COMPLAINTS AND DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT UNIVERSITIES IN TURKEY

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at Universities in Turkey

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
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ABSTRACT

Complaints and Disclosures of Sexual Violence at Universities in Turkey

This thesis revolves around the mechanisms of complaints and disclosures of sexual violence at universities in Turkey by focusing on the experiences of survivors. Adopting a relational understanding of violence and conceptualizing it as a continuum, it first unpacks how complaint processes operate to enable the institutional reproduction of violence for survivors through exhaustion driven by procedural ambiguity and lack of standardization; routinization of impunity due to temporal limitations and flexible definitions; and institutional insensitivity. It then introduces different practices of disclosures as both feminist collective actions and calls for solidarity among survivors while arguing that these practices create counterpublics at digital, discursive, and spatial levels. This thesis also examines the setbacks of disclosure mechanisms, including stigmatization, victim-blaming, social ostracism, and the normalization of sexual violence. It also focuses on the (trans)formation of subjectivity for survivors and other parties during and after the complaint and disclosure processes while revealing the multiple and shifting subject positions individuals hold. It concludes with a focus on solidarity, exploring how survivors engage with and constitute themselves in relation to solidarity networks as well as revealing the challenging aspects of these networks. In doing so, this thesis aims to create a link between complaints and disclosures and address the gap in the literature by providing an in-depth exploration of both in academic settings in Turkey.

ÖZET

Türkiye'deki Üniversitelerde Cinsel Şiddet Şikayetleri ve İfşaları

Bu tez, kurtulanların deneyimlerine odaklanarak Türkiye'deki üniversitelerde cinsel şiddete ilişkin şikâyet ve ifşa mekanizmalarını araştırmaktadır. İlişkisel bir şiddet anlayışını benimseyen ve şiddeti bir süreklilik olarak kavramsallaştıran tez, şikâyet süreçlerinin prosedürel belirsizlik ve standartlaşma eksikliğinden kaynaklanan tükendiricilik, zamansal sınırlamalar ve esnek tanımlar nedeniyle cezasızlığın rutinleşmesi ve kurumsal duyarsızlık gibi yollarla kurtulanlar için şiddeti kurumsal olarak nasıl yeniden ürettiğini gösterir. Ardından, farklı ifşa pratiklerini feminist kolektif eylemler ve dayanışma çağrıları olarak ele alıp bu pratiklerin nasıl dijital, söylemsel ve mekânsal düzlemlerde karşı kamular yarattığını tartışmakla beraber ifşa mekanizmasının dezavantajlarını damgalama, mağduru suçlama, sosyal dışlanma ve cinsel şiddetin normalleştirilmesi üzerinden inceler. Ayrıca, bireylerin çoklu ve değişken özne konumlarına odaklanırken, şikâyet ve ifşa süreçleri sırasında ve sonrasında kurtulanlar ve diğer taraflar için öznelliğin oluşumunu tartışır. Tez, son olarak, dayanışma meselesine odaklanarak, kurtulanların dayanışma ağlarıyla kurdukları ilişkiyi, bu ilişki üzerinden kendi öznelliklerini nasıl oluşturduklarını ve bu dayanışmanın kırılgan taraflarını ve çıkmazlarını araştırır. Böylece bu tez, şikâyet ve ifşa süreçleri arasında bir bağlantı kurmayı ve Türkiye'deki akademik ortamlar bağlamında her ikisinin de derinlemesine bir incelemesini yaparak literatürdeki boşluğu gidermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

CONTENT WARNING

This study explores the various ways in which the problem of sexual violence is addressed and engaged within university settings. Rather than focusing on experiences of sexual violence, it aims to shed light on the complaint and disclosure mechanisms employed by survivors as well as their perceptions of these processes. However, while the primary focus is on these mechanisms rather than the explicit details of individual experiences of sexual violence, readers may still find some discussions on complaints and disclosures distressing or triggering. Therefore, readers are advised to approach the content with care and mindfulness of their own well-being.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CİTÖK	The Commission on Prevention of Sexual Harassment *(Cinsel Tacizi Önleme Koordinatörlüğü)*
CTS	Support Unit Against Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault *(Cinsel Tacize ve Cinsel Saldırıya Karşı Destek Birimi)*
LGBTQI+	Lesbian gay bisexual trans queer/questioning intersex and other
TCK	Turkish Penal Code *(Türk Ceza Kanunu)*
YÖK	Council of Higher Education *(Yükseköğretim Kurulu)*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Shaping the research context

During my senior year at university, I was confronted with a deeply unsettling incident that has since left a profound mark on me: Doruk, who had been one of my closest friends since high school, was publicly disclosed[1] as a rapist in the Facebook group of our university. This disclosure was made by several women who shared their experiences of verbal and sexual assault by him. It drew so much attention in the group and also received controversial reactions from others; however, the fact that it was made by multiple women led people to believe in its accuracy more, as people noted in the comments sections below the disclosure post. These women later filed official complaints to the university, went through a lengthy and exhausting process that I later learned was quite difficult for them to navigate.

The process that followed this disclosure was also quite troubling for our friend group to deal with. We found ourselves in a bizarre position of not knowing how to handle the situation. The truth was that we had subtly cut ties with Doruk during freshman year after a disturbing incident at a New Year's party where he *persistently* tried to kiss a friend. Nonetheless, the disclosure on Facebook still came as a shock.

[1] Throughout the thesis, I use the term "disclosure" to replace the Turkish term, *ifşa.* According to the TDK, *ifşa* means "revealing, spreading something hidden" (gizli bir şeyi açığa çıkarma, yayma). Currently, it is also a term employed by feminists in Turkey to refer to the feminist political practice of sharing one's experience of sexual violence and the perpetrator in public space.
However, it should be noted that disclosures are not limited to these practices. They can also be directed at organizations and places, not just individuals. Additionally, people might practice disclosures when they feel they have experienced injustice in various other situations, not just those involving sexual violence. Nevertheless, in this thesis, I focus exclusively on disclosures of sexual violence directed against individual perpetrators.

After we saw the disclosure post, we started to think about what we could do, but the women who had disclosed him had already taken action and filed a complaint against him to the university. He was suspended for a semester thanks to the complaints. Over time, he dropped out of the university since his reputation as a rapist became more widely known and made it difficult for him to come to campus. Years later, I heard that he assaulted another woman at his workplace.

While this is just one story I shared above, there are many other instances of sexual violence on campuses that I have heard, witnessed, and experienced. This comes as no surprise, as universities have historically been breeding grounds for sexual harassment as institutions that are deeply ingrained with inherently asymmetrical relationships and imbalanced power dynamics (Clair, 1993; Whitley & Page, 2015).

Nevertheless, amidst the prevalence of sexual harassment, I have also been fortunate to witness various methods of combating it, as the story above illustrates. Thus, the core of this research is shaped by these shared experiences, not just my own, with a particular focus on the formal and informal mechanisms -complaints and disclosures- survivors use to deal with sexual violence.

1.2 Towards and beyond a research question

As I gradually became aware of this issue and participated in mechanisms against sexual violence, I found myself compelled to ask more questions about how survivors cope with sexual violence at universities. With all of this in mind, the initial question that ignited this research was a fundamental one: “How do survivors experience the processes of disclosures and complaints of sexual violence?” Over time, this question has evolved into more detailed inquiries: Why do survivors opt

for filing formal complaints against the perpetrators or disclose them? What forms of justice are envisioned by those involved in these processes? How do the institutional structures address the complexities of sexual violence and complaint processes? What role do these institutional structures play in perpetuating the suffering of survivors during these processes? What does it mean to publicize the experience of sexual violence? How individuals constitute and reconstitute themselves in relation to sexual violence as well as complaint and disclosure processes? What is the role of solidarity networks in these processes?

As per my profound engagement with the subject matter, I initially had my own answers and opinions on some of the research questions I posed above, affected significantly by my preconceived ideas. Nevertheless, throughout the research process, my perspective has evolved considerably. Initially, I viewed formal and informal mechanisms as diametrically opposed to one another: the former signifying compliance with patriarchal justice and the master's tools while the latter symbolized the liberating force in resistance. Over time, I have come to the realization that the issue is far more nuanced, cannot be neatly compartmentalized and such dichotomous thinking was overly simplistic. This realization brought up broader questions concerning feminist politics and solidarity.

In this context, while this thesis asks the aforementioned questions, it is also a reflexive inquiry into the complex, controversial and often contentious processes of complaints and disclosures. It aimed to critically engage with these mechanisms designed to tackle sexual violence at universities while scrutinizing both the deadlocks these mechanisms produce and the solutions they propose. This critical examination also revealed the necessity of a deeper reflection on our roles and responsibilities within these frameworks.

In addition to all these, while the thesis focuses on mechanisms against sexual harassment within university settings, I believe the landscape within universities cannot be separated from the wider socio-historical context of the feminist movement in Turkey and worldwide practices of disclosures. In this sense, in this chapter, following the methodology section, I will focus on how the feminist movement in Turkey's has engaged with the issue of sexual harassment. Subsequently, I will provide an overview of the #MeToo movement and the most common practices of disclosures it has catalyzed.

1.3 Navigating the research: An attempt at feminist methodology

Throughout this research, I was aware that engaging with the mechanisms against sexual violence requires a deep sense of responsibility. It is a sensitive topic since sexual violence is a matter of complexity that has to do with deeply personal, traumatic experiences that can have lasting psychological impacts on survivors. Hence, not only the event itself but also the subsequent interactions about issues related to sexual violence can also be complicated for the survivors. In this sense, I consider my subject position -as a woman who have been through the very experiences central to this research- to be a crucial aspect of this research, which will be discussed shortly. Nevertheless, research on such a sensitive topic still requires a responsible approach that prioritizes the dignity, consent, and emotional well-being of participants.

My primary method in this research was to conduct in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured interviews. I tried to give each informant the time and care they needed and when necessary, I conducted multiple interviews with the same person to ensure a profound understanding. The questions in the interviews primarily revolved

around why and how survivors choose to file complaints or disclose sexual violence, their experiences during and after these processes, the impact of their relationships with other people on these experiences, and the reactions they receive from other parties, so on and so forth (Appendix A). Although I had a set of questions, the interviews were often like conversations and meetings with friends, where I have also shared my own experiences as well. I believe this exchange not only facilitated open dialogue but also increased the sense of mutual trust between myself and the participants.

Since I explore both formal and informal actions against sexual violence, I interviewed both those who have filed complaints or disclosed their experiences and those who have not. Among the participants, some were engaged in feminist organizations and networks, some held quite active roles within these groups, and a portion of the participants were not involved in any such organizations. Also, some of these organizations included campus-based feminist networks and other feminist collectives or formal associations that maintain a presence within universities. Although these organizations defined themselves through feminism, they were also grounded in diverse political ideologies. By incorporating a variety of perspectives and experiences from those who have chosen different paths, I aimed to more accurately reflect the range of experiences and the complexities of dealing with sexual harassment. Doing so also helped to better understand the spectrum of justice imagined by survivors and others, and the factors that influence those perceptions. In adopting this approach, I hoped to demonstrate that there is no single right way to respond to harassment, nor is there a uniform experience in its aftermath. This may contribute to a more inclusive dialogue that resonates with a wide array of survivor experiences. I also conducted interviews with individuals who were not subjected to

sexual violence, in order to have insight into their perspectives too. I also interviewed academic staff who have served at Sexual Harassment Prevention Commissions (CTS for short in Turkish) at universities. I did not set a specific sample size because I believe reaching "saturation", a point where recurring themes emerge in interviews, is more important than the number of interviews (Small, 2009, p.25). Overall, I conducted 21 interviews with individuals from five different universities in Turkey.

I aimed to examine different subject positions and the role of solidarity networks through focus group interviews. Thus, I also conducted two focus group interviews, and this process was quite interesting for me, both as a researcher and sometimes as an active member of solidarity networks. These focus groups allowed me to not only observe the interactions among participants but also the complex dynamics within the groups. Doing so also provided insights into how individuals behave within a collective context and talk about sexual violence, which can differ from one-on-one interviews. Before choosing the research project for my thesis, I had been actively involved in such groups and had the opportunity to observe and be a participant observer in the most literal sense of the word. Thus, I also drew from my own experiences, which were rooted in my engagement with these groups. However, I chose to withhold certain information I gained during these focus group sessions, as its public disclosure might unintentionally harm my participants -who are not just participants but also my friends.

As I mentioned above, the main question that ignited this research was: "How do survivors experience the processes of disclosures and complaints of sexual violence?" In this vein, in an attempt at feminist methodology, my inquiry began "in actual experience as embedded in the particular historical forms of social relations"

(Smith, 1987, p.49). I have been involved in the issue of sexual violence and the discussions that are at hand in this thesis. As such, I consider myself as a "researcher" deeply immersed in her subject matter, as someone who is very familiar with the issue. A considerable part of this research is based on my own experiences with sexual violence as well as complaint and disclosure processes. In this light, I have benefited from my journals as fieldnotes and they have been foundational for my project. These journals date back to 2020, and since then, I have written extensively not only about my personal experiences, but also about my reflections on the experiences of those in my close circle. Thus, a substantial part of this thesis is rooted in an autoethnographic approach. In this regard, as feminist theory often emphasizes the importance of the personal as political, I aimed to make use of my own "knowledge from personal experience" while valuing subjective experience as a legitimate and powerful source of knowledge and use this knowledge "to guide the analysis" (Deitch, 2020, p.219). Hence, while autoethnography is not an inherently feminist practice, I believe in this case it works as a feminist intervention.

In his work, Faubion openly employs the strategy of creating a fictional character who serves as "a composite of five actual members" of his research and who effectively "incarnates" the "common condition" of these members (1993, p.14). In this respect, his main character exists as both a work of fiction and a reflection of reality since she is directly derived from real-life individuals. While I claim that this thesis is largely autoethnographic, I do not, as the reader will notice, employ a predominantly evocative autoethnographic narrative throughout. Unlike Faubion, who amalgamates several participants into a single character, I choose to divide myself into two characters. Thus, two of the characters mentioned in this thesis represent aspects of my own experience. This decision stems from the fact

that, even though I am committed to preserving anonymity and confidentiality, careful readers may infer the real-life counterparts of other parties involved in these narratives. Therefore, bifurcating myself allows me to unfold my personal experiences while upholding ethical considerations, mitigating legal risks and maintaining anonimity. However, while these characters alone are not entirely representative of me, they not only articulate my personal journey but also speak to a broader narrative of womanhood and survivorship, as do all of the stories in this thesis.

This thesis is then an "entanglement of [my] personal stories and the intellectual subjects that move" me (Behar, 2021, p.40). In a way, I was struggling to figure out how to tell my own story. Hence, the above-mentioned decision of bifurcating myself was a personal response to Ruth Behar's question of "How does a woman find her voice and not lose her soul in academia?" (2021, p.39). In this sense, this decision arose not only out of certain ethical and legal considerations, but also out of my own vulnerability in writing about myself.

Furthermore, I believe autoethnography offers a distinctive contribution by facilitating a deep, introspective analysis in the context of exploring mechanisms against sexual violence (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). When dealing with a subject matter that is both deeply personal and socially ingrained, such as sexual violence, situated knowledge becomes an important tool for exploring such complicated, veiled, and socially taboo issues that may otherwise remain largely unexplored. Thus, I aimed for this thesis to revolve around "situated and embodied knowledges" rather than establishing "unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledge claims" (Haraway, 2016, p.583).

This methodological approach offers insights that are not only personal but also collectively resonant, as “situated knowledges are about communities” and not just “about isolated individual[s]” (Haraway, 2016, p.590). By acknowledging my position as an individual and a researcher -inclusive of my social, political identities, and experiences- I intend to convey their influences and transform them into tools for achieving a deeper understanding. Hence, I seek to create a dialogue between interviews and my own lived experiences. This has been an iterative process “that aggregates partial perspectives” while recognizing that “standpoints are not individual and static but community-based and processual” (Sweet, 2020, p.928). Thus, my goal is to leverage the “nondominant knowledge and its potential for theorizing power from the experience of everyday life” without homogenizing survivors’ experiences (Sweet, 2020, p.928).

Autoethnography challenges positivist approaches that prioritize objective and quantitative data over the qualitative and subjective. Feminist scholars has criticized these methods for silencing the voices and dismissing the experiences of those who are maginalized (Bowman, 1992). Then, autoethnography questions the epistemological assumptions about what constitutes valid knowledge and who gets to produce it. In this sense, I use my “epistemic privilege” derived from my subjectivity, and this will guide me “to relational theorizing” by “generating insights into power” while still valuing the “knowledge production that [is] “external' to experience” (Sweet, 2020, p.930-1).

In addition to all these, I recognize that my subject position regarding this research comes with a certain set of preconceptions that inevitably affect my approach. Thus, I try to benefit from this closeness, as it can unveil nuances and complexities that a more distant observation might miss. However, approaching

sexual violence through autoethnography demands a critical methodological undertaking. Hence, “embodied accounts” mean not only the generation of “relational” knowledge but also “a form of self-scrutiny, a critical and genealogical self-narrative” (Braidotti, 2009, p.243). Nevertheless, particularly in autoethnographic work, this immersion invites a reevaluation of what bias means in qualitative research. It entails dealing with the blurry line between personal involvement and analytical approach while reflecting on my own subject position in each and every part of the process. In this vein, my goal is not to eliminate bias or achieve objectivity, but to critically engage with it.

1.4 Navigating the ethical terrain

As I embarked on this research, I was well aware of that sexual violence is a delicate issue that introduces profound ethical challenges that need to be carefully navigated throughout the research process. Given the need for trust in my field, I used snowball sampling to reach my participants. Fortunately, my path was laden with already established connections with a substantial number of my interviewees thanks to shared personal and political backgrounds. These bonds, some of which became stronger through the research process, provided a solid foundation upon which to build trust and rapport. In addition, my approach allowed potential participants to initiate contact, fostering a more organic and voluntary engagement with those individuals who expressed an interest in contributing to my research.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with my participants that revolved around the issues of complaints and disclosures. Throughout these interviews, I remained mindful of the ethical considerations inherent in discussing issues related to sexual violence as I recognized that it can inadvertently trigger traumatic

consequences for survivors (Kelly, 2012). In response to these concerns, my goal was simple: not to directly ask about sexual violence experiences and to create a safe and supportive environment for my informants. As such, the interview questions were designed to explore participants' general opinions and conceptualizations regarding the main themes of the study rather than experiences or accounts of sexual violence. I attempted to engage with them in a flexible and open manner, staying away from a directive approach. I instead aimed to allow my interlocutors to share their experiences in a manner and depth that they felt comfortable with.

Acknowledging that survivors are not solely defined by victimhood, I have sought to enable them to articulate their perspectives on their own terms. Further, anthropological inquiry, particularly the "study of suffering," necessitates the careful listening to the "silences that can be recognized as language" (Ross, 2001, p.273). With this in mind, I paid attention to these silences and aimed to identify the gaps in people's narratives. When I recognized the silences, I not only sought to understand them but also to create space for my participants without being intrusive. I believe this approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter, beyond the explicit verbal and performative expressions, capturing the subtleties that contribute to a richer understanding of the experiences being studied.

Last but not least, I prioritized the anonymity and safety of my participants during both the data collection and writing process. Before interviews, I informed the participants about the framework, questions, and objectives of the research to ensure that they are fully aware of the context of the questions and can make an informed decision about their participation. Audio recording only took place with their explicit consent; otherwise, I proceeded with note-taking alone. I took great care to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of my participants by keeping their names

anonymous, as well as the other parties whose stories are pronounced in this thesis. At times, I used pseudonyms or other privacy measures to anonymize stories and narratives. Furthermore, to prevent recognition and to protect identities, I have occasionally changed or omitted certain details when the details may expose specific information about individuals.

1.5 Sociohistorical background

In this section, I will provide an overview of feminist disclosures of sexual harassment by framing them within the broader trajectory of feminist struggle in Turkey, as well as the analogous movements unfolding globally. Initially, I will discuss the gradual deepening of the feminist movement's engagement with sexual violence in Turkey. This part will also show how the feminist movement enabled changes in the institutional and legal realms, as well as its engagement with the disclosure practices. I will then move on to an examination of the prevailing disclosure practices worldwide, tracing a trajectory that is notably related to the #MeToo movement.

1.5.1 Feminist resistance against sexual violence in Turkey

The origins of the feminist movement in Turkey date back to the 19th century, to the Ottoman era, when progressive elites began to develop feminist perspectives. Subsequently, the emergence of what is known as the first wave of feminism or state feminism in Turkey coincides with the formation of the Turkish nation-state, which deliberately incorporated, modernized, and "enfrenchised" Turkish women in the 1930s (Sirman, 1989, p.4).

Fast forward to the second wave of feminism in Turkey during the 1980s, we observe a new path characterized by a distinct resistance to what is called state feminism, with women becoming more engaged in public activism and their quest for rights. During this period, the mantra "the personal is political" played a significant role for the second wave feminism in Turkey, around which the feminists shaped their demands (Diner and Tokaş, 2010). Women began to advocate for their rights both inside and outside the domestic sphere (Bora, 2019). In this vein, feminists raised issues concerning private sphere through various means such as street meetings, house meetings, public demonstrations, and so on (Adak & Çağatay, 2023; Özçürümez & Cengiz, 2011).

Sexual violence became as a central concern during this period. Several feminist organizations initiated petition campaigns and public rallies to denounce the sexual violence against women (Timisi & Ağduk Gevrek, 2002). In this sense, feminism in Turkey in the 1980s shifted its focus to highlight personal experiences and situate women's bodies "as the site of the struggle" (Sirman, 1989, p.21). Through this lens, feminists began to unveil the connection between women's oppression in the private sphere and the wider socio-political terrain by exposing the shared experiences of womanhood (Adak & Çağatay, 2023). One of the most prominent aspects of the agenda during this period was to address violence within the household. Feminists not only challenged domestic oppression, but also underscored that sexual violence against women transcends divisions such as race, education, and class (Sirman, 1989). The struggle against the oppression of women's sexuality was declared with Kadın Kurtuluşu Bildirgesi[2] and the campaign

[2] "Declaration of Women's Liberation" in English

"Bedenimiz Bizimdir, Cinsel Tacize Hayır"[3] was also launched through the end of the 1980s (Timisi & Ağduk Gevrek, 2002, p.29)

In the 1980s, feminists also aimed to foster solidarity and raise awareness, particularly about sexual harassment (Bora & Günal, 2002). This struggle gradually gained momentum in the 1990s, with significant progress in both institutional and legal realms (Arat, 2000). The draft amendment to the Turkish Civil Code was among the most important formal efforts of the 1990s in terms of egalitarian policies and standing against the oppression of women's sexuality (Işık, 2002). The assemblies organized during this time demonstrated that different forms of violence against women and sexual harassment in the workplace were on the agenda of the women's movement (Işık, 2002). As awareness of women's autonomy over their bodies grew, women began to openly share their personal experiences related to domestic violence, sexual harassment, violence, abortion, and more, realizing the commonalities of their struggles (Çeşnigil, 2019, p.21). Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı[4] was also established in 1990, which is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the prevention of violence against women. Hence, against the backdrop of heightened consciousness in the 1980s and 1990s, women developed an intention to break the silence surrounding secrets they were taught to keep (Saner, 2021).

