

## The Mediating Role of Job Stress in the Effect of Glass Ceiling Syndrome on Turnover Intention on Nurses

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Keywords:</b> Glass Ceiling Syndrome Turnover Intention Job Stress Career Barriers	<b>Purpose</b> – This study aims to determine the mediating role of job stress in the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on the turnover intention of nurses in health institutions. In the literature, there are a limited number of studies examining the relationship between glass ceiling syndrome, turnover intention, and job stress in the sample of nurses in health services. Incorporating research within the private health sector in Turkey and incorporating job stress as a mediating variable adds a unique and original dimension to the study.
Received 3 July 2024 Revised 27 October 2024 Accepted 5 November 2024	<b>Design/methodology/approach</b> – A cross-sectional research design was used in the study. A questionnaire was administered to 304 nurses in two private hospitals in Turkey. Descriptive statistical techniques, difference analysis, Pearson correlation analysis, and the PROCESS macro Model 4 were employed in the regression analysis.
<b>Article Classification:</b> Research Article	<b>Results</b> – Glass ceiling syndrome has a positive effect on turnover intention. Moreover, this positive effect increases when job stress is used as a mediating variable. In other words, job stress has a mediating effect on the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention.
	<b>Discussion</b> – The glass ceiling syndrome and job stress experienced by nurses lead to turnover intention. The health institutions must improve working conditions and eliminate factors that lead to work stress. In particular, the barriers to nurses' career goals must be eliminated and they should be allowed to take part in management positions.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From the past to the present, women have made significant contributions to economic life with their active roles in fulfilling domestic responsibilities and in business life. Although the active role of women in business life is accepted, the fact that they remain between the expectations of their families and their duties at work shows that they face significant obstacles in their career progression. In other words, it reveals that they are exposed to glass ceiling syndrome. In this respect, it is possible to define the glass ceiling syndrome as the artificial and tangible invisible obstacles in the organizational structure that women or disadvantaged groups face in their career paths to advance in business life (Akdemir and Duman, 2017). The problems women face in business life cause a loss of motivation and dissatisfaction. This situation is seen as a factor in their intention to quit their jobs or end their working life (Soysal and Baynal, 2016). Therefore, it is assumed that the service obligation and the necessity of human-oriented work in the health sector with a high density of female employees, the work stress caused by the workload, and the obstacles women face in their career progression lead to turnover intentions.

The research topic is the mediating role of job stress on the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on female healthcare professionals' intention to stay or leave their jobs in private hospitals. In this framework, the study aims to reveal the glass ceiling perceptions of female employees working in the health sector, determine the effect of these employees' glass ceiling perception levels on turnover intention, and investigate whether job stress plays a mediating role in this effect. The limitations of the study are restricted to private hospitals operating in a province in Turkey. This situation has reduced the population of the research and it is only a study in the field of private hospitals. It does not cover all private health institutions in Turkey. In addition,

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this study addresses only female employees, not all employees in hospitals. This situation prevents the generalization of the results we will obtain from the findings to cover all employees.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The fact that women are given fewer duties and responsibilities in working life, especially at managerial levels, indicates that women in Turkey are exposed to glass ceiling syndrome more than male employees in management and represent fewer leadership positions. According to the 170-country Gender Equality in Public Administration Report, women make up 46% of public administrators, but only 31% in leadership positions and 30% in senior management positions. In Turkey, 22 percent of public managers, 8 percent of senior managers, and only 8 percent of senior leaders are women (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). According to 2023 data, the employment rate of women is 31.8% (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2023). However, female employees in managerial positions remain at approximately 10% (Arslan, 2017; Tunç, 2016).

On the other hand, there are more female employees, especially in the health sector. However, they are not sufficiently involved in top management levels nor sufficiently supported by organizational policies in a male-dominated society. However, cultural norms, stereotypical social rules, business policies, and practices affect women's exposure to glass ceiling syndrome. At the same time, individual factors are also effective in this process. It is thought that social and individual barriers also have an impact on women's job satisfaction, and this may be reflected in business processes (Akpınar-Sposito, 2013; İpçioğlu et al., 2018; Soysal et al., 2016).

There are research findings in the literature about women experiencing glass ceiling syndrome by being exposed to career barriers (Hoşgör et al., 2016; Kolade & Kehinde, 2013; Soysal et al., 2016). However, it has also been observed that this syndrome does not only occur in women; men are also affected by this syndrome, there is no gender-based difference, and they are exposed to glass ceiling syndrome while progressing on their career path (Can et al., 2018; İpçioğlu et al., 2018; Özyer et al., 2014).

