılan "bilimsel intihal tespit Programı"yla tarandığını ve hiçbir şekilde "intihal içermediğini" beyan ederim. Herhangi bir zamanda, çalışmamla ilgili yaptığım bu beyana aykırı bir durumun saptanması durumunda, ortaya çıkacak tüm ahlaki ve hukuki sonuçları kabul ettiğimi bildiririm.

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23.08.2019

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I hereby truthfully declare that this thesis is an original work prepared by me; that I have behaved in accordance with the scientific ethical principles and rules throughout the stages of preparation, data collection, analysis and presentation of my work; that I have cited the sources of all the data and information that could be obtained within the scope of this study, and included these sources in the references section; and that this study has been scanned for plagiarism with "scientific plagiarism detection program" used by Anadolu University, and that "it does not have any plagiarism" whatsoever. I also declare that, if a case contrary to my declaration is detected in my work at any time, I hereby express my consent to all the ethical and legal consequences that are involved.

Ayşe Gizem GÜNEŞ

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ABBREVIATION LIST

SELDIA: The European Direct Selling Association

DSA: Turkish Direct Selling Association

WFDSA: World Federation of Direct Selling Associations

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Direct selling has been a significant retail channel for the companies to deliver their products or services to the consumers without any intermediary. The European Direct Selling Association (SELDIA) defines direct selling as a method of marketing and retailing goods and services directly to the consumers, in their homes or in any other location away from permanent retail premises (http-1). The common way of direct selling is a face-to-face meeting, in which the products are introduced to an individual, or to a group. Another way is that sales consultants leave a catalogue with the consumer and then they contact later to ask for the orders. Since the principal of direct selling is personal contact with the customer, it distinguishes from direct marketing or mail order (http-1). Direct selling companies do not rely on traditional retail outlets or online marketplaces, but they maintain a sales force of millions of independent workers that added \$189.6 billion to the global economy in 2017 (http-2). According to Turkish Direct Selling Association (DSA), the sales in direct selling industry in Europe increased 3.5 percent in 2017 compared to the last year and reached 38.5 billion dollars (http-3). In Europe, the sales from direct selling companies reached to 34 billion Euro and there are five largest markets, which are Germany, France, UK, Italy and Poland and in which growth was driven (http-1). In the survey of SELDIA in 2018, it has been asked to the direct selling consultants to tell the first three words which come to their mind when they think about their job. The most common words are freedom, independence and flexibility. Even though people think that direct selling is rewarding and fun, it should be considered that it can also be challenging and even difficult (SELDIA, 2018).

Over the last five years, there has been a constant growth in direct sales volume. There are more than 6 million people who are engaged in direct selling in European Union, a figure that goes up over 15 million for the whole European continent. Over 25,000 people get permanent employment from direct selling companies in Europe and 76% of the products they sell are manufactured in Europe (http-1).

According to the World Federation of Direct Selling Associations (WFDSA), there are 1,523,000 independent representatives in direct selling industry in Turkey (http-2). Independent direct selling consultants get commissions from what they sell and also they have the advantage of being their own boss. They can decide about their

working hours (full-time, part-time), make their own plans and set their goals, determine if they want to have a sales team or not and decide how to manage their team and how to serve their customers (http-2).

According to SELDIA, over 14 million people are involved in direct selling industry in Europe and 79 percent of them are women (http-1). It is obvious that women have a significant role to make direct selling expand in all over the world. Besides, direct selling provides an employment opportunity to all women from all areas, which means that it does not depend on their social or educational status. Almost 9 out of 10 direct sellers are women, who come from all ages and backgrounds. They can be parents, a housewife, a student, retired women or they can already have a job but work as a hobby or part-time job (http-1). For this reason, direct selling attracts many people and when they are in this business, they have continuous trainings and seminars in which they can improve themselves very well in many fields. Those trainings and seminars include communication skills, self-development courses or company's product specifications. There are also some specific reasons for women to begin direct selling business. For example, some women want to lose weight and they start using some products from a direct selling company. After that, when they see how the products are good for them, they realize that with these products they can reach more people who want to get fit or live healthy and change their life as well. Another example is with cosmetic products and household goods. When women like the products that they use, they start recommending them to their friends or family members. In this way, they also realize that they can sell the products and get profit from them in direct selling business (http-2).

In the magazine of Turkish Direct Selling Association, the general manager of the direct selling company LR Health and Beauty Turkey explains how women play a significant role for Turkish economy by attending to the direct selling sector:

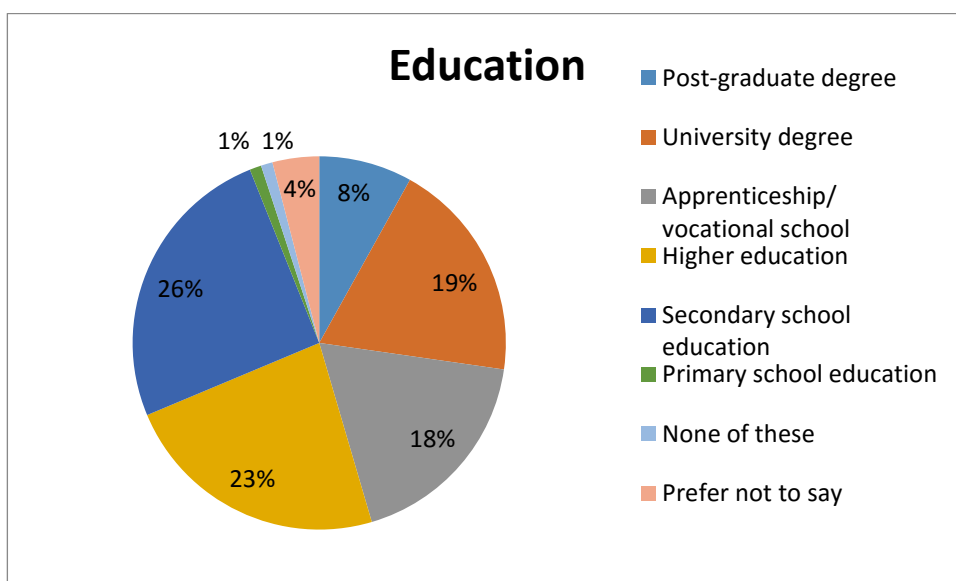
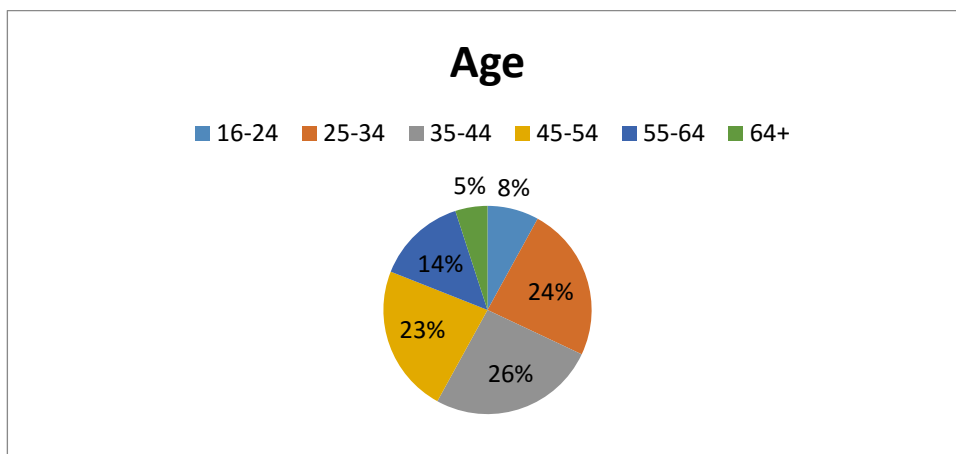
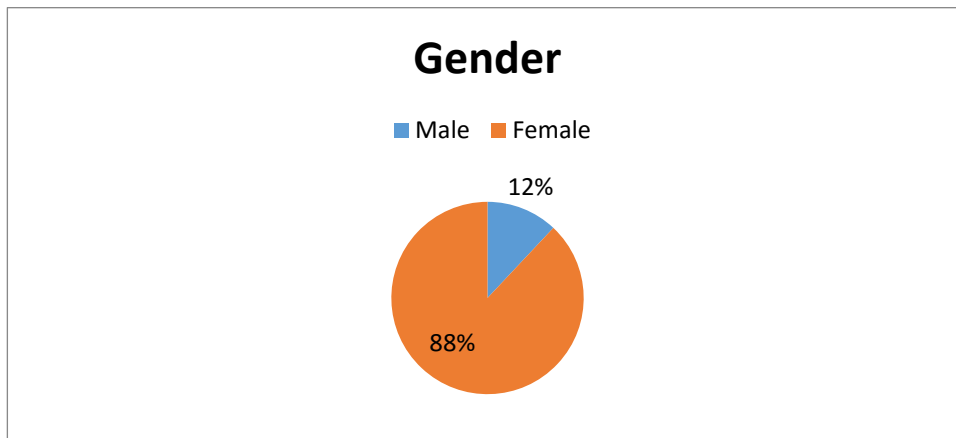
“1.5 million People in our country are working in the direct selling sector. This sector, in which 80 percent of it is women, makes a significant contribution to the country's economy and also plays an important role in bringing women into business life and generating economic income. In our country, female labor force participation rate is around 30%. Considering that the labor force participation rate of women in the

European Union countries is around 62%, it is also revealed that the direct selling sector has an important mission in our country (Direct Selling Association, 2019)."

As a result of the high number of female direct sellers in direct selling sector, direct selling can be considered as a part of pink-collar profession. Pink-collar worker refers to a person who works in a job, which is mostly considered as female jobs such as nursing, secretarial works, baby-sitting. Pink-collar jobs are considered historically less valued by many people because they are paid less compare to the male jobs. "Almost all general population studies find that the percent female in the job is associated with lower earnings for both males and females even with extensive job skill and human capital controls (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993)." Although this view has changed for many people nowadays, this term has been still used. Since the number of female sales consultants who work in direct selling industry is so high, it might be also considered as a pink-collar job. As McGuire (2000) mentioned in his book, in the work environment the sex composition of employees should have an impact on the status of their network members. "For example, the more women with whom employees work, the more women with whom they will interact, and thus the more women they will have in their networks (McGuire, 2000, p. 505)." In relation to that sentence, it is possible to say that female sales consultants can draw attention of women more in their environment and as a result of that, the more women can join in direct selling sector.

According to the Global Statistics 2018 of World Federation of Direct Selling Associations (WFDSA) about Global Sales by Product Category, the most sold product category is wellness (33.2%) and cosmetics-personal care (31.2%), which can be speculated as the relation between women and direct selling products. According to the survey of SELDIA (see Figure 1.1 below), which was conducted in Europe in 2018, we can see the average rate of gender, age and education of direct sellers in Europe. It shows that "direct selling is mostly done by women but is undertaken by all age ranges and all levels of education (SELDIA, 2018)."

Figure 1.1.: Gender, Age and Education of Direct Sellers (SELDIA Direct Sellers 2018 Survey) (SELDIA, 2018)



The aims of this study are to question if the female sales consultants consider direct selling as their profession and to examine if direct selling can be viewed as a

pink-collar profession or not? In order to reach this aim, the study was designed to reach the given sub objective, and to argue if direct selling can eventually become a profession for women. Another point is that to what extent direct selling can be considered as a profession.

In order to find out the answers for these questions qualitative research study was designed and semi-structured interviews applied for generating the empirical material. With the analysis often interviews with women who work in direct selling industry for different companies in Turkey and with the help of literature review on this subject, this study has been formed.

1.1. Organization of Study

This study examines professionalization of direct-selling as pink-collar profession. Within the context of first chapter; introduction, problem of the study, purpose of the study, significance of the study, limitations and definition of terms are discussed. In Chapter 2, conceptual framework of the study is given with the help of different perspectives from relevant literature.

In Chapter 3, the methods of this study, interviewing process and information about interviewees are given and explained in detail. In Chapter 4, analysis of interviews and findings and interpretations are presented. Finally, chapter 5 concludes the study with summary of the findings, further research suggestions and practical implications.

1.2. Problem of the Study

According to WFDSA, direct selling has many benefits such as giving the opportunity to people who want to have their own business and earn income, to consumers as an alternative to retail stores, and a cost-effective way for business to bring products to the market. It is also an alternative for those, who want a flexible timetable to get household income or for the people who cannot work in a regular job (http-2).It is also argued that for the people, who achieve success and choose to pursue their independent direct selling business on a full time basis, direct selling can be a good opportunity to make it a fulfilling career (http-2).