Even if these acts of breaking the silence were not always organized struggles aimed at publicly naming individual perpetrators, women voiced their concerns through house meetings, even during the coup regime, where they gathered to discuss personal experiences and issues related to sexuality (Çeşnigil, 2021, p.8,31). In this sense, this trajectory of the feminist movement laid an essential foundation for the promotion of different and more direct forms of practices to confront sexual

[3] "Our Body is Ours, No to Sexual Harassment" in English
[4] Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation

violence. Therefore, this background is important to understand the current forms of mechanisms against sexual violence and to see how feminist engagement with sexual violence has evolved over time. On the other hand, while in the next section I will discuss the relationship between disclosure and the global #MeToo movement as a practice carried out through social media, it should be noted that disclosure is not a phenomenon practiced only since #MeToo or only in recent years for the feminist movement in Turkey. The practice of disclosing abusive men began to emerge as an issue within the organized structures of the left.[5] In the 2010s, disclosures started to be frequently utilized in a systematic manner to expose instances of harassment within these organizations.

In addition to these efforts, feminists have actively sought to create change within academic realm, acknowledging the prevalence of sexual violence within academic institutions and the limitations of institutional responses. To this end, CTSs have been established at some universities. Initially, these units aimed to raise awareness about sexual violence, provide education to students on these matters, establish regulations and guidance documents for handling complaint cases, and serve as places where survivors could find support in the face of sexual violence experienced within the university (Kalem, 2018). These units also aimed to act as deterrents to potential harassment cases on campuses, conduct workshops and seminars on the topic and facilitate the establishment of similar units in other universities in Turkey (Şenol-Cantek, 2018). Additionally, networks between CTS units at different universities have been established to foster a more collaborative and mutually supportive approach in addressing sexual violence while promoting a

[5] (Baytok, 2021a) https://sendika.org/2021/02/ifsalar-adalet-ve-kadinlarin-guclenmesi-cemre-baytok-catlak-zemin-607269

culture of solidarity and shared learning (Uygur & Şimga; 2018). The pivotal role CTSs play in disciplinary investigations will also be explored in Chapter 2.

1.5.2 Digital feminism, #metoo and sexual violence

The widespread phenomenon of sexual harassment disclosures has become increasingly prevalent and transformed into organized struggles with the #MeToo movement all around the world. The term was initially employed by Tarana Burke, a Black feminist activist, in 2006 to shed light on the prevalence of sexual violence and reveal the stories of harassment experienced by women as part of an effort to create a liberatory movement (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). Subsequently, it resurfaced on October 15, 2017, following a request of actress Alyssa Milano, who asked Twitter users to respond to her tweet by sharing the hashtag me too if they had experienced instances of sexual violence. Milano's call prompted a flood of stories revolving around sexual harassment. Quite rapidly, more than twelve million users across Twitter, Facebook, and various other social media platforms have posted to the #MeToo hashtag, publicly sharing their own experiences as survivors of sexual violence (Garcia, 2017).

The #MeToo movement, on the other hand, has faced not only external criticism but also internal conflicts and disagreements over the politics of disclosure. These conflicts have stemmed from generational divides among feminists, concerns about its intersectionality, different perspectives on the methods, discursive aspects of disclosures, as well as varying conceptualizations of consent and violence (Cossman, 2019; Kindig, 2018; Kipnis, 2017; 2018; Chattopadhyay, 2018; Faludi et al., 2020). In a parallel line, in chapters 3 and 4, I will explore the internal

disagreements among feminists regarding disclosures and the deprivatization of sexual violence experience, to some extent.

Referred to by some as the "fourth wave feminism" or "digital feminism," the current atmosphere of feminist movement places a significant emphasis on "online technology" and "social media outlets like Twitter provide an unprecedented means for solidarity and activism" more than ever (Zimmerman, 2017, p.54).Therefore, propelled by the #MeToo movement and the global influence of digital feminism worldwide; digital platforms, social media, and online spaces have provided women and other gender minorities with a means to share their experiences and raise awareness about the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence. This has also paved the way for disclosures of sexual violence in Turkey, particularly starting in the fields of cinema and television sector (Dede Özdemir, 2015). While social media disclosures can be considered the most acknowledged and common practices of disclosures, in the remainder of this thesis, I will also present different practices of disclosures adopted by survivors in terms of how they create counter-publics.

1.6 Sexual violence in academic settings

While rooted in an essentialist understanding of gender, the foundational conceptualizations of sexual violence emphasized its relationship to the patriarchal structures engrained in society rather than categorizing it solely as acts of a sexual nature (MacKinnon, 1979). This approach situated sexual violence within the broader context of sexual discrimination and elucidated its broader sociopolitical framework beyond individual encounters (MacKinnon, 1979). Other scholars have also pointed out the relationship of sexual violence to the political economy and the capitalist mode of production (Federici, 2018). Kelly introduced the concept of

sexual violence as a "continuum," which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter (1998). This approach has been one of the most persistent understandings prevalent in the literature since it helps us see the "overlap between sexual harassment, men's sexual entitlement, women's inequality, and men's violence against women" (Grosser & Tyler, 2020, p. 223).

MacKinnon's perspective has received some criticism from feminist scholars, who argue that her reliance on a binary conception of gender and her inadequate treatment of women's agency, as well as her portrayal of female subordination as an immutable, universal phenomenon, failing to account for the nuances involved in this issue (Malone 2017; Cornell 1991; Özkazanç, 2015). Her conceptualization has also been criticized for advocating the restriction of sexuality rather than empowerment as well as for narrowly framing the issue within the "the experiences of women as the subordinate sex class" (Gallop, 1997; Özkazanç, 2015; Grosser & Tyler, 2022, p. 223). However, it offers an important lens through which to understand how sexual violence intersects with institutional and workplace environments. Despite these critiques, her framework has been the starting point for many studies that explore sexual violence as a matter of power dynamics, rather than merely an issue of sexuality.

In this line, further feminist critiques of sexual violence bring to light the deeply rooted power dynamics within institutional structures, revealing a complex intersection of various axes of power, including gender, race, age, and more (Eckert et al., 2022). Similar to many other institutions and workplaces, academia is not exempt from the pervasive influence of patriarchal codes that shape its fabric (Lemaitre, 2017).

To shed light on this complex landscape, it is critical to acknowledge that sexual violence in academia is not an isolated incident or concern. Instead, it is closely entwined with broader gender asymmetries that define the entire academic environment (Täuber et al., 2022; Blithe & Elliott, 2020). Awareness of this gendered aspect underscores the significance of recognizing not only the individual incidents of harassment but also the systematic issues that are ingrained in the very structures of academic institutions. Therefore, rather than being impartial entities, universities, through their structures, create conditions that facilitate sexual violence through institutional structuring (Tauber et al., 2022).

This oversight within the academic realm enables professors to "act out their toxic tendencies under the guise of the legitimate authority of the organizations that employ them" (Forster and Lund, 2018; p. 24). Under the banner of this authority, the power dynamics prevalent in academia become a troubling aspect, where the structures meant to facilitate knowledge and intellectual growth become breeding grounds for abuse. These relationships both result from and contribute to "the misuse of power by the perpetrator" (Abel and Rouleau, 1995, p.150). Moreover, the academic sphere is profoundly entwined with clientelistic mechanisms and characterized by hierarchical relationships which have been termed "academic incest" (Başak, 2013, p.28). This term points out to the inherent problems of power imbalances between seniors and juniors within academia, where this framework can perpetuate an environment conducive to various forms of sexual violence. These inherent asymmetries, present in various aspects of academia, occasionally intersect with instances of sexual violence.

Although sexual violence manifests itself in a variety of forms -the complexity of this issue becomes more apparent when considering the multitude of

terms and classifications employed in discussions on the topic, which will be thoroughly explored in Chapter 2- the academic realm and university campuses serve as settings where many of these incidents unfold (Gialopsos, 2017). Hence, while recent discussions have brought new cases of sexual violence in academia to light, it is crucial to recognize that such occurrences in academic settings is far from a novel phenomenon (Franklin et al., 1981). By highlighting the harassment experienced by women students perpetrated by professors, it is emphasized that sexual violence is an undeniable reality on campuses that often persists in silence (Dziech & Weiner, 1984).

Unfortunately, when cases of sexual violence come to light in university settings, they often face inadequate institutional or legal repercussions, primarily due to a desire to shield the institutions themselves (Sloan & Fisher, 2011). In this sense, the sexism inscribed in institutional structure of academia which is "perpetuated at the individual and organisation level through concealment within culture, policies, the hierarchies that exist within how institutions are structured and regulated" fuels sexual violence (Whitley & Page, 2015, p.37).

Within this institutional framework in which sexism finds its way, it is also important to talk about "how responsibility is allocated" in the face of sexual violence (Whitley, 2015, p.37). Most of the time, academic institutions approach cases of sexual violence with the intention of refraining from public exposure in order to protect their reputation (Phipps, 2020; Gomez, 2022). Therefore, what is given more importance is neither the survivor of the assault nor the repercussions toward the perpetrators. As a result, the very academic and institutional structures that should aim to prevent these asymmetries and power relationships remain inadequate and often times not transparent (Adams-Prassl et al., 2024). This is

similar to Sara Ahmed's work on complaint processes in academic spheres that prioritize the instructions at the expense of the victim (2021). This, in turn, affects the survivors' decisions about whether and how to take action in the face of sexual violence.

Overall, sexual violence manifests itself in various forms in academic spheres, not only through interactions among students, but also through interactions between academics and students. The power dynamics inherent in these relationships create an environment where instances of exploitation can occur. Referring to the case of Avital Ronnell at NYU, Wang (2018) highlights "the insular nature of academia," a characteristic shared with "many other industries in which a hierarchical power structure" remains[6]. This environment, Wang argues, becomes a breeding ground for various forms of sexual violence, proliferating "the rampant sexual harassment and abuses of power that are endemic within its walls". Since the hierarchical relationships are deeply ingrained in academia, it renders those who have been subjected to sexual violence vulnerable and makes it difficult for them to resist against it (Tauber et al., 2022, Naezer et al., 2019).

1.7 Structure of the thesis

In line with the foregoing, this thesis revolves around the mechanisms of complaint and disclosure of sexual violence within academic institutions. It aims to probe the multifaceted nature of these mechanisms and examine their nuanced and controversial dimensions. In doing so, the thesis aspires to make a significant contribution to the understanding of complaints and disclosures of sexual violence in universities.

[6] Esther Wang (Aug. 17, 2018). "What Are We to Make of the Case of Scholar Avital Ronell?" https://www.jezebel.com/what-are-we-to-make-of-the-case-of-scholar-avital-ronel-1828366966

In this chapter, I have offered a concise overview of the methodology and sociohistorical context underpinning this study. Following from this foundation, the second chapter will be an examination of complaints: the institutional mechanisms in place to address sexual violence at universities. My objective for this chapter is to conceptualize violence as a continuum and understand its relational nature in order to see how sexual violence is intertwined with other forms of violence. By introducing the layers of complaint processes, I will illuminate how these institutional frameworks are built in ways that perpetuate further harm, exhaustion, impunity, and insensitivity while drawing upon the narratives and insights of participants.

The third chapter centers on the act of sexual violence disclosures. In addition to exploring the survivors' motivations for undertaking disclosures, this chapter unpacks various practices of disclosures. This exploration reveals disclosures as a collective political action and a form of solidarity, and portrays how they form counter-publics on digital, discursive, and spatial levels. Nevertheless, this chapter also addresses the drawbacks of disclosure mechanisms. These drawbacks include the challenges faced by survivors, such as stigma, victim-blaming, and social ostracism, and the broader implications of politicizing pain and normalizing sexual violence.

In the final main chapter, I will engage in an in-depth discussion on the formation of subjectivity, which subtly underlies many of the discussions in the preceding chapters. I will approach the issue of subjectivity from different angles and try to unpack its multiple layers. To initiate this discussion, I will first focus on the discourse surrounding the victim-survivor duality. I will then critique the conventional victim-perpetrator paradigm and employ the concept of the implicated subject to offer insight into the complex subject positions individuals occupy in the

perpetuation of sexual violence. From there, I will examine the fragmented and fluid dimensions of subjectivity. This issue will be followed by a discussion on the relationship between sexual violence, resistance, and feminist subjectivity, as well as the nexus between narration and subjectivity. I will conclude the chapter with an exploration into the fragile aspects of feminist solidarity networks while demonstrating how these networks navigate and negotiate subjectivities.

CHAPTER 2

FILING THE COMPLAINT

I recall that one night when a small group of four of us gathered at Mayıs' place in Ortaköy for a movie night. As the evening wore on and it neared the time to head home, Mayıs suddenly received a strange text message from one of her professors, with whom she was quite close with. This professor, whom I will call Mehmet in this thesis, was liked by all, almost like a heroic figure.

We looked at the text message, finding it peculiar and difficult to understand. It seemed as if it was sent by someone who was drunk because the text was full of typos and meaningless emojis. It said something about how Mehmet wanted to tell Mayıs what was in his heart.

Receiving such a message from a professor at 1:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning made us all feel uncomfortable. Mayıs asked him if everything was okay, but she continued to receive more strange texts and audio messages afterward. It became clear that Professor Mehmet was drunk -or pretending to be drunk- from the way he was communicating. All of us, as a round table discussion, decided that the content of his messages was inappropriate to send to a student. Mayıs felt deeply disappointed.

We also found ourselves somewhat shocked by the situation, especially since we were also already familiar with this professor's widespread popularity at the university. He was adored by everyone, often seen socializing with his students, going out to dinners, sharing drinks, and buying them gifts and concert tickets. However, there was also an element of not being entirely surprised, as one always

harbors a lingering suspicion that such extreme niceness might be concealing something darker, especially when it is a man who is beloved by all.

Throughout that night, the professor persisted in texting, sending audio messages, and calling Mayıs for nearly two hours. She expressed a feeling of disgust and shattered trust. We were also quite irritated. She decided not to answer any of the calls that night because she felt that his actions could only escalate into more disturbing things.

Following this uneasy story, I will examine the institutional mechanisms for addressing sexual violence within universities in the upcoming sections of this chapter. Alongside providing a framework for a relational understanding of violence, I will outline the layers of institutional complaint processes. Subsequently, I will shed light on how these institutional mechanisms reproduce violence for survivors through exhaustion, the institutionalization of routine impunity, and institutional insensitivity, which are deeply rooted in the system. Ultimately, my aim is to underscore the importance of recognizing sexual violence as a continuum that extends beyond singular acts, influencing various aspects of survivors' lives.

2.1 Theorizing violence

> *violence, far from being an interruption of the ordinary, is folded into the ordinary.*
> -Veena Das[7]

As Mayıs reflects on the experience, she acknowledges that it was an uncomfortable and unsettling moment that revealed the professor's true nature. Instead of calling the experience harassment, she considered it sexual misconduct. In the aftermath, however, she found herself burdened with a profound sense of responsibility. She

[7] (Das, 2008, p.283)

struggled with the realization that this man was likely a *serial* harasser. Mayıs could not shake the weight of guilt for having dined with him and accepted his gifts. She questioned why she had not recognized the signs earlier. The experiences Mayıs endured did not involve physical harm. However, the persistent phone calls, intrusive text messages, and voicemails she received were deeply unsettling. This sense of unsettlement developed into some kind of a psychological burden on her during her encounters with him.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I try to present a comprehensive overview of the taxonomies and categorizations of sexual violence. However, it is critical to recognize that the concept of violence, in its entirety, is inherently blurry and "unstable" (Das, 2008, p.284). It is a complex phenomenon that often eludes the grasp of those who experience it while challenging survivors to comprehend the full scope of what they have been through. Take the example of Mayıs: the absence of physicality does not equate to the absence of harm. Violence as such too can precipitate profound consequences, take different forms and be reproduced in various manners. As such, it left deep-seated and far-reaching effects on Mayıs' life, as it will be unfolded throughout this thesis.

Therefore, my primary concern in this thesis is not only with the overt acts of sexual violence, but also with various other forms of violence that follow the experience of sexual violence experience. To this end, I seek to explore how violence is reproduced through instructional structures as well as through processes of stigmatization and social ostracism -in the next chapter- following disclosures. This exploration will try to understand the plurality of violence and how it leaks into the mundane. This perspective aligns with Kleinman's concept of "violences of everyday life" which demonstrates violence as something that "has multiple forms

and dynamics" (2000, p.227). This plural understanding is crucial as it allows us to move beyond "current taxonomies of violence" as defined in formal domains that are limited to objective criteria and specific instances of violence.

A couple of days later, the professor contacted Mayıs again, as if nothing had happened. He seemed oblivious to the events of the previous encounter. This affected Mayıs even more than the event itself since Mehmet's recklessness about what he did was even more worrying. Yet, he appeared nervous when Mayıs sounded distant and asked if everything was all right. She responded by expressing her irritation at his behavior the other night, particularly given his position as a professor. He apologized and attributed his actions to being drunk that night. Mayıs was incensed by his apology, and we were all convinced that he was a predator using the same strategy with his students.

This pluralistic frame of thinking also indicates the interconnectedness between "ordinary" and "extreme" violence (Kleinman, 2000, p.227). Therefore, violence has a "multi-sided character" that leaks into the everyday and manifests itself in various ways (Bourgois, 2001, p.7). It also calls for an acknowledgment of "multiplicity of its effects in experiences of suffering" (Kleinmann, 2000, p.227). Despite Mayıs' assertion that she was not traumatized by the incident, as I remarked, she was still grappled with feelings of unrest.

By feeling an immense responsibility on her shoulders, Mayıs started telling this issue to people around her, her close friends, friends from his classes, or from her department. Mostly, what she did was to warn people because she was driven by a sense of obligation. She felt indebted and she did not want other students to fall victim to similar experiences. However, she also wanted to uncover if her encounter was an isolated incident or part of a pattern. Over time, as Mayıs shared her story,

she discovered similar accounts from others, some of them were more disturbing and deeply impactful than her own, as remarked by her. She also considered herself fortunate to have avoided a more uncomfortable experience from that night, especially after hearing from her peers about their troubling encounters with the same professor. These stories typically began with late-night texts, advanced to phone calls, and eventually escalated to more aggressive behavior on the phone, including verbal assault, as she had already suspected. Learning about these kinds of experiences left her feeling even more unsettled, disturbed, and vulnerable.

Mayıs did not feel discouraged from participating in campus life, but she had to refrain from a literary festival in which she played a very active role upon learning that this professor had recently joined the organization committee. Similarly, I know of many friends who had to drop classes because they shared them with certain students who harassed them. For some of them, this meant a significant shift in their academic journey. Nazlı, a friend of mine from university, for instance, had to drop her film studies classes -a field she entered the university eager to explore- because she was harassed by a popular male student who was actively involved in these circles on campus. The harassment she faced from a popular male student was not only a violation of her bodily integrity and personal safety but also a direct assault on her academic aspirations and professional dreams.

These stories collectively illuminate on a critical issue; the need to recognize sexual violence as a continuum with far-reaching effects that shape the academic and personal lives of those involved. It is never merely about the acts of violence themselves but about the broader climate they engender. This acknowledgment calls for an understanding of violence "in a dynamic and relational manner" to see how its various forms are "transformed, reproduced, or entangled across time and space"

(Gökarıksel, 2019, p.114). Students find themselves having to make significant changes in their courses, majors, and even career aspirations, not to mention the emotional and psychological aspects. This goes hand in hand with the existing body of research that points to the link between sexual violence and the prevailing power dynamics in institutional spheres (Cantalupo & Kidder, 2018; Potter et al., 2018; Cantor et al., 2015). Hence, women and other sexual and gender minorities are disproportionately subjected to sexual violence and consequently, it, often times, poses "a serious external barrier to [their] career development" (Fitzgerald et al., 1988, p.155). Therefore, while the enduring trauma resulting from sexual violence is substantial, experiencing it during one's university years directly influences one's academic trajectory (Mengo & Black, 2015; Jordan et al., 2014; Potter et al., 2018).

Violence, therefore, does not exist in isolation; it is inextricably linked to other types of violence. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois discuss this entangled nature of violence by remarking that "violence is a slippery concept - nonlinear, productive, destructive, and reproductive … Violence gives birth to itself. So we can rightly speak of chains, spirals, and mirrors of violence - or, as we prefer - a continuum of violence" (2004, p.1). This recognition compels us to look beyond the incident itself and question the institutional, social, and structural factors that allow sexual violence to persist as a continuum, reverberating through the lives and communities of those affected. Then, within this entangled world of everyday violences, the experience of sexual violence extends far beyond the immediate act, continuing to be reproduced and echoed in myriad forms and contexts. Grasping this entanglement is an effort to unveil and understand the "general economy of violence"[8] that encapsulates the

[8] Gökarıksel borrows this term from Etienne Balibar in order to demonstrate the scenes of violence in Poland. In this thesis, I employ this term to depict the atmosphere of violence that is both reproduced in the aftermath of the act of sexual violence and intricately intertwined with it.

problem of sexual violence at universities (Gökarıksel, 2019, p.114). To this end, I will explore this general economy and how this reproduction unfolds throughout the processes of institutional complaints and disclosures, in the remainder of this chapter.

2.2 Unpacking the concept: sexual violence

The everydayness of sexual violence is reflected in the narratives of many of the women who became a part of this study. They revealed that experiences of sexual violence are not exceptional but rather part of the routine fabric of being a woman on campus. Then, rather than an eventful conceptualization of sexual violence, it matters to see how it "attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary" (Das, 2006, p.1). While sexual violence has become "naturalized" in the social fabric, it is also simultaneously "shared and particular" (Kleinman, 2000, p.239). Thus, while sexual violence is profoundly individual, it is also a collective event experienced by many on an ongoing basis. Irmak, a graduate student from Ankara, confided to me during our interview:

> Ahah, of course it wasn't my first harassment experience. I mean, I'm sure all the women in this university have been harassed, physically or at least verbally. We are all dealing with this shit. So it didn't affect me that deeply. But I couldn't handle, I couldn't digest the fact that he could act so comfortably in public as if nothing had happened. I couldn't digest it and I was very affected by it. ... It's hard enough to see your harasser, it's hard enough to face him, it's even harder to deal with other people after you disclose your harasser. Or managing your classes, your interactions with people. ... I won't go into too much detail but I am happy that this process is over. (my translation) (Appendix B, 1)

This quote also foregrounds the troubling aspect of sexual violence as something that leaks into the everyday experiences of survivors in various manners. This reveals the pervasive nature of violence and the complex realities that survivors face in the aftermath of sexual violence. Hence, while trying to adopt a more relational,

entangled, and holistic understanding of sexual violence with its relation to other forms of violence, I also feel the need to discuss the vocabulary on sexual violence, as these categorizations informs how legal and institutional systems deal with sexual violence. As taken as the beginning ground in many studies, according to the World Health Organization, sexual violence is referred as:

> any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.[9]

Consistent with the dimension of "coercion" integral to this definition, a multitude of scholars have emphasized that the domain of sexual violence encompasses "nonconsensual completed or attempted" physical or "non-contact acts of a sexual nature" including "voyeurism and verbal or behavioral sexual harassments" (Basile et al., 2007, p.8). Therefore, based on these insights, it is clear that sexual violence cannot be viewed as a monolithic phenomenon but rather as a "continuum" that includes both physical and non-physical acts (Post et al., 2011, p.102). In this sense, "there is a continuum of degrees of coercion" that ranges from "physically forced compelling acts" to "fully consensual acts," and between these two lies "many shades of gray" (Hamby and Koss, 2003, p.252).