On the other hand, turnover intention is a situation that emerges as the employee's decision to leave the job and the employer voluntarily, in addition to negative attitudes and behaviors in the work environment. It also refers to the possibility that the employee is considering quitting and turning to alternative job opportunities (Mobley, 1977; Tepper et al., 2009). In organizations where glass ceiling syndrome is experienced, stereotypes, role conflicts, management practices, lack of a framework, and problems in the communication network can be encountered. In addition, organizational functions, culture, and climate are among the obstacles listed in general. As a result of these deficiencies, the performance of female managers and female employees who want to advance in their careers may decrease, and the intention to leave the job may arise (Sökmen & Akar Şahingöz, 2017).

The conditions of business life and the pressures caused by these conditions make the business life of employees difficult, and job stress becomes inevitable due to increasing pressure. As a result of job stress, employees may intend to quit their jobs, which may cause negative individual and organizational consequences. In addition to physical and psychological problems in employees, organizational performance and productivity may decrease. Within the framework of the relationship between glass ceiling syndrome and turnover intention and the relationship between job stress and turnover intention (Öztürk & Şahverdioğlu, 2019; Sökmen & Akar Şahingöz, 2017), this study is positioned in the context of these three variables.

Health services is a professional field that involves stress due to the workload and responsibility it requires, and has problems that may cause some organizational and individual negativities. Today, it is seen that in addition to the health problems that occur in individuals, deterioration in organizational health is also observed, and negativities occur in the functioning of the organization. One of the reasons underlying this negative picture is job stress (Çelik & Turunç, 2009; Çil Koçyiğit et al., 2010). As in most professional groups, women in health services can encounter career barriers in the working process. For this reason, female healthcare workers are thought to be exposed to glass ceiling syndrome (Hoşgör et al., 2016).

Glass ceiling syndrome is defined in the literature as a career barrier, especially for female employees (Fathy & Youssif, 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Müldür & Karaca, 2022; Orhan, 2015; Yıldız, 2014). Glass ceiling syndrome is related to various individual and organizational factors as well as turnover intention and job stress. In other words, it is thought that job stress and turnover intention emerge in female employees due to glass ceiling

syndrome. Table 1 summarizes the literature on glass ceiling syndrome, turnover intention, and job stress variables in the sample of female employees. The literature shows that these variables are related to different variables, such as entrepreneurship, leadership, job satisfaction, motivation, organizational justice, and emotional intelligence. There is no study addressing all three variables together. On the other hand, studies on women's career barriers in health services in Turkey, where female employees are concentrated, are also limited (Akca et al., 2022; Çankaya & Çiftçi, 2022; Hoşgör et al., 2016; Kara, 2019; Müldür & Karaca, 2022). In this framework, the main purpose of this study is to determine the mediating role of job stress in the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention in nurses.

**Table 1.** The literature on glass ceiling syndrome, turnover intention, and job stress in female employees' sample

Year	Author	Title	Subject*	Result
2005	Pamela Kephart, Lillian Schumacher	"Has the 'glass ceiling' cracked? An exploration of women entrepreneurship"	GCS	It was concluded that the number of organizations and female managers is increasing and that female entrepreneurs are more than male entrepreneurs. With the increase in women entrepreneurs, glass ceiling syndrome is experienced.
2013	Abeer Imam, Faisal Tehseen, Shah Aiman Raza	"Mediating role of job stress between workplace discrimination gender discrimination-glass ceiling and employee attitudinal outcomes job satisfaction and motivation in banking sector of Pakistan"	GCS JS	Job stress has a mediating role in strengthening the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on job satisfaction and motivation.
2013	Cansu Akpınar- Sposito	"Career barriers for women executives and the glass ceiling syndrome: The case study comparison between French and Turkish women executives"	GCS	Both nationally and globally, female employees are less likely to be involved in management than male employees in the face of cultural norms, stereotypes, employer policies, and practices.
2013	Obamiro John Kolade, Obasan Kehinde	"Glass ceiling and women career advancement: Evidence from Nigerian construction industry"	GCS	It is concluded that women face career barriers in industry.
2014	Sabitri Bhatta	"Does perceived respect influence the intention to quit the job among home health aides working in patients' homes in the US?"	TI	Age, race, and education are important factors in the turnover intentions of home healthcare workers. Turnover intentions of employees decrease when managers respect the work of their employees.
2014	Kubilay Özyer, Öznur Azizoğlu	The relationship between glass ceiling barriers for women in business life and perceived organizational justice	GCS	When the glass ceiling syndrome values are analyzed, it is seen that women score lower than men. This shows that men are exposed to the glass ceiling more than women. There is a relationship between the glass ceiling and perceived organizational justice.
2014	Bolanle Ogunbamila, Anthony G. Balogun, Adepeju Ogunbamila, Richard S. Oladele	"Job stress, emotional labor, and emotional intelligence as predictors of turnover intention: evidence from two service occupations"	JS TI	In the study, it was observed that job stress did not affect turnover intention. However, the emotional labor factor increases employees' turnover intention, while the emotional intelligence factor decreases turnover intention. At the same time, bank employees have a higher turnover intention than health employees.