Direct selling has changed the lives of many women in many ways. Especially it is life-changing for those who had no job before starting direct selling business. They

have become independent and more self-confident because they started earning income and they are able to afford their life by working flexible and being their own boss. While direct selling provides a job opportunity to women, it should be questioned if it really becomes a profession for them. Most of the people relate direct selling with women, so does it mean that it is just a part of pink labor? It is possible to say that direct selling depends on pink labor force because more than half of its sales consultants are women and some of the direct selling companies might exploit women to get profit for their company. As Enis (1992) states that sales representatives should be considered as business partners rather than individuals seeking a bit of loose change by direct selling companies(Enis, 1992). But among these business partners, there can be also big income differences depending on their level in the company. Moreover, it is significant to mention about gender pay gap in professions all over the world. Direct selling is a different field of work where women do not feel that gender gap as much as in the other professions. However, gender gap is a part and parcel of professionalization. As long as gender gaps in workplaces exist, women will always have some problems to find a work or keep their job. For this reason, it should be questioned how to stop or change this gender gap and how it has an impact on pink-collar workers and also direct selling industry. Moreover, direct selling can be considered as a pink-collar profession but on the other hand, there is a relation between gender pay gap and direct selling industry. If it is a pink-collar profession, then it might have been exploited because of gender pay gap. This study aims to reveal how the female direct sellers in this industry consider this situation.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Direct selling has a significance to make women participate in labor force and it might have affected the increase of labor force participation rate among women in Turkey. Currently, depending on the data which is provided by the World Bank, labor participation rate among women in Turkey is 33.572% ([http-5](#)).

Direct selling encouraged many women to start their own business and to become independent. This may be considered as an improvement for women to make them participate more in labor force but in long and real terms, maybe it does not have so much effect on labor force participation rate among women. In addition, it is not possible to know that to what extend women consider direct selling as their profession.

In the magazine of Turkish Direct Selling Association from April 2019, there are explanations of the Ministry of Development, Planning Specialist Seda Turkseven about the current situation of women's participation in business life in Turkey. She explains that as the Ministry of Development, their priority policy is to strengthen the role of women in the economy. They agree that women should play an important role in development, and they are working to take the necessary steps to make women take action more in economic life. While women's labor force participation rate is related with the level of education, for men it is not like that. As an example of this, we can see that while the general unemployment rate for women is 13.4% and for men is 9%, and the unemployment rate of higher education graduates in women is approaching 20%, 10% in men. For high-educated women, it is harder to find a job in Turkey, and solving the problem of education is not the only solution. She states that the barriers from social value judgments should be removed. At this point, the Direct Selling Sector is an important step for breaking the shell of women and increasing their confidence. I think that as our women can achieve something in this way, they will be able to enter the employment market more (Direct Selling Association, 2019).

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out to what extent direct selling can become a profession for women and to search about the relation between pink labor and direct selling. As it is stated in the SELDIA's survey, 88 percent of direct sellers are women (SELDIA, 2018) but to the best of my knowledge we do not know if they consider it as their profession or if they just work as a hobby or part-time job. Another purpose is to discover what profession means for the female sales consultants in direct selling industry. It is also important to find out for this study if direct selling should be considered as pink-collar job or not.

In order to clarify these topics and to achieve the goal of this study, there will be a detailed literature review of all these terms and after that the data which is provided from the interviews with ten female sales representatives are going to be analyzed.

1.5. Limitations

Like in most of the studies, there are also some limitations that restrict us to get a general conclusion in this study.

The first and most important limitation for this study has been the number of women with who interviewed. Interviews have been done only with ten women from some national and international direct selling companies in city (Manisa/Soma) in Turkey. The number of participants could be higher to get more information for this study.

The second limitation is that there are not so many researches about pink labor or pink-collar workers. Therefore, the lack of sufficient data about these topics restricts the study and it makes it difficult to find out the relation between the female sales representatives in direct selling and pink-collar workers.

The last but not the least limitation is that the difficulty to find female sales consultants from different levels of education and degree of their success in the companies in which they work. Even though the effort has been made to include variety of participants to this study, this was not achieved in the context of this study. Since the aim of this study is to have several perspectives of female sales consultants in direct selling industry, it was substantial that women should have different levels of education or achieved high levels in their work, or they have just started to work. However, since the city where the interviews were conducted is very small, mostly the women were graduated from primary school. It was difficult to find female sales consultants who are graduated from the university and dedicated themselves to direct selling. Nevertheless, women are included to the interviews from all different levels and degrees.

1.6. Definition of Terms

For this study; direct selling, pink labor and professionalization are the main concepts and will be discussed through the study. For this reason, it is necessary to get to know the meanings of these terms.

1.6.1. Direct selling

According to WFDSA, direct selling is a retail channel used by top global brands and smaller, entrepreneurial companies to market products and services to consumers. The direct selling channel has an important difference from broader retail, because

direct selling serves the products and services to the consumers directly and it is also an opportunity for entrepreneurial-minded people who want to work independently and have a business with low start-up costs (http-2).

WFDSA(http-2) stated the reasons why millions of people choose to be involved in direct selling is that they like the products of a company and want to purchase them with a discount. “Some decide to market these offerings to friends, family and others and earn commissions from their sales. The most successful consultants may decide to expand their business by building a network of direct sellers (http-2).”

1.6.2. Pink Labor

The reason of searching about pink labor is the high number of women who work in direct selling industry. The purpose is to find out if direct selling is a pink-collar job or not. Because pink labor or pink-collar workers are related with the jobs, which are considered traditionally as women jobs such as nursing, baby-sitting, beauty consultant or salesperson. Pink-collar jobs are usually characterized by relatively low pay given their specialized skills (Hodson & Sullivan, 2008).

1.6.3. Profession

Although profession can be defined in different ways and there is not a certain definition for everyone, we can try to understand what a profession means in the dictionary and literature and what it means to the women who work in direct selling industry. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a profession is “a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification (http-4).” It means that in order to have a profession, people need to be qualified and get training in a specific area. It is stated in the literature that professions can be defined as subsets of occupations, and occupational communities, and similarly it is possible to define it by means of jurisdictional struggles with competing groups over the tasks to which they claim (Anteby, Chan, & DiBenigno, 2016).

On the other hand, according to the female direct sellers, a profession means an occupation in which they spend their time and as a result of that they get income to afford their lives. In addition, the general idea of people who work in direct selling industry is that this job does not require any qualification or training. Therefore, it is obvious that there are incompatible definitions about profession, but in literature review

part, more explanations about profession and professionalization are going to be given and this subject is going to be clarified.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, conceptual framework of the study will be revealed with the help of literature review conducted. Conceptual framework includes the following concepts; direct selling, pink labor and professionalization. All these subjects are the main topics of this study and they are going to be explained from different point of views from various studies. These explanations will help us to clarify the relation between direct selling and pink labor. In addition, different meanings and views for profession are going to be examined and it will be possible to understand better to what extend direct selling can become a profession for women.

2.1. Direct Selling

2.1.1. Definition of direct selling

Direct selling has been a contradictive subject through the history and in the society. There have been so many definitions about direct selling and salespeople through the history. Gerald Albaum (1992) states that direct selling is not considered as an interesting research area for academic community. The reason behind this lack of interest might be the negative image of direct selling industry or few awareness and knowledge of the industry and its economic effect. In addition, there are many direct selling companies and they are relatively small and often considered to be no receptive to academic research. “Regardless of the reason, direct selling has not been viewed as an “exciting” industry, one that deserves the attention of the academic community (Albaum, 1992, pp. 95-111).”

In the 90’s, in order to understand the full meaning of direct selling, Peterson & Wotruba (1996) reviewed direct selling from three perspectives, which are operational, tactical and strategic. They argue that these perspectives help researchers and scholars to define the domain of direct selling with explanations of the various ways by the means of implementing and with identification of the key components that characterize direct selling and distinguish it from other marketing methods (Wotruba & Peterson, 1996, pp. 1-16).

From operational perspective, direct selling has two major elements: first one is “face-to-face selling” and the second one is “away from a fixed retail location”(Wotruba & Peterson, 1996). Direct selling is a form of retailing without any store and it is not

related with a traditional retail establishment. The well-known direct selling companies such as Amway or Tupperware do not have any retail stores where a consumer can go and purchase their products (Wotruba & Peterson, 1996, pp. 1-16).

From tactical perspective, direct selling can be characterized by some factors such as; the type of salesperson, which is used, whether the selling agents are part-time or full-time, whether the selling process occurs in a home or elsewhere, the extent to which selling agents are customers. “Each of these characteristics has tactical implications for direct selling companies, both with respect to selling and with respect to recruiting (Wotruba & Peterson, 1996).”

From a strategic perspective, direct selling can be considered as a channel or a form of distribution, a means of gaining access to a market, or a way of doing business (Wotruba & Peterson, 1996, pp. 1-16).

According to Duffy (2005) direct selling can be considered as vibrant and successful because he thinks that it represents a potential new channel for many traditional companies. Moreover, he considers direct selling as an opportunity to enlist the help of thousands of independent sales consultants who work purely for commission. Direct selling is a motivation for many independent people who would like to have flexible working hours and to be their own boss (Duffy, 2005, pp. 43-45).

Peterson & Albaum (2007) define direct selling as “a type of non-store retailing in which virtually all salespeople are non-salaried, independent contractors whose compensation results almost exclusively from sales commissions or profit margins added to a wholesale price.” At a strategic level, we can consider direct selling as a channel or mode of distribution or a way of doing business in which traditional channel intermediaries, such as wholesalers and retailers, are not used and sales are made directly to consumers (Peterson & Albaum, 2007, pp. 317-323).

At present, the World Federation of Direct Selling Associations (WFDSA) which represents the direct selling sector all over the world defines direct selling as a retail channel which is used by top global brands and smaller, entrepreneurial companies to market their products and services to consumers (<http://www.wfdsa.org>).

Figure 2.1: Schematic View of Distribution Channel (Wotruba & Peterson, 1996)

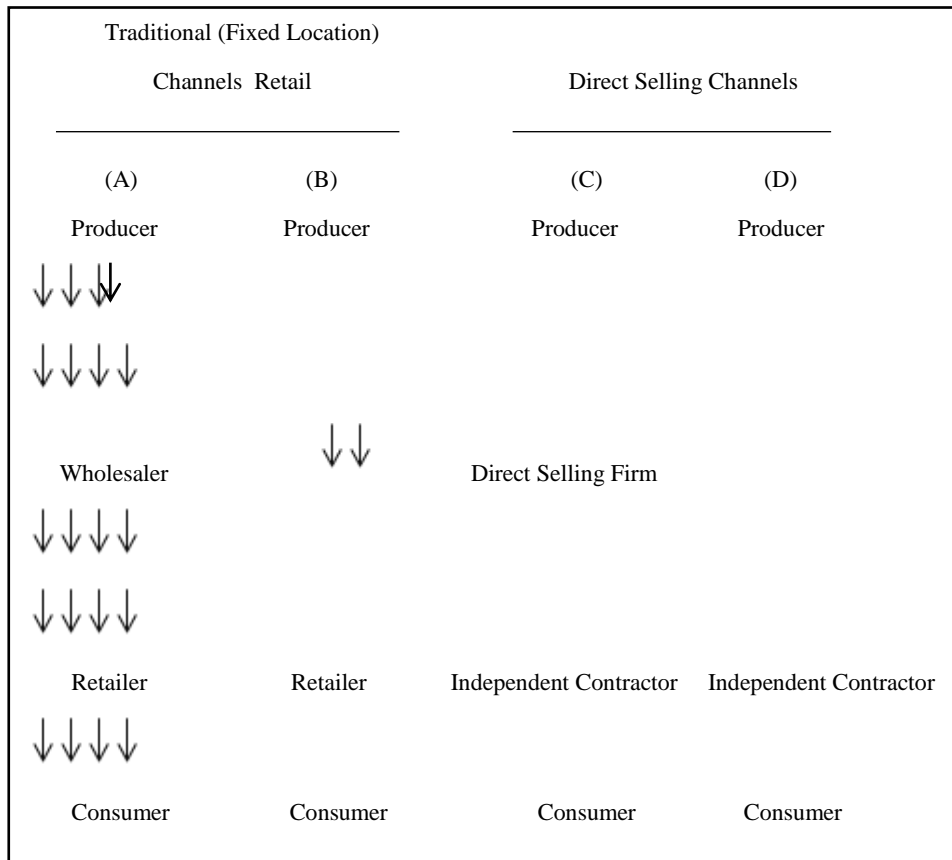


Figure 1.2 given above depicts traditional and direct selling retail channels. “Channel A is the “traditional” retail channel; Channel B has become a common channel with the rise of large retail chains, superstores, and category killers. Channels C and D are common versions of direct selling channels where no intermediary other than the independent contractor or the direct selling firm exists(Wotruba & Peterson, 1996).”

Wotruba & Peterson (1996) mentioned that direct selling is not well understood, and the term itself is often abused or misused. A suggested definition is “face-to-face selling away from a fixed retail location.” Although this is effectively an operational definition, it possesses both tactical and strategic implications for the practice of direct selling (Wotruba & Peterson, 1996, pp. 1-16).

In a typical direct selling structure, independent sales representatives who sell products to customers through face-to-face communication get help of the direct sales company for product and sales training or sales reporting. “Customers place product orders with independent sales representatives, who may deliver the products themselves

or process the order with the direct sales company for delivery. Traditionally, the direct sales company's communication with customers relates to establishing the brand image(Ferrell, Gonzalez-Padron, & Ferrell, 2010).”