This nuanced understanding is critical to acknowledge the full breadth of behaviors that qualify as sexual violence, which extend beyond overt physical aggression to more subtle forms of violation that are no less insidious. Nevertheless, while sexual violence exists on a spectrum, the legislative and institutional measures of sexual violence differ across countries and institutions. These measures tend to offer definitive categorizations that attempt to delineate the boundaries of sexual violence by strictly adhering to objective criteria. Hence, the problem arises for the

[9] retrieved from https://apps.who.int/violence-info/sexual-violence/

survivors when ""at some point along the continuum, the degree of coercion falls below current legal standards for meeting the definition of a crime" despite still being non-consensual actions (Hamby and Koss, 2003, p.252). Therefore, such an emphasis on objectivity in these categorizations fails to capture the nuanced, performative, and often indiscernible dimensions of sexual violence. Consequently, it results in the exclusion of the numerous sexual violence experiences. This oversight is compounded by the lack of a "common nomenclature" to articulate the multitude of coercive encounters that survivors endure, a challenge that stems from the inherently subjective and performative nature of these experiences (Campbell and Townsend, 2011, p.99).

2.3 Sexual violence in the formal realm

To understand how institutional structures further reproduce violence, we should also examine how sexual violence is addressed and positioned within legal frameworks and academic institutions.

2.3.1 The legal landscape of sexual violence in turkey

The realm of sexual offenses remained inadequately addressed in the Turkish Penal Code (TCK) until the reformed TCK was introduced in 2005. In the preceding iteration, sexual offenses were categorized under the rubric of "Crimes Against General Morality and Public Order"[10]. A pivotal transformation unfolded with the reclassification of sexual offenses under "Crimes Against Bodily Integrity"[11] in the 2005 TCK. This nuanced adjustment signaled a departure from the previous association of sexual crimes with societal and familial moral doctrines towards a

[10] "Adabı Umumiye ve Nizamı Aile Aleyhine Cürümler" in original.
[11] "Cinsel Dokunulmazlığa Karşı Suçlar" in original.

focus on the notions of bodily integrity and individual freedom (Kırbaş Canikoğlu, 2013, p.63). This change indicated a more progressive approach to addressing sexual violence within the legal framework.

In the preceding TCK[12], some of the acts that can be included under sexual violence were defined with concepts such as "ırza tasaddi," "namusa tasaddi," "ırza geçme"[13] which are expressions that define honor through the female body (Karacan, 2022, p.1281) and rape between married couples was not recognized as a crime (Yokuş Sevük, 2005). These definitions are left out of the new TCK, and the marital status no longer plays a role in defining the offense and determining its punishment (Yokuş Sevük, 2005). In other words, the sexist, male-dominated language that existed in the old law has been eliminated to some extent (Kırbaş Canikoğlu, 2013). Furthermore, the crime of harassment, which used to be defined as teasing and molestation[14], is defined as "sexually motivated harassment"[15] in the new TCK.

In TCK 102, sexual assault is basically defined as violating the bodily inviolability of a person through sexual behavior. The qualified form of the same offense is defined as performing the act by inserting an organ or other object into the body. In order for an event to be defined as sexual assault, sexual behavior must be carried out against the consent of the person. In the crime of sexual assault, force, threat, trickery or situations affecting the will of the victim are not regulated as elements in the article, but in its justification, it is mentioned that it is possible to commit these crimes by using force or threat or trickery against the victim, for

[12] In the preceding TCK, *söz atma* (can be translated as catcalling) and *sarkıntılık*(molestation) are also defined under sexual offenses.
[13] It can be said that these words meet the definitions of assault and rape in English. However, the use of "ırz" and "namus" in these terms frames the act of rape in relation to honor and chastity, making it a sexist term for defining sexual assault.
[14] "söz atma ve sarkıntılıkta bulunma" in Turkish.
[15] "cinsel amaçlı taciz" in Turkish.

example, by causing them to lose consciousness or by taking advantage of their unconsciousness (Yokuş Sevük, 2005).

Further, according to Article 105 of TCK, sexual harassment is defined as disturbing the victim sexually in violation of moral purity, which is carried out by sexual behaviors that do not constitute a violation of the person's bodily inviolability. According to Yokuş Sevük, it is a shortcoming that the offense of sexual harassment in Article 105/1 of the TCK is not clearly defined, specified and formulated in a way that can be understood by everyone (2015).

All in all, despite certain advancements regarding sexual crimes with the implementation of the new TCK, there are still shortcomings in the legal framework (Kırbaş Canikoğlu, 2013). Moreover, the developments in norm-making and law-making have not yet been fully reflected in the courts and these legislative measures have not always been applied impartially within the judicial system (Kırbaş Canikoğlu, 2013; Koğacıoğlu 2008). The inherent challenges in substantiating allegations of sexual crimes and bringing the perpetrators to the court have contributed significantly to the prevalence of unpunished offenders. By and large, the reform of sexual crimes through the new Turkish Penal Code did not provide a comprehensive solution to effectively address and prevent sexual violence since the deeply rooted patriarchal order within the legal system makes sexual violence difficult to prove and does not adequately protect victims (Smart, 2002).

2.3.2 Sexual violence at universities: Definitions and procedures

In Turkey, sexual violence codes in universities are based on two sets of regulations. The first is the Student Discipline Regulation of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), which deals with cases of sexual violence among students. The second set is

the Civil Servant Law, which regulates cases of sexual violence involving academic and administrative staff. In both scenarios, the process begins with the complainant submitting a petition to the university. The university is then obligated to provide an official response to this petition. However, the decision to initiate a disciplinary investigation rests with the university. Depending on the penalty, if a disciplinary investigation is not initiated within 15 days (for warnings and reprimands) and 90 days (for suspensions), the authority to impose a disciplinary punishment expires due to the statute of limitations.[16] In addition, the regulation[17] stipulates a standardized period for the disciplinary investigations to take place, which is thirty days. However, if there is reasonable justification, this period may be extended, up to a total of ninety days.

The assignment of the disciplinary committees mostly depends on the university, and these committees are subject to rotation. Certain universities, thanks to CTS initiatives, have created advisory groups to be involved in the disciplinary processes, consisting of individuals who are knowledgeable about how to approach this issue (Göker, 2018). Yet, in most universities, the assignment of members to disciplinary committees is often determined in a seemingly arbitrary manner - based on factors such as the availability of professors and the number of services they have provided. For instance, professors who have served on a disciplinary investigation for plagiarism may also be assigned to a sexual harassment case. This leads to a

[16] Madde 13 https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/08/20120818-12.htm

[17] The full text in Turkish is as follows: "Disiplin soruşturmasına, disipline konu olay öğrenilince derhal başlanılır ve soruşturma en geç otuz gün içinde sonuçlandırılır. Soruşturma bu süre içinde tamamlanamaz ise soruşturmacı gerekçeli olarak ek süre talep edebilir. Disiplin amiri sunulan gerekçeyi ve zamanaşımı sürelerini dikkate alarak her defasında otuz günü geçmemek üzere altmış güne kadar, toplu olarak işlenen suçlarda ise doksan güne kadar ek süre verebilir." Retrieved from: https://hukukkoord.firat.edu.tr/documentFiles/1695634561831.yok_ogrenci_disiplin_isleri_2547_madde_54.pdf

situation where committee members may lack knowledge of trauma-informed techniques or feminist approaches to effectively handling sexual violence.

According to the Student Discipline Regulation of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), sexual harassment is defined as an act that results in the suspension of the perpetrator student from the university for two semesters. Further, sexual assault, as outlined in Article 9, involves engaging in "sexual conduct" on individuals' bodies which leads to the violation of their sexual integrity. According to the regulation, this constitutes grounds for dismissal from the higher education institution.[18] However, it is important to note that while YÖK's disciplinary regulation -which is actually subject to TCK- includes the names of these two offenses and the associated penalties, it lacks the explicit information about what they entail and the specific behaviors that fall under these definitions.

On the other hand, regulations pertaining to academic and administrative staff are introduced by Law No. 6764, amending Article 53 of the Council of Higher Education Law. According to this amendment, employees under the jurisdiction of this law within the Higher Education Council (YÖK) face dismissal from public service if they commit the offense of "physically assaulting or sexually harassing their superiors, colleagues, staff, service beneficiaries, or students."[19] Regarding the decision-making processes, another complication arises when sexual violence is perpetrated by academic or administrative staff since the university lacks the authority to enforce decisions they reach. According to the same article, disciplinary penalties are administered by competent authorities and boards as follows: (i) penalties such as warnings or reprimands towards students can be imposed by the

[18] It can be found on: https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/08/20120818-12.htm
[19] In Turkish: "Amire, iş arkadaşlarına, personeline, hizmetten yararlananlara veya öğrencilerine fiili saldırıda veya cinsel tacizde bulunmak." It can be found on: https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/12/20161209-5.htm

university, (ii) penalties involving removal from the university teaching profession and/or dismissal from public service are imposed by the decision of the Higher Disciplinary Board (YÖK) upon the university's proposal[20]. According to the Civil Cervants Disciplinary Regulation, from the completion of the investigation, (i) warning, reprimand, and deduction from salary penalties must be decided in fifteen days (ii) dismissal from civil service should be given in six months after submitted to YÖK.[21] In terms of the statute of limitations, if the disciplinary action is not imposed within a maximum of two years from the date on which the act or conduct requiring disciplinary action occurred, the authority to impose penalties expires[22].

While the regulations governing the disciplinary process following sexual violence complaints are meticulously structured, the definitions of sexual violence remain strikingly ambiguous and insufficiently configured. This stark contrast underscores a systematic inconsistency: while procedural rigor demonstrates a capacity for establishing clear guidelines, vague definitions of sexual harassment and assault leave significant interpretive gaps, allowing even more inconsistency in implementation. This discrepancy not only complicates the process for survivors seeking justice but also raises questions about the effectiveness of a process built on foundations that provide clarity and precision selectively. This will be explored in detail in the following sections of this chapter.

On the other side of these processes, the CTSs that have been established in some universities have been beneficial in these processes. However, unfortunately, only 40 universities in Turkey currently have CTS commissions, and not all of these

[20] Madde 29, 30, can be found on: https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2016/12/20161209-5.htm
[21] Madde 31, can be found on: https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=3935&MevzuatTur=21&MevzuatTertip=5
[22] Madde 32, can be found on: https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=3935&MevzuatTur=21&MevzuatTertip=5

commissions could have been fully functional[23]. The primary role of CTSs is to offer accurate guidance in cases of sexual violence, without making decisions or acting on behalf of individuals. Instead, they focus on providing essential information and support to students and other members of the university community facing incidents of sexual violence. These commissions take on the responsibility of informing survivors about disciplinary investigations and offering guidance on legal and psychological support mechanisms when necessary. CTS commissions have also produced "approach documents" and guidelines, which serve as valuable resources when addressing instances of sexual violence within universities (Uygur and Şimga, 2018).

Although CTS do not directly handle disciplinary processes or decide the outcome of investigations, the guidance they provide plays a vital role in navigating such complex processes. According to Cemre Baytok's 2021 report[24], Aylin Vartanyan, who was a member of the CİTÖK[25] at Boğaziçi University, outlines the complaint processes that occur when CİTÖK is not involved or when it is dysfunctional:

> The scattered complaint model, while creating confusion in reaching the necessary authorities, also reduced the possibility of the complainant remaining anonymous. Furthermore, because commission members simultaneously carried multiple responsibilities, when the complainant especially approached teaching staff to convey student and/or staff complaints, they did not have the opportunity to detail or openly express the pressure, shame, threat, fear, and similar negative emotions they experienced.[26]

[23] Universities that have CTS units, their names, the year of establishment, and more can be found from this link: https://cts.ankara.edu.tr/2022/03/23/cts-birimi-olan-universiteler/
[24] (Baytok, 2021b). Available at: https://cinsiyetesitligipolitikalari.org/cepd_folders/uploads/2023/12/CITOKRaporu-CemreBaytok-2021.pdf
[25] It is the abbreviation for the CTS unit in Boğaziçi University. CİTÖK stands for Commission on Prevention of Sexual Harassment *(Cinsel Tacizi Önleme Koordinatörlüğü)*
[26] Original in Turkish, translated into english by myself. Original quote can be found at page 6, https://cinsiyetesitligipolitikalari.org/cepd_folders/uploads/2023/12/CITOKRaporu-CemreBaytok-2021.pdf

The arbitrary composition of disciplinary committees is one of the most essential parts of the disciplinary process, as these committees are the very first point of contact for survivors; hence, the individuals who serve on them are particularly important. This challenge is even more pronounced at universities that do not have CTSs because most CTSs not only provides guidance to survivors on navigating the complaint process but also has the authority to monitor the process and appoint one member to the disciplinary committees – if it is allowed by the dean. Moreover, given their overseeing authority, CTSs can intervene in cases of mistreatment by disciplinary committees.

2.3.3 Sexual misconduct

The term misconduct inherently refers to actions occurring within institutional settings and is developed to indicate wrongdoings within professional spheres, rather than those happening in other public settings. In this sense, misconduct encompasses a variety of actions that pose a threat to the legitimacy of individuals and the professions, which are highly contextual and dependent on the nature of the work (Gabbioneta et al., 2023; Clemente and Gabbioneta, 2017; Harrington, 2019). Therefore, for both this thesis and for academic discourse, another imperative concept to be discussed is sexual misconduct.

In academia, in a general sense, sexual misconduct as a term is used to describe both physical and non-physical forms of sexual violence directed at students and perpetrated by academic staff at any level (Page et al., 2019). According to this conceptualization, sexual misconduct encompasses acts of sexual violence that target students irrespective of their backgrounds, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and so forth. The terminology of misconduct also emphasizes the idea that

"the focus remains on the responsibility of the staff member and their employer for maintaining professional conduct" in all interactions with students (Page et al., 2019, p.1311).

Central to our inquiry is the recognition that sexual misconduct transcends the narrow boundaries of the legal definitions pertaining to harassment and assault (Cheng & Hsiaw, 2022, p.6). It encompasses a broader array of behaviors that may not meet the criteria set forth by the law but nonetheless warrant consideration in the academic settings. Thus, certain attitudes and actions that fall outside the purview of legally defined sexual offenses may still be deemed impermissible within the confines of universities (Cheng & Hsiaw, 2022). This underscores the imperative for universities to adopt comprehensive policies that not only adhere to legal standards but also address the nuanced complexities inherent in addressing sexual misconduct within educational institutions.

For the reasons outlined above, sexual misconduct emerges as an important term thanks to its ability to encompass a wider range of coercive and unwanted behaviors occurring in academic settings, particularly between individuals of differing hierarchical positions. Within American and other university systems, what we see is that acts and behaviors that cannot be easily defined under sexual harassment, assault, or rape, can be considered as sexual misconduct, which still recognizes them as problematic behavior that require repercussions (Cheng & Hsiaw, 2022). However, it remains inadequately defined in the Civil Servant Law that applies to academic and administrative personnel. In Turkish Penal Code, misconduct is defined as "görevi kötüye kullanmak"[27], without any specific delineation regarding sexual misconduct. Merely, under TCK Article 102/2, "görevi

[27] "abuse of power" in English

kötüye kullanmak" is considered one of the qualified circumstances of the offense under "the committee of the offense through the abuse of authority provided by public duty or service relationship"[28] and is accepted as one of the aggravating factors for punishment (Bilgili, 2010). Consequently, "incidences of academic sexual misconduct in these spaces slip through the cracks" within the legal and institutional frameworks surrounding sexual violence (Petit-Thorne, 2023, p.155).

2.3.4 Feminist legal approaches to sexual violence

In almost all of my interviews, participants expressed a lack of faith in legal processes while noting that they believed the law would never be on their side. These sentiments align with the views of feminist legal scholars who have extensively highlighted the shortcomings of legal systems in addressing gender-based violence and sexual harassment (Berlant, 2001; Brown, 1997; Buss, 2008). A major source of these shortcomings lies in the evidentiary procedures embedded in criminal law (Cowan, 2019). These procedures, particularly those centered around sexual offenses, often perpetuate "systematic oppression... under the guise of legal neutrality" (Abrams, 1995, p.304). Contrary to claims of legal neutrality, however, the law is mainly structured in a manner where the wrongdoings of men receive penalties when directed towards other men but are overlooked in cases involving women (Kannabiran and Kannabiran, 2002). Hence, it is a question of "how, why and by whom the law is used" and a matter of "the way the law sustains cultural norms and structures of power and inequality" (Porter, 2020, p.153).

Furthermore, the concepts of consent and coercion play a crucial role in the definitions and categorizations sexual violence. The rigid boundaries of these

[28] Original in Turkish, translated into english by myself. In Turkish, TCK 102 says: ""suçun kamu görevinin veya hizmet ilişkisinin sağladığı nüfuz kötüye kullanılmak suretiyle" işlenmesi"

definitions and the understanding of consent can inadvertently undermine women's experiences of sexual violence. This undermining aspect stems from the difficulty of explaining and portraying these subjective experiences under "legal-conscious terminology" (Felman, 2002, p.5). Criminal law typically operates within a system that requires the survivor to *prove* "non-consent," often by relying on physical evidence inscribed on the body (Abrams, 1995, p.343). In cases where there is no demonstrable lack of consent, definitions and conceptualizations of consent have frequently contributed to the portrayal of sexual violence as consensual intercourse (Smart, 2002; Matoesian, 1993).

In the Turkish Penal Code of 2005, despite being defined in the law, many issues regarding consent still persist. In particular, when there is no evidence of physical violence or when the victim has consented in the past, the law's approach towards consent remains problematic (Üçüncü, 2018). As long as certain acts do not result in permanent or serious injuries or if there is evidence that the victim has previously consented, the concept of consent renders these acts legally permissible. Hence, as feminist legal theory discusses, the legal terminology and institutional processes have the potential to trivialize the seriousness of sexual violence by only recognizing violence that depends on purely measurable and observable characteristics (Cowan, 2019).

In this context, the concepts of consent and coercion employed in legal and institutional contexts often reduce the situation to a mere medical inspection of the body and are used to "negate the speech of the woman" (Das, 1996, p.2415). Hence, Das argues that these frameworks are "not oriented towards protecting the bodily integrity of a woman but towards the regulation of sexuality" (1996, p.2413). In a similar line, feminist legal theory has criticized the law for adopting a male

perspective and legitimizing male dominance while imposing it on society; that is, by institutionalizing male power over women and the masculine attributes of power through legal rules (Buss, 2009). Consequently, criminal justice efforts to address sexual violence in formal settings are filled with inadequacies, to say the least (Campbell, 2007).

2.4 Institutional reproduction of violence

> *sexism is institutionalized, its possibility and perpetuation bound up in the structures of the institution, is a starting principle of this analysis*
> -Laura Whitley & Tiffany Page[29]

A contributing factor to the frequent failure of "policies and programs aimed at relieving the suffering that results from such violences" is the multiple layers and entangled nature of violence (Kleinman, 2000, p.228). Consequently, these processes are shaped by institutions that are "organized ... as pragmatically oriented programs" to save themselves rather than being organized to prioritize the survivors (Kleinman, Das, Lock, 1997, p.xxv). This complexity becomes particularly evident in the institutional handling of sexual violence when survivors attempt to file official complaints with the university. In this vein, this section is an exploration of the question posed by Das and Kleinmann: "How are institutions implicated in allowing or disallowing voice?" (2000, p.5).

Taking into account all of the following points, I realized that survivors see themselves as engaged in a broader struggle beyond individual perpetrators. They fight not only against the perpetrators themselves, but also against the institutional structures that survivors try to navigate and somehow disrupt impunity. This

[29] (Whitley & Page, 2015, p.39)

indicates a form of legal consciousness among survivors, which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

In this line, within the framework of institutional responses to sexual violence, survivors frequently encounter a complex array of challenges that go beyond the initial trauma they have endured. Thus, this section explores the recurring patterns where survivors, already grappling with the aftermath of sexual violence, find themselves subjected to additional forms of institutionalized harm. Through three primary themes, I discuss the ways in which institutional structures reproduce violence for survivors, overlook their well-being and exacerbate their trauma. To this end, firstly, I explore how complaint processes exhaust survivors through the procedural ambiguities and lack of standardization inherent in these mechanisms. Subsequently, I examine how institutions frequently foster a culture of routine impunity which is facilitated by vague definitions and statute of limitations outlined in regulations. Lastly, I address the phenomenon of institutional indifference towards survivors which is particularly evident in testimonial practices and bureaucratic requirements.

2.4.1 Exhausting the survivors: Procedural ambiguity and lack of standardization

In her discussion of institutional responses to complaints of sexual violence, Ahmed explores the ways in which institutional structures "exhaust" and drain survivors through complicated "administrative processes" (2021, p. 45). Often very demanding and cumbersome, these processes seem to operate by gradually depleting the energy of those seeking redress. Ahmed's conceptual framework resonates with the notion of "legal exhaustion," as articulated by Göksel and Morse, to point out the profound "state of exhaustion" often faced within the drawn-out institutional mechanisms

(2022, p. 175). As noted earlier, by necessitating individuals to navigate a maze of procedures, complete endless paperwork, and adhere to strict deadlines, intuitional actors often prioritize procedural adherence over the needs of individuals, even in cases of sexual violence where special care and attention are warranted (Ahmed, 2021). In this regard, these insights underscore a stark reality: the very structures that promise justice can, in practice, obstruct it by subjecting survivors to a depleting process. Ahmed portrays filing a complaint as a process that necessitates individuals to become "institutional mechanics," where figuring out how to successfully navigate a complaint "through the system" becomes a task in itself (2021, p.41). In instances of sexual violence, the absence of resources like CTS within universities can exacerbate the challenges survivors face in navigating the system as survivors find themselves thrust into a complex and obscure bureaucratic process without clear signposts or reliable resources to guide them.

This exhaustive nature of the complaint processes is deepened by a lack of standardization in both the outcomes and procedures involved. While regulations and laws offer meticulous guidelines regarding the stages of disciplinary investigations and the framework of penalties, throughout the course of my research, I have seen a notable lack of consistency in the complaint processes, even within the same university, despite these regulatory frameworks. This, in a way, exemplifies what Bourdieu calls "instituted disorder," which highlights the arbitrary workings of the institutions in terms of both their "procedures and effects" (2000, p.230). For instance, considering Rüya's experience, who filed a complaint against her ex-boyfriend with compelling evidence, including eyewitness testimonies and confessions from the assailant himself via text messages revealing the abuse she had endured. The process dragged on so long that she felt compelled to give up multiple

times. Given the gravity of her accusations -consistent rape and psychological abuse within and after the relationship- the disciplinary committee repeatedly requested additional documentation. The process lasted more than nine months and resulted in a penalty of reprimand, which left Rüya disappointed. Furthermore, the university also did not acknowledge the legal restraining order obtained by Rüya. Subsequently, Rüya has taken legal action against the university administration for violating Law No. 6284[30] since they did not implement the restraining order, and the case is still ongoing.

In contrast, another participant, Bilge, documented the WhatsApp messages she received and experienced a very troubling testimonial process due to the attitudes of the committee members. Regardless, she ultimately learned that the perpetrator received a one-semester suspension. She viewed this outcome as a satisfactory repercussion, and the entire process took no more than three months. Both Rüya and Bilge are students at the same university. In this vein, Ekin, a participant-friend who is actively involved in feminist organizations, shared that when survivors reach out to her, she informs them about the process and warns them by remarking "how this process is full of surprises,"[31] ironically. Consequently, all of these introduce an element of unpredictability for individuals filing complaints, as they are unable to anticipate the outcome or assess the strength of their cases beforehand.