2017	Asadul Islam, Amer Hamzah Jantan	“The glass ceiling: career barriers for female employees in the ready-made garments industry of Bangladesh”	GCS	Organizational and social cultures are the main barriers to women taking leadership positions.
2018	Joseph Teryima, John Emakwu, Muhtari Yusuf Abubakar, Paul Kayode Oyekanmi	“Effect of affirmative action plan program and glass ceiling management strategies on the employees’ productivity at Benue State University”	GCS	Glass ceiling management strategies have a significant impact on employee productivity.
2018	İsa İpçioğlu, Özüm Eğilmez, Hilal Şen	Glass ceiling syndrome: A research in the context of human resources managers	GCS	The glass ceiling syndrome is more of an obstacle caused by the individual, and although social factors have an impact, the biggest factor is individual factors. In addition, according to human resources managers, the glass ceiling syndrome is not specific to female employees but is a career barrier all employees face.
2018	Shashikala Mudgal	“A study of women’s lived experiences of leadership at the workplace: A feminist study of organizations”	GCS	It was concluded that despite the lack of women managers in organizations and complaints about the situation, women are still excluded from top management due to the subtle functioning of gender schemas.
2019	Samuel Awuni Azinga, Nestor Asiamah, Henry Kofi Mensah	“Eschewing love of money and materialism: a potential step towards avoiding nurses’ intention to quit”	TI	Materialism had a significant positive effect on the love of money and turnover intention, while the love of money did not predict nurses’ turnover intention. The study concluded that nurses’ avoidance of materialism and love of money could be a way to reduce turnover intentions.
2019	Hyun Yun	“A study on the effect of job performance on emotional labor, career turnover intention, job stress, growth need”	JS TI	A significant positive relationship was found between job stress, turnover intention, and interpersonal conflict. It was also concluded that public organizations have higher emotional labor and job stress levels than private organizations.
2020	Mehmet Sağır	Effects of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention of women working in the banking sector	GCS TI	Glass ceiling syndrome leads to an increase in turnover intentions of female employees.
2020	Süreyya Ece	“Are female employees temporary workers? A study on female’s job attitude and intention to quit”	TI	It was determined that female employees’ attitudes towards work and working conditions were more positive than male employees. In addition, it was determined that the turnover intention of female employees was lower than that of male employees.
2020	Jojo K. Joseph, Jikky P. Shaji	“Career barriers for women executives in India and the glass ceiling syndrome”	GCS	The glass ceiling barriers to women’s career development were identified as family responsibilities, organizational policies, organizational culture, social networks, lack of mentors, sexist stereotypes, and individual factors.

2020	Berna Dağdeviren İshak Aydemir	The relationship between glass ceiling perceptions of healthcare workers and gender perception	GCS	Women working in the health sector have a more egalitarian gender attitude than men and face more glass ceiling barriers than men.
2021	Waruni Thiranagama	“Is gender plays a role in workplace? Review of glass-ceiling effect on women employees”	GCS	Although the existence of the glass ceiling syndrome is accepted, it is argued that this effect is a myth created by society. In addition, it is argued that the lack of female employees in the upper levels of organizations is not due to the glass ceiling but to the factors that prevent female employees from reaching the top ranks.
2021	Yılmaz Palancı, Cengiz Mengenci, Serkan Bayraktaroğlu, Abdurrahim Emhan	“Analysis of workplace health and safety, job stress, interpersonal conflict, and turnover intention: a comparative study in the health sector”	TI JS	There is a significant positive relationship between turnover intention and interpersonal conflict. In the health sector, employees who do not feel peaceful and secure in the work environment tend to have high stress, turnover intention, and conflict with coworkers.
2021	J. A. A. De los Santos, Leodoro J. Labrague	“The impact of fear of Covid-19 on job stress, and turnover intentions of frontline nurses in the community: A cross sectional study in the Philippines”	TI JS	It was observed that female nurses were more fearful than male nurses during the pandemic period. In addition, fear of Covid-19 increased work stress as well as turnover intentions in nurses.