It is also significant to mention about definition of the terms which can be confused with the meaning of direct selling. At this point, Rani N. (2016) clarifies the difference between the terms such as direct marketing or distance selling and direct selling. Author prefers the terms such as direct marketing or distance selling and describes these concepts as an interactive system of marketing that uses one or more advertising media to affect a measurable response and/or transaction at any location, with this activity stored on a database. Telemarketing, direct mail, and direct response are the most known types of techniques for direct marketing and distance selling (Rani, 2016).

It is true that direct selling companies might use some of the techniques and technology, which belong to direct marketing or distance selling, in order to enhance their businesses. However, the face-to-face or personal presentation is the main difference between the two methods of marketing, and this will be always an aspect of the direct selling relationship (Rani, 2016, pp. 57-64) .

2.1.2. Direct selling and women

Since the women have started to become more active and visible in the labor force participation, a term “feminization labor” coined by Guy Standing (1999) arose because available employment and labor options tend increasingly to characterize activities associated, rightly or wrongly, with women and because the pattern of employment tends to result in an increasing proportion of women occupying the jobs (Standing, 1999). And when we think about direct selling, it is inevitable to relate it with women. Christensen (2013) states that direct selling has become a magnet for women because of the inequalities in the workplaces; such as women earning seventy-seven cents for every dollar a man earns, it comes as little surprise that women account for more than 80 percent of all direct sellers (Christensen, 2013).She also mentions that many women who are ambitious to climb higher in their positions face with the fact that discrimination gets worse when they are in a higher position.“Ten years after graduating from college, women can expect to earn sixty-nine cents for the same job their male classmates are paid a dollar to do(Christensen, 2013).”

In the history of direct selling, the place of women has been always very important and they were the building blocks of the industry. Nowadays the role of women in business life has changed and when we look at the Global companies, nine of the 29 U.S. companies in the Top 50, which makes 31 percent, are led by women who were either co-founders or who serve as president or CEO. And these women are inspiring other women around the globe, especially in developing countries (Emmert, 2014).

2.1.3. Effects of technological developments on direct selling

With the technological developments and increase of social media accesses, a digital retail environment has become popular for many companies. However, direct selling is a model that can be adapted to any market and demographic changes, and it never loses its basics. The European Direct Selling Association (SELDIA) claims that with the effects of digitalization, nowadays most of the consumers are well informed when browsing and purchasing products online. For them shopping should be easy and they want to access to products and services faster. Direct selling has adjusted to the digital retail space, as many sellers choose to sell products online(http-1). Nowadays, it is common to see many social media accounts of sales consultants from different direct selling companies. In this way, sales consultants can reach so many consumers from their mobile devices and sell many products online.

For salespeople, social media technologies have an impact on reducing the effort and the cost of connecting with the customers. Another effect of these technologies is that “customers are now connecting with and drawing power from one other, defining their own perspective on companies and brands, a view that’s often at odds with the image a company wants to project.” Since the people have started using social media so much to get the things, they need from one another, rather than from companies, the balance of power from company to customer is not the same (Bernoff & Li, 2008).

It is a necessity to choose a suitable technology for the direct selling companies if they want to build a consumer-oriented business strategy. In this way, they can increase sales productivity by understanding the impact of technology in different stages of the sales process. “Technology in salesperson-to-consumer interactions is used to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the sales representative’s relationship with customers.”For this reason, more and more direct selling companies are investing in

sales technology in order to enable and enhance sales representatives' connections to the consumers without weakening the sales representatives' relationship with the company. At this point, it is crucial to question how direct selling companies can have the balance between traditional face-to-face contacts and technology that allows for virtual relationships. "As what is viewed as personal interactions change in today's society, direct sellers need to consider the new technologies that are defined by some consumers as an equivalent to, or a substitute for, face-to-face communication(Ferrell, Gonzalez-Padron, & Ferrell, 2010)."

There is an example of how internet is changing the direct selling world. In the USA and Canada there is a website called Quixtar which is created by Amway -a direct selling company. This website helps its IBOs (Independent Business Owners) from USA and Canada to order their products online and also to show the products and the business opportunity to their clients and candidates. Amway have had such success with this website that nowadays almost all IBOs who work with Amway are using this website in the USA and Canada. Furthermore, this website has become one of the top ten selling websites on the internet. After this success, Amway UK created a similar website called Amivo that will be used by IBOs from several European countries (Alturas, 2003).

The website "Direct Selling News" has started to publish the Direct Selling Digital 100 to show the social media activities of many direct selling companies which are trying to adapt themselves to the new digital area. In the website it is described as "a new monthly ranking, the DSN Digital 100, which will offer added insight on the digital marketing efforts of direct selling companies." DSN Digital 100 aims to see which companies within the direct sales industry has currently a good social media strategy in furthering their brand goals by showcasing the Top 25 companies in four areas. In the website, the companies' social media size, which means the combination of Facebook likes, Twitter followers, Instagram followers and YouTube subscribers, their social media engagement, which means the average engagement rate that leads to increased reach, awareness and influence, and also the number of individual people coming to a site within a 30-day period and the page views of the companies for 30 days will be shown every month (Emmert, 2019). Nowadays it has become very common and actually compulsory for the direct selling companies to encourage their sales

consultants to have a social media account where they can introduce the products to more people through the videos or photos. For example, currently Amway has online social selling courses for free in its website for all of its sales consultants to teach them how to use social media efficiently. Moreover, sales consultants have started to create their own website or a social media account, in which they can both present and sell their products and find new consumers or members for their sales team. In addition to this, direct selling companies want to take the advantage of these developments in technology and they encourage their sales consultants to use social media. Many direct selling companies have their own social media accounts or special apps to use for ordering products or evaluating them. For example; Amway has many different apps for its sales consultants, in which they can order the products, see or calculate their monthly salary and level of their success. Furthermore, nowadays Amway and the other direct selling companies are doing some competitions online in social media and they want their sales consultants to share photos with the products on social media and the owner of the photo which gets more likes wins a gift from the company. Amway has also a beauty application, in which people can try the cosmetic products of Amway through a camera filter and see how the make-up products look like on them. If they like any of those products, they can order it through that app, or they can take a photo and share it on their social media account. As we can see from these examples, nowadays it is crucial to keep up with the digital world for direct selling companies.

2.1.4. Social and economic benefits of direct selling

Peterson, Crittenden, & Albaum (2019) states that direct sellers' income which they acquire from their direct selling activities depends on different kinds of factors, such as product type, market demand, and selling effort expended. A salesperson in direct selling industry can get an income as a full-time direct seller or work part-time to earn extra money or to buy some specific products. "However, the economic impact of direct selling is more than the cumulative income generated by individual direct sellers. "The sum of three interrelated effects shows us the economic impact of direct selling activity. These effects are as following: "a direct effect (retail sales by the direct sellers), an indirect effect (upstream or supply chain sales), and an induced effect (downstream sales due to household spending associated with the direct and indirect effects)." In short course, the economic impact of direct selling is greater than the mere aggregation

of individual direct seller incomes. As such, the economic effect of direct selling is appropriately expressed as impacting the economy as a whole (Peterson, Crittenden, & Albaum, 2019).

2.2. Pink-collar Workers

2.2.1. Definition of pink-collar

The terms pink labor or pink-collar workers are not as common as blue-collar or white-collar. Especially the meanings of these terms are not known well by anyone or mixed with some other terms. The term “pink-collar” gained popularity with the book “Pink collar workers: Inside the world of women's work” which is written by Howe (1977), and after that this term was used a lot during the Second World War, since women occupied jobs as secretaries, typists, and transcribers during that time (Francis, 2012). Howe (1977) referred to “female concentrated job” such as registered nurses, elementary teachers, hairdressers and secretaries (Howe, 1977). According to American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, pink-collar is “of or relating to a class of jobs, such as typist or telephone operator, once traditionally filled by women ([http-6](#)).” Collins English Dictionary defines the term pink-collar as “Sociology of, relating to, or designating low-paid occupations traditionally associated with female workers ([http-7](#)).” In other words, pink labor is related with jobs which have been traditionally linked with women such as nursing, babysitting or secretary jobs. It can be deduced from this definition that pink-collar occupations are valued and respected less in the society than others.

In the literature, Mastracci (2004) considers pink-collar jobs as the ones where women dominate in terms of overall employment, and they can be blue- or white-collar, or in the services. For example, manufacturing can be classified as a blue-collar industry and automobile manufacturing is male dominated. Also, textile and apparel manufacturing is female-dominated, then this can be also considered “pink-collar.” In a similar way, finance, insurance, and real estate are classified as a white-collar industry, stockbrokers are usually male and bank tellers are usually female and for this reason their job can be considered “pink-collar.” You can already think that the jobs classified as “pink-collar” are usually lower-paying ones, and women’s concentration in them is a significant factor in the gender pay gap. (Mastracci, 2004)

After explaining the “pink-collar” term, Mastracci (2004) questions how this view towards pink-collar workers and jobs can be altered. She argues that if the number of workers who are willing to take the lowest-paying jobs decreases, so the thinking goes, demand will increase and the wages paid to attract workers, male or female, would have to increase over time. This sounds appealing. However, there are a lot of women who are willing to get the lower pay that accompanies pink-collar occupations, but the supply of women workers remains consistent, so the employers do not need to increase salaries to attract workers, either now or over time. “If non-college female workers behaved more rationally and avoided lower-paying, low-mobility pink-collar jobs and entered higher-paying, high-mobility jobs, market forces would prevail and even out the distributions of men and women across occupations, thereby minimizing gender pay disparities(Mastracci, 2004).”

2.2.2. Pink-collar and Gender Gap

Above, it has been already stated that pink-collar jobs are related with female jobs which are usually underestimated by other people and especially by men in public. Miller (2017) claims that according to a study, the reason why mostly the men resist to pink-collar jobs is the culture of masculinity. In the society there is a perception that women are empathetic and caring, while men are strong, tough and able to support a family(Miller, 2017).Women experience this also in workplaces like in every area of their lives.In the concept of pink labor, it is important to search for the effects of gender pay gap or inequality in workplace.

The gender pay gap can be defined as the income differences between men and women. There are many factors which create the gender pay gap such as occupational segregation, bias against working mothers, and direct pay discrimination. In addition to these factors; racial bias, disability, access to education, and age can be also reasons for gender pay gap. As a result of this, different groups of women have different experiences for the gaps in pay (Vagins, 2016).

Norris and Kochhar (2019) also mention that women who have the same education level and do the same work as men get less salary than their male colleagues even in the formal sector. Also, since the time that women generally spend in the paid labor market is less than men, when women get older, they have lower pensions and face a higher risk of poverty. The authors think that in order to change this gender

inequality, there should be different approaches which can differ in every country depending on the level of economic development, existing gender gaps, and the speed at which the new technology affects the economy. There are three main areas that can be highlighted. First of all, there can be more “policies to bring more women into the workforce, second policies to provide women with the right skills and to empower women in the workplace and third easing transitions for displaced workers (Norris & Kochhar, 2019).”

On the contrary, Hudson and Sullivan (2008) reveal that women have started to get higher positions in postindustrial society. They have worked in the jobs which were considered as male jobs before such as airplane pilot, firefighter, and heavy-equipment operator. The reason why women have gotten better positions is that the demands on women to perform homemaking duties were decreased. “These roles have declined in significance because of delayed marriage, reduced birth rates, labor-saving technologies, and the substitution of paid services for work that women previously performed at home such as childcare.” Furthermore, since more women have studied and graduated from college and in postindustrial society it had increased importance; women have had better jobs during that time. Although some things are getting better for women, the average income that women get for full-time work is still only about three-quarters of men (Hodson & Sullivan, 2008).”

According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the definition of gender wage gap is “the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men.” Data refers to full-time employees on the one hand and to self-employed on the other. Also on the chart of Gender Wage Gap Employees 2017 which OECD provides on its website, Turkey has 6.9 gender wage gap in 2017(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2019).

It is stated that gender wage gaps have a direct effect on income inequality. “Moreover, high gaps in labor force participation rates between men and women are likely to result in unequal earnings between the sexes, thereby creating and exacerbating income inequality.” In addition to that, there are more women who work in the informal sector than formal sector. In this informal sector salaries are much lower, which increases the gender earnings gap and exacerbates income inequality. When there are

large gaps in labor force participation rates between men and women, this can lead to an inequality of earnings between the sexes, thereby increasing income inequality. “The correlation between gender gaps in labor force participation and income inequality is strongest in high-income countries (Gonzales, Jain-Chandra, Kochha, & Newiak, 2017).”

According to a study of OECD (2015), we can see that recent developments are mixed in the G20 emerging economies. “Income inequality has fallen in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Turkey since the mid-2000s (or earlier for some countries), although in Mexico the decline was modest and in Argentina, Brazil and Turkey inequality remains relatively high.” There are many sources within the labor market that can cause an income inequality. However, there are particularly relevant five reasons that generate income equality. These are: the gap between wages and productivity, employment levels, changing patterns of employment relationships, a weakening of labor market institutions, and increasing wage dispersion (International Labour Organization, International Monetary Fund, OECD, World Bank Group, 2015).