The unpredictability of the complaint process puts survivors into a state of limbo, laden with confusion about their next steps or the potential outcomes. This pervasive uncertainty not only intensifies their anxiety but also compounds the

[30] Law No. 6284 is the law based on the protection of family and prevention of violence against women. Regulation of the Law No. 6284 can be found on: https://dspace.ceid.org.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1/308/ekutuphane3.2.6.2.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

[31] "bu sürecin ne kadar sürprizlerle dolu olduğu" in Turkish.

trauma they are already grappling with. Hazal is a recent graduate who was raped by a man she had just started flirting with during her first year of university. She told me:

> When I started this process, I had no idea what would happen. CITÖK could not say anything about the outcome of the investigation. They have no direct influence on the process and the decision. I talked to other people too, other people who went through this process. Some investigations ended fairly, some did not. In some cases, they followed the protocol, in some cases the university even gave precautinary suspension. But in my investigation they found me unfair in the end. They didn't even enforce the restraining order I got from the court. Can you believe it? I go to court, I get a restraining order, because it's obvious that this guy is threatening me. But the university doesn't care. ... I don't like to say this, but at that time I was very afraid of this man and what he might do to me. That he would get angry because I filed a complaint against him and do something to me. So I felt stupid for complaining and dealing with a lot of things. I would have been much more peaceful if I didn't have to deal with this stupid university. (my translation) (Appendix B, 2)

Hazal's university, too, did not implement the restraining order she obtained, yet preventive suspensions were applied to others from the same university, even in the absence of a court-ordered restraining order. This lack of standardization regarding outcomes is also prevalent in the temporal dimension of the process. The "temporal uncertainty" embedded within the process is particularly striking, considering that the timeframes for disciplinary procedures are detailly outlined in the relevant regulations (Griffiths, 2014). Hence, this again reveals the great inconsistency in the implementation of formal frameworks. When a group of friends and I decided to collectively file a complaint with the university against another professor who has been physically and verbally harassing students since she started working at our university, our main concerns revolved around the uncertainties of what would unfold and when. We questioned when certain actions should be taken, when the processes would begin and end, and so forth. We often found ourselves searching for clarity, only to be learning critical information and bureaucratic tasks at the last minute, which necessitated us to take actions quickly. What followed then was an

expanse of waiting, a suspended state where time stretched, and the resolution seemed distant. Moreover, throughout this process, we had to avoid any acts that would influence the outcome or trigger retaliatory behavior from the professor in question. On a similar note, Ekin, in our interview, told me:

> and I was always advised to stay silent, until the disciplinary process ends, until the university comes to a conclusion. But you know what, it takes so much time, and it becomes such a burden not to talk. Then, the waiting is like hell, I can say it is the worst thing. You don't know what can or will happen to you or them. So, it's not like a band-aid, it is slow in a vague way. (my translation) (Appendix B, 3)

As evident from these accounts, "temporal uncertainty and discord mark points of tension" for many survivors navigating these complex systems with the hope of holding their perpetrators accountable (Griffiths, 2014, p.1993). This sense of uncertainty and suspension is mostly heightened by "their expectations of progress and efficiency" and "the machinations of … systems," which juxtaposes with the bureaucratic realities in practice (p.1994). This temporal experience and the uncertainty that stemmed from it are surely related to the formation of survivors' subjectivity. Hazal underwent a similar process full of waiting. Before sharing how this process went, she warned me that she had forgotten much of the details, both because it was so difficult for her and because the situation was quite complicated. Upon filing a complaint, her disciplinary investigation was extended over a year. The university's disciplinary committee only interviewed some witnesses nine months after Hazal made her complaint. She found herself persistently following up with officials, who remained non-communicative and offered little information. After a while, they informed her that the outcome of her case would not be shared with her. She kept calling different offices in the university, and after her umpteenth inquiry, Hazal was recommended to write an official petition to learn the decision. This process took almost a year. Eventually, after the petition, she received a call from the

university, only to learn that the rapist was not found guilty by the disciplinary board. I most vividly remember these words from our discussion: "If the decision had been made within a few months, I wouldn't have been affected this much, but waiting for the entire year was so hard that I was completely exhausted."[32]

Hazal's case also exposes a blatant and certain disregard for the disciplinary regulations established by YÖK. The wildly differing experiences and outcomes encountered in navigating complaints resonate with what Koğacıoğlu observed in her study on Istanbul's courthouses, which are marked by "routinized divergences from formalistic premises" (2008, p.101). These divergences resemble the already existing "gap between the law as intended and law in action" and "challenge law's assertion that it is a bordered system, separated from the 'everyday' or from intrinsic social inequality" (Porter, 2020, p.153). Nevertheless, such divergences represent more than mere administrative anomalies; they signify deep-rooted structural inconsistencies that impose an additional burden on survivors.

Overall, the procedural ambiguity and lack of standardization leave survivors increasingly frustrated and fearful of the process, unsure of what to expect and when to expect it. Navigating a formal sexual violence complaint "operates under chronic uncertainty and instability" for survivors (Griffith, 2013, p.266). Such inconsistencies in institutional responses to sexual violence create not only logistical challenges but also profound psychological impacts (Ahmed, 2021). The psychological distress resulting from navigating these processes is not trivial; the anxiety and fear that lie in such procedural ambiguity and uncertainty can be debilitating while further victimizing the survivors and reproducing the violence in different manners. Therefore, what we witness is the "bureaucratic appropriation of

[32] "eğer karar birkaç ay içinde çıksaydı bu kadar etkilenmezdim ama tüm bir yıl boyunca beklemek o kadar zordu ki tamamen tükendim bu süreçte" in Turkish.

the experience of suffering" (Chuengsatiansup, 2001, p. 32), where the institutional framework itself becomes a form of re-victimization.

2.4.2 Embedded injustice: The institutionalization of routine impunity through temporal limitations and flexible definitions

In essence, impunity refers to the exemption from punishment or the failure to hold individuals accountable for their actions. While discussions of impunity often arise in the context of severe human rights violations, this thesis acknowledges a broader understanding of intertwined forms of violence and its reproduction in everyday life. Hence, particularly within the context of sexual violence, it is essential to grasp how impunity becomes ordinary and operates in routine scenarios. To make sense of this, I will adopt the term "routine impunity," as articulated by Cheesman. This term underscores the regularized and "recurrent" nature of impunity that extends beyond the cases of "massive human rights violations" (Cheesman, 2019, p.873). In line with feminist legal critiques of inherent biases and shortcomings that systematically disadvantage survivors (Campbell, 2007; Pollack, 1990), the institutional regulations around sexual violence in Turkey constitute one of the primary factors contributing to routine impunity.

Chaudhary critically observes that the law itself is shadowed by impunity, "either in the form of a suspension of the law or prior to this, in a self-authorizing and foundational *Gewalt*."[33]. In this line, I argue that (1) the temporal limitations that mark the complaint process, and (2) the flexibility in the definitions of sexual violence in the regulations reveal the ways in which "impunity modulates into the

[33] Chaudhary, Z.R. (2018). Impunity: Zahid R. Chaudhary. *Political Concepts.* https://www.politicalconcepts.org/impunity-zahid-r-chaudhary/

very conditions of legality itself" with regards to sexual violence (Cheesman, 2019, p.4).

On one side of the routine impunity issue lies the matter of statute of limitations, which is outlined with precision and little flexibility, in contrast to the relatively broad definitions of sexual violence. According to the statute of limitations, the complaint processes should be completed in two years at most after the execution of the act requiring disciplinary action[34] (Yokuş Sevük, 2005). These limitations on the period of right to complaint set a narrow window within which survivors must come forward. For instance, Mayıs only started contemplating about filing a complaint after finding solidarity with others who had faced similar experiences by him. Yet, by the time she connected with them, the complaint period had already expired for some of their experiences and barred their inclusion in the complaint case. Ultimately, combined with other challenges, they decided not to file a complaint.

In this vein, the timeframe of the statute of limitations overlooks the complexity of trauma and survivors' need for time to come to terms with their experiences. This challenge is also reflected in existing research, which highlights how "current law ignores the lasting effects of trauma" without acknowledging that trauma may lead to non-reporting of sexual violence experiences (Purdue & Vars, 2023, p.145). Hence, short statutes of limitations for sexual violence ask the impossible of many victims: report the crime before they have recovered from the trauma. These timeframes thus render the survivors more vulnerable and less able to deal with the institutional processes. The urgency imposed by these deadlines only

[34] https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=3935&MevzuatTur=21&MevzuatTertip=5 https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/08/20120818-12.htm

adds to their trauma. Consequently, the statute of limitations fosters impunity by routinely leaving many cases unreported or invalidating others.

While the regulations governing the institutional process in the aftermath of sexual violence complaints are meticulously structured -even if their implementation often reveals divergences from the regulation itself. This contrast underscores an inconsistency: on the one hand, the procedural rigor demonstrates a capacity for establishing clear guidelines, while, on the other, the vague definitions of sexual harassment and assault leave more gaps for interpretation. This discrepancy not only complicates the process for survivors seeking justice but also raises questions about the effectiveness of a system built on foundations that selectively present clarity and precision.

Hence, within these ambiguities and contradictions lies another root of impunity. Institutional frameworks are based on broad and unspecific definitions regarding sexual violence. While this lack of detail might initially seem like an attempt to encompass a wide range of behaviors, it ultimately fails survivors. While the complaint process starts with filing a petition to the university, which requires knowledge of how to name and frame one's own experience, the lack of explicit guidance on definitions of sexual violence results in ambiguity and confusion for survivors. They face the daunting task of understanding how the university will interpret their cases.

In addition to the ambiguous definitions of harassment and assault, the lack of clarity surrounding misconduct, as well as the absence of definitions for other forms of violence such as dating violence, persistent stalking, construction of consent, grooming, and so on, poses significant challenges. During my interview with a professor who has been actively involved in CTS within her university and

has participated in numerous disciplinary investigations, she emphasized the critical importance of understanding these distinctions. She highlighted that being familiar with these forms of violence and knowing that they are not defined in the regulations can greatly impact disciplinary investigations.

According to her insights, the inherent ambiguity can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. When members of disciplinary committees possess knowledge of these nuanced forms of violence, such as when disciplinary committees involve CTS members, they may navigate investigations more effectively by recognizing and addressing them appropriately. However, in instances where members lack this understanding, which is often the case since many universities do not have CTS, the vagueness and the lack would lead to turning a blind eye towards various instances of violence. Hence, the ambiguity in the regulations leaves more room for interpretation and makes it difficult to classify certain acts under the umbrella of sexual violence. This ambiguity serves as a breeding ground for impunity and enables perpetrators to find loopholes within these broad descriptions and evade accountability (Petit-Thorne, 2023).

In the introductory chapter, I discussed the institutional dynamics that prioritize the institutions themselves over the survivors. In a parallel line, academic institutions often tend to sacrifice the less privileged to protect the esteemed (Ecevit & Beşpınar, 2018). Hazal had the belief that her rapist would face lenient consequences if he were someone else. However, he was a top-performing student in one of the best engineering programs at the university. He had also scored incredibly well on the national university entrance exam. Hazal, therefore, speculated that one reason for his impunity was that the faculty members did not want to jeopardize his bright future over what they perceived as a trivial matter. In another instance, a

friend pursuing a master's degree in fine arts at an endowed vakıf[35] university mentioned that a professor in their department had a reputation for harassing his students. Students planning to file complaints against him were discreetly cautioned by other faculty members on the grounds that while they recognized the validity of their concerns, the institution would find ways to protect him since he is one of Turkey's foremost artists who brings various sponsorships to the university. I believe this institutional tendency is facilitated by procedural ambiguities and a lack of standardization, as committees have no clear-cut procedures to follow and can exercise their own discretion to a certain extent. CTS members who were involved in several disciplinary investigations also shared similar stories with me based on their observations. They noted the tendency of professors on disciplinary committees to protect the futures of seemingly competent students and their academic disciplinary records via trivializing the experiences of survivors and not putting them under forms of sexual violence.

On a related note, another significant challenge contributing to routine impunity, posed by how sexual violence is conceptualized, is the heavy reliance on concrete, physical evidence (Hlavka and Mulla, 2021). As discussed by feminist legal scholars, the evidentiary requirements surrounding sexual violence demand survivors to prove non-consent, primarily through "physical injur[ies]" either on the body or on the physical space, eyewitness testimony, and the use of "weapon" as indicators (Larcombe, 2002, p.132). Only when physical evidence as such is available, then the discursive and other forms of evidence provided by the survivors can be recognized by the systems (Larcombe, 2002). However, many instances of

[35] Vakıf universities are private universities that are funded by private foundations, rather than the state.

"sexual harassment is embedded in innuendo, in body language, in rude stares—gestures that will vary by culture, social group, class, and era, as well as by individual" which in turn makes it "impossible to prove that a certain gesture was harassing" (Gordon, 2018, p.52). Hence, institutional mechanisms often overlook the subjective, performative, and subtle dimensions of violations that are not always explicitly visible (Das & Kleinman 2001; Zippel, 2006). Yet, given the subtle and often private nature of these acts, survivors are frequently left without the tangible proof required to meet the standards of evidence demanded by legal systems. It was this exact reason that deterred Ceren, an undergrad student, from filing a complaint against a professor who once urinated in front of her during a campus festival, in the backyard of their department building. This evidentiary gap silences survivors and fosters impunity as it increasingly difficult for survivors to substantiate their claims. By and large, these systems "transform the issue into a bureaucratized, mechanistic set of procedures for disallowing certain very narrowly defined behavior" while telling survivors that "their experiences do not qualify as sexual harassment and must be tolerated" (Gordon, 2018, p.54). Being cognizant of this, Eda, a survivor of sexual assault, told me the following:

> I never thought of complaining to the university. I mean, it's almost impossible to sue anyway. I would never do that. But I mean, what would happen if I filed a complaint, if I started that process? I have nothing to show, no evidence. He would just come out and say that I was okay with everything at the time, that I gave consent. (my translation) (Appendix B, 4)

The evidentiary requirements in place often result in a deadlock for individuals who were subjected to non-physical forms of harassment or misconduct (Sabina & Ho, 2014). The hierarchy created among different forms of evidence mirrors the perceived hierarchy among different types of sexual violence. The centrality of physicality in evidentiary requirements "has divided sexual violence into the serious

and the non-serious," hence resulting in a perception of an "artificial threshold" for what qualifies as worthy of institutional repercussions (Petit-Thorne, 2020, p.328-329). Consequently, formal frameworks trivialize "less serious" forms of sexual violence, like non-physical ones (Petit- Thorne, 2023, p.157). This is also why Mayıs and others were not able to file complaints about this professor, as other people whom he verbally via phone calls were not able to produce concrete evidence of it easily, and the text messages would only be considered as insignificant and not have the legal charge of sexual violence. Hence, aware of these institutional inadequacies, they chose to avoid engaging with these systems altogether.

Impunity not only remains as an exemption from punishment but becomes an oppressive burden in the daily lives of survivors. When survivors witness their perpetrators evade accountability, they endure a secondary form of trauma. The psychological weight of this injustice is profound as survivors grapple with the realization that the very system that should be safeguarding them instead exacerbates their suffering. Moreover, the lack of consequences for perpetrators further facilitates sexual violence and ensures its persistence (Buchanan, 2007). This perpetuating cycle contributes to a narrative that not only normalizes such misconduct but implicitly condones it. This ongoing cycle feeds into a narrative that not only normalizes such behaviors but tacitly endorses them.

2.4.3 Institutional insensitivity

Given the pervasive effects of sexual violence, existing research has underscored the essentiality of a trauma-informed framework when engaging with survivors (Campbell et al., 2019). This approach is especially crucial in institutional and formal domains requiring interaction with survivors of sexual violence, like

complaint processes (Bent-Goodley, 2019). Fundamentally, a trauma-informed approach focuses on interacting with survivors while fully acknowledging their "vulnerabilities and needs" (Randall & Haskell, 2013, p.518). Nevertheless, the lack of systematic consideration for the complaint processes signifies institutional apathy and a failure to prioritize trauma-informed practices for survivors.

Feminist scholars have discussed that, in addition to what the law entails, its implementation through institutions also exemplifies one of the challenges in addressing sexual violence, as it is often based on a certain form of physicality and performativity required by survivors (Brison, 2019). This emphasis on physicality and performativity is particularly evident in the testimonial aspect of the judicial realm, where testimonies and tribunal efforts become "hierarchical social encounters," that further victimize survivors (Koomen, 2013, p.254). These formal practices, including survivor and witness testimonies, the manner in which they are delivered, and how survivors are made to perform, as well as the experience of being in court and articulating their stories, pose significant challenges (Baldwin, 2010; Campbell et al., 2019; Ross, 2001; 2003). The performative aspects are not only limited to the testimonial setting but also extend to survivors' initial encounters with institutional structures, such as interactions with police and medical workers, which are often marked by "a humiliating insensitivity" (Brison, 2019, p.16).

The above-mentioned challenges have been recurring themes throughout and beyond this research. I have encountered numerous individuals who faced nothing but inconsiderate treatment during their disciplinary proceedings. Many were subjected to recounting their experiences of sexual violence in excruciating detail to the disciplinary board while enduring relentless questioning devoid of sensitivity. Rather, this indifference mirrors the "humiliating insensitivity" that Brison identifies

by drawing on her encounters with police and medical systems after her own rape experience (2019, p.16). For instance, when Ekin herself filed a complaint to her university, the disciplinary committee asked her why she did not shout at friends who were present in the same house during the assault. I have encountered similar stories from other participants, who were scrutinized for being alone with their assailant in a student club room or for consuming alcohol with someone they did not know well. These accounts align with the broader framework of sexual violence trials, which often involve subtle or overt forms of victim blaming through "crebility attacks" that require more that "the complainant's repeated verbal communication of non-consent" (Randall, 2010, p.417, 422).

In a similar line, Ayşe, who is now a senior year undergraduate student at a public university, was asked by one of the committee members regarding why "she waited for this long if she was really raped". One member went as far as suggesting that since Ayşe appeared "quite at herself" and kept attending classes for several months after the incident, the severity of the rape should be called into question. In this context, Ayşe's resilience in continuing her academic pursuits and waiting to file a complaint for a few months as interpreted as inconsistent with the expected behavior of a genuine victim. Her response to the assault failed to conform to the "socially expected form" of ideal victim performance, both prior and during the committee meeting (Randall, 2010, p.423)

Furthermore, the challenge is not only navigating the system but also articulating and performing their trauma within the confines of institutional structures. Ekin shared with me later that the disciplinary committee did not perceive her as an ideal victim because she appeared to be a confident young woman during the meeting, who is actively involved in feminist movement. They asked her why she

remained silent that night if she was “such a feminist”. This aligns with how ideal victims are characterized by “weakness” and “innocence” and how this stereotyping often neglects narratives that diverge from these characterizations (Christie, 1986, p.194; Cuppini, 2023). Hence, testimonial processes entail a performative aspect from survivors in order to be perceived as a true or ideal victim (Gotell, 2002).

Indeed, the insensitivity of these mechanisms is fundamentally shaped by institutional regulations themselves, regardless of the intentions or actions of individuals within these institutions. These are the regulations that fail to prioritize the formation of committees or the adoption of trauma-informed approaches toward bureaucratic processes by neglecting the necessary sensitivity required when addressing issues of sexual violence. Hence, while the attitudes and behaviors of staff within these formal settings may vary, for survivors, the challenge lies not merely in personal encounters but rather in institutional structures. Nisan, a friend of mine, also filed complaints about her abuser to the university, told the following:

> I think my disciplinary process was as good as it could be. I know from other people who had very bad experiences talking to the commission and so on. But the professors in my commission were all very good. But that doesn’t change anything either. I had to go to the campus like five times to start the process, or I had to sign a lot of things to get news, because it was not easy to reach people. It’s not about the officers, by the way, they were very nice and they kept apologizing to me, they kept saying sorry for calling me there for the wet signature. But that’s how it works, and I’m not happy about it. ... actually that woman [the officer working there] informed me about some issues, about some things that should be kept confidential, because she always felt sorry for me. (my translation) (Appendix B, 5)

Nevertheless, the well-intentioned efforts of individuals within these institutions often prove insufficient in preventing the perpetuation of violence by the broader structures they operate within. Returning to Hazal’s story, who was raped by her friend, she promptly reported the incident to the university the day after it occurred. During her testimony with the disciplinary board, she experienced a seemingly

smooth process, with one individual reassuring her that she was not under investigation but rather there to share her experience. However, despite this seemingly supportive atmosphere, the university failed to take necessary and precautionary actions. Specifically, they did not put into action the restraining order Hazal had obtained from the court by disregarding how this would affect her life at the campus. Although one professor attempted to assist her with the restraining order, the matter escalated to the rectorate. The rector expressed concerns that the other student might file a lawsuit against the university on the basis of an obstruction of his right to education. Consequently, she stopped going to most of the classes as it bore the risk of running into him. She felt profoundly disheartened and distressed. In a similar manner, Rüya remarked these:

> The professors who dealt with my case were decent ones. I mean, of course, it is not easy to go up there and explain what happened, but they have no choice either, and they were very thoughtful in the interview. The woman working at the dean's office is also very sweet, but she kept calling me to get me to sign some things. It's not her fault either. She has nothing to do with these processes. So I had to go there a couple of times, she had to make me sign something and it was not possible to do it from outside. She was sorry for me too, but anyway. (my translation) (Appendix B, 6)

According to Fassin (2015), institutions operate on both macro and micro levels, which are revealed through public policy and individual practices, respectively. While these institutions "have their actions framed by legislation" in line with a certain rationale, the individuals working in these institutions also adopt "a certain professional ethos" and "routine" (Fassin, 2015, p.6). This consequently means that the behavior of these individuals reflects the values and initiatives of their respective institutions through "the habits they develop" and "the initiatives they take" (Fassin, 2015, p.ix). However, as evidenced by the narratives of Nisan and Rüya, we require a more nuanced approach to understanding these processes. It is crucial to recognize that institutions are not homogeneous monolithic entities; rather, they are comprised

of diverse agents some of whom bring their own values into their work, potentially diverging from the norms and codes of their institutions.

Nevertheless, even though some individuals within these institutions may exercise a degree of autonomy and willpower, the institution itself and its effects extend beyond the actions of its members. Hence, a pervasive sense of apathy still dominates these systems. In this sense, it is not that these institutional systems always turn individuals embedded in them into "humorless automatons," as Herzfeld suggested in his conceptualization of the social production of indifference (2021, p.1). Rather, it is the inherent insensitivity and indifference of procedures that fail to acknowledge the survivor's trauma and actively exacerbate the initial violence. Therefore, since institutions transcend the combined version of the individual actions and decisions of their members (Douglas, 1986), it is the institution, rather than any single individual within it, that emerges as a pivotal force in perpetuating violence.