\* GCS: Glass ceiling syndrome; JS: Job stress; TI: Turnover intention

There are individual, organizational, and economic consequences of female employees facing glass ceiling syndrome. It causes negative consequences such as high employee turnover, absenteeism, and quitting. Men see women in business life as a threat regarding career opportunities; they are negatively affected when women are given the job they can do or when they think that they are unemployed because of women. In this situation, men reduce the performance of women who want to improve themselves, advance their careers, and encourage them to quit their jobs. Female employees who face gender-based discrimination and policies in the workplace may experience alienation from work, depression, fear, and poor performance. As a result, they may turn to turnover intention (Akdemir & Duman, 2017; Zeng, 2011). In this regard, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Glass ceiling syndrome has a positive effect on turnover intention.*

Labor turnover is an important problem in healthcare services. A high turnover rate damages the health system and affects the quality of service (Rindu et al., 2020). At the same time, stress is a problem that leads to burnout in healthcare services. Burnout jeopardizes health service delivery and causes many effects on health workers. As a result of stress leading to burnout, the labor turnover rate increases, and turnover intention emerges (Shakil & Mujtaba, 2023). Job stress has a positive effect on employee turnover intention. The higher the level of stress experienced by the employee at work, the higher the turnover intention. Workload has a direct relationship with job stress, and therefore, job stress has been proven to mediate the relationship between workload and turnover intention (Christy & Priartini, 2019). Thus, stress is a multifaceted chronic problem for healthcare. This suggests that there is an interaction between stress and turnover intention. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Job stress has a positive effect on turnover intention.*

Due to labor-intensive service provision and meeting people's physical and psychological expectations, the health sector has elements that can pave the way for job stress and many negative factors. Long working hours, physical, emotional, and psychological needs of patients, inadequate equipment, patient circulation, emergencies, care and follow-up of life-threatening patients, and sleep patterns are factors affecting stress. Healthcare workers may feel under intense stress even while performing routine tasks and may think of quitting their jobs due to work stress (Karabay, 2015). Considering the socio-demographic characteristics, it is seen that organizational commitment and job stress affect employees' turnover intention. If employees' organizational commitment is high, there is a decrease in turnover rate, while if it is low, there is an increase in turnover intention. The factors affecting turnover intention include organizational culture, job expectations, career opportunities, relationships among colleagues, and environmental factors (Gül et al., 2008; Takase et al., 2005). It is thought that the coexistence of glass ceiling syndrome and job stress will have a higher effect on turnover intention. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H<sub>3</sub>: Job stress has a mediating role in the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention.*

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1. Research Design and Sample

Cross-sectional design was used in the research design. The study was conducted in two private hospitals in Istanbul, Turkey. Since turnover intention is more common among private sector employees, the study was conducted in private hospitals. The inclusion criteria were that all participants were female, had been working in the hospital for at least one year, and voluntarily participated in the study. In the study, it was aimed to reach all nurses constituting the population. Due to reasons such as leave, illness, and refusal, the entire population could not be reached. The total number of nurses working in the private hospitals where the study was conducted was 400. A total of 304 people determined by convenience sampling method were included in the study. The research sample constitutes 76% of the population.

#### 3.2. Data Collection Tools

The data collection tool consists of three scales, including questions about the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

*Glass Ceiling Syndrome Scale:* The Career Pathway Scale (CPS) developed by Smith et al. was adapted into Turkish by Sarioğlu. The scale consists of 18 statements and four dimensions (denial, resilience, resignation, and acceptance) (Çankaya & Çiftçi, 2022). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the glass ceiling syndrome scale was found to be 0.709 and the KMO value in terms of validity was found to be 0.779.

*Turnover Intention Scale:* It was developed by Grandey and adapted into Turkish by Ünler Öz. The scale consists of one dimension and three statements (Bulutlar & Ünler Öz, 2010). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the turnover intention scale was calculated as 0.848 and the KMO value was calculated as 0.718 in terms of validity.