While women try to participate in labor force more and more in many countries, there are still some restrictions or unequal laws to prevent them to work. According to a study, “some countries have numerous legal restrictions, with 30 countries having in place 10 or more restrictions on women’s participation.” There are only 18 economies which have no legal differences in the treatment of economic rights for men and women. These restrictions differ depending on the countries. For example; “in 18 countries, husbands can prevent their wives from working, and laws or regulations in 100 countries restrict non-pregnant and non-nursing women from pursuing the same economic activities as men.” The restriction which prevents married women from working without getting the permission of her husband was removed in 23 countries (for example, by Turkey in 2001 and in South Africa and Guatemala in 1998) (Gonzales, Jain-Chandra, Kochha, & Newiak, 2017). According to the analysis, the heterogeneity in the labor market gender gaps in different countries can be only explained by the differences in social values. “There is a significant negative correlation between how much a country respects women’s rights and female labor force participation, but almost no correlation with gender gaps when it comes to the

percentage of employers in the labor force(Gonzales, Jain-Chandra, Kochha, & Newiak, 2017).”

Although some common drivers can be explained for gender inequality, there are usually different aspects of it which have more importance for different countries. As the main drivers of income inequality in all countries, gender gaps in labor force participation and education can be counted, in addition to standard determinants of income inequality. For the countries which have advanced economies and access to health and education, the gaps are largely closed; the gender gap in labor force participation is the key aspect of gender inequality that affects income inequality. “For emerging markets and low-income countries, gender gaps in opportunities (education and health) are also found to be important drivers of income inequality. ”Moreover, in low-income countries, women’s health has a significant effect on income inequality, since inequality in opportunities translates sharply into income gaps (Gonzales, Jain-Chandra, Kochha, & Newiak, 2017).

It is possible to say that there are different ways to close the gender gap in education, health, working life for all countries. “In some areas, such as education, the gender gap has closed for almost all women; but progress has been slower for those who are poor and face other disadvantages, such as ethnicity.” In other areas, the process has been slow to close the gap. It has been even like that among well-off women and on the contrary, in countries that have developed rapidly. For example; a way of reducing the income poverty as a part of development can be closing the gap in well-being between men and women. “Greater gender equality also enhances economic efficiency and improves other development outcomes. ”Some policy implications can be implemented to provide gender equality in more countries. To be able to do that, policymakers need to focus their actions on five clear priorities: reducing the excess mortality of girls and women; eliminating remaining gender disadvantages in education; increasing women’s access to economic opportunity and thus earnings and productivity; giving women an equal voice in households and societies; and limiting the transmission of gender inequality across generations (Revenga & Shetty, 2012).

2.3. Professionalization

2.3.1. Profession, Professionalism and Professionalization

There has been always the issue of how professions should be defined for the studies of professions. If it is questioned why it is so important, there are some reasons. First of all, if the study of the professions is considered as a discipline of its own, its object of study must be 'constituted' as a specific object of knowledge. For professions there should be distinctive features which make it meaningful to talk about them as a particular social stratum. If this is not the case, we can consider the studies of the professions as a part of ordinary work-life research, or the sociology of organizations. For this reason, there should be explicit differences between professions and other occupations. Secondly, because of a lack of definition, there will evidently be negative effects on research precision, and thirdly, when there is the lack of a shared definition, this will make the communication between scholars more difficult (Brante, 2011, pp. 4-20).

According to Brante (2011), a good definition should include "genus proximum, a broader category, and differentia specifica, signifying distinguishing properties." He gives the example of dog as a genus proximum and differentia specifica the properties distinguishing 'poodle' from other dogs, by simultaneously signifying what poodles have in common. In this case, he considers the most often genus proximum as occupation, even though some other suggestions could be practice or authority. Also, in this case as differentia specifica, it should be questioned what distinguishes professions from other occupations. In addition, it should be indicated what professions have in common, hence external difference and internal similarity. Depending on this structure, Brante (2011) defines professions as "occupations conducting interventions derived from scientific knowledge of mechanisms, structures, and contexts (Brante, 2011)."

Generally, it is considered as the only requirement to be professional, when a person gets income or adopts a business-like approach to it. Professionalism is an attitude to work which anyone may adopt. However, professions and professionalism can be considered from different points of views from the researchers. Some of them consider the professionals as members of a limited group which has high-status service occupations such as medicine, engineering and law. In addition to being repositories of authoritative knowledge, there are some common features of these occupations. There is

a restricted entry for these occupations and also they require high-level qualifications and stringent tests of competence, together with distinctive types of formal organization. It is because of the high status and supposed effectiveness of established professions that aspects of their outlook and behavior are claimed for work of every type (Ackroyd, 2016).

There are many terms such as profession, professional, professionalization, professionalism and the meanings of these terms might be sometimes confusing. When we look at the meaning of profession in the past and now, there will be a big difference between both. For example, people used the term “profession” for the first time as a label for the traditional professions such as law, medicine, and architecture and at that time this term had more prominent features. Kultgen (1988) mentions that “as new occupations struggled to be recognized, their advocates modified its meaning in order to extend the term to them, while striving to retain enough of the old connotations to warrant its continued use.” The people who were still supporting to keep the original meaning of profession were against these efforts and they were just traditionally minded and continued to use the term with its earlier meaning. As a result of this, the term 'profession' covers a large family of occupations with some similarities and differences (Kultgen, 1988).

He also explains that a few occupations obtained the features during eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and these are the learned professions of law, medicine, the ministry, and architecture. When these professions had difficulties to attain recognition and drive rivals from the market place, they started to organize some associations for themselves, where they can set their own standards, have the control of entry into the group, sponsored schools and standardized training, regulated practice, and aimed to improve their image before their patrons and the public (Kultgen, 1988, pp. 58-101).

Kultgen (1988) indicated that at that time, it wasn't possible and desirable for professions to be considered in a different way than they represented themselves to the public. “Functional and moral considerations coalesced with public relations to reinforce an idealized presentation of the professional self not only to society but to the professionals themselves.” In the process of time, the professions started to match some criteria that they professed. With respect to other ideals they contented themselves and a chronic discrepancy between ideal and actual practices settled in. “This discrepancy

accounts for the recurrent disillusionment generation after generation of people who enter professions and find out what they are really like(Kultgen, 1988).”

From the perspective of Brown (1992), the term “profession” is a reminder of the way in which each succeeding generation, and each new group of would-be professionals, used the examples of history in order to define, organize, and publicize their own particular expertise and cultural authority. In successive generations of would-be professionals, the language of predecessors became, through the ingenious use of metaphor, ready-made and usable tradition. Moreover, as the words profession and professional (and laity and lay, and all of the more particular emulative terms employed) were used by new secular groups to draw upon established authority for their own purposes, the meanings of the words changed and expanded (Brown, 1992).

On the other hand, according to Hodson and Sullivan (2008) professions are knowledge based occupations. However, for every occupation knowledge that its members master is different. The professions are distinguished by the type of knowledge they master. They define professionalization as the effort by an occupational group to increase its collective standing by taking on the characteristics of a profession. It is necessary to distinguish professionalization from professionalism, which is the competence and effectiveness of workers in their job performance (Hodson & Sullivan, 2008, pp. 253-353).

About the degree of professionalization, Jeong and Leblebici (2019) propose that when the degree of professionalization increases for a given occupational domain, the degree of variation among careers gets lower. To put it in different way, they consider the degree of professionalization as a converging institutional force that promotes career similarity because major elements of career construction become increasingly institutionalized. Professionalization can bring about some important things such as homogeneous career entry events, which would be both encouraged and required before one could perform professional practice. Such kind of institutionalized entry requirements can be a reason of restriction for both internal competition within an occupation through status stratification and external competition with other occupations by the claim of exclusive jurisdiction. Because of such restrictions, individuals compare their career trajectories to those of their peers and reduce career variations. “While professionalization is an institutional force driving towards career convergence, the

authors view the heterogeneity of employing organizations in an occupational domain as a competing ecological force driving towards career divergence. "For them, the organizational diversity is a significant factor to shape the careers (Jeong & Leblebici, 2019).

Jeong and Leblebici (2019) consider that there are certain similarities at both the career beginning and the career consolidation. People tend to conform to expected career progressions in high professionalization occupations, generally based on regulations, educational systems or other kinds of associations, where external signs like income or power are bound with the progression of the individual in the professional scale. On the other hand, different alternatives would be possible for the people who work in an occupation with weak professionalization (Jeong & Leblebici, 2019).

When it is thought about the future of professions, Susskind & Susskind (2015) claimed that everything has already started to change for professions. They stated that in the past whenever people needed an expert guidance, they looked for it. The members of the professions were the only ones who had that knowledge and experience to solve our problems. The authors call each of these professions acting as a 'gatekeeper' of their own, distinct body of practical expertise. However, at present this situation is under threat and already changing. Nowadays, it can be observed that professionals from different professions have started doing each other's work.(Susskind & Susskind, 2015)

2.3.2. Gender and Professions

Through the history there has been always a relation between the professions, professionalization and gender. The term semi-profession has caused a discussion of gender and professionalization (Witz, 1992). As a definition of semi-profession, Hodson & Sullivan (2008) state that it refers to an occupational group which has achieved some of the characteristics of a profession or possesses each hallmark of a profession in a limited way. As the examples of major semi-professions; elementary and secondary schoolteachers, librarians, social workers, and registered nurses can be respected. Because of the reason that these occupations are mostly dominated by women; they are also called the female semi-professions. And also it is possible for some of them to be regarded as lower status because of the high number of women in these semi-professions and they have traditionally been low paid(Hodson & Sullivan, 2008, pp. 253-353).It was claimed that semi-professions cannot be considered as professions

because women do not have enough occupational motivation, ambition and any drive toward intellectual mastery, they are not capable of having authority over men (due to their own belief in male superiority), or of forming occupational communities and maintaining constructive colleague relations because they are less able than men to disagree impersonally, without emotional involvement. In short course, since women and men are not the same, semi-professions cannot be considered the same as professions (Witz, 1992).

Furthermore, Kuhlmann & Bourgeault (2008) argued the need for more complex and context sensitive approaches on gender and professions. In their article it is highlighted that there should be more participatory professional projects and equality and diversity in the professions should be improved as the key role of public policy and the state. According to the authors, professionalism is highly flexible, and it can be in any form. When more and more women start working in all areas of professional work and they are more accepted within the professions, this can be a proof of flexibility and permeability of boundaries. In the past women were excluded prominently, and at the same time disproportioned forms of inclusion of women and minority groups are emerging alongside the lines of status of a professional segment. As a result of this, “both the sources of inequality and the opportunity structures for equality are becoming more diffuse and the flows of power more complex. “Although new dominant claims come into view, there are also new players that may counteract such claims. “A discourse of “feminization” of the professions even when applied in its “modernized” version of integration and positive attitudes on women makes the new forms of asymmetrical inclusion and the now more “fine-tuned” hegemonic claims invisible. “In this way, the “feminization” discourse changes and new myth about women and the professions that can easily break out as a boomerang for women (Kuhlmann & Bourgeault, 2008, pp. 5-18).

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, the methods which applied in this study is reviewed and explained in detail. For this study, qualitative research method and semi-structured interviews are chosen and implemented. Under the title of research approach and research technique, qualitative research method, semi-structured interviews, interview process and interviewees: the participants will be explained respectively during this chapter.

3.1. Research Design: A qualitative Study

Qualitative research method has been chosen to carry on this study and find out the answers for the questions. The empirical material which is collected by qualitative research method is usually in the form of words, such as descriptions, accounts, opinions, feelings etc., it is not based on numbers. This type of empirical material is mostly used when the focus of the study is people, particularly in social groups or as individuals (Walliman, 2011, p. 130).Saldana (2011) defines qualitative research as an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches and methods for the study of natural social life. He states that in qualitative research method, the information or data which is collected and analyzed is not quantitative in character, “consisting of textual materials such as interview transcripts, field notes, and documents, and/or visual materials such as artifacts, photographs, video recordings, and Internet sites, that document human experiences about others and/or one’s self in social action and reflexive states (Saldana, 2011).”

According to the purpose of the project, there might be many different goals of qualitative research. As a result of this method, there are significant representations and presentations of remarkable findings from the analytic synthesis of data and these can help us to observe the culture, to get new insights and to understand the complexity of individuals, to evaluate the effectiveness of programs or policies, artistic renderings of human meanings, and/or the critique of existing social orders and the initiation of social justice (Saldana, 2011).

With a qualitative research, a great variety of dimensions of the social world can be explored, such as our research participants’ way of living, their values, experiences and imaginings, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate(Mason, 2002).

This qualitative research is based on the interviews in order to gather some information for the research questions. When a qualitative research is based on interview data, it is likely having a realistic perspective. The answers which are provided by interviewees are considered either as factual information about the respondent's situation and history, or as expressions of his or her experiences and perspectives. This realistic perspective helps interviewer to get the information which lacks for his or her study from the interviewee, especially this information might be about the interviewee's conditions, experiences and perspectives. "Questions are used to specify the kind of information that is being requested, while answers will be heard as efforts to provide that information; that is information relevant for the research project, and fitting in the current interactional context (Have, 2004)."