2.5 Conclusive remarks

In exploring institutional complaint processes for sexual violence, I sought to unravel the complexities of the system. Initially, I adopted a relational framework for understanding the entanglement of violence. I then provided an overview of the formal institutional framework for complaints. As I navigated through the layers of complaint regulations and procedures, I uncovered the bureaucratic complexities that underpin the system. Each step revealed how these structures, which are supposed to help survivors, instead perpetuate a cycle of violence. I argued that these cycles of violence are produced by the exhaustion of survivors, the routinization of impunity, and institutional insensitivity. The intertwinedness of violence becomes evident through the different forms of relational violence survivors face in the aftermath of

sexual violence. Thus, it becomes clear that sexual violence is not an isolated event but has lasting effects woven throughout survivors' lives.

Having explored the formal complaint frameworks for addressing sexual violence, the following chapter revolves around alternative mechanisms employed by survivors. By examining these alternative approaches, I aim to ask to what extent we can challenge and dismantle the barriers that perpetuate violence.

CHAPTER 3

DISCLOSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.
-Audre Lorde[36]

In this chapter, my attention turns to the informal yet organized means by which survivors of sexual violence have chosen to disclose their experiences. At this point, it is crucial to note that feminist disclosure is not a standalone practice merely undertaken at universities. Instead, as I remarked in the introduction chapter, the phenomenon stretches far beyond the confines of university and intersects with the trajectory of the feminist movement, both locally in Turkey and on a global scale. Over time, disclosures have gained considerable momentum in Turkey and have become widely employed in the fight against sexual violence (Şener, 2021). Various platforms and feminist organizations across different sectors have embraced disclosures as a crucial strategy in their efforts (Dalaman & Demirtaş, 2021; Gümüş, 2022).

Most simply, disclosure refers to the act of naming and/or displaying perpetrators of sexual violence, which can involve sharing one's own experiences or instances where one has witnessed sexual violence against others. While all the different practices of disclosing sexual violence -all of which will be discussed in this chapter- can pave the way for new opportunities, naming a harasser within a public sphere raises numerous questions, particularly concerning the potentials it unveils and the challenges it presents.

[36] (Lorde, 2018, p.94)

In his work, Soja draws on Lefebvre to explore the ways of transcending "the categorically closed logic of the "either-or" in favor of a different, more flexible and expansive logic of the "both-and-also"" (1999, p.268). This perspective does not advocate for an "in-between position" but rather encourages how things can simultaneously be "oppressive and liberating" (Soja, 1999, p.276). Consequently, I view disclosures as occupying a space that is "simultaneously central and marginal (and purely neither at the same time), marked by contradictions and ambiguities" (Soja & Hooper, 1993, p.187). This chapter then serves as an exploration towards this end: conceptualizing disclosures as a collective political action and a form of solidarity while also addressing the drawbacks of this strategy that reproduces violence against survivors in different ways.

In order to illuminate this multilayered nature of disclosures, I will proceed by exploring the motivations that drive survivors to disclose. This section will portray heterogenous understandings of justice for survivors. I will then delve deep into various disclosure practices and discuss how they create counter-publics on digital, discursive, and spatial levels. Following this, I will address the setbacks of disclosures by demonstrating how they create challenging environments for survivors through stigmatization, victim-blaming, and social ostracism. These setbacks will also encompass the relationship between disclosures, economies of visibility, and the normalization of sexual violence.

3.1 Understanding the whys and hows

To understand the potentials and setbacks of disclosure, it is important to also grasp why and how they are practiced. Exploring these aspects will also be crucial in understanding the subjectivity and solidarity formations surrounding the disclosures.

3.1.1 Motivations behind disclosures

Ceren, a close friend of mine, was harassed by a professor at our university. After a long process of contemplation, she disclosed him on Twitter. When I asked about this decision, she explained that she could not financially pursue legal action against him, and engaging in institutional processes would cost a significant amount of time and energy, especially since he was a professor. Nevertheless, she felt a strong need to make him face the consequences. Consequently, after consulting with her friends, she opted for disclosing him through an anonymous Twitter account. She also expressed skepticism about the criminal justice and institutional systems, stating, "Why would I ever trust the court or the disciplinary mechanisms and their justice?"[37] I received similar words from Eda, who disclosed the man who sexually assaulted her:

> When I was experienced this situation, it was not even an option for me to file a complaint or to take this guy to court. Because I knew that I would be wrong, and he wouldn't get any punishment and I would end up spending a lot of money on the case. Also, I didn't want him to be expelled from school or, I don't know, go to jail. I don't think it would make any sense; I don't believe in such a justice system because I don't think it's useful. It's not that these people shouldn't face the consequences of their actions, of course they should. But I'm sure that any punishment from the school or the court would not be good. I don't know what is the right way I have in mind, but I wanted some kind of justice to happen, to come. So, I chose another way, I decided to disclose him in our social circles. I mean I'm not sure if it was the best way, ahah, but I think it was better than going through the state legal system. (my translation) (Appendix B, 7)

This skepticism towards formal justice mechanisms for achieving justice in cases of sexual violence was not unique to Ceren and Eda but was a common thread in many of my interviews. Similar views were also shared by those who filed complaints to the university, such as Ekin and Nisan. As the above quotations show, survivors are also highly motivated to hold perpetrators accountable. Yet, most survivors perceive

[37] "Neden mahkemeye ya da disiplin mekanizmalarına ve onların erkek adaletine güveneyim ki?" in Turkish.

the criminal justice system as inherently patriarchal and biased, which functioned to the detriment rather than the benefit of survivors.

In simple terms, legal consciousness refers to what "law represents to [people] and how they situate themselves in relation to it" (Porter, 2020, p.25). The examples I discuss imply that survivors develop and share a particular form of legal consciousness. This legal consciousness derives from their positioning of themselves in opposition to the state's structures, including institutional and legal systems. They indicate a significant level of mistrust. This mistrust was also evident among survivors who filed institutional complaints with the university, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, when they indicated that they were essentially fighting against both the perpetrators and the institutions, rather than fighting with the institutions against the perpetrators.

Then, as opposed to a legalistic approach towards sexual violence, disclosures can be conceptualized as a feminist "commitment to nonlegal and nonbureaucratic means of struggle" as a tool "that we can control ourselves" (Gordon, 2018, p.53-54). In a separate interview, Nisan, who is also very actively involved in feminist networks in and out of the university, expressed her skepticism toward efforts to improve university regulations, finding them unnecessary and likely futile. She asserted that we, as feminists, should never settle for and be satisfied with how institutions treat survivors. While acknowledging the symbolic significance of disciplinary investigations in sending a message to perpetrators and third parties, she believed that our attention should not be on appropriating "the master's tools," as she articulated[38]. This perception is not unfounded, as the judicial and punitive systems often tend to favor the already privileged rather than acknowledging the suffering of

[38] She used this exact framing as proposed by Audre Lorde, in English, during a conversation in Turkish.

those who are disadvantaged and marginalized (Davis, 1981). In this sense, disclosures can sometimes emerge as alternative "justice-seeking projects" that do not comply with state and institutional law (Brown and Halley, 2003, p.4).

Instead of pursuing "liberal reforms" that acknowledge and validate the legitimacy and authority of the state, a considerable number of my participants perceive disclosures as a tool for accountability and liability outside of criminal and institutional justice systems. In our discussions, another friend told me that we should not overly prioritize and talk about the results of the disciplinary mechanisms or legal procedures as our rights and the legitimacy of our claims are not contingent upon them. Then, these women consider disclosure within a framework that diverges from "the liberal state's promise to make justice happen by means of law" (Brown & Halley, 2003, p.7). This viewpoint is also in line with numerous feminist theorists who have advocated for alternative systems of justice in addressing sexual violence while pointing out the setbacks of formal frameworks (Ptacek, 2010; Smart, 1986). Then, survivors' mistrust of formal structures and how they imagine justice emerge as the reasons behind their decisions regarding disclosures. Then, the act of disclosure, as a strategy, emerges as a way of holding "individuals, institutions, and structures responsible" when they would otherwise remain unchallenged (Page, Bull & Chapman, 2019, p.1321). It represents an intervention into institutional spheres that often fail to bring justice and foster collective resistance against it.

Ekin, as I have also mentioned in the previous chapter, is one of the most active members of the feminist network at her university, and she also actively engages in the efforts against sexual violence. Her involvement also extends beyond her campus as she collaborates with feminist networks across various universities and contributes to solidarity initiatives for disclosure and complaint processes. In

addition to the lack of trust in legal and institutional systems, Ekin, during one of our interviews, emphasized that disclosures expose not only individual perpetrators but also the system itself, particularly its inherently patriarchal nature. She pointed out numerous other methods of self-defense for survivors that do not necessarily involve public disclosures. If disclosure is believed to be ineffective or cause significant harm to the survivor, then it may not be the appropriate action. At times, as she explained to me if the perpetrator is affiliated with a student club or an organization, it can be more effective to discreetly inform the relevant authorities within that group rather than publicly disclosing the issue. Doing so would not only protect the survivor's privacy but also ensure that the perpetrator is discredited and held accountable. Then, regardless of how it is perceived, "whether it be conceptualized as consequences or accountability," the concept of justice envisioned by survivors entails subjecting perpetrators to "specific actions" after the wrongdoing (McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019, p.186).

Hence, according to Ekin, disclosure is just one method among many, and our primary focus should always be supporting the survivor. The priority should be creating safe spaces for survivors on campuses and classes. She further added that it is essential to consider what warrants disclosure carefully; if everything becomes a matter of disclosures, it can not only break trust in disclosures as a mechanism but also lead to negative consequences for those who disclose, including ridicule and ostracization. Therefore, despite the consensus on mistrust in judicial and institutional mechanisms for addressing sexual violence, it is important to note that feminists do not base their ideas of justice on "a binary framework" that acknowledges either "formal law" or "informal community justice practices"

(Karlsson, 2024, p.1). İpek is also a queer feminist activist who has been a part of various feminist and queer organizations. They also remarked those:

> I'm not going to say that disclosure is the best solution, that it doesn't have any problems. We are talking about that, what disclosure means, how to do it, theoretically and practically. In some cases, it might be better to complain or to go to court directly. But I mean, as you know, sometimes there are things that happen that these systems will never recognize. ... I know there are some controversial and confusing aspects of this [disclosures], some people say it's neoliberal, some people say it's a reformist method. I agree up to a point. It also hurts people a lot afterwards, those who disclose. (my translation) (Appendix B, 8)

As Ekin's and İpek's insights suggest, there is no one-size-fits-all kind of justice, nor is there a singular rationale behind disclosures. Instead, the idea of justice is "a continually shifting pattern, constantly refracted through new circumstances and understandings" (McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019; p.186). Then, it is vital to understand that "the acts of justice-seeking are both iterative and contextually changing" (p.186). In this sense, the ideas of justice for survivors, as traced in Eda's words of "I wanted some kind of justice," are not limited to the confines of the "formal legal system" (Karlsson, 2024, p.1). They hold a broader spectrum of ideals, including other forms of justice they try to achieve through disclosures, like acknowledgment of perpetrators, measures to prevent future incidents, and fostering communal support and solidarity among survivors.

What also became apparent to me was that many survivors engaged in these processes appeared to establish a hierarchy between different forms of sexual violence and perpetrators. They discerned that ideals of restorative justice could be applied to certain cases, while they felt that some perpetrators did not deserve restorative paths. Aslı, a friend of mine, who is an MA student at a vakıf university, articulated these insights as such:

> I don't think the same way about all harassers, I don't think it's very strange to be a harasser. I think a lot of men are likely to harass someone, I think it

> has to do with power dynamics between genders and gender performances. I'm not saying these to excuse harassment, but a 50-year-old professor is not the same as a college freshman who has no idea what consent is. I don't see their mistakes as equal. For the younger one, I would be satisfied with things like rehabilitation, self-reflection, accepting his mistakes and taking responsibility. But no, for the other one, I think he should be disclosed in all possible ways. For example, I would want revenge, that he loses everything he has and is never given another chance. (my translation) (Appendix B, 9)

Hence, it is crucial to grasp that perceptions of justice "are not dichotomous" but rather exist on a spectrum (Daly, 2017; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2019, p.181). Instead of being constrained to choose either retributive or restorative ideals, how survivors envision justice is widely context dependent. Hence, survivors' conceptualization of justice, as well as their motivations and decisions regarding disclosure, depend greatly on the perpetrator's identity and what this identity represents.

3.1.2 Disclosures: forms and potentials

In this very section, I will focus on the main modes of disclosures commonly practiced by university students within the current sociopolitical climate. In this vein, this exploration is centered around three primary practices: disclosures through social media, the circulation of gossip, and disclosures on walls. Each method represents a crucial practice through which survivors reclaim their voice against sexual violence. I conceptualize each of these practices as interventions into the public sphere across different layers, an attempt to reclaim these public spaces as counter-publics on digital, discursive, and spatial dimensions.

Social media serves as a digital space where perpetrators are revealed to a wide range of audience. This form of disclosure benefits from the connectivity and immediacy of the online social media spheres to generate a digital counter-public, an alternative space where survivors can narrate their stories on their own terms. Gossip

emerges here not as rumor-mongering but as a powerful discursive tool. Through whisper networks, survivors can bypass formal structures that might otherwise suppress their stories. This practice of communication creates a discursive counter-public, one that operates through the spoken word. Further, as a form of spatial intervention, disclosures on walls through wall writings, posters, and stickers inscribe survivors' testimonials onto the very fabric of public spaces. It disrupts the physical landscape and raises attention to the reality of sexual violence by turning walls into canvases for enacting feminist activism. Doing so establishes counter-publics on physical spatial level by transforming public spaces into arenas of resistance.

3.1.2.1 Disclosures on social media

Recalling Eda's earlier statement, she initially chose to disclose her perpetrator within her social circles. Afterwards, she extended this decision, to disclose him on social media further adding onto her perspective:

> I wanted everyone in this university to know and talk about what he was doing. I also knew that if I posted [the disclosure] on Facebook [group], it would be a very big deal. (my translation) (Appendix B, 10)

In this context, there is a shared understanding of the ineffectiveness of judicial processes, which stands in opposition to social media platforms as a means of seeking justice and protecting oneself from potential legal repercussions (Gavigan, 1986). Therefore, social media platforms utilized for digital activism position the internet as a "realm that exists as an alternative to or outside of traditional domains of power" (Smith and Halafoff, 2020, p.7). Within this framework, social media operates as a dynamic and versatile landscape for survivors to challenge oppressive systems by publicizing their personal experiences. In this digital arena, many

survivors discover their ways of taking political action. Hence, "[e]ven when testimony is silenced in one jurisdiction," disclosures serve as "testimony [which] has a life of its own" within the digital sphere (Gilmore, 2023, p.xi). Therefore, when shared on social media, personal experiences that are overlooked by the legal sphere can transform into "sources of discussion of feminist identity and politics and contribute to women's history writing from below" (Göker, 2019, p.313). According to the Turkish Penal Code, disclosing perpetrators can potentially subject the agent to legal consequences (Haraszti, 2005). When Hazal sought legal advice about her situation, the lawyers she consulted told her that initiating a lawsuit was unlikely to result in favorable outcomes. In terms of disclosing, they warned her to be cautious by preserving her anonymity and refraining from providing the perpetrator with any leverage:

> Now, a friend of mine is facing a lawsuit because she publicly disclosed the man who harassed her. If I had the mind I have right now, I wouldn't let her do it that way, I would have made sure that she took the necessary precautions, like using an anonymous account and things like that, you know. (my translation) (Appendix B, 11)

Therefore, anonymity is a crucial element for survivors contemplating disclosures, not only for providing them safety but also throughout the decision-making process. In this vein, social media platforms offer an opportunity for individuals to maintain anonymity, thereby mitigating legal risks to a certain extent when appropriate precautions are taken (Clarke-Vivier & Stearns, 2019; Chandra, 2020). This stands in contrast to formal complaints, where university regulations do not ensure anonymity. This lack of anonymity can be troubling for complainants who fear retaliatory behavior from perpetrators, especially when the perpetrator holds a significantly powerful position, like a professor. In this regard, social media exhibits a "strategic flexibility" (Soja, 1996, p.13) that stems from its capacity for providing anonymity.

Thanks to this opportunity, disclosures enable the necessary bypassing of norms and rules and contribute to resistance by "allow[ing] for confession to millions in relative safety" (Whelehan, 2007, p.xvi). This reappropriation is "guided by some form of "potentially emancipatory praxis" that emanates from its flexibility, which aligns with the feminist struggle and seeks to challenge the patriarchal codes embedded in the social and legal system (Soja, 1996, p.22, Smart, 2002).

This flexibility enables survivors to mobilize through social media and strengthen them against the patriarchal culture and law that work to oppress women and suppress their voices (Alsahi, 2018). Drawing on the insights of bell hooks, Soja introduces the notion of "radical openness," a term that emphasizes the creation of spaces that facilitate the formation of diverse communities of resistance and "polyvocal political movements capable of linking together many radical subjectivities" (1996, p.93). While Soja initially applies this concept to physical spaces, I contend that the feminist movement's utilization of social media exemplifies such polyvocality in action. In this vein, women who are physically spread appropriate digital media as "a space for networking, community-formation and debate" (Hamilton, 2019, p.91).

However, while individual undertakings of disclosure do occur, the majority of disclosures on social media are organized actions, even in cases where the survivor is the sole victim of the violence. These disclosures often stem from acts of solidarity and are initially disseminated through the social media accounts of feminist organizations. This collective approach ensures that the survivor does not stand alone in the public eye and helps safeguard their identity from widespread exposure. In this regard, akin to the #MeToo movement, feminist disclosures illustrate "new possibilities for digital forms of feminist activism" where these digital

manifestations of feminist activism operate as “networked feminist counterpublics” (Patil & Puri, 2021, p.659, 691).

Through social media, various subjectivities that do not align with “the dominant organization of the public sphere” gain increased visibility (Şener, 2021, p.2). In a world where stories of oppression and bodily experiences often go unheard, social media plays a crucial role in mediating these narratives (Choi & Cho, 2017). Consequently, disclosures become forms of “public testimonial” enacted on social media (Trott, 2021, p.1126). Through this enactment, individuals build their own media and networks of communication that traditional media could never replicate (Choi & Cho, 2017). Doing so process challenges the so-called “boundaries between public and private” in “the absence of spaces for critique” (Harris, 2008, p.485). In this manner, feminists not only utilize social media as a conduit for these narratives but also reclaim it as a counter-public, where shared experiences become “affective and contagious” (Choi & Cho, 2017, p.28).

This contagion fosters a collective call to action and solidarity among individuals (Choi & Cho, 207). Thus, by sharing their stories -stories of marginalized experiences-, individuals reclaim space, assert their presence within the dominant discourse, and signal the “emergence of feminist counterpublic[s]” (Patil & Puri, 2021, p.659). Consequently, these disclosures serve as an open call for fellow survivors who have been through similar things to unite and strengthen their collective stance. It transforms into a space where marginalized voices are not merely acknowledged but actively turned into feminist action. Hence, disclosing sexual violence on social media offers new opportunities for advocacy and community building (Gash and Harding, 2018), as Ceren says:

> Yes, to be honest, I’m aware that it’s a bit strange to talk about what you’ve been through on social media. It makes you a bit vulnerable. ... But after a

> while it actually opens up a space for you to meet other women who have been through the same thing as you. So it's an important part of the process. I don't regret it at all. ... Meeting other women is actually the most important thing. So you can meet other people who have been harassed by the same person and you can grow solidarity. That's a very valuable and empowering thing. (my translation) (Appendix B, 12)

Therefore, disclosures empower individuals to embrace their vulnerability -being subjected to sexual violence- for political purposes. This parallels the concept of "purposeful peripheralness," a deliberate positioning on the margins (Soja, 1996, p.72-84). This peripheral stance contests the "social totality" of the public sphere (Warner, 2002, p.49), out of which disclosures help feminists claim their own counter-publics. These attempts towards counter-publics, which originate from sharing personal narratives of marginalization, defy established norms and advocate for a feminist discourse where voices on the margins resonate. Through disclosures, then, a new feminist landscape is imagined, one where vulnerability is not a weakness but a tool for collective solidarity, political agency, and subjectivity. Ceren continued:

> When you go and disclose someone on Facebook, you are not just telling a story. You are essentially pointing a finger at someone, making them visible so that they suffer the consequences. At least that's why I did it, I wanted him to be recognized and known by everyone, (laughs) but I'm not sure if it worked. (my translation) (Appendix B, 13)

Social media platforms represent digital public spheres "whose borders are blurred, where the street and the virtual world intertwine and complement each other" (Şener, 2021, p.3). Despite having an abstract character rather than being concrete, they hold a transformative power capable of cultivating environments conducive to constructive and tangible action (Şener, 2021, p.8). As a form of activism, disclosing sexual harassment helps survivors "to take their digital activism into the 'real world'" whilst yielding concrete consequences for their struggles and activism (Hoover and Echchaibi, 2012, p.1-8). Doing so establishes a distinct form of

spatiality within digital spheres, as survivors reappropriate social media as a space to challenge hegemonic discourse through the transmission and materialization of personal experiences (Hoover and Echchaibi, 2012). These digital spaces underscore the political potential of disclosures to actively claim and redefine digital spaces as sites of resistance and change, thereby asserting feminist counterpublics at the digital level (Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016; Dinçer, 2023).

3.1.2.2 Gossip as disclosure

Following her unsettling encounter with her professor, Mayıs contemplated the best way to alert others about this individual. She decided to tell others and strategized on disseminating her warning without directly exposing herself. Given that the professor would lack concrete evidence to initiate any formal defamation complaints against her, Mayıs felt more secure in sharing her story. She carefully selected whom to tell the story and tried to choose the right people to tell by considering who has connections to more people and who would never disclose her identity. I was also one of the people who were tasked with spreading the word. Thus, in our case, gossip was a deliberate collective effort shaped by careful planning.

In this sense, the phenomenon of gossip may emerge not as mere idle chatter but as a vibrant form of solidarity that flows through society. It may reveal patterns of power, resistance, and political practice in the everyday. Besnier demonstrates this potential by suggesting that "politics "happens" where one may be led to least expect it—in the nooks and crannies of everyday life, outside of institutionalized contexts that one ordinarily associates with politics" (2019, p.11). His reflection underscores the significance of gossip and the importance of theorizing it as a potent form of everyday resistance. Through this lens, gossip casts light on "the complexities of

politics in small-scale societies where hierarchy and egalitarianism coexist in sometimes uneasy fashion and where the boundary between public and private is at best wafer thin" (Besnier, 2019, p.1). This perspective challenges traditional conceptions of politics as confined to the formal arenas of public debate. During an interview, Irmak, my friend who is an MA student in Ankara, told me this:

> I mean, I was afraid of filing a complaint or disclosing him on social media, because the court or the university would never protect me. These are all male-dominated, patriarchal systems. Actually, I never wanted to have to deal with the university and have to face some stupid men along the way. I didn't want to take refuge in them (the university). So I thought, what can I do? Nothing. But I can talk. I can talk to my friends, I can tell them to tell others. So that I could reach out to other people who had been harassed by this man, and then we could come together and maybe find the strength to do more. We could create a chance to protect other people that he could have harmed. (my translation) (Appendix B, 14)

Then, we see that gossip extends beyond the framework of a merely individualistic act based on "protecting individual interest" (Paine, 1967, p.278). Yet, what happens here is that gossip can also be a communal endeavor utilized by individuals as a means of "local social control," which transcends personal interests (Driel & Verkuyten, 2022, p.604). It is a way to collectively protect the community against those who pose a threat. This strategic use of gossip is often underpinned by a sense of solidarity among women with a concerted effort for fellow women's good (Paine, 1967). In line with this is that gossip requires "the cooperation and participation," and it flourishes in environments characterized by "close-knit social networks" (Merry, 1984, p.271). Such a perspective further emphasizes the importance of the collaborative effort for gossip as a collective practice that requires a deliberate engagement of others within the social network.