*Job Stress Scale:* It was developed by House and Rizzo and adapted into Turkish by Efeoğlu. The scale, which consists of a single dimension and seven statements, measures the psychological and psychosomatic symptoms related to the stress experienced by the employee at work. It is designed to determine the degree of stress experienced by the employee at work, the degree of preoccupation, and sleep problems (Efeoğlu & Özgen, 2007). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the job stress scale was found to be 0.834 and the KMO value in terms of validity was found to be 0.876.

### 3.3. Data Collection

The researchers gathered the data through face-to-face surveys conducted between March 15 and May 15, 2021. Individuals who met the inclusion criteria were incorporated into the study. The questionnaire provided to the participants encompassed details regarding the study's objective, an informed consent document, and approval from the ethics committee. Ample time was afforded to participants for anonymously completing the questionnaire. These forms were then gathered in sealed envelopes, ensuring utmost confidentiality and anonymity for the participants.

### 3.4. Statistical Analysis

The data underwent analysis utilizing SPSS Version 22 alongside the PROCESS Macro. Evaluation of the analysis results took place at a 95% confidence interval, with a significance level set at  $p < 0.05$ . Initially, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted, encompassing frequency, mean, and standard deviation calculations. Independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance were used to determine whether there were significant differences in glass ceiling syndrome, turnover intention, and job stress according to socio-demographic variables. Subsequently, the scales' internal consistency was assessed, followed by a correlation analysis between the variables. Finally, Hayes' (2022) Model 4 was employed to ascertain the mediating role of job stress in the impact of glass ceiling perception on turnover intention.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethics committee (dated 16.02.2021 and numbered 11344) approval was obtained for the study. The research was also conducted following the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (2013). Written confirmed consent was obtained from the participants. Participants were informed about the confidentiality and anonymity of the questionnaires.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 2 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Accordingly, the majority of the participants are between the ages of 18-25, single, have a working period of 1-5 years, and have a bachelor's degree.

**Table 2.** Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

	Variable	n	%
Age	18-25	147	48.4
	26-35	108	35.5
	≥ 36	49	16.1
Marital Status	Single	203	66.8
	Married	101	33.2
Working Time (Year)	1-5	179	58.9
	6-10	75	24.7
	11-15	50	16.4
Education Status	High School	85	28.0
	Associate Degree	106	34.9
	Bachelor Degree	100	32.9
	Postgraduate	13	4.3

### 4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The mean, standard deviation, and correlation values of the variables are presented in Table 3. Accordingly, the mean values of glass ceiling syndrome ( $2.65 \pm 0.534$ ), job stress ( $2.87 \pm 0.924$ ), and turnover intention ( $2.51 \pm 1.058$ ) are close to each other and at a medium level. According to the correlation analysis results, a positive relationship exists between glass ceiling syndrome and job stress ( $r=0.200$ ) and turnover intention ( $r=0.253$ ). Similarly, there is a positive relationship between job stress and glass ceiling syndrome ( $r=0.365$ ). According to these results, their turnover intentions increase as the participants' perceptions of job stress and the glass ceiling increase.



**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

	1	2	3	Mean	Standard Deviation
Glass ceiling syndrome (1)	1			2.65	0.534
Job stress (2)	0.200**	1		2.87	0.924
Turnover intention (3)	0.253**	0.365**	1	2.51	1.058