As it is discussed above, interview method makes it easier to get detailed information for the subjects which are indeterminate for the researcher. Since the conversation is the best and easiest way of communication for human beings, of course, conversations through interviews are also the optimal option to get that information. However, "the pervasiveness of the figure of conversation in human life is both a burden and a blessing for qualitative interviewers." On the one part, it stands for that qualitative interviewing is a way of understanding the main features of our conversational world. In return for common critiques of qualitative research that it is too subjective, "one should say—given the picture of the conversational world painted here—that qualitative interviewing is, in fact, the most objective method of inquiry "when someone wants to search for qualitative features of human experience, talk, and interaction because with qualitative interviews it is possible to cover all these features and for this reason. "On the other hand, it is also a burden for qualitative interviewers that they employ conversations to study a world that is already saturated with conversation (Brinkmann, 2014)."

3.2. Case Study

In order to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena, the case study can be used in many ways as a research method. With the help of a case study, researchers can give their full of attention to a case and maintain the factual perspective (Yin, 2014). According to Stake (1995), case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case,

coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995). In addition to this, Davey (1991) states something similar to that definition and he indicates that instead of using large samples and following a rigid protocol to examine a limited number of variables, case study methods contain deep and long research of a single instance or event. In this way, researchers can look at what is happening and they can collect data, analyze information and report the results systematically (Davey, 1991).

The case of this study is that direct selling as a pink-collar job cannot become a profession because of specific reasons. First of all, the meaning of profession in the literature differentiates from what female direct sellers consider the profession. For them, profession is a job, in which they spend their time and earn income. However, as it is stated in the literature review, profession has a different and deeper meaning than what they think.

3.3. Research Technique: Semi-structured interviews

For this study, semi-structured interviews have been chosen and implemented. Semi-structured interviews include some closed-ended and open-ended questions and cover specific topics or themes. This method was chosen for the interviews to have more information from the interviewees to get the answers for questions of this study. In a semi-structured interview, as an interviewer, it is important to work with a loosely structured topic guide or to have a checklist of topics which should be covered during the interview. In this guide, there can be some structured questions that are more structured than others, even though as a rule these tend to be followed up by less structured ‘probes’ which are ways of following up on a topic in order to generate more information. “This is not a questionnaire, because the interviewee can respond freely to what is asked. The questions may not be asked in the order given in the guide; you may introduce additional questions to get more information about particular topics (Kielmann, Cataldo, & Seeley, 2012, p. 29).”

When semi-structured interviews are conducted with many different participants, all the main questions will be asked and similar wording will be used during all interviews in order to make the comparison of the data better (Kielmann, Cataldo, & Seeley, 2012). However, “semi-structured interviews allow discretion on the number

and order of predefined questions posed to the participant unlike the structured interview (Wilson, 2013).”

When semi-structured interviews are compared with structured interviews, it can be seen that with semi-structured interviews, “there is a better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee; “also there is a higher chance for the interviewer to become visible as a knowledge-producing participant during the interview, and so that the interviewer does not stay hiding behind a preset interview guide. Furthermore, in comparison with unstructured interviews, the interviewer can focus on the main or the important subject that he or she considers it related with research project (Brinkmann, 2014).

There are some strengths and weaknesses for semi-structured interviews. The strengths are as following: Semi-structured interviews address complex topics through probes and clarification; they ensure that particular points are covered with each participant and also allow users and interviewers to raise additional concerns and issues. Furthermore, with this type of interview, interviewers have some flexibility and they have the chance of broad comparisons across interviews. The training time required for semi-structured interviews is less than unstructured interviews because the interviewer has a set of specific questions available as a starting point. As a weakness of semi-structured interviews, it is possible that interviewers direct the participants to a particular answer through some cues during the interview. Another weakness can be the inconsistency among interviewers. When the interviewers have too much flexibility, it might create difficulty for comparisons. If there is more than one interviewer, it should be considered that all the interviewers get training about how much flexibility they have in probing existing questions or asking new ones(Wilson, 2013).

3.3.1. Interview Process

First of all, for this study individual and face-to-face interviews are conducted, since this type has many advantages. The first advantage is that as an interviewer you can always change the topic of conversation in a way that is more useful and in relation with your research theme, when it is face-to-face interview. The second advantage is that since the interviews can consist of some questions which are personal, sensitive or even taboo for the individuals, it is always better to conduct individual interviews that

give more confidentiality and often make it easier for the interviewer to create an atmosphere of trust and discretion. In addition to these advantages, another reason to use face-to-face interview method is that “in face-to-face interviews, people are present not only as conversing minds, but as flesh-and-blood creatures who may laugh, cry, smile, tremble, and otherwise give away much information in terms of gestures, body language, and facial expressions. “In this way, Interviewers can provide a great amount of information available for the research (Brinkmann, 2014).

Based on the basics of semi-structured interviews, nine questions have been prepared for the interviews. For each of the questions, there were also related questions and topics. In case the interviewee did not give a detailed answer, those related questions or topics were prepared to be asked to get more clear answers. The questions are formed to get answers to the main questions of this study. Therefore, the questions are mostly about the way female sales consultants work in direct selling sector such as their working hours, education level and their goals for the future. It has been also significant to know how they consider direct selling (as a real profession or a hobby). In case they consider it as a profession, it was also asked what a profession means to them.

After the preparation of the interview questions and consent form, a pilot interview was conducted to see if the questions were suitable for getting accurate answers, to check if the sound recording system works properly and also to see how much time is needed for all questions. The total time for each interview changed for all participants, since some of them were more willing to answer the questions in detailed, while others did not give so much detail. All interviews were conducted in Turkish and the data which has been provided from interviews will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Before the interviews were conducted, a consent and information form, which was prepared beforehand, was given to the participants to read carefully and sign it. In that form, the purpose of this study was explained and all participants had the opportunity to stop or leave the interview, in any uncomfortable situation.

3.3.2. The Participants

The target group of this study is female sales consultants in direct selling sector. For this reason, ten women who work with different companies in this sector were chosen purposefully for the interviews (Patton, 2002). All participants have different

ages, education and income levels. Below, profile of each participant is explained in regard to the dates of the interviews. In the consent and information form, they were also given option to write their birth date and average income, therefore some participants did not prefer to write them on the form. While choosing the participants, it was important to find women who work as full-time and dedicated themselves to this job, and also those who work part-time and do this job as a hobby to reach maximum variety. Because depending on those different views, it is possible to understand the phenomenon from different perspectives. All interviews have been conducted in August 2018 in Soma-Manisa.

Table 3.1.: Participant profile

	Education	Part-time in Direct Selling	Full-time in Direct Selling	Average Salary	Age
Participant 1	Primary school graduate		×	6.000-8.000 TL	35
Participant 2	Primary school graduate		×	10.000 TL	56
Participant 3	High-school graduate	×		-	44
Participant 4	Bachelor’s degree		×	3.500 TL	37
Participant 5	Primary school graduate		×	1.500-2.000 TL	47
Participant 6	Primary school graduate		×	-	-
Participant 7	Bachelor’s degree		×	10.000 TL	52
Participant 8	Associate degree diploma	×		1.900 TL	37
Participant 9	Primary school graduate		×	6.000 TL	48
Participant 10	Bachelor’s degree	×		1.500-2.000 TL	51

Among the participants, seven of them are working full-time for their job. And only three of them are working part-time as business partners of direct selling companies. All participants have their own specific features, stories and goals. Most of

the participants are/were housewives before they started their own business with direct selling companies, or they are still housewives and doing this job. For example, Participant 1 (P1) was a housewife but because of some financial difficulties, she started to work in many different sectors before this job. And now she has an office for direct selling company in which she is working, and she is in the office 6 days in a week. After she became independent with direct selling job, she got divorced and took the responsibility of her kids. Participant 2 was also a housewife before she started with direct selling. Now she is calling herself as a business woman. She has been working full-time in this sector for 5 years and last year she got a brand-new car from her company as a gift for her success. She is among the best leaders in Aegean region.

On the other hand, there are also two participants who were working in another sector before they started to direct selling sector. Participant 7 (P7) has bachelor's degree in the department of accounting. Before this job, she worked in public and private sectors. First she started working part-time in this sector for 5 years but when she noticed that she really enjoyed what she was doing, she decided to open a healthy nutrition office of Herbalife and she has been working full-time for 8 years. Also, P4 has been working full-time in this sector for one year and before that she worked in a private company for some time. Even though she is new in this sector, she has already reached to a high level in her company and she is very enthusiastic about building a team and becoming a great leader for her team.

Among the participants there are five women who have their own office for this job. For example; P1, P5, P6, P7, P9 have a healthy living and nutrition office, where they can support their team for a healthier life and sell or show their products to the customers. These women have a daily schedule and they work full-time in that office.

While most of the participants prefer to work full-time in this sector, there are also three participants who work part-time or prefer spending less time for it. For instance, P3 has been working part-time in five different direct selling companies for 20 years. She said she really likes direct selling, but she is doing it only as a hobby. Another example is participant 8; she has been also working in this sector for 20 years and at the beginning she was working full-time but now she is only working part-time as a hobby, because she is working full-time in a bakery and she does not want to spend so much time for direct selling anymore. The last example is P10; she is physical education

teacher in a public school, and she has worked in different direct selling companies for many years. Now she has been working part-time with LR Company for 2 years. And she only considers direct selling as a hobby, not as a profession.

3.4. Data Analysis

Empirical material provided from interviews will be analyzed and according to these analyses, main themes will be determined in order to come to the conclusion about the research questions. The main themes will be explained and discussed in detail in the next chapter. The first theme will be the life-changing opportunities for female direct sellers that they have experienced after starting with direct selling. And under this title, there will be seven different themes related to these opportunities. After that, data analysis will continue with the themes such as; balance between family and work, womanhood as an advantage, challenges of working as a woman and direct selling as a profession lastly it will be discussed how direct selling can be lifetime happiness for everyone.

3.5. Trustworthiness of the Study

The positivists often question the trustworthiness of qualitative research, the reason for this might be the different way of addressing their concepts of validity and reliability in their work and it is not the same way in naturalistic work (Shenton, 2004). In a world dominated by quantitative researchers, there is always evidence which hierarchies place qualitative studies on a low rung, and quantitative researchers' quality criteria are used to make decisions about research funding. Using terms and criteria which are recognizable and widely accepted is very useful for some people. There are also some people who think that validity is an appropriate criterion for assessing quality in both qualitative and quantitative studies, however, there is a must for qualitative researchers to use different procedures to achieve it (Polit & Beck, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated the standards for the trustworthiness of qualitative research that parallel the standards of reliability and validity in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four criteria to develop the trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry. These are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. These four criteria for trustworthiness represent

parallels to the positivists' criteria of internal validity, reliability, objectivity, and external validity, respectively (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, the researcher paid particular attention to ensure credibility, validity and reliability of the study. For example; as data acquisition method, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various female direct sellers who have different levels of education, different ages and particular stories, in order to have different point of views and various stories for this study. Moreover, the data which was attained from the interviews compounded with the related literature to ensure those concepts which are mentioned above. In addition to this, throughout the research process the researcher received the support and advices of Dr. Ozan Ađlargöz who is an expert on his field and also the supervisor of this thesis.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, the main and subthemes which are determined after data analysis will be explained. Direct quotations will be provided and translated to give detailed information and to foster trustworthiness.

4.1. A life-changing Career Opportunity

Direct selling provides so many different opportunities to its business partners that they can even change the lives of them in a positive way. These opportunities are adapting healthy lifestyle, flexible working hours, being their own boss, getting awards, unlimited income, self-development and socialization.

For example; Participant 7 and P1 explain the opportunities they have had with direct selling apart from the reason to lose weight.

“When I attended to the first seminar of Herbalife, they told us about the opportunities to go abroad for the conferences or seminars of the company. I was very interested in going abroad because actually I was making money from my former work at that time, but I was not happy. I have been always an idealist person, so I was wondering about other countries. I had never been on a plane in my life. I had never seen an airport at that time. And when they talked about overseas, I was very interested. I was complaining about my weight, but I joined Herbalife to be more energetic, to live a happier life, to live a more social life and to see the world rather than losing weight.”
(Participant 7)

“Direct selling gave me the opportunity to develop myself and learn more things. Now I have more self-confidence and I got divorced with my husband after I have become independent with this job. I have two children and I am taking care of them thanks to this job.” (Participant 1)

4.1.1. Healthy Lifestyle

Each participant has their own story to start with direct selling and has unique experiences in this job. Most of the participants enjoy their healthy lifestyle after they lost a lot of weight thanks to the products of their company. Especially some direct selling companies have specific products for losing weight or getting fit and shape. For

almost half of the participants, the reason why they started with direct selling is that they wanted to get fit or be healthier. To achieve this goal, they started to use the products of a direct selling company to lose weight. After that, when they experienced that they really liked the products and became healthy and lost a lot of weight thanks to the products, and then they started to recommend them to their friends because their friends were also willing to lose weight or live a healthier life. In this way, they have started to reach more and more people and also, they have seen that there is a possibility to earn money by selling products or sponsoring more people and building a team.

Below, there are some stories how they adapted a healthy lifestyle thanks to their direct selling jobs.