Therefore, in line with the seminal argument of second-wave feminism that "the personal is political," gossip exemplifies how the private sphere –which is ordinarily perceived as non-political and filled with the personal and the mundane–

can indeed become a site of political significance and action (Collier and Yanagisako, 1987). Through the act of gossiping, individuals navigate and transgress the thin boundaries between the private and the public. In doing so, they challenge ""the confinement of politico-gural to the public sphere, where men dominate" through a relegation of a political engagement (Besnier, 2019, p.6). Ceren, my friend who was harassed by a professor whom I mentioned earlier, also shared the following:

> In this case, I talked to a friend of mine and I told her to tell as many of her friends as she could. We formed something like a group, I tried to reach out to people to see if anyone else was going through similar things. So, guess what, I reached out to more than one person, of course, the guy had done this to many people. And then we got together with them and tried to think of a collective action that could be taken. (my translation) (Appendix B, 15)

In line with these insights, we can draw a parallel to what Nancy Fraser refers to as "subaltern counterpublics" (1990, p.67). She describes these counterpublics for disadvantaged groups who lack "arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies" (Fraser, 1990, p.66). The idea of a subaltern counterpublic, or an alternative public sphere, envisions "the constitution of a public as a multicontextual space of circulation" which is not confined within the borders of a specific institution but defined by "the circulation of discourse" (Warner, 2002, p.85). To resort to Fraser's perspective:

> On the one hand, they [subaltern counterpublics] function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides. This dialectic enables subaltern counterpublics partially to offset, although not wholly to eradicate, the unjust participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies. (Fraser, 1990, p.68)

While trying to reach more people through gossip in Mayıs' case, our main aim was to make the man face some repercussions. They managed it to a certain extent as his reputation was shattered, and many of his students cut ties with him. Then, gossip

can also give rise to “economic consequences” by potentially “restrict[ing] its target’s access to resources, particularly those obtained through cooperative efforts” (Besnier, 2019, p.17). It can further lead to political and social consequences, encompassing mockery, exclusion, and more (Besnier, 2019). Often, this is precisely the aim of survivors: to impose the perpetrator to real-life consequences despite the indifferences of institutional and legal structures. Therefore, as a mechanism, gossip can potentially control behavior and may function as an effective tool for social regulation.

Doing so also enabled Mayıs to reach other women who had been through similar experiences with this professor. They came together and, after a while, decided to disclose this professor as a group. Thus, being able to share her experiences helped Mayıs create a unity among women bound by shared experiences and foster political action thanks to effectively establishing a discursive subaltern counterpublic. As Fraser argued, these alternative publics emerge as a response to the marginalization and exclusion of certain groups from dominant discursive arenas. By their very nature, these counterpublics “help expand discursive space” by becoming a tool for survivors when they lack access or rights within judicial frameworks.

In a similar line, when I asked Hazal whether she ever considered publicly disclosing her rapist after the university found him not guilty as a result of the complaint, she mentioned that she made a small disclosure by telling what he did to her social circle. Hazal, as she phrased it, was living a double life. Her parents were quite pious and oppressive, always trying to control her life. When she started university, she had the chance to distance herself from her family, get away from her parents, and build a life of which her parents remained unaware. Hence, she refrained

from disclosing him on social media as she was getting threats from him and was afraid that he may tell her parents about "her life," which would have significant repercussions. Gossip, through "the cumulative effect of individualized and often anonymous acts," as in the case of Hazal, becomes a mechanism through which the survivor voice their dissent, often anonymously, while posing a challenge to "exertion of power" (Besnier, 2019, p. 7). Nazlı, a friend who was harassed by her high school friend, told me the following:

> I was afraid of disclosing him on social media because even if someone else shared it [the disclosure post] for me, he would realize that I was behind it. I couldn't risk it. Then I decided to disclose him to our friends. When I started exposing him in my social circle, people started giving me a lot of advice. Do this, do that and so on. I hate it when people give me advice after I tell them what I went through, as if I had never thought about what they were telling me before. But people like to talk condescendingly; they don't know what you've been through, I guess they don't understand what it means to be a woman. But I mean, I felt very vulnerable in the face of this patriarchal order, and I never thought of filing a lawsuit. (my translation) (Appendix B, 16)

Importantly, as can be seen from the above quote, this drive to create a new discursive landscape "maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status" (Fraser, 1990, p.86). This awareness shapes the character of the counterpublic and emphasizes its role as a space of resistance and agency for those who find themselves on the peripheries. Hence, gossip offers a discursive space for those excluded from hegemonic channels of discourse and power.

3.1.2.3 Disclosures on walls

There exists another method of publicly disclosing perpetrators: on the walls through writings, posters, and paint. Survivors leave marks on walls to inscribe the names and deeds of perpetrators in order to create a visible reminder of their abuse within public spaces. By doing so, they utilize the visibility of these public spaces to break

the silence surrounding harassment and establish a tangible testament to the perpetrator's actions.

Following the disclosure of a prominent academic from Turkey, the disclosure transcended social media and spilled onto the physical sphere and marked the walls with writings proclaiming "[his name] is an abuser." This case was a very popular one as this academic and the woman he harassed were quite well-known individuals not only within academic circles but also on social media. Furthermore, the professor who harassed Mayıs and many others was later disclosed via posters in and around the campus. These posters featured the photograph of the perpetrator, along with the message, "feminists will send harassers away" [39]. In one of the interviews, my university friend Zeynep told me these:

> Don't look at this liberal discourse that pretends that this university is a free place. People think, for example, that the students and academics on this campus are profeminists and democrats. This is nonsense. There are so many perpetrators on this campus, and we are trying to find our place among them. I hate this situation. Sometimes I think, yes, let's disclose these guys. Let's post their faces and photos everywhere so that they can never feel safe here. They should know that this place, this campus is not theirs, it is ours. (my translation) (Appendix B, 17)

Zeynep's desire to disclose the perpetrators and mark them publicly ("put their faces everywhere") suggests a call for accountability and a way to unsettle the false sense of security the wrongdoers enjoy. Zeynep ended up not disclosing the guy who harassed her, yet she still considers doing it, trying to reach others. She is unwilling to "silently coexist" with those who have harmed her. In this sense, these practices of disclosures work as a form of "(re)claiming of space," representing "a type of disruption or as an intervention in the continuum of injustice, whereby victim-survivors can experience a sense of justice, empowerment, belonging and freedom" (Antonsdottir, 2020, p.719).

[39] "tacizcileri feministler gönderecek" in Turkish.

In numerous other discussions, the idea of publicly disclosing perpetrators by "displaying" them in public spaces emerged as a recurring suggestion among many participants. However, it remained largely unimplemented and was perceived as a controversial issue by many. Nonetheless, a prevalent theme I observed throughout these conversations was the perception of the campus and its surrounding area as a battleground. Survivors expressed a desire to reclaim their own space within this contested environment and assert their presence in it. In this sense, disclosures on walls are not commonly used but mostly employed in the context of "serious" or "persistent" sexual violence, as noted by many individuals I engaged with. Survivors utilize this method when they consider the perpetrator's actions irredeemable or beyond the scope of any restoration.

During our conversations with Ekin, she mentioned that when the perpetrator is an academic, the issue becomes more severe as their actions illuminate deeper systematic and structural power issues ingrained in sexual harassment, which feminists are actively fighting against. In this context, when a senior professor at the university was revealed to be a perpetrator, feminist organizations based in this university disclosed his identity by throwing purple paint on his walls so that everyone would see and acknowledge him as a harasser. Subsequently, they went to his class to confront him by revealing their knowledge of his actions. However, the professor ended up not attending the class to face them. In this sense, reclaiming the space through inscriptions on walls is "not only about survival but is about enacting a shift in the power dynamics" between the survivors and perpetrators (Antonsdottir, 2020, p.732).

When the professor who harassed Mayıs was publicly disclosed, and his name was put on the walls, Mayıs expressed surprise at the magnitude of the

disclosure and remarked that it was something so big that it could not be returned. Conversely, İrem, whom this same professor sexually assaulted, expressed satisfaction and stated that he would be too ashamed to return to the neighborhood and continue to present himself as a perfect, well-intentioned professor while hurting others. She further added the significance of this campus and neighborhood as her own space; even posters placed on the walls were promptly taken down:

> Word flies and writing remains, ahah. I mean sure, the posters can be taken down and the wall writings can be erased somehow, but it doesn't matter. That man will never forget that his name and photos were put up here and he won't be able to come here, I know that. I don't care about anything else. (my translation) (Appendix B, 18)

Hence, there is a clear intent behind these disclosures to disrupt the comfort perpetrators enjoy and to shift the balance so that they, rather than the survivors, feel exposed and unsafe. This further helps the survivors feel safe without the fear of encountering the perpetrator, empowered, and regain the "right to everyday life" (Beebeejaun, 2017, p.326). In this sense, İrem advocates for visibility not only as a form of punishment but also as a declaration of ownership over the campus and neighborhood. Therefore, disclosures enacted on walls serve as a means of reclaiming space and establishing safe environments. This act of inscription represents a tangible and direct assertion against physical spheres that are filled with sexual violence and perpetrators. They serve as a way to leave a lasting and impactful mark on the campus and its surroundings, which are often characterized by gendered hierarchies and instances of harassment. Then, these writings effectively "remap the formal space of inscription" (Nandrea, 1999, p.111), as İrem champions this act as a tool for transformation, retribution, and an affirmation of ownership:

> Men think they can do anything they want, anywhere they want and get away with it. They think they own this campus. I think this is the best way to show them that this is not the case. I see it as leaving a mark that they will never forget. And I think these tactics should be used more often because we can

> show other women what these men are like. So that they don't accidentally, unknowingly get involved with them. (my translation) (Appendix B, 19)

Therefore, this practice of disclosure functions not only as a way of publicly calling out the perpetrator but also as a method of transforming anonymous urban landscapes into spaces of resistance and community awareness. Survivors assert their rights within spaces traditionally closed off to them. In doing so, they confront the power imbalances inherent in these "built environments" and find ways to alert the public to the prevalence of sexual violence (Enke, 2007, p.4).

In contrast to the fleeting nature of and rapid dissemination in social media, the act of putting a message on a wall is perceived as a more enduring and impactful form of intervention, as articulated by İrem. This method is viewed as having greater impact repercussions for perpetrators than social media disclosures. Therefore, survivors assert their rights within spaces traditionally closed off to them while also creating new spaces of their own. Their objective in publicly revealing perpetrators via disclosures on the walls is to "intervene in public landscapes and social geographies [that are] already structured around gender" (Enke, 2007, p.4). Doing so means confronting the social hierarchies embedded in built environments. Hence, by utilizing writings, posters, and paints as "territorial markers" (Ley and Cybriwsky, 2018, p.498), feminists assert their presence and articulate their own discourse within tangible urban spaces. In this manner, they reclaim these settings as feminist counter-publics.

3.2 Setbacks of disclosures

While it can offer various opportunities, the act of disclosing experiences of sexual violence for survivors can also be a profoundly challenging and multifaceted process laden with deadlocks. In this line, I explore the setbacks of sexual violence

disclosures survivors encounter in this challenging terrain survivors navigate. Firstly, I focus on stigmatization and victim-blaming often directed towards survivors and then examine the phenomenon of social ostracism, whereby survivors face isolation and rejection from their social circles or leave themselves out following disclosure. Finally, I will discuss the normalization of sexual violence via the proliferation of disclosures, which may unintentionally desensitize individuals to the gravity of such acts.

3.2.1 Stigmatization and victim-blaming

> *I want to speak about anger, my anger, and what I have learned from my travels through its dominions.*
> -Audre Lorde[40]

I recall a conversation with a close male friend of mine, Batu, who told me that he always feels sorry for "us" -"us" here indicates the feminists- because our anger casts us in the wrong even if we are mostly the right ones. This conversation was based on the social media disclosure of a male university student from a left-wing organization. Batu further said that we seem "unsympathetic". His words resonated during a period when my friends and I were thinking about whether to disclose a student from a different university, who sexually assaulted at least four women. This intersection of a so-called sympathy and critique in his statement reflected a wider perception of feminist activism, particularly in its confrontation with issues like sexual violence with boldness and public action. Over time, I had many first-hand experiences and witnessed that labels like "angry," "repulsive," and similar adjectives are frequently assigned to feminists. Hence, feminists, when they employ

[40] (Lorde, 1997, p.280)

strategies to confront the hegemonic structures and seek justice, often met societal stigmatization (Anastosopoulos & Desmarais, 2015).

Stigmas, according to Goffman, refer to sets of unfavorable stereotypes imposed by society onto individuals (1963, p.3). This process triggers a dynamic where social identities and stigmas become solidified, leading stigmatized individuals to be perceived as "tainted" or undesirable (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). Goffman differentiates between three main streams of stigma: "physical deformities," "blemishes of individual character," and "tribal stigma" (1963, p.4). This second category refers to the stigmatization of individuals due to their perceived character, political and religious beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and so forth (Goffman, 1963).

Then, in the context of survivors' experiences, the stigmas attached to them as a result of disclosures are often perceived as, under this second category, flaws in their individual character. Women have endured stigmatization not only for the "violence that is inflicted on them" but also for their acts of resistance against such violence (Das & Kleinman, 2001; Jefferson, 2004, p.3). In this sense, my research resonates with Goffman's insights on stigma and the formation of social identity regarding how survivors face stigmatization when they file complaints or disclose their perpetrators. Sharing their experiences and disclosing sexual violence frequently results in discomfort or rejection for survivors, with them being seen as characteristic of a "hysterical" woman to be avoided (Stewart, 2019, p.73; Ashworth & Pedersen, 2023). Women who publicize their perpetrators often encounter similar labels, reflecting their stigmatization due to their stance against sexual violence (Ahmed, 2021). Within certain social circles, they are labeled as "feminist killjoys" and "unsympathetic," similar to what Batu called me (Ahmed,

2019, p.239; Hennefeld, 2021; Kotler, 2018, p.51). Ahmed characterizes this issue as complaints being "sticky" in the sense that they attach to the person and lead to portrayals of complainants "as moaner" who "mak[es] something from nothing, much out of little" (2021, p.203). Consequently, these stigmatizing categories become deeply ingrained in the formation of social identities and mark survivors with stigmas which may lead to their social ostracization, as will be discussed in the following chapter (Goffman, 1963, p.3)

Individuals who disclose their perpetrators mostly face the danger of stigmatization and victim-blaming (Gallagher et al., 2019, p.3). How this stigmatization works and leaks into the public sphere is particularly visible on social media platforms. When Mayıs and her friends disclosed this professor on Twitter, they were met with responses from numerous accounts calling them "shameless," "whores" and so on. Another friend of mine, who disclosed misconduct by a man affiliated with a left-wing union, received messages criticizing her for her "inconsiderate feminist behavior," with claims that such actions were detrimental to the broader cause and the movement as a whole.

While the very act of "telling" inherently involves an exercise of power, "telling a dissonant story, one that challenges tolerances around who may appear in public, will place marginalized subjects at greater risk of being doubted" (Gilmore, 2017, p.9). Then, these "self-representational" narratives are "likely to elicit skepticism or condemnation" rather than compassion and righteousness (Gilmore, 2017, p.80). Hence, in addition to this blend of victim-blaming and stigmatization, survivors who "disclose publicly risk reactions of disbelief" (Gallegher et al., 2019, p.2). Disclosures often come under intense scrutiny, with bystanders meticulously analyzing every detail. In the case of Mayıs and her friends, they were met with

skepticism from many, with a significant portion of responses focusing on the perceived character of the accused professor. He was often described as "such a nice professor," while the survivors themselves were questioned with comments such as "how do we know you are not lying?" For instance, an anonymous account replied, stating that feminists are always attempting to ruin someone's reputation. Additionally, Mayıs observed numerous replies to the original post criticizing the actions of feminists as "impulsive"[41] and "indigested"[42]. In this sense, what transpires is the creation of "tainted witness," a term used by Gilmore to illustrate how testimonial acts of women are "discredited by a host of means meant to taint it: to contaminate by doubt, stigmatize through association with gender and race, and dishonor through shame, such that not only the testimony but the person herself is smeared" (2017, p.2).

These reactions are also consistent with studies that highlight how the stigmatization of survivors aligns with alt-right rhetoric, which seeks to "successfully (re)position[x] feminist and other progressive politics as intolerant and oppressive" (Ahmed, 2021; Phipps, 2020, p.237). This response underscores a broader tendency to delegitimize and trivialize women's experiences of violence as well as maintain the existing power imbalances. Mayıs later told me that despite her certainty in her righteousness, she felt increasingly exhausted and angry upon seeing these types of replies. In another conversation, she remarked that she would have never gone through with the disclosure if she had known about these potential reactions in advance.

Hence, while acts of disclosure represent a crucial step towards accountability and healing for many survivors, they are often met with

[41] "dürtüsel" in Turkish.
[42] "hazmedilmemiş" in Turkish.

stigmatization, skepticism, and further victimization. Survivors of violence often report the "feeling that they will be discredited and tainted" in the case of disclosing the violence they have been through (Hannem et al., 2015, p.391). Hence, the risk and potential of stigmatization associated with disclosures dissuades survivors from speaking up and sharing their experiences (Gallagher et al., 2019, p.1), as is also visible from Nazlı's comments:

> I can say that if I am not exposing the man who raped me today, this is the reason. We see what people are dealing with [on the university Facebook Group], what kind of responses they get. Angry feminist and all that kind of stuff is flying around. Honestly, I don't really care what they think, but I don't want to deal with it. (my translation) (Appendix B, 20)

Therefore, there is a link between the stigmatization of survivors and the individuals' decisions about disclosing their perpetrators. In these contexts, concepts like "outrage" and angry feminists "have been mobilized by alleged perpetrators and their defenders to avoid accountability" by challenging survivors and feminists through tone-policing or criticism of "political correctness" (Phipps, 2020, p.237; Phipps, 2014, p.38). In many cases, the portrayal of survivors as angry casts doubts on the credibility of their disclosure. This illustrates the precariousness and fragility of the "ideal victim" status (Randall, 2010, p.398), which is contingent on the survivors' discourse and attitudes rather than the actual experience of violence.

3.2.2 Social ostracism

The notion of stigma is especially important to contemplate on "mixed contacts," which refers to "the moments when stigmatized and normal are in the same "social situation" (Goffman, 1963, p.12). Such encounters often lead to a conscious effort by both parties to organize their social lives in a way to prevent this contact. This highlights the pervasive influence of stigma in social relations and the

lengths to which individuals go to prevent the discomfort it brings. As a result of stigmatization, stigmatized individuals experience "discrimination" because being "linked to undesirable characteristics" creates a justification for "devaluing, rejecting, and excluding them" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p370-1; Kennedy & Prock, 2018). In this sense, stigmatization not only regulates individuals' daily lives and interactions but can also lead to social "ostracism" (Goffman, 1963, p.33).

Within the context of sexual violence and disclosures, the stigmatization of survivors gives rise to a complex set of consequences. Consequently, sexual violence encompasses not only "direct physical harm, trauma" but also "social ostracism" experienced by the survivor (Jefferson, 2004, p.1). Then, survivor's journey is often defined by the enduring effects of sexual violence, which leaks into various facets of their life. This stigmatization, coupled with subsequent ostracism, often place them in a relentless struggle as they try to pursue justice, navigate life post-violence, and grapple with retraumatization (Gallagher et al., 2019; Filipas and Ullman, 2001; Campbell and Raja, 1999). Hence, survivors who come forward are sometimes met with exclusion from their own communities, from which they had expected support, as evident from Irmak's words:

> They are all hypocrites. Everyone talks about cancel culture. They are so ignorant of the dynamics here. I don't know who is really canceled here. The last time [during a demonstration] a man was disclosed, he showed up at a group breakfast two days after, and everyone was shamelessly sharing photos from the breakfast. I don't know what it means to be canceled anymore, but I know that I was ostracized for disclosing my rapist, that much I know. The shoe dropped on me, they didn't invite me to that breakfast for example. (my translation) (Appendix B, 21)

This form of ostracism, while subtle, speaks volumes about the social dynamics at play, where the cohesion of the group is preserved at the expense of the victim. In this regard, ostracism serves as a strategic tool for social groups to uphold their integrity by "eliminat[ing] burdensome members and maintain[ing] their

cohesiveness and strength" (Williams, 2007, p.445). Therefore, the act of disclosure does more than revealing a perpetrator; it may expose the survivor to a societal lens that is all too often critical and unforgiving. Disclosures, despite being intended to assert agency and demand justice, also subject survivors to further ostracism and scrutiny (Freedman, 2007). Hence, as in the case of the risk of stigmatization; while there are many different forms of ostracism, regardless of its form, the possibility and expectation of ostracism often represents "a threat to deter victims from speaking out against their harassers" (Brown and Battle, 2019, p.55) and perpetuates a culture of impunity for perpetrators.

In the case of my friend Nazlı, she was harassed by a former high school friend who was a part of her friend group. He was an integral thread in this close-knit circle which had been together for nearly a decade. This made her decision-making process all the more complex. She had to profoundly contemplate on whether to name her perpetrator and share her story with their mutual friend group. She knew that doing so might risk her standing within the group. Hence, her dilemma was not only about confronting her perpetrator but also about the future of her friendships. Would her friends, who were close to both Nazlı and the perpetrator, stand by her? It was this uncertainty Nazlı faced that she might find herself being left alone. This led to a long period of contemplation, and after two years, Nazlı took the courage to speak out. Afterwards, she experienced intimate violence from those closest to her:

> I mean, like I said, I didn't exactly disclose him publicly, but I told our group of friends in high school. It's different in high school, or well, those friendships are different. After I told them, they acted like they felt sorry for me, but then I found out that they were meeting him and going on trips together without telling me. One of them told me that they even started new WhatsApp groups without me. So, what can I say? I'm not going to lie, I wasn't really upset, I already knew what kind of people they were, I just realized it once again. They were relieved to be rid of me and I finally stopped caring about what they were doing. I still occasionally think about disclosing that guy on social media, but then I don't want to bother myself

> again and again about something I've already let go of, but at the same time I feel like I owe it to the other women. (my translation) (Appendix B, 22)

Moreover, "the stigmatized individual[s]" find themselves in a dilemma wherein they feel "unsure" about how others will "receive" them (Goffman, 1963, p.13). This dilemma arises not from the ambiguity of social categories imposed on them but rather from the certainty of knowing that they are/will be stigmatized. In this sense, women who name their harassers often face a secondary form of victimization through social ostracism, which can be viewed as a pervasive type of violence in everyday life. Dilan's words revealed a similar sentiment:

> In a sense, I knew that I was the girl who disclosed that beloved teacher and caused his classes to be canceled. Also, when you disclose someone publicly, you disclose yourself. You know, men start looking at you differently, as if you are the cause of the harassment and you can make them become harassers too. That was quite disturbing. (my translation) (Appendix B, 23)

The above quotation is an illustration of this harsh reality, especially when it became public knowledge that she was one of the people behind the disclosure of the professor. Her classmates continued their weekly reading groups without inviting her. Upon learning about her encounter with the professor, her boyfriend not only blamed her for the situation but promptly ended their relationship. Consequently, she found herself ostracized from their mutual friend group; they even started not greeting her on campus.