\*\* Correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

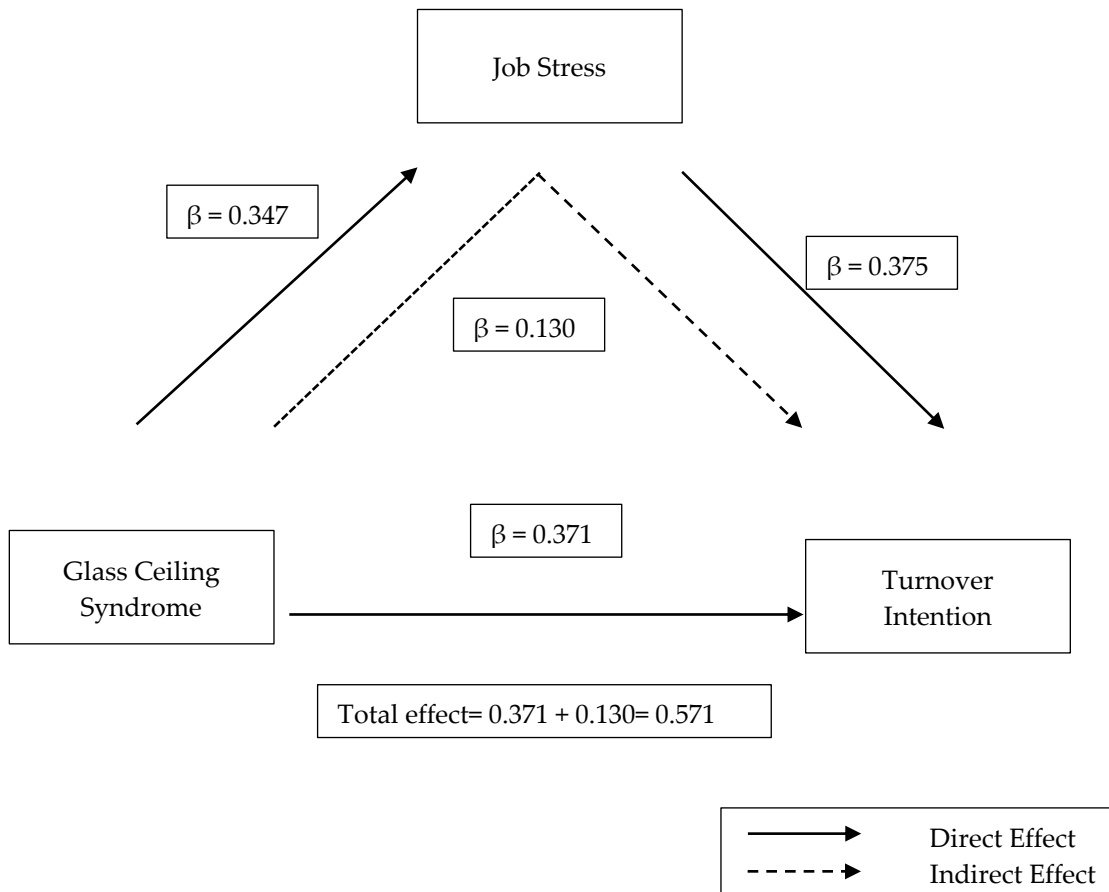
#### 4.3. Mediating Role Analysis

SPSS PROCESS Macro Model 4 was used to determine the effect of the glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention and the mediating role of job stress in this effect. The analysis results indicate that both glass ceiling syndrome ( $\beta=0.371$ ) and job stress ( $\beta=0.375$ ) positively affect turnover intention. Moreover, job stress played a partial mediating role in the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention ( $\beta=0.130$ ) and increased the positive effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention ( $\beta=0.501$ ). Based on these results, H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, and H<sub>3</sub> are accepted (Table 4, Figure 1).

**Table 4.** Direct and indirect effects

Variables	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	LLCI	ULCI	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Glass ceiling syndrome	0.371	0.130	0.501	0.284	0.718	4.540	0.000
Job stress	0.375			0.254	0.496	6.097	0.000

The dependent variable is turnover intention.

**Figure 1.** Research model

#### 4.4. Difference Analysis

Independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance were used to determine whether there were significant differences in glass ceiling syndrome, turnover intention, and job stress according to socio-

demographic variables. According to the results of the analysis, the marital status variable did not show a statistically significant difference on glass ceiling syndrome, job stress and turnover intention ( $p > 0.05$ ). On the other hand, the age variable causes a statistically significant difference in job stress and turnover intention, and working time causes a statistically significant difference in turnover intention ( $p < 0,05$ ). According to the results of the post hoc analysis, the mean turnover intention of the 36+ age group is higher than that of the 26-35 age group. The mean job stress of the 18-25 age group is higher than that of the 26-35 age group. The mean intention to quit of participants with 11-15 years of work experience is higher than that of participants with 6-10 years of work experience.