“The customers who use our products wake up more comfortable in the morning, they feel more energetic, for example, my friend and my customer lost five kilos in three weeks. Today she said she is so happy. She also said that she can wear some clothes that she was not able to wear them before.”(Participant 7)

“After using these products, your energy is increasing, you start feeling better and you get more self-confidence. These products make you feel great. And everyone starts recognizing that you have changed. They are asking how you can be so happy or energetic. They also notice that you lose weight and in this way you start recommending these products and this business.”(Participant 7)

“In this job I feel myself much better than before. I have more energy; I do not have migraine or any health problem anymore, because I have been eating healthy.”(Participant 9)

4.1.2. Flexible Hours

When you work as a sales representative in a direct selling company, you do not have any fixed time schedule for your job. It all depends on you. You work whenever and wherever you want to work. This attracts many housewives and other people to start a business with direct selling. On the other hand, even though it is very flexible, and you can adapt it to your daily life easily, it still requires a lot of time and effort to become a successful leader in this sector.

As following, Participant 2 and 10 stated how they enjoy the flexible timetable:

“Actually, working hours depends on me. If I have a big goal to achieve, I work for 12 hours in a day, because I love my job. But sometimes I do not work that much. As I told you, it depends on me and my mood. If I have something else to do on that day, I do not work.” (Participant 2)

“Of course, I love my job. I can do it in flexible hours. Nobody says anything to me. There is no fixed working time. I'm just working during my free time. I make money and I spend time at my house. I'm taking time for my kids. I work at night if I have something to do during the day. Everything depends on me in this job.” (Participant 2)

“As I said before, in a direct selling company there is no fixed time, so we do not have any timetable.” (Participant 10)

One of the advantages of direct selling is that time schedule is completely flexible, and you do not have to stay in an office to work all day. However, some of the participants said that they spend a lot of hours for their jobs because they have healthy nutrition offices and they work from their office. For instance, Participant 9 and Participant 5 have Herbalife (Direct selling company) offices and their weekly working hours are below:

“I work here every day from 7:30 to 13:00, except Sundays. I mean, I spend almost 36 hours in a week.” (Participant 9)

“I come to work every day except Sundays. I spend 40 hours for my job in a week.” (Participant 5)

On the other hand, the women who work part-time with a direct selling company spend less time because they consider it as a hobby. They describe their working time as the following:

“Sometimes I spend two hours a week; sometimes I spend five hours for three days. You may not have to work so long anyway. But if you have big goals, I think it's enough if you work three hours a day.” (Participant 3)

“I used to work full time and I was spending all my day for this, but now I just spend half an hour a day.” (Participant 8)

4.1.3. Business of their own

In a direct selling company, you are the boss of your own business and when you make enough effort, you can even have a big team and become a leader. This is also an attractive part of direct selling for people, who does not want to work under the rule of someone.

“I work here whenever I want to. I don't work if I don't want to or if I have something else to do. I am the boss of my own business.” (Participant 1)

“I am the boss here. Nobody asks me any questions. Nobody can give me orders to make me do something. We're the bosses of our own business. I give the orders to myself. If I say to myself that I should go to the meetings or I should prepare a presentation, then I do it on that day. Sometimes there are some problems in my teams, and I respond to them. I check how well they are doing. If you are a good leader, your team grows so fast. But not if you don't lead your team, then it does not grow. Our job is both easy and difficult. Your team can disappear so easily. You need to have the control all the time.”(Participant 2)

Participant 7, who has started working in a direct selling company after leaving her job in a public institution, expressed her thoughts:

“I am very satisfied with my work. I'm really glad. Probably one of the most accurate decisions of my life has been to join to direct selling network. If someone gives me a job at any official institution right now, in which I work full time on a table, I sincerely say that I would never accept it. Because after spending so much time with my current job, no one can keep me at a desk for 8 hours a day in that discipline of a principal. Because I am the boss of everything in my job and I feel so free. So I cannot get any orders from someone else anymore.” (Participant 7)

4.1.4. Awards

Direct selling companies offer so many awards to their business partners. With those awards, direct sellers get the opportunity to see new places, countries and get to know new people and cultures. Moreover, when they make their team bigger, they start getting more awards. This is a strategy of direct selling companies to motivate their business partners and keep them active in this sector.

“After I started using the products, I found out that I can also make money with these products. First I didn’t know it was a business. After one year, I started to consider it as a job. I tried. I spent some time on this. Even though I spent 2 hours a day, I started to succeed. I have started to get amazing holidays as an award from my company. I like it because I am rewarded for what I have done. I have started to see it as more business because I earn money and I get awards. ” (Participant 2)

“After starting to work in this sector, I found out that direct selling is a profession in which you can earn income. In this job, you can earn really good incomes with one effort of 100 people instead of 100 efforts of one person.” (Participant 1)

“Before I was just a primary school graduate and I had no job, but now I have become a business woman. I have become a shareholder of the company.”(Participant 2)

Below, P2 explains how getting rewards can encourage direct sellers to make their business bigger or even to keep it stable.

“I have been rewarded with a Mercedes car for 1 year. Now my goal is to keep that car at least for 2-3 years. In order to do that, I have to work hard for 3-4 months from now on. I also want to win some holidays abroad. These are my targets by January. Hopefully I will achieve them by January.” (Participant 2)

4.1.5. Unlimited Income

Another opportunity that direct selling companies offer to their business partners is unlimited income. Direct sellers can always increase the amount of their salary; it only depends on them, their performance and their team-work. This is also a great motivation for direct sellers to set bigger goals and to work hard to reach them.

Participant 10 is working as a teacher in a government school and she reveals that the income that she can get from direct selling is unlimited. The more you make effort, the more income you get. It is an incredible opportunity of direct selling when it is compared with other jobs.

“Now my income is a certain amount with my current profession. I want to get more income. I know that it is not possible to get an income of 20-50 thousand Turkish

Liras per month with a work in which I work from eight in the morning until five in the afternoon. The only way to achieve this is through the direct selling.” (Participant 10)

In addition, direct selling companies offer an unlimited salary, which makes people to have bigger goals and makes them work harder to achieve them. Most of the participants have big goals about their future salaries. For example;

“We do not have any limits for our income. The more I work, the more I earn. I have big goals. I want to earn 50.000-100.000 Turkish Liras per month.” (Participant 1)

“In my dreams, I want to do this job as long as I am alive and I want to get monthly 2 million dollars income. (Participant 7)”

“I do not limit myself about the income. If the leaders in my company earn 200.000 Turkish Liras in a month, I also want to earn that.” (Participant 9)

4.1.6. Self-development

One of the benefits of direct selling is that it helps people to improve themselves and to have more self-confidence. Direct selling companies provide self-development courses online or as a meeting for their business partners. Self-development is crucial for them to be able to build a team and manage it.

Participant 4, P7, P9 and P2 expressed also their thoughts about how direct selling has improved them.

“And one of the best things about the direct selling is that you develop yourself very well. I always say it to my friends and all my representatives around me. One of the best things that direct selling has taught me is to read. I have started reading personal development books. Normally, I liked reading a lot but I could never make time for it. I was mostly spending my days drinking coffee with my friends but right now, I'm listening to the conversations of successful networkers (direct selling business leaders) from the world. In this way, I learned to improve myself. I believe that this job teaches people to improve themselves.”(Participant 4)

“I always wanted to visit different places. I wanted to improve myself. Even though I am graduated from university, I did not have the habit of reading books. After I joined to my direct selling company, I have gained the habit of reading books. Also, I

started to drive the car. After my 40's, I have learned how to drive. This job opened my eyes to the world.” (Participant 7)

“We have online seminars. And we also go to the meetings in different cities. I am so happy to have these seminars in my life. Thanks to these seminars, I have changed and improved myself a lot. I am primary school graduate and I was grown in a village. But now I am totally a different person than before.” (Participant 9)

“I am a primary school graduate, but thanks to Farmasi, I have improved myself. I can do anything now. I'm self-confident.” (Participant 2)

4.1.7. Socialization

Except from self-development, direct selling helps people to socialize and get to know more people. Participant 4 and P7 explain how they have had so many friends thanks to their job:

“I can say that I have many friends in many cities of Turkey, with whom I haven't met face to face yet, but we have a great friendship and we are connected with each other with bonds of love. And we have this love without seeing each other. Without seeing each other, we have become brothers and sisters. This is a bond of heart and this is really a work that you do with all of your heart and love.” (Participant 4)

“I actually joined in this direct selling company to socialize. Thanks to my job, I have had many friends. Now, I have so many close friends everywhere in Turkey. I am so happy to have so many friends. Our purpose in life is to be happy. And I have found what I was looking for with this job.” (Participant 7)

“Sometimes we really have fun in this healthy nutrition Office. Sometimes we do sport together in the morning. Sometimes we dance here. This is a great place to socialize. Everyone talks to each other and gets to know each other. Many people make friends here. We have many positive and funny people around us.”(Participant 7)

4.2. Balance between Family and Work

Direct selling is popular with having a flexible working time. However, it is still important to question if the participants can make time for their family while working as a business partner in a direct selling company.

At the beginning of this job, it might be difficult or tiring to build a team for direct sellers. If they want to grow fast, they should build their team and manage it. During this time, some of the participants stated that it was hard for them to have the balance between their work and family. On the other hand, the others can definitely make time for their work and family. Below, there are some examples from interviewees, who think that they can make time for their family:

“I can definitely make time for my family in this job. I spend more time with the people I love. Actually, that's the only reason I work in this job. I work like this to spend more time with people I love.” (Participant 6)

“Of course, I can make time for my family. If I had worked in a specific job with a time schedule, I would have been working from 8 am to 5 pm and my income would be limited.” (Participant 1)

Participant 10, P4 and P9 claimed how they struggled to balance the time for their family and work when they started working for the first time:

“So, if you have a goal in this sector and you want to achieve that goal, you should work until you succeed it. Inevitably, I could not make time for my family so much. In other words, it was like that until I built a good team for my business. At the beginning, the people who will join to your team are new and the products as well. First, I needed to learn about the company and the products so that I could answer if my team has any questions. But after training my team, now I do not get tired as much as at the beginning. Right now, I always have enough time for my family.” (Participant 10)

“Actually, at the beginning I could not make time for them. But it takes almost 2-2.5 months for this job to make a team and everything falls into place after that. However, it obviously depends on your performance to make and train that team. If you are making an effort and your team grows every day, or if you have a strategy, the team will be ready in 2-2.5 months. After making that team, you have plenty of time for your family and children.” (Participant 4)

“We had some trouble at first. I can be honest with you about this; I am a housewife and a mother of two children. I decided to start to this job by myself. Yes, I said I'm going to lose weight and do this job, but my husband did not support me at the

beginning. He did not accept me to work in this job. He refused it and he told me not to expect any support from him. He said if you want to do it, you have to do everything by yourself. So there was no support from his side. Where there was no support, of course there was a shackle. But it is better now. It was harder at the beginning, now it is better.” (Participant 9)

4.3. Womanhood as an Advantage

As it is discussed in the literature review, gender gap at work and in many different areas has been always a big issue in all over the world. Since this subject has an important place in this study, it should be questioned how women in direct selling sector feel themselves.

It is significant to point out that women use their womanhood as an advantage to sell the products or build their teams. Below, there are some examples from the experiences of the interviewees:

“There are so many advantages of being woman, of course. Generally, it does not matter if you sell the products to a man or woman, because these products are for anyone and as a woman I can sell them to anyone easily.” (Participant 10)

“Of course, there are advantages for women, because we usually sell products to women, and we have a higher ability to convince them. We can also sell anything to a man very easily. Men do not usually want to refuse women, when we try to sell something.” (Participant 3)

“No matter how self-confident a man is, in our culture it is strange when a man approaches the woman to sell the products. But we're more comfortable among women. We are experiencing this advantage. I can introduce a product to a man directly. That's why it's more advantageous for me to be a woman.” (Participant 6)

4.4. Challenges of Working as a Woman

First of all, working as a woman is already difficult in many parts of the world. Since these participants are working in a small city of Turkey, they feel the social pressure and they also try to keep being a good mother and wife while working in this job. Here, the motherhood and social expectations play an important role and it becomes

an obstacle for them to achieve their goals. Below, we can see how these disadvantages affect their working life:

“Of course, there are also some disadvantages. As a woman in Turkey, you cannot go alone anywhere at any time during the night. For example, sometimes I have to hold a meeting. Since most of the people are working during the day, some meetings have to be in the evening to introduce this job to others. Men are more comfortable about this. And I'm having trouble because I don't know how to drive. My husband has to bring me. He may not have time because of his job. These are common problems for women.” (Participant 3)

“We experience some disadvantages, but we have learned how to deal with them. Maybe in developed countries women do not experience such things but in Turkey unfortunately we do. But as I said, we learned to deal with it.” (Participant 1)

“Let me just tell you this disadvantage. I'm a mother; you know if you have children, it means you have a responsibility. I cannot go anywhere as freely as a man. That's why my job is getting bigger slowly. If we were doing this with my husband or if I could be free like a man and go anywhere for my job, I could have grown my business more easily. In this case, I am doing my job in limited conditions. So I cannot meet so many people because I cannot go to the meetings so much. And I do not have any support from my family. The secret of being successful in this job is to meet with many people and to introduce this opportunity to more people. It is all about how many people you have reached. The more you have changed the lives of people, the more your business grows. However, I do not get that chance. I am a little more restricted.” (Participant 5)

4.5. Direct Selling as a Profession

As a main subject of this study, it should be analyzed if women in direct selling sector consider their work as a profession or not. The answers of participants revealed that most of the women who work full-time in a direct selling company consider it as a profession. However, those who work part-time or already have a job do not consider it as their profession.