Dilan's statement, "when you publicly disclose someone, you disclose yourself too," illustrates how holding or revealing information is closely related to stigmatization (Orne, 2013). When the information that would spark stigma is "invisible," it is on the individual to decide whether to disclose (Goffman, 1963, p.73). Consequently, it becomes a matter of navigating "how to deal with the information that can lead to being discredited" (Joachim & Acorn, 2000, p.245). In this regard, the decision to disclose for a survivor entails not only revealing

information about the perpetrator but also about themselves, thus becoming an integral aspect of their self-presentation (Orne, 2013; Goffman, 1959; 1963).

Being ostracized by their social circles is not the only challenge survivors face. Stigmatization and its repercussions, such as "status loss and isolation," not only have detrimental impacts on survivors' psychological well-being but also hinder their "help-seeking and attainment process" (Kennedy & Prock, 2018, p. 512; Kennedy, Bybee & Greeson, 2014). Hence, the lack of appropriate consequences for their perpetrator, or the presence of the perpetrator or the anticipation thereof, may compel survivors to distance themselves and withdraw from these groups, and end up effectively creating a scenario where they are indirectly pushed aside. In response, the survivor feels compelled to rearrange their everyday life by strategizing how to minimize the likelihood of these encounters. As a close friend of Mayıs, I bore witness to her experiences during this period.

For Mayıs, as a passionate literature enthusiast, a renowned literary festival in Istanbul held significant importance. She had played a vital role in the execution of this festival over the years. However, the presence of a prominent professor in the field, who had become actively involved in the festival and was well-connected with the committee, posed a significant challenge. Contrary to her hopes, his involvement was more invasive and unsettling than she had initially thought. He made no effort to spare her discomfort, and his indifference intensified her unease. Initially, Mayıs persisted in attending the festival meetings, but the unavoidable contact with the professor gradually became intolerable.

She considered talking about him to the festival committee, but she understood all too well that disclosing him would not just expose him but also mark her within the festival community. She would be seen not only as someone who had

been sexually harassed but also as someone who accused a good member of the festival. Mayıs found herself at a crossroads, fully aware that her choice could profoundly alter her social life and possibly make her an outcast. This anticipated stigmatization and the societal marginalization that would likely follow serves as a testament to the social burdens endured by survivors. She then disclosed him to some people from the committee whom she trusted. They assured her that they would be careful and try to keep the perpetrator away, but ultimately no concrete action was taken. Overwhelmed with embarrassment, Mayıs felt compelled to withdraw from her responsibilities before the festival came to an end. The perceived failure of support systems left her feeling isolated and abandoned.

All in all, the experiences detailed in this section illuminate the multifaceted societal repercussions faced by survivors of sexual violence who choose to speak out. The act of disclosure, while a critical step for asserting one's agency and seeking justice, paradoxically subjects survivors to stigmatization and social ostracism. It becomes clear that the act of disclosing a perpetrator is enveloped in complexities that extend far beyond the act itself that help reproducing the initial experiences of violence in different ways.

3.2.3 Politics of pain & naturalizing the suffering

In her exploration of feminist literature, Green examines autobiographical forms as a "spectacle" to illustrate how "feminist self-representation" both empowers individuals by "establish[ing] an authority by speaking from the experience" and constrains by "subject[ing] the woman … to a voyeuristic public gaze" (1992, p.7). In parallel to this are the previous discussions on stigmatization and victim-blaming in this section, where I examined how survivors, through disclosures, which I

consider as feminist self-representational forms, expose themselves to diverse audiences and their ensuing reactions. Beyond stigmatization and victim-blaming, this voyeuristic scrutiny brings about broader consequences.

In this vein, particularly when enacted as a collective action, the practice of disclosure often prompts discussions among survivors regarding its execution. Consequently, questions concerning the motivations behind disclosure, the methods employed, the content shared, and the extent of disclosure become pivotal within feminist circles. These discussions occasionally give rise to disagreements within solidarity groups, a topic I will delve into further in the subsequent chapter.

In line with these discussions, then, the act of self-representation or self-exposure through disclosures is a topic of contention among survivors, as per my observations. Considering that social media is also a crucial medium for disclosures, the focus on how "mass media … facilitates the 'spectacularization' of" events becomes even more critical.[43] According to Noble, "the paradox of the spectacle is that it creates both markets of consumption and audiences of resistance" (2014, p.24). This discussion is closely related to the digital realm since "making the personal visible" on social media introduces certain risks, and social media disclosures become "media spectacle[s]" that are "incapable of dismantling a system of oppression" (Clark-Parsons, 2021, p.363). Hence, the central question for this discourse is the question of managing the "economy of visibility" within the digital sphere (Clark-Parsons, 2021, p.363-6). Here, the notion of the economy of visibility emphasizes the condition in which visibility "becomes an end in itself, rather than a route to politics" (Banet-Weiser, 2015, p.55).

[43] (Zellinger, 2013, p.1) can be found on https://www.academia.edu/4702205/Frames_of_Mediation_and_the_Spectacle_of_Everyday_Life or https://l24.im/yf4IE1D

The majority of disclosures on social media typically involve detailed narratives recounting the sexual violence experience. These accounts, predominantly penned by survivors themselves, often provide detailed descriptions of the events, surrounding circumstances, and the perpetrators involved. In the preceding sections of this chapter, I emphasized İpek's words: "I am not going to say that disclosure is the best solution that does not have any hiccups." Parallel to this, I have seen an absence of consensus on executing and navigating disclosures effectively. For instance, when Nazlı and her friends opted to disclose a perpetrator from their university, they intentionally chose to keep their statement brief and omit specific details. This decision was a political choice on their part, like a stance against the *spectacularization* of the event, driven by their reluctance to craft a narrative for the sake of credibility. Moreover, the idea of sharing such intimate details felt invasive, like a "violation of her boundaries," as Nazlı said to me. Consequently, they released a concise statement that did not elaborate on the professor's actions but merely labeled him as a harasser. This disclosure quickly sparked a lengthy, heated debate across Twitter and drew considerable controversy. Some students were distinctly critical of the form of disclosure; one of them published a post criticizing the vagueness of the accusation in this disclosure while questioning how anyone was expected to trust a disclosure devoid of any specifics. He suggested that the disclosure post appeared to be a ploy against the professor. This disclosure sparked a debate among survivors as well, with some advocating for the inclusion of details while others opposed it.

In this sense, I believe economies of visibility provides a useful framework to understand these discussions. According to Banet-Weiser, the "economies of visibility are gendered" as there exists a greater "imperative" for "women to make

themselves visible," in general (2015, p.55). She conceptualizes this phenomenon as an economy since it functions in a manner akin to a "supply and demand" model (2015, p.58). This economy of visibility is also intertwined with women's credibility. Women do not inherently possess credibility; instead, they have to give the effort to gain it since it becomes "a commodity to be worked for, paid for, secured" (Banet-Weiser & Higgins, 2022, p.129)

Baner-Weiser further observes that this economy of visibility and its associated dynamics are also conspicuous on social media platforms (2015). In line with this, I contend that this framework is equally applicable in understanding disclosures, including how they are initiated and perceived by the audience. As she later told me, Nazlı initially hesitated to share the full extent of her story because her primary intention behind the disclosure was not to convince or persuade third parties but rather to publicly call out the perpetrator. However, she also came to the understanding that people's inclination to seek out details was driven by a desire for deeper understanding and the formation of their own opinions. Eventually, she felt compelled to clarify the professor's actions, acknowledging the significance of being believed and the innate need for validation. In essence, what was at stake here was an economy of visibility, which was contingent upon the negotiation of the supply and demand of details, self-exposure, and lived experiences. Then, survivors can gain credibility only when they portray their experiences of sexual violence in spectacular ways (Banet-Weiser & Higgins, 2022)

Another participant, Melike, who had been involved in a collective disclosure concerning an athlete student from her university, expressed that she did not willingly partake in the disclosure. She feared potential repercussions since the athlete came from a very powerful family and doubted the effectiveness of

disclosures. She anticipated facing significant backlash and questioned whether the disclosure would be worth the cost. Yet, regardless of this dilemma, she became a part of the disclosure. As we discussed various acts of disclosures, she told me that abstaining from providing details often leads to demands for more information and people asking to know more; however, providing the details still results in doubts from some regarding one's credibility. In this line, Melike told the following:

> I don't think we have an obligation to tell anyone what we are going through, that we have to share every detail with others in order to legitimize ourselves and so on. This situation also makes me a bit uncomfortable. As if by sharing every detail we have to convince others of our experiences. If I want to disclose someone, I disclose them and it's up to them whether others believe me or not. I certainly don't need to compromise my values for a handful of men to believe me. I don't think the politics that we do here should be based on the credibility of these experiences, and I don't think that the impact of our exposure should be determined by how striking or sensational our experience is. (my translation) (Appendix B, 24)

Here, we see an echo of Berlant's (2001) discussion on the politics of pain, wherein she suggests that the politicization of pain may potentially mean aligning with the categorizations law and state structures presuppose on us in order to make political claims. Therefore, "to deprivatize women's structurally induced pain" is not always fruitful, particularly when they are not recognized as subjects before the law and the state (Berlant, 2001, p.124). This raises questions about the efficacy of making one's pain public, as Melike also questioned, especially in terms of disclosures, which fall into a complex area that is simultaneously empowering and oppressive for survivors.

Wendy Brown, on the other hand, offers a counterpoint, arguing that "feminism must retain and reproduce the pain of marginalization in order to maintain itself as a political project" (Ahmed et al., 2015, p.15). I will further discuss this point in the following chapter through the relationship between violence and subjectivity while exploring how disclosures exemplify an embracement of marginality as a site for resistance. In this vein, the violence endured by "the

politicized subject become[s] a necessary fetish for the gaining of visibility and credibility," which allows the individuals to identify their pain and connect with it (Ahmed et al., 2015, p.15). Nazlı, despite her initial reluctance, came to recognize the necessity of public belief and the potential for political mobilization through shared experiences:

> I think it is normal for people to question the credibility of any disclosure text they read. Similarly, I think it's perfectly reasonable for someone who has been sexually harassed not to want to publicize that experience. Bu we can make politics out of this experience. While I don't think we need to engage in any kind of negotiation to get people to believe the disclosures, sometimes compromises have to be made if we want to have a political impact. (my translation) (Appendix B, 25)

Another time, while discussing a famous Youtuber disclosed on social media not for sexual violence but for fraud, a friend in the group expressed how everyone's detailed narratives about him seemed overly harsh to her. She remarked that even if he were in jail, he would likely be forgiven after a while and move on, whereas now he seems like he will never be forgiven. Another friend added that it would have been more restorative if such matters were dealt with within inner circles. According to her, the concept of "disclosure" emerged in the past three to four years, and we have collectively wasted it. Considering the nature of social media, it is unsurprising that it has come to this; it is like a blood race, she noted. Yet another friend, Beliz, chimed in, pointing out that our perception of exposures from three or four years ago is vastly different from now. She expressed support for disclosures in cases of serious violence, as they can bring about justice in some form. However, she observed that current exposures make both the person who disclosed and who was disclosed incredibly vulnerable. She questioned whether we genuinely believe in the transformative power of disclosures and pondered whether Twitter is the appropriate platform for it. Hence, in addition to the ongoing discussions and controversies

surrounding the politicization of pain, we must also consider how the deprivatization of suffering is consumed by others. Beliz further added:

> There was a summer when where we always saw a new disclosure on the Facebook group and at the beginning I used to go into the group and read all the details and stuff. It was a strange process where I found out that some of my friends or friends of my friends were perpetrators. And when you read these posts, these are the posts that tell you what happened, and if you're a decent person, you feel a little bit of guilt and responsibility, but only for a certain period of time. After a while you just get used to it because it's impossible to remember them all. Sometimes you forget who was the perpetrator and who was what. (my translation) (Appendix B, 26)

To revisit the relationship between credibility and the economies of visibility, social media mostly emerges as a tool for the spectacle of disclosure to take place. However, the mediated aspect of disclosure -its spectacularization on social media platforms- causes the "message [to] get[x] lost in the spectacle" (Harlow et al., 2017, p. 3). In this line, this phenomenon of getting used to disclosures -as Beliz noted- stems from how and where the experience of violence becomes "mediatized" and highlights the risk of a fast "consumption of suffering" (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1996, p.9). Through this consumption, the repetitive exposure to representations or testimonies of pain might lead to "desensitiz[ation]" or "moral fatigue" (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1996, p.9). This desensitization implies that individuals may gradually "become "used "to"" when there are "repeated exposures to that stimulus" (Anderson & Brushman, 2018, p.397). With the mediatization of suffering on easily-accessible platforms like social media, a sense of "political despair" arises (Anderson & Brushman, 2018, p.397). In line with this, the demand for detailed accounts of sexual violence to "authenticate reality" underscores the challenges faced in balancing the need for visibility and the risk of trivializing or commodifying pain (Das & Kleinman, 2000, p.4; Kleinman & Kleinman, 1996). Hence, the normalization of suffering through a multiplicity of disclosures can result in a

peculiar normalization and indifference towards sexual violence as well as a lack of sensitivity. This desensitization may provide perpetrators with a form of immunity as disclosures lose their impact due to this desensitization, cases of sexual violence risk slipping into obscurity, becoming easily forgotten or dismissed, as my participants have also remarked. People do not care about the perpetrators as the disclosures become only one of many; "You get used to it over time,"[44] as Beliz said. Then, it becomes urgent to question disclosures as empowering practices through which to obtain justice. This cycle of "getting used to" perpetuates a situation where perpetrators evade accountability, and the urgency for addressing and preventing sexual violence diminishes.

Perpetrators also gain immunity through other means. For instance, Ekin shared her insights with me based on her involvement in a feminist network, where they collectively undertook various disclosure processes. During these times, she was approached by numerous perpetrators seeking to talk to someone after being disclosed. This recurrence stemmed from her active participation in the network as she was one of the familiar and well-known figures of the network for other students. According to her, previously, perpetrators may have felt ashamed and inclined to take responsibility, but now they have become more adept at understanding their legal rights and options. When confronted with disclosures, they often threaten survivors with legal action, claiming they will hire a lawyer and citing their knowledge of their rights. Ekin attributes this shift to past instances where perpetrators successfully won defamation lawsuits. Consequently, as disclosures have become widely employed strategies, they have learned from others and have become more adept at finding loopholes in disclosures and navigating legal systems.

[44] "E zamanla alışıyorsun" in Turkish.

As I mentioned earlier, the act of disclosure frequently sparks controversy among survivors and solidarity groups regarding its execution. These controversies are not limited to the method of disclosure but also include selective attitudes towards visibility and the reasons behind the disclosures. Nisan's words exemplify an important point, which is also relevant for the discussion on implication, which will be explored in the next chapter:

> I can't stand that everyone is protecting their own group, it's not right. When I was first introduced to feminism, I thought we would stand up to perpetrators no matter what. But sometimes these people co-opt things that we should use as liberating mechanisms and then use them according to their own desires. When it's someone from their group, they cover up all the harassment. But then they label a queer person as a misogynist here and there. Or someone else goes and discloses someone for defrauding them or not paying their rent. I think this is very wrong. (my translation) (Appendix B, 27)

Hence, in these complex dynamics, for survivors, it becomes clear that the politics of disclosure, the representation of pain, and the pursuit of justice in cases of sexual violence are deeply intertwined with broader debates about visibility, credibility, and the ethical and political implications of sharing personal trauma.

3.3 Conclusive remarks

In this chapter, having explored both the potentials and setbacks of disclosure as a mechanism against sexual violence, I argued that disclosures are essential tools for creating counter-publics on digital, discursive, and spatial levels. However, they also present challenges for survivors by subjecting them to stigmatization, victim-blaming, and social ostracism. Furthermore, I have examined disclosures through the lens of their relation to the politics of pain and the normalization of sexual violence.

In doing so, my primary aim was to explore disclosures with their myriad of intricacies and controversies since I believe that mitigating the challenges requires us

to have a comprehensive look at the issue. As I considered both complaints and disclosures, it becomes crucial to ask how we can cultivate supportive environments that empower survivors to step forward and pursue justice while safeguarding their well-being. How can we confront societal attitudes and norms that silence of survivors and normalize sexual violence? Examining these aspects and posing these questions brings to light the interconnected issues of subjectivity, politics, and solidarity. These issues have been underlying certain discussions throughout these two chapters, while they may not always have been explicitly discussed. The upcoming chapter will be on a more in-depth exploration to this end.

CHAPTER 4

SEXUAL VIOLENCE, SUBJECTIVITY, AND SOLIDARITY

> *This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators.*
> -bell hooks[45]

The disclosure about Doruk came at a time when naming harassers on social platforms had become an increasingly prevalent method of seeking justice at universities. Hence, neither was the phenomenon of calling out the wrongdoers in the public novel nor was Doruk the first perpetrator disclosed in the university Facebook group. However, discovering this disclosure on our university's Facebook group was an unexpected twist in our day-to-day life. We were somewhat shocked to realize the magnitude of the issue. After the disclosure was posted on the Facebook group, the topic lingered in discussions among various circles of friends for a long while. It was an unfamiliar territory involving someone who had once been a close friend, and it hit closer to home than any before.

On an occasion with a group of women all familiar with Doruk, a friend expressed her surprise about my obliviousness regarding Doruk's case over the past two months. She mentioned that even she had heard about it through whispers from several people. As the conversation unfolded, it was revealed that several women told her about their troubling encounters with Doruk. They either tried to warn her or find out whether she had a similar experience with him. I could not help but feel somewhat upset, wondering why no one had contacted me directly. She hesitantly

[45] (bell hooks, 2015, p.23)

suggested that those whom he had harassed might have been reluctant to share "such personal experiences"[46] with me, given my previous close friendship with Doruk. I could understand their reasoning, yet it saddened me that people might think I would align with him on such an issue. Nevertheless, at the same time, I also recognized that it was normal for them not to know how I would react in this situation.

Particularly as a woman who tries to live a feminist life, the weight of this issue became such a burden on my shoulders. I felt stupid, I felt guilty, and I felt indebted to all the women who were subjected to violence by him. Our collective silence -born out of an unawareness of the severity of his behavior- has weighed heavily upon me and my friends. Upon witnessing him verbally harassing one of our friends during a party, our sole action was to distance ourselves and our friend from Doruk. With the disclosures, I felt compelled to reflect on the adequacy of our response. There have been many times we asked ourselves whether we were guilty in this or not.

This story unfurls into many significant discussions that shape this chapter. I start with an examination of the victim-survivor binary to uncover its broader implications and contextual significance. Next, I will explore subject positions beyond the victim-perpetrator dichotomy and explore the concept of implicated subject. This will be followed by a discussion on the fluid and fragmented nature of individual subjectivity. My focus will then shift towards the formation of subjectivity, considering the relationship between violence and subjectivity as well as the role of narration. I will finalize the discussion by scrutinizing how the (trans)formation of subjectivity in relation to feminist solidarity networks and explore the fragile aspects of these networks.

[46] "bu kadar kişisel deneyimleri" in Turkish.

4.1 Navigating the victim - survivor binary

Throughout this thesis, I employed the term “survivor” to describe those who have been subjected to sexual violence. Nevertheless, in order to make sense of this choice, it is crucial to acknowledge the longstanding discussion about the notions of “victim” and “survivor” in feminist theory and academic spheres. The feminist movement in the 1970s played a pivotal role in popularizing the term “survivor” to describe individuals who had been abused (Orgad, 2009). This shift in terminology was symbolic as well as linguistic, and it represented an attempt to empower those who have survived trauma.

In many instances, the notions of “victim” and “survivor” are perceived in opposition to each other, which maps onto the dichotomies between passive and active, respectively. Hence, victimhood is often associated with weakness, and in various contexts, victims are frequently depicted as “helpless” and “decimated” (van Dijk, 2009; Minow, 1992, p.1432). In contrast, survivorship is perceived as an active position embodying strength, resilience, and “empowerment” (Barringer, 1992, p.15). Building upon this perspective, Dunn (2005) criticizes the persistence of the victim label and raises questions about its inherently stigmatizing nature since victimhood emerges as a category that perpetuates harmful stereotypes. This characterization not only reinforces societal biases but also undermines the agency and resilience of those who have experienced violence, as well as portraying them as the main reasons for the harm (Reich, Pegel & Johnson, 2022; Sprankle et al., 2018). Furthermore, the stereotype of victimhood oversimplifies the experiences of individuals and reduces them to singular events while disregarding the multifaceted nature of their identities and the complexity of subject positions (Minow, 1992).

Victims are also often depicted as "pathetic" (Minow, 1992, p.1432), and this stereotyping and its harmful effects are particularly evident in media responses and representations of movements such as #MeToo, where comparable "antivictim discourses" are deployed against victims (Ross, 2022, p.57). This approach suggests a reluctance to acknowledge the realities of victimization and the media's tendency to downplay or discredit survivors' experiences (Lykke, 2016), ultimately undermining the credibility of survivors and perpetuating a culture of victim-blaming and disbelief (Thacker, 2019). Such narratives reinforce existing power dynamics and uphold the status quo rather than promoting accountability and resistance. Contrary to this, embracing the survivor identity allows individuals to reclaim agency over their narratives and assert their right to define their experiences on their own terms (Delker, Salton & McLean, 2020).

In line with this discussion, throughout my research, I observed a deliberate avoidance among my participants in using the word *mağdur (victim)* to describe themselves. This hesitance stemmed from two primary reasons. Firstly, the term "mağdur" was perceived to carry a passive connotation, which implies a sense of helplessness, in parallel to previous research (O'Shea et al., 2024). Secondly, my participants expressed a reluctance to allow their experiences of sexual violence to become a defining feature of their identities (Ross, 2022; Moradi et al., 2012). They resisted the idea of being reduced to mere victims or sufferers and instead preferred to emphasize their agency, reflecting a desire to "reclaim" control over their own narratives (Palmer-Mehta, 2018, p.177). Nihan's words exemplify this tendency:

> ... I've always hesitated to identify myself as a victim in social settings, especially in male-dominated settings. The words we use are political choices after all. I think sometimes people can actually feel victimized because there is a sense of helplessness or vulnerability involved. I don't think this is necessarily a bad thing, sometimes we can feel that way. We should also give ourselves this much space, we shouldn't take so much burden on ourselves.

> Of course, being a victim and being helpless are not bad things. But I mean, I never wanted to introduce and show myself in this way in environments where men are present. (my translation) (Appendix B, 28)

Nihan's emphasis on the political significance of word choices resonated with other interviews as well. Further, her perspective aligns with the distinction drawn between the experiences of the victim and survivor: "while the victim has been immobilized and discouraged by the event, the survivor has overcome the traumatic memories and become mobile. The survivor draws on the experiences of coping with the catastrophe as a source of strength" (Figley, 1985, p.399 as cited in Orgad 2009). This distinction is further supported by Orgad's argument regarding the reclamation of the term "survivor" as a feminist political intervention (2009, p.142). Therefore, this act of self-identification represents a powerful assertion of autonomy and empowerment for many survivors.