**Table 5.** Difference analysis

	Variable	n	Mean	S. D.	F	p
Glass ceiling syndrome	Married	101	2.650	0.604	7.360	0.974
	Single	203	2.652	0.496		
Job stress	Married	101	2.826	0.939	0.002	0.548
	Single	203	2.894	0.918		
Turnover intention	Married	101	2.586	1.065	0.203	0.382
	Single	203	2.475	1.055		
Glass ceiling syndrome	18-25	147	2.653	0.448	0.041	0.960
	26-35	108	2.642	0.621		
	$\geq 36$	49	2.669	0.573		
Job stress	18-25	147	2.968	0.901	3.625	<b>0.028</b>
	26-35	108	2.681	0.985		
	$\geq 36$	49	3.000	0.794		
Turnover intention	18-25	147	2.535	1.000	6.500	<b>0.002</b>
	26-35	108	2.290	1.024		
	$\geq 36$	49	2.932	1.178		
Glass ceiling syndrome	1-5	179	2.641	0.540	1.698	1.167
	6-10	75	2.585	0.517		
	11-15	50	2.720	0.647		
Job stress	1-5	179	2.964	0.924	1.864	0.136
	6-10	75	2.699	1.020		
	11-15	50	2.674	0.669		
Turnover intention	1-5	179	2.500	1.022	3.302	<b>0.021</b>
	6-10	75	2.307	0,988		
	11-15	50	2.632	1.222		
Glass ceiling syndrome	High School	85	2.602	0.567	1.943	0.123
	Associate Degree	106	2.630	0.525		
	Bachelor Degree	100	2.670	0.518		
	Postgraduate	13	2.930	0.455		
Job stress	High School	85	2.894	0.852	0.261	0.854
	Associate Degree	106	2.815	1.016		
	Bachelor Degree	100	2.890	0.923		
	Postgraduate	13	2.992	0.714		
Turnover intention	High School	85	2.663	1.022	2.731	0.054
	Associate Degree	106	2.359	0.987		
	Bachelor Degree	100	2.456	1.133		
	Postgraduate	13	3.000	1.066		

## 5. DISCUSSION

Turkey has a unique historical development in terms of the position of women and the efforts made for their empowerment in the social sphere. It is possible to see the reflection of this historical development in the decisions taken and policies implemented for the advancement and empowerment of women. It is known that

women have become more involved in business life with the support of women's work. Women who started to take part in working life in the Republican era preferred the public sector due to "job security". However, with the development of the private sector and employment opportunities, women started to take part in the private sector after 1980 (Arslan, 2017). The 11<sup>th</sup> Development Plan aims to increase the female labor force participation rate to 38.5% and the female employment rate to 34% (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2023). Nowadays women's labor force participation rate has risen to 36.4% and their employment rate to 31.8% (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2023).

With the entry of women into business life, gender-based problems such as some professions not being suitable for women, unfair distribution of tasks, women being laid off first in times of economic crisis, or quitting their jobs in the face of such problems may occur (Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2023). The increase in the employment levels of women employees has been the subject of our research as it brings with it the possibility that problems they may encounter in their business life may also arise.

The study focuses on the mediating role of job stress in the effect of glass ceiling perception levels on the turnover intentions of female employees in the health sector. Research findings indicate that the level of glass ceiling perception affects female employees' turnover intentions, and job stress mediates this effect. The fact that the health sector contains more stress than other service sectors has increased the accuracy of the hypotheses. This study suggests that the higher the glass ceiling perception level of women working in the health sector, the higher their intention to quit their jobs, and job stress increases the strength of this effect.

In line with the purpose of the study, there are studies in the literature supporting the accepted hypotheses. In the study conducted by Öztürk and Şahverdioğlu (2019) on female employees in private health institutions, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between job stress and turnover intention and that the two variables positively affect each other. The study conducted by Çankaya (2020) on the job stress and turnover intention of employees in private hospitals concluded that job stress affects turnover intention.

Torun and Tekin (2014) reported that the relationship between the personality traits of health managers working in public hospitals and job stress is significant. The results of the studies conducted in health and management show that they support our study. Akbolat et al. (2014) concluded that mobbing perceived by employees in hospitality organizations, except for the health sector, has a positive effect on turnover intention. Based on this study, it can be concluded that applying the turnover intention variable to different sectors produces positive results.

In a study conducted by Imam et al. (2013), the mediating role of job stress on the effect of glass ceiling perception levels of bank employees in Pakistan on job satisfaction and employee motivation was examined, and it was concluded that there is a mediating role effect. Although the service sector used in our study is the health field, the fact that the mediating role of job stress affects the variables in the study conducted on bank employees shows that our study is in accordance with the literature.

The study by Özyer and Azizoğlu (2014) examined the relationship between the glass ceiling barriers for women and perceived organizational justice, and a high correlation was found between the two variables. The important point to note in this study is that glass ceiling values of both men and women were measured, and it was concluded that men were exposed to glass ceiling practices more than women. Based on this example, it can be concluded that including men in glass ceiling syndrome studies may yield meaningful results.

Ogunbamila et al. (2014) examined the effects of job stress, emotional labor, and emotional intelligence on the turnover intention of bank and healthcare employees and found that job stress did not significantly affect turnover intention. However, it was observed that bank employees had a higher level of turnover intention than healthcare employees. Although the effect of job stress on turnover intention was not found in this study, the fact that an effect arising from other variables affects turnover intention and that health employees have less turnover intention than bank employees confirms the assumption that different results may be obtained with the application of our study to different sectors.