“Yes, I consider direct selling as my profession. If you do not consider it as your profession, you cannot do it and become a leader. You should really love what you are doing.” (Participant 3)

“Yes, it is my only job, my only profession.” (Participant 6)

Contrast to these answers, P10 and P8 claimed that they do not consider direct selling as their profession. And below, they explain their reasons for this:

“I consider it as a hobby. I already have a profession. I'm a physical education teacher. You know, I can't just leave my own job and go with direct selling. Direct selling is a hobby that I do along with my profession.” (Participant 10)

Interviewer: “Can direct selling become a profession for you?”

P10: “It could be. If you don't have a job, for example, if you're a housewife, it could be your profession and you could make a lot of money. But I already have a profession.”

“I do not consider direct selling as my profession. I used to consider it because it was a source of income for me. I was willing to do it. However, now I cannot keep doing it. I am not willing to do it anymore. But as I said, people should really need that job to become successful. If a person needs it, he or she considers it as a profession.” (Participant 8)

From the answers of P10 and P8, it is possible to conclude that getting income is a great reason to consider direct selling as a profession. On the other hand, there are still other participants, who consider it as a profession because direct selling makes them feel happy. And feeling happy is more important than getting income for them. For example, Participant 6 states why she considers direct selling as a profession:

“The criterion to accept it as my profession is that it makes me happy. Because I was also happy in my prior job and I worked nine years. I was earning very little. But I was very happy. I am doing this also because I feel happy. It does not matter for me how much I earn from this job, it is not a problem at all, as long as I am happy here.” (Participant 6)

On the other hand, some of the answers from interviewees suggest that direct selling is not suitable for men or men do not consider it as a profession. According to these answers, female direct sellers accept that direct selling is a pink-collar profession and men do not fit in with this job. Below, the answers of P10, P2 and P8 show us their opinion about male direct sellers.

“There are two men in my team, the rest are all women. Usually men have already a profession and do not consider this job as a profession. Actually, it would be good if men do this job. A male leader in my team already does it very well. But there are mostly women. I think this job is more suitable for women.” (Participant 10)

“We have a male leader and he will become a manager soon. Men can do this job better actually, but they do not consider it as their profession.” (Participant 2)

“99 percent of the people in this sector are women. It is not so possible to see men in this job. They usually say that their wife sells, and they help. They can't express themselves as good as women. It's not a job for men”. (Participant 8)

According to the answers of these participants, it can be seen that most of them consider direct selling as a profession. However, the meaning of the profession in the literature is very different than what female direct sellers think. Below, (see Table 4.1.) the table shows the difference between the criteria for professionalization and the criteria for female direct sellers to consider a job as a profession.

Table 4.1.: *Criteria for Professionalization vs. Criteria for Female Direct Sellers*

Criteria for Professionalization (Abbott, 1988)	Criteria for Female Direct Sellers
Having governmentally sponsored licensing legislation	Earning money
Having professional association and examination	Being happy in their job
Having ethics codes	Working full-time
Being an expert in that field (with a university education)	No qualifications to become a direct seller

Direct selling companies are working a lot to make the direct selling called as a profession. For instance, in every country there is an association for direct selling

companies and they try to educate their business partners to make them expert in their products and direct selling. However, the participants claim that everyone can work as a direct seller and no qualification or education needed for this job. For this reason, direct selling can be considered as a pseudo-profession.

4.5.1. Men for Management, Women for Selling

Above, some of the participants claimed that direct selling is not suitable for men and they do not consider direct selling as a profession. In spite of this view, the other participants state that men are more successful in managing the team and when they build a team, they become leaders in this sector.

“Many of my female friends are doing this job right now. But it is very interesting that the biggest success in the cosmetic company is achieved by male leaders. There are many men in the cosmetics industry that I know very well and work with. Sometimes it sounds different. Sometimes people say how a man can sell a lipstick or makeup product they are not on the marketing side of this business; they are on the side of team building and leadership. Men can also form teams for women very well. Especially if they are intelligent and good at selecting the right people for their team or if they have such a vision or something, men can do it really well.”(Participant 4)

“Of course women are the majority in this sector, but when men get into this job they can reach higher positions. They are able to get more income and become leaders.”(Participant 3)

“Actually men can do this job better but they do not care about it. There are many successful male direct sellers in this sector. For example, the third most successful leader of our company is a man. He earns millions.”

At this point, although direct selling is usually considered as a “female job”, it is very interesting to see so many men in the highest positions in most of the direct selling companies. For example, P7 explained that she has mostly women in her team, because she usually contacts with women and they keep recommending this job to each other. In this way, she is getting more and more women in her team. On the other hand, she added:

“When we look at the leaders who work in a direct selling company in all over the world and Turkey, these leaders are mostly men or husband and wife work together as a couple.” (Participant 7)

4.6. Lifetime Happiness for Everyone

4.6.1. A lifetime job for everyone

There is such a perception in public that women who work in direct selling companies are mostly housewives. However, most of the participants disagree with this general perception in public. Some of them described the people who work around them in this sector as the following:

“When I look at my team, there are housewives and also university graduates. There are workers, students or some people who do this job part-time. There are other people who are single and have no jobs. Everybody can work in a direct selling company. When I look at the people who have built a team very fast and have a high position in Turkey, they are usually willing to improve themselves or they have already some experience. And the people who have some reasons to do this job can grow so easily. If you have a reason, you work hard for it until you achieve it.” (Participant 7)

“Everybody can work in this job. As I said, I have over 300 members. Among them, there are housewives, doctors, lawyers and teachers. For example, since we are in Soma, there are many workers from mine who work this as part-time job. Everyone is doing it because as I said, our priority is to believe in our products and use them. There is no other specific condition to do this job.” (Participant 1)

“I can say that there are many housewives but we have also some members who are nurses or doctors. Nowadays they lean towards direct selling and they have started to work part-time, because we can make more money than they earn. They started to make an additional contribution to their family.” (Participant 2)

“I think anyone can work in direct selling sector very easily, because these people do not have any inherent skills to do this job. Anyone who is self-confident or has reason to work can do this job. No one needs a special talent.” (Participant 1)

Most of the direct selling companies offer their business partners the opportunity to leave their job to their children, in case something happens to them or they are not

able to work anymore. This is a good strategy to appeal more people to this sector and especially women would like to leave their job to their children. For example; some of the participants also indicated that they consider their job as a lifetime job and also a heritage to their children. Below, there are some quotations from the interviews:

“I will never lose my job. And I can also leave it to my children.” (Participant 2)

“Herbalife became my lifestyle. I will be doing this job for the rest of my life. And in the end, I have the opportunity to inherit this job to my children. I have a daughter and a son. When one of them wants to continue my business, I will transfer my license to them. I will hand them over when I don't want to work anymore. The reason I want to do this is to guarantee at least one of my children's lives. And he or she will get a job thanks to me. My son could not find a job yet. My daughter is starting a new university and will study to be a dietitian. When she becomes a dietitian, she will already have a very close relation with this profession. She can maintain Herbalife as a dietitian. This is my target.”(Participant 7)

4.6.2. Changing the lives of others

With direct selling, many people's lives change in a positive way. The reason behind this is that those women who were housewives before start earning money and getting more self-confidence and being independent. As a result of that, they become happier with themselves and with their job. Usually when they are happy thanks to this job, they want to share this happiness with others and make the others happy also. Most of the participants noted that making people happy with this job motivates them more to keep doing it.

For example; below Participant 9, P6 and P1 explain how some things have changed in their lives after starting with direct selling:

“One of the most important reasons why I am doing this job is to make people happy. When you make people happy, that happiness reflects you as well. I enjoy my work, because both parts are happy. It is said that you will receive whatever you give. I want to be happy, for this reason I make people happy first.” (Participant 9)

“I do my best to make everyone happy because in this way I'm also happy. And with this job I learned to make myself happy. I have totally changed from an unhappy woman to happy woman thanks to this job.” (Participant 9)

“And in Herbalife, I have seen how a bad life slowly changes and transforms into a happy life with smiling faces. That makes me love my job more. So what I do most fondly in my life is to help people. And I can do this in Herbalife. Here, I am definitely changing the lives of others. Because someone also helped me and changed my life.”(Participant 6)

“I love my job so much. Because, as I said before in any other profession, you usually work just to earn money, or you just try to spend all your day to get that money at the end. However, here with my current job, I change many people's lives and make them healthier and happier.”(Participant 1)

4.6.3. Qualifications for direct selling

In the consent and information form, it has been asked to give information about their education level of the participants. According to the forms, half of the participants (P1, P2, P5, P5, P6, and P9) are primary school graduate, P3 is high school graduate, P8 has associate degree diploma and P10, P4, P7 have bachelor's degree. Six of them were housewives before starting their business with direct selling. However, for example, P3 still calls herself as a housewife and she is doing this job as a hobby.

For the interviews, a variety of women with different education levels have been chosen. And it is important to question if their education level affects their job or if there should be any qualifications for direct sellers. Some of the participants indicated that there are no specific qualifications to work in direct selling sector. On the other hand, others were opposed to this idea and they specified some qualifications for this job. Below, the opinions of the participants about this theme are stated:

“In fact, you should not look for any qualifications. Because you will never know who can do this and who can't. At the beginning of this job, I was trying to choose some people for my team but many other people surprised me with their success. Sometimes I said I don't think this woman or man can become successful in this job. However, that person achieved his / her goals and became very successful. And sometimes a person, with whom I worked a lot for many months, leaves my team without saying anything. So it is not certain who will do this job and who will not do it. You can only understand it by asking these questions: Does he/she really want this job? Does he/she love it? Does

he/she use his product? Is he/she in love with his/her work? I mean, these questions are very important.”(Participant 4)

“There is no specific qualification for this job. Even an illiterate person can do it.” (Participant 10)

“Some people just use products, some of them consider it as a business and they get income, and some people do it for a healthier life. But there is no qualification that we are looking for. Everyone can do it very easily. I'm a primary school graduate and I do it.” (Participant 6)

“People can work in every job as long as they need it. If people need to earn money, they learn how to talk, or print the catalogs. People, who do not need that money, not get into this job anyway. Even if someone is very talkative but do not want to do this job, cannot become a leader.” (Participant 8)

“At the beginning of this job I thought that some qualifications were needed for this job. In other words, I thought that being talkative or having a high financial situation to buy a lot of products was important, but I realized that I was wrong. Because even very some people that you don't expect that success, even primary school graduates can make incredible sales, have incredible goals and reach them.”(Participant 3)

On the other side, P2 and P7 have different opinions about the required qualifications for direct selling sector. Below, we can see their answers:

“Of course, some qualifications are needed for this job. Not everyone can become a leader. Leadership is not that easy. You have to control and manage your team; you should be there any time when your team needs your help or support. You should never tell your team that you cannot do that or cannot help them. For this reason, you should get some training and teach them also. After that training, you will be able to manage your team better.” (Participant 2)

“Now everyone can be a member of Herbalife, everyone can use our products, but of course, you must be open to self-development to be able to do this as a business. You must be willing to learn and improve yourself. And of course you should have some reasons to do this. People who do not have the ability to sell anything cannot do it. First

you should learn how to sell the products. Also you have to get some communication skills. It is not possible to do this job if you do not have communication skills. Our job is all about communication.” (Participant 7)

4.7. Summary of Analysis

As a summary of this analysis, there are some points to put emphasis on. The reasons to start working with a direct selling company are mostly the same for most of the participants. They wanted to have a healthy life or they really liked the products of the company that they used for some time and when they started recommending those products to others, they have seen that they can actually consider it as a business and they can get an income at the end. For sure, they are all satisfied with what they are doing right now, because they have a healthier or happier life than before they started, and also the ones who were just housewives before have become independent business women. Therefore, it is obvious that direct selling has a positive effect on women’s life and the way of living their life has changed after this job. In face-to-face interviews, it was possible to see the light in their eyes and happiness on their faces. They have more self-confidence and they really believe in themselves thanks to the self-development seminars that they get every month from the direct selling companies.

Most of the women prefer this job because of its flexible working hours. The interviewees also stated that they can work whenever or wherever they want and they can make time for their friends or family while working. Flexibility of direct selling is indicated as the best thing of this job according to the participants. In addition to this, the admiration and gifts which are given by their companies for their success make the women work harder to reach their goals and those gifts really encourage them to get higher positions and build a bigger team.

Eight of the participants indicated that they consider their job as a profession and they are trying to do anything to improve themselves in this sector. However, when the men enter to this business, they usually become more successful than women. About this situation, some participants said that they do not have so much freedom as male sales representatives do. As a disadvantage of working as a woman in direct selling sector, the women remarked that some of them cannot go to the meetings alone in the evenings or their husbands do not let them attend to the meetings in another city for the weekend. As a woman, they have also more responsibility for their children and in

Turkey, especially in small cities it is still not common that women work and make more money than their husbands.

5. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1. Conclusion of the Study and Discussion

The goal of this study is to investigate if the women who work in direct selling sector in Turkey consider their job as a profession and also to find out if female direct sales representatives are among the pink-collar workers or not. In order to come to a conclusion for this study, related literature review has been made and qualitative research method has been chosen in addition to the conducted semi-structured interviews with ten female sales representatives from different direct selling companies in Turkey. Empirical data which is provided by the semi-structured interviews have been analyzed in detail in chapter 4.

One of the main questions of this study is to what extent female sales consultants of a direct selling company consider their job as a profession. However, after the interviews it was obvious that the more important question is under which circumstances they can consider it as their profession. “The information gained from analysis of the preliminary data collection leads to better understanding of the situation and helps to determine what further data collection is required.”(Walliman, 2011, p. 128)Preliminary analysis of the empirical material revealed that the women who work full-time with a planned schedule in direct selling industry consider their job as a profession and they work hard with their sales team for their future goals. Moreover, they are mostly satisfied with their job and proud of themselves and their success. Even though the participants consider it as their profession, there are some conditions in which they can consider it as a profession. For example; most of them indicated the reason why they consider direct selling as their profession is that they do not find their job boring and they have the chance to change other people’s lives with this job, they are happier and they also keep changing their lives. In addition to this, they make money with their business and also make time for their family. These are the essential reasons for them to keep doing this job.

Despite of the fact that this job looks very easy and it can be done by anyone, it requires a lot of patience and effort until you can build a team and make a business from it. There might be many negative sides of direct selling which make people give up easily at the beginning. For instance; it is not certain if their work is permanent or not until they have a strong team and the amount of their income might change every month

depending on how much they work. Nevertheless, this might be a challenge for people to work harder and build their team in a better way. The interviewees also stated that there are so many people especially young ones who give up just after some time they start to this job. The reason behind this is that nowadays young people want to earn income in an easier way and direct selling looks like a good option for that but because they are not so patient and they want to get lot of money in a short time, they give up easily. It should be noted that in direct selling industry, it takes time until you get a higher position in the company and get a high income. In short, direct selling can be a good profession for women in Turkey and they can really become a business woman, as long as they do not give up until they have a strong team.

On the other hand, the women who work part-time or as a hobby do not consider direct selling as a profession, because they do not spend so much time for it and do not get so much salary to be able to afford their life. Another disadvantage for them is that it depends on only how much they or their team work for that month. The sales consultants have to be so planned with their team that they can guarantee an income for every month. In order to achieve that, they have to be ambitious and determined about their goals. Therefore, the possibility to make direct selling a profession depends on the sales consultants' performance and willingness.

Another significant point for this study is that if direct selling should be considered as pink labor because of the high number of women who work in this sector. As it is also stated in the survey report 2018 of SELDIA, 88% percent of sales consultants working in direct selling industry are women and only 12% is men.(SELDIA, 2018) It is obvious that women dominate direct selling industry and for this reason it can be said that direct selling is a part of pink labor.

However, most of the men who work in this sector get higher positions as team leaders and they do not sell the products, but they manage their team to become more successful. Also, in the interviews, some of the participants indicated that there are not so many men in their team, but when they look at the best leaders of their company in the monthly meetings of the company, they usually see male business partners. It is possible to think that men build a team of female sales consultants and manage them in a good way to make this their business. Since women are good at contacting with people and selling the products which are mostly about wellness, cosmetics and make-

up or household, it is a reasonable strategy for men to build a female sales consultants team to make progress in this business. This means that while direct selling is a part of pink labor, it also has glass ceiling effect because of many male team leaders in direct selling companies.

The reason why it is more difficult to become a team leader for women might be the responsibility of their children and housework. In the interviews, most of the participants stated that the disadvantage of working as a woman is that they cannot go to every meeting during the evenings or weekends because of their husband or children. Similarly, they cannot go to some of the holidays that provided by the direct selling company for the sales consultants. It means that there are still some obstacles for women that withhold them to walk on the path to the success.

In the literature, it is possible to see the similar examples from all over the world. Casanova (2011) conducted some interviews with people who work in direct selling sector in Ecuador and she found out that it is possible to see the men's involvement in this sector with three different perspectives. These are men as opposers, supporters and drivers. Opposers are the ones who do not approve their wife's work and act as an obstacle to their selling and business. There are supporters, who "silently tolerate their wife's work as well as those who help out a bit, taking catalogs to work with them or making bank deposits to cover orders. "Lastly, there are some men called 'the drivers', who actively sell and grow the business, either in partnership with a woman who is officially enrolled in the sales force, or on their own, using a woman's name and contact information while she remains inactive. However, the oppositional husband is considered as a common enemy and an almost mythical figure capable of making or breaking a woman's income-earning potential. As it is seen in direct selling, "most men adopt an oppositional or a supportive stance toward their wives' direct selling work, or a combination of these behaviors."(Casanova, 2011)

On the other hand, as the best advantage of this job for most of the women who work in this sector is its flexibility. Even though some women complain that they cannot get higher positions because of their responsibility for housework and children, the others like that they can make time both for their children and their work in direct selling. In the interviews, the participants also specified that as the best thing of their work. Moreover, in the literature Mullaney and Shope (2012) stated about the flexibility

and sense of motherhood. “Direct selling is a great opportunity for sales consultants because while working in this job, they can have enough time for their children and also get a much-needed break from the demands of home and children.”(Mullaney & Shope, 2012)

It can be said that there are some factors, which make professionalization of direct selling difficult for women. These might be the view of society to the direct selling or people do not take this job seriously. Another reason might be the instability of sales consultants to achieve their goals. Usually people give up on their goals before they make an effort to success. However, it is obvious that there are so many people who consider direct selling as their profession and so many women who call themselves business woman thanks to this job.

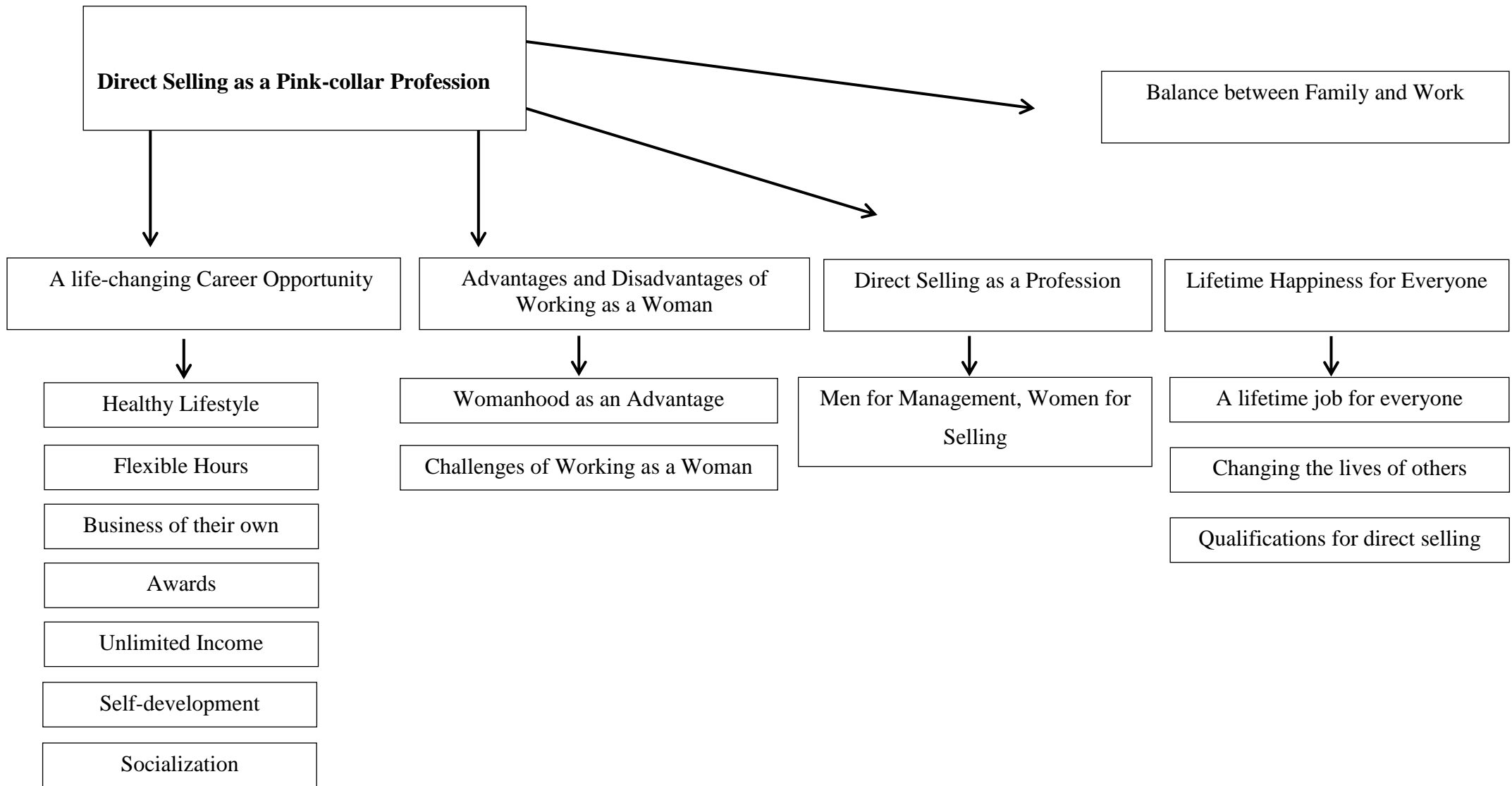
In conclusion, direct selling is expected to be a profession for women who work hard for their goals, but when we look at the big direct selling companies, men are progressing easier in their career. On the other hand, women get stuck in a non-professional job. And it means that direct selling becomes a pink labor job for women.

5.2. Suggestions for further research

As suggestions for the further studies, there could be another research from the perspectives of male sales representatives. This study depends on the opinions of women and the purpose is to find out if direct selling can become a profession for them. But what about the men who work in this sector. Do they really consider it as a profession? What is the secret of becoming a male team leader in this sector? With such kind of questions, another research could be very interesting to compare the results with this study.

It would be also better to make a sweeping statement if there were more participants for this study. The number of the participants for the interview is a limitation and this number can be increased in a further research. Moreover, the main methods which are used to sell products to the existing customers and to get in touch with potential customers could be asked also to find out which channels the female sales consultants use already or need to use more. Below, there is a figure (Figure 5.1.) which explains the relation between main themes of this study.

Figure 5.1.: Direct Selling as a Pink-collar Profession



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APPENDIX 1:
INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

This study is a description of the professionalization of direct selling. The study is carried out by a graduate student Ayşe Gizem Güneş under the supervision of Dr. Ozan Ağılgöz in Anadolu University, Institute of Social Sciences.

- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- Face-to-face interviews are conducted with the participants within the scope of the study and these interviews will be recorded with your permission.
- The information of the participants will be kept confidential throughout the research process.
- The data obtained within the scope of the research shall be used for scientific purposes only and shall not be used for purposes other than the purpose of the research.
- A copy of interview record can be shared with you if you wish.

If you have any questions or requests during the data collection process, you can share them with me. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason during your participation, you can leave the interview at any time. If you leave the interview, the data obtained from you will not be used and be deleted immediately. Thank you for taking the time to read and evaluate the information and consent form.

Researcher: Ayşe Gizem Güneş

Participant;

Name and Surname:

Date of Birth:

Education: Master / Bachelor / High School / Primary School

Work Status: Working / Not Working - Part time / Full time

Average Revenue:

I participate in this study voluntarily, knowing that I can leave the study if I wish, and agree that the information I provide will be recorded and used for scientific purposes.

Participant's Name - Surname:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 2:

Interview Questions

1. What was your to begin this work?

- Providing a regular salary
- Making use of your spare time
- Did you start working part-time or full-time?

2. Can you tell us one of your work days?

- How long have been working in this job?
- How much time do you spend for your work in a week?
- Can you have enough time for your family while working?

3. Did you have any education before you started working? Do you still have education?

- Seminars, contact meetings etc.
- Do you have any certificate or diploma?
- Do you have educations regularly?
- Did you become a member of any place for his job?
- What did you study in the university?

4. Are there any qualifications for this job? If there are, what are they?

- Being talkative, having a high ability of persuasion, having a lot of friends etc.

5. Have you got any goals for this job? If you have, what are they?

- Until when do you plan to do this job?
- How much income do you expect from this job?
- Are you glad that you are in this job?

6. Do you consider this job that you are doing as a profession?

- What does a profession mean for you?
- What are your criterions to accept this job as your profession?
- Have you got another profession?

- Did you work in another job before?

7. Who are the people who work in this job around you? Mostly women or men?

- Are the products which are sold mostly for women or not?
- Can you describe the people who do this job around you? (Housewives, students etc.)

8. Do you have any advantage or disadvantage of being a woman while working in this job?

- If you experience any, can you tell us? Advantages / Disadvantages.

9. How do you see the future of direct selling?

- Can direct selling become a profession which provides good and easy source of income?
- Can the usage of social media affect direct selling in any way?