Nevertheless, these sentiments were not limited to our conversations with Nihan alone; it has been a recurring theme in my field. People were highly invested in the issue of how these labels represent them, their broader applications, and the effects of using them across different contexts. There was a significant focus on how individuals perceive and negotiate these labels, raising the possibility of examining questions of subjectivity and agency and their relationship to language and violence. This point will also be important for the following parts of this chapter where I discuss the nexus between narration and subjectivity.

I believe Nihan's perspective further lays the ground for understanding the multiplicity of subjectivity, which will be discussed in the following parts of this chapter. By actively participating in the politics of truth and intervening within it, the subject becomes an element in the construction of truths. This reveals "the multiple sites through which these historically contingent truths are productive of positions

for subjects to be formed" (Blackman et al., 2008, p.6). Therefore, grasping this aspect also enables us to appreciate the multifaceted nature of subjectivity and recognize its non-singular aspects.

As previously mentioned, I rely on the notion of survivor throughout this thesis while recognizing that these positions do not exist on a linear "journey to be made from being a victim to being a survivor" (Antonsdottir, 2020, p.719). I build on existing recognition that the so-called dichotomy between victim and survivor is not always clear-cut (Mittal & Singh, 2018; Kelly et al., 1996). There is no monolithic categories of victims or survivors, and these are not fixed identities attached to individuals (Kelly et al., 1996). Many individuals may oscillate between these identities without their experiences fitting neatly into either category. Therefore, it is imperative to approach these terms with care and acknowledge the complexities of trauma and its aftermath.

4.2 Understanding implication: Beyond the victim – perpetrator duality

In complex issues such as sexual violence, it can sometimes be difficult to understand where people stand in the context of singular events and how much responsibility they have, because as complex as these events are, so are people's relationships and positions in relation to these events. For this reason, in this section, I will discuss how we can move beyond the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator to understand people's positioning in cases of sexual violence.

4.2.1 Bystanders

After receiving a distressing call from my close friend Nisan -whom I mentioned previously in this thesis- we decided to meet on campus as she was pretty sad and

frustrated. She recounted how she recently learned unsettling rumors about the man she was dating, discovering he had verbally and physically harassed other women. Yet, the most upsetting part about this story was that her friend Meriç, who also knew the man, had been aware of these "rumors" but chose not to tell her as he did not want to be seen as a snitch. Meriç reasoned that if the allegations were true, someone else would have intervened by now. However, when confronted by Nisan, Meriç was taken aback and regretted not speaking up earlier. During our meeting, she also recalled a particularly unsettling incident during an argument between her and the man she was dating, where he directed his anger towards her and scared her. As Nisan shared her experience, she expressed feeling deeply hurt and betrayed by Meriç's silence and the male solidarity he exhibited with someone he barely knew. She struggled to comprehend why he did not feel compelled to warn her as he knew they were romantically involved. She could not shake the thought that he might have hurt her as he had done to others. Nisan's story presents a good starting point for exploring the ways we can understand sexual violence beyond the simple dichotomy of victims and perpetrators.

As an attempt for moving beyond this dichotomy, in trauma and violence literature, the subject positions of victim and survivor are often juxtaposed with that of bystanders. Bystanders have traditionally been conceptualized as "innocent, uninvolved" agents in cases of violence (Rothberg, 2019, p.42). Nevertheless, the existing research has also discussed the involvement of bystanders in cases of sexual violence (Bennett et al., 2017; Burn, 2009). Despite their perceived passiveness and distance from the violence itself, their attitudes and approaches towards survivors considerably impact survivors' experience in the aftermath of sexual violence, including the complaint processes (Banyard, Moynihan & Plante 2007; Rowe 2018;

Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey 2013; Tenbrunsel, Rees & Diekmann 2019). In this vein, numerous studies show that the positive attitudes from bystanders and their involvement in the complaint processes can greatly ease the burden of survivors (Armitage, 2021).

The role of the bystander has been theorized in various ways, with bystanders often portrayed as "passive" individuals in the face of violence (Bloch et al., 2018, p.1050). However, in examining their role, Last makes a critical distinction between "watchers" and bystanders (2000, p.324). She notes that bystanders occupy a subject position that entails "the refusal of aid, the refusal even to recognize or be recognized as even an accidental witness to a violent act" (Last, 2000, p.324). In a similar manner, another definition suggests that bystanders are individuals "who do[x] not become actively involved in a situation where someone else requires help" (Clarkson, 1987, p.2). These conceptualizations shed light on the complex and nuanced nature of bystander and challenges the notion that they are entirely uninvolved and passive agents in contexts of violence.

Bloch et al. distinguish between three categories of bystander behavior: "distancing, ambivalence, and involvement" (2018, p.1049). The latter category, involvement, encompasses actions that either further perpetuate or end the violence. Nevertheless, the act of distancing oneself or maintaining an ambivalent stance can also contribute to the perpetuation of violence, "by not challenging or intervening they give tacit permission to the abuse of power occurring in their environment" (Bloch et al., 2018, p.1049). This framework suggests that the subject position of "bystander" is "central to discussion of the kind of ambiguous morality that characterizes the gray zone" (Rothberg, 2019, p.40). Hence, in order to have a more

nuanced insight into how prevailing asymmetries remain and are reproduced, a conceptualization of bystanders as passive agents becomes inefficient.

4.2.2 Implicated subjects

Keeping the above discussion in mine, in terms of sexual violence, how should we then conceptualize the issue of abstaining from action or refraining from involvement? How does this act of non-engagement, of failing to stand up against the oppression witnessed, become unfolded within the very power dynamics responsible for harm? At this point, I argue that in contexts of sexual violence, Rothberg's conceptualization of the implicated subject provides a more comprehensive and fruitful framework for thinking about in-between subject positions, guilt and responsibility, also in contexts of sexual violence. Beyond the conceptual rubrics of passive bystanders, implicated subjects "contribute to, inhabit, inherit or benefit from … regimes of violence and domination, but do not originate or control such regimes" (Rothberg, 2019, p.201). Therefore, understanding the prevailing nature of structural violence necessitates an examination of the ways in which "implicated subjects reproduce the everyday conditions of possibility for systemic" oppression and "enable" the perpetration of violence (Rothberg, 2019, p.8). At the same time, implication is a broad realm that manifests in various forms as will be explored further in the remaining parts of this section.

The concept of implication helps us comprehend not only the formation and persistence of "global scale" historical events but also structural "social ills" in "local and translocal contexts" (Rothberg, 2018, p.535). Viewing trauma as both "intimate" and "embedded in the circuits of the social and the structures of the everyday," implication enables us to navigate through the personal and structural dimensions of

its genesis (Rothberg, 2019, p.209). Therefore, in examining the structural and enduring nature of sexual violence intersecting with various axes of class, race, age, and more, implication becomes an essential lens.

During our interview with İpek, a very close friend of mine from the university, another unsettling story resurfaced. Back in our junior year in undergrad, there was a group of four guys hanging out together as one of those cool groups. They were also politically active and engaged in leftist organizations. At the campus, I remember them attending workshops, watching films, and discussing third-wave feminism at student club events. During the interview, İpek told me that she suspects she was raped by one of these men at a house party while the others were probably aware of what was happening. Recently, one of them, Can, came forward to apologize, expressing deep remorse. He said that İpek was drunk and kind of unconscious that night and stated that he cannot forgive himself. İpek was surprised by this act of redemption but not as angry as I was. I was angry because even if this guy did not commit the rape himself, he was aware of it. Then, he chose to remain silent for two years. İpek said something like this: "I don't think he is a bad guy. He was actually quite genuine. I trust him. However, what to do? He is a man; they are all like this; if they are not working hard enough to change themselves, they are all mostly guilty in this."

Both Nisan's and İpek's narratives provide valuable insights into the limitations of framing experiences solely within the binary of victim and perpetrator. Drawing upon Rothberg's concept of implication, it becomes possible to unravel the complexities of the subject positions. According to him, implication refers to the position of being "entangle[d], involve[d], or connect[ed] closely," indicating "how we are "folded into" events that at first seem beyond our agency as individual

subjects" (Rothberg, 2019, p.1). While akin to "complicity," this notion carries a distinct connotation (Rothberg, 2019, p.1). Implication differs from complicity in that the latter has a legal connotation inherent to it. Hence, it better captures "the forms of indirect participation" that are not accounted for as directly in the unlawful realm Rothberg, 2019, p.13).

Implication is crucial for grasping how structural dynamics envelop individuals and position them within violence. Implicated subjects, as Rothberg elucidates, occupy a unique space: they are "less "actively" involved than perpetrators" yet do not conform to the archetype of the "passive" bystander (Rothberg, 2019, p.1). In the case of İpek, while Can was not the one who raped my friend, he had the potential to intervene and possibly prevent the situation but failed to do so. Can's inability to do so also speaks to the broader societal dynamics at play. As İpek observed, he was a product of a culture entrenched in brotherhood. Understanding his position through implication "weaves subjectivity into structures and histories of power" (Rothberg, 2019, p.59). Therefore, "although indirect or belated, [his] actions and inactions help produce and reproduce the positions of victims and perpetrators" (Rothberg, 2019, p.59).

I also aim to reflect inward and ponder how I, too, found myself in a similar situation. As I hinted to earlier in this chapter, when we discovered that Doruk had made one of our friends "uncomfortable" at a party, our response was simply to sever ties with him. We failed to address Doruk's behavior in a meaningful way, neglected to contemplate the potential harm he might cause to others, and instead chose the easy route of breaking ties with him. At that time, it probably seemed like a meaningful response to us. However, in light of subsequent revelations that he had harmed other women as well, I cannot help but ask these questions: Was it merely

ignorance on our part? Did we lack an understanding of feminist principles or the gravity of sexual violence? Despite believing our actions were well-intentioned and feeling unable to fully grasp the seriousness of the situation at the time, looking back from the present, I feel like our ignorance cannot serve as an excuse. It actually underscores deeper systemic issues, a reality I am now keenly aware of. While friends often reassure me not to blame myself as I did not act with bad intentions, I struggle with what Rothberg describes as the "ambiguous morality that characterizes the gray zone" (2019, p.40). I recognize that even if I did not bad intentions, I could have done more. I failed to take responsibility. So, while I may not bear direct culpability for Doruk's actions, I cannot dismiss the possibility that I could have played a better role in preventing his future actions, at least to a certain extent. Acknowledging my implication in this situation sheds light on the "ambiguous spaces that do not fit neatly into our scripts for explaining violence" (Rothberg, 2019, p.207). It serves as a reminder of the complexities inherent in addressing and comprehending instances of violence and our individual responsibilities within them.

While the above-mentioned stories are about remaining silent and not taking the necessary action, it is important to recognize that there are various other forms of implication. Beyond these positions, "'implicated' modes of relation would encompass bystanders, beneficiaries," the descendants, and more (Rothberg, 2019, p.40). This is to say that there is not a "homogenous space of implication," but a "non-binary terrain of implication [that] refracts subjects differentially (2019, p.209). Aylin is a friend who was verbally and physically assaulted by a professor at her university. Following this incident, she started talking about this to many friends and also some of the professors she was close with, including Professor Derya. She had a reputation for being approachable and supportive of students. Derya had a close

friendship with Mehmet, having family meetings every now and then. When Aylin shared her experience, she received a compassionate response, and Derya expressed sympathy and a willingness to help. Aylin felt relieved by this support. However, two weeks later, Aylin stumbled upon a photo from a house party at Mehmet's house, with Derya present. Feeling nothing but sorry and angry, Aylin decided to cut ties with Derya and never ask her for help again. Derya also remained hesitant and cautious afterwards and always kept their conversations brief. This experience had a profoundly negative impact on Aylin and shattered her hopes and beliefs.

A couple of months later, Mehmet's harassment became public knowledge, known to most students and professors. It was at this juncture that Derya severed her ties with Mehmet and reached out to Aylin anew. She expressed a commitment to make Mehmet receive a formal penalty. During our interview, I asked Aylin her perspective on Derya. According to her, Derya appeared to have initially benefited from her association with Mehmet, enjoying the perks of being friends with a popular figure who facilitated networking opportunities. However, as the issue became widely known, Derya not only feared repercussions within feminist circles for her association with a perpetrator but also sought the image of a professor who stood against harassment to enhance her own reputation. Aylin also mentioned that she somewhat understands the difficulty of confronting a friend or colleague, especially when they are highly reputable within social circles. In that sense, Derya, as I consider her position as an implicated subject, "occup[ied] positions aligned with power and privilege without being [herself] direct agents of harm" (Rothberg, 2018, p.535). Then, understanding the multifaceted nature of implication "move[s] us away from overt questions of guilt and innocence and leave us in a more complex and

uncertain moral and ethical terrain - a terrain in which many of us live most of the time" (Rothberg, 2013, p.40).

Rothberg argues that "the realm of implication is above all a realm of conscious and unconscious consent" (2019, p.41-2) where implicated subjects "not only benefit from, but also contribute to, inhabit, and inherit regimes of domination without originating or controlling such regimes" (2018, p.535). Aslı, a student at a renowned vakıf university in Istanbul, was among a group of women who collectively filed a complaint against a professor, Semih. They later found out that previous informal warnings had been issued to him by two of the professors in his department regarding his close interactions with women students. These professors, as individuals with greater power within hierarchical relationships, cautioned him. This warning was due to Semih's tight relationships with students, inviting them to his house and frequently meeting them over drinks. Despite the warning, Semih continued his behaviors. Nevertheless, after cautioning him, the other two professors did not follow up on the issue to see whether he heeded their warning and continued his actions. When a collective complaint was filed against him, these two professors talked to Aslı and her friends saying they were not surprised. Indeed, while their previous warning pertains to collegial behavior, it also raises questions about where individuals position themselves in the face of such misconduct. Then, how should we consider the professors' role and responsibility in this issue? Is it fair to say that they were also "participa[nts] in injustice, but in indirect ways," considering what subsequently happened between this professor and other students? (Rothberg, 2019, p.20). A failure to follow up, not checking on the students, and enabling impunity to a certain extent also results in injustice and violence. Through these forms of inaction, they inadvertently granted "conscious and unconscious consent" to his

wrongdoings. However, in this case, I view it not merely as a passive stance of observing from afar, but rather a deliberate denial of the problem, distinct from a simple indifference, as they noticed the warning signs (Rothberg, 2019, p.42).

Returning to the earlier point, I agree with Rothberg that implication is a "complex ethical terrain," and trying to decide on "guilt and innocence" may be an unavailing endeavor (2019, p.34). Aslı said to me that she does not view these professors as inherently guilty. Instead, she sees them as individuals who should have been more cognizant and proactive in addressing this situation, rather than dismissing it with a simple warning. For her, they should have taken the appropriate action by labeling it as misconduct and addressing it accordingly. However, she emphasizes that their lack of awareness should not be brushed aside as mere ignorance regarding how to handle such a situation. Hence, these structural problems and their integration within institutional spheres create implicated subjects who "play essential roles in producing and reproducing violence and inequality" (2019, p.202). This exemplifies the "unconscious consent" aspect of implication; as Rothberg suggests, it closely parallels the idea of "the privilege of unknowing" (2019, p.42). Together with this state of unknowing, the realm of implication then becomes a starting point for reevaluating our shared obligations and the ways in which we contribute to systemic issues, even when we are unaware of doing so.

4.3 Multiple and shifting subjectivities

The preceding section on implication also suggests the multiple and shifting nature of subjectivity by demonstrating how individuals may hold several subject positions, as in the case of Derya; however, I will explore this topic in more detail in this section. Since violence as a concept and experience is hard to define and confine,

"trying to locate the subject through the experience of such" boundaries is also quite challenging (Das, 2006, p.5). Thus, subjectivity is "variable and complex, and changes over time," and therefore cannot be limited to any singular framing (Griffiths et al., 2013, p.16). Challenging an essentialist approach towards subjectivity, it is then crucial to conceptualize selves as "multiple and fractured rather than unitary, mobile rather than stable, porous rather than enclosed, externally constituted rather than internal or 'inner' natural essences" (Fox Keller, 2007, p.353-4). This perspective underscores the fluid and contingent nature of the construction of subjectivity that emphasizes the permeable boundaries between the self and the other. In this line, I will focus on the dynamic nature of subjectivity, which is context-dependent and temporally bound.

As Das remarks, particularly concerning the experience of violence, there exists "a complex agency made up of divided and fractured subject positions" (2006, p.77). Rothberg also remarks that the "continuum" of subjectivity is "complex, and people can occupy multiple positions at the same time (as victims, perpetrators, and collaborators)" (2019, p.40). Further, these categorizations of subject positions are "abstractions that serve analytical purposes but do not describe human essences" (Rothberg, 2019, p.8). Hence, they are not ontological categories inscribed in bodies but rather intertwined with sociohistorical and political contexts.

Aligned with these theorizations of subjectivity, this research highlights how individuals may adopt varying positions in response to different events, as well as their capacity to hold multiple subject positions simultaneously. One day, after classes, while hanging out with friends, we discussed plans to gather together for the Feminist Night March on March 8th. Then, we stumbled upon a furious tweet from a woman professor, let us call her Ayşe, at our university, reacting to Mehmet's

disclosure. One of us, Dilan, expressed surprise at Ayşe's tweets and her stance against Mehmet as she is friends with a well-known professor from a private university who has physically assaulted several queer university students of whom he was the advisor. Dilan elaborated that it is not that Ayşe is unaware of the issue; she knows that her close friend Ali is accused of harassment but has not severed ties with him, while she vehemently opposes Mehmet.

Here, we can revisit Derya's story when she initially remained silent regarding the harassment perpetrated by her close friend Mehmet but later evolved into an ally for the survivors. Nisan's poignant words from the last section of the previous chapter also resonate:

> I can't stand that everyone is protecting their own group, it's not right. When I was first introduced to feminism, I thought we would stand up to perpetrators no matter what. But sometimes these people co-opt things that we should use as liberating mechanisms and then use them according to their own desires. When it's someone from their group, they cover up all the harassment. But then they label a queer person as a misogynist here and there. (my translation) (Appendix B, 27)

These instances highlight the complicated dynamics influencing the subject position individuals take in the face of sexual violence, which can vary greatly. Someone who speaks out against harassment in one instance might look the other way when the perpetrator is a friend.

Hence, these stories call for a deeper understanding of subjectivity that goes beyond an understanding of "structural dependence" (Biehl & Locke, 2017, p.337). That is to say that one's structural positioning does not solely determine their subjectivity. While it is true that we can ""in the course of each event, in the ups, downs, and arounds of each individual life, we can see the reflection of larger systems in the making" (Biehl & Locke, 2017, p.337), adopting a more process-

oriented understanding of subjectivity allows us to comprehend its dynamic nature better and shifting patterns.

Later, Hazal shared her own story. After being raped by her friend, she went to talk to Professor Mehmet because he was a close mentor in her department. At that time, she did not know about Mehmet's incidents. Upon telling, Mehmet was very supportive, checking in on her well-being for months and ensuring she was okay. He even reached out to faculty members on the disciplinary committee to inquire about any progress on her case. Hazal told me that she did not know whether this was a strategic act on his part, but at that time, she thought he was "a real ally."

In line with Biehl and Locke's suggestions, Rose also adopts a more multiple understanding of the subject by applying a Deleuzian understanding of the becoming on the theory of subjectivity:

> human being, here, is … the target of a multiplicity of types of work, more like a latitude or a longitude at which different vectors of different speeds intersect. The ''interiority'' which so many feel compelled to diagnose is not that of a psychological system, but of a discontinuous surface, a kind of infolding of exteriority. (Rose, 1998, p. 37).

Hence, as can be seen from these stories, subjects are not singular entities but rather exist at intersections of various forces and influences. This conception challenges the notion of an inherent, stable subject position, and instead, it portrays subjectivity as a discontinuous surface. By acknowledging this multiplicity and dynamic nature, we may better understand how individuals navigate power dynamics and negotiate their identities within complex social landscapes.

4.4 (Trans)formation of subjectivity

In this section, I will discuss the constitution and reconstitution of subjectivity by examining this multifaceted issue from three key axes: (i) the role of violence and

resistance in shaping feminist political subjectivity, (ii) the relationship between narration and the formation of subjectivity, and (iii) the ways individuals (re)construct their subjectivity in relation to solidarity networks. By exploring these diverse axes, I aim to further reveal how individual and collective subjectivity is formed, transformed, and continuously reshaped.

4.4.1 Violence, resistance, and subjectivity

> *The histories that bring us to feminism are the histories that leave us fragile. Feminism might pick up (or more hopefully pick us up) from the experiences that leave us vulnerable and exposed.*
> -Sara Ahmed[47]

Subjectivity has long been conceptualized through the link between "becoming a subject" and "the experience of subjugation" (Das, 2006, p.59). In this line, this section's central question of concern is understanding how "violence is implicated in the formation of the subject" (Das and Kleinmann, 2001, p.5). Throughout this thesis, I have tried to demonstrate the intertwined and everyday forms of violence in order to reveal the ways it extends far beyond the immediate experience of sexual violence. In recognizing how it leaks beyond the immediate, I highlight the ways survivors of sexual violence often encounter secondary forms of victimization in a vicious circle of violence. Then, when the strategies against harassment prove ineffective, individuals become more exposed to violence.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the temporal complexities embedded in institutional complaint processes and how they create a certain sense of "uncertainty" for survivors who try to navigate these systems. This uncertainty becomes a significant element of the survivor subjectivity, where individuals often find themselves lost

[47] (Ahmed, 2016, p.31)

within these bureaucratic mechanisms. Other aspects of complaint processes, like other institutional forms of further victimization, also count in the constitution of the subject.

Furthermore, in Chapter 3, the discussion on survivors' motivations for disclosing perpetrators sheds light on how survivors position themselves vis-à-vis institutional and legal structures, culminating in their subjectivity in relation to these structures. It is also crucial to acknowledge other forms of violence during disclosure processes, which, in turn, becomes an essential aspect of survivors' subjectivity and shapes their relationships with others, as influenced by experiences of stigmatization, victim-blaming, and social ostracism. In that regard, not only sexual violence but the endless reproduction of violence and the atmosphere it engenders become essential parts of the survivors' subjectivity. This is to say that institutional processes and the societal dynamics at play during disclosures (trans)form and imagine a specific type of subject in the face of sexual violence. Thus, "the experience of becoming" a survivor extends "beyond the duration of" sexual violence itself (Griffiths et al., 2013, p.11).[48] As Ekin shared with me, being raped is one thing that "puts an urge in the individual to fight[49]," however, seeing that complaints or disclosures do not work is an entirely separate challenge that increases the desire to resist. Then, the reproduction of violence compels survivors to engage in a process wherein they forge their feminist subjectivity and political agency through fighting sexual violence.

[48] Griffiths and colleagues (2013) culminates this analysis based on the relationship between temporality and migrant subjectivity. Here, I apply it to deepen the understanding of the formation of survivor subjectivity, in the face of sexual violence, complaints, and disclosures. In: Griffiths, M., Rogers, A., & Anderson, B. (2013). Migration, time and temporalities: Review and prospect. COMPAS Research Resources Paper, 3, 1-31.

[49] "insanda savaşma isteği uyandıran bir şey" in Turkish, in her own words.

In their examination of subjects, Butler acknowledges that subjects "emerge in relation to an established order of truth" (2017, p.7) Furthermore, they invoke Foucault's insights on critique, wherein it is described as "the movement by which the subject gives himself the right (le sujet se donne le droit) to question truth" (Foucault, 1997, p.32, as cited in Butler, 