Yun (2019) found a significant positive relationship between job stress, turnover intention, and interpersonal conflict in both public and private organizations. Regarding organization type, it was concluded that public organizations had higher levels of emotional labor and job stress than private organizations. Accordingly, it is

thought that our study may yield different results and contribute to the literature when applied to both public and private organizations.

The study conducted by Ece (2020) on male and female employees' attitudes towards work and turnover intentions determined that the turnover intentions of female employees were lower than those of male employees. Based on this study, by applying our study not only to women but also to men, the results of turnover intention can be compared, and a different perspective can be brought to the literature.

Dağdeviren and Aydemir (2020) examined the relationship between the glass ceiling perceptions of both male and female healthcare workers and gender perceptions. According to the aforementioned study, women working in the health sector have a more egalitarian gender attitude than men and face more glass ceiling barriers than men. When this result is compared with this study, the fact that female employees in the health sector face glass ceiling barriers strengthens our results and helps us support the study with the literature.

In their study, Palancı et al. (2021) discovered a notable positive correlation between turnover intention and interpersonal conflict. They noted that employees who do not experience a sense of well-being and security in their work environment tend to exhibit elevated stress levels, leading them towards a disposition for turnover intention and potential conflicts with their colleagues.

In the study conducted by De los Santos and Labrague (2021) with healthcare professionals, it was observed that female nurses working during the pandemic period were more fearful than male nurses. In addition, it was concluded that nurses' work stress, as well as organizational and professional turnover intentions, increased with increasing fear of COVID-19. This study suggests that conducting our study during the pandemic period and targeting healthcare workers may affect the results we obtained. Although our study does not specifically specify pandemic period employees, it can be assumed that the time period in which the study was applied coincided with the pandemic period and that our results may change according to an extraordinary situation.

#### *5.1. Limitations of the study*

This study has a number of limitations. Although various factors are efficient on turnover intention, this study is based on glass ceiling syndrome and job stress factors. Another limitation is that the study was conducted in a sample of private hospitals. In addition, since the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is expected to be an additional effect on the stress experienced by nurses. Despite these limitations, the study provides data about the mediating role of job stress in the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention in nurses.

#### *5.2. Practical Implications*

Women working in the health sector are negatively affected by the barriers they face while advancing on their career paths, and there are triggering factors in their work and private lives that increase the strength of this effect. They may encounter glass ceiling barriers such as the intense workload of the private health sector, gender discrimination, the balance between work and private life, economic and educational reasons, and organizational policies, and these barriers may lead to results such as resignation and quitting the job. Due to intense labor and workload, the stress levels of female employees working in the health sector are high. In addition to the glass ceiling barriers that women face at work, job stress disrupts the working balance of employees and may cause them to think of quitting their jobs. Considering all the negative factors and triggers, women may face glass ceiling barriers as they progress on their career path and try to rise to senior positions. Health institutions should take steps to improve working conditions in this direction which will help nurses to reduce their stress levels. The government and health institutions need to develop policies and practices to address the problems experienced by nurses at work.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The study revealed a weak but positive relationship between glass ceiling syndrome, job stress, and turnover intention. Moreover, through mediating role analysis, it was found that job stress played a partial mediating role in the effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention. Thus, job stress increased the positive effect of glass ceiling syndrome on turnover intention. The positive relationship between workload and turnover intention is thought to stem from workload and working conditions in health services. At the same time,

factors such as gender discrimination, work-family conflict, career barriers, and organizational policies are likely to cause glass ceiling syndrome in female employees.

Due to the nature of health services, female employees have high-stress levels. In addition to the glass ceiling barriers women face in the workplace, the work stress experienced disrupts the working balance and may reveal the intention to leave the job. Considering the negative factors and triggers, female healthcare workers may encounter glass ceiling barriers in their career plans to participate in management levels. In other words, glass ceiling syndrome and job stress experienced by female employees in the health sector can positively affect turnover intention.

The study has a limited scope as the small sample size and only two private hospitals are considered. In addition, the role of socio-demographic factors was also ignored in the analysis. In future studies, the scope of the study can be expanded by collecting data from different private hospitals as well as public hospitals. In addition, qualitative and mixed methods can be used in future studies, and the scope of this study can be further expanded.

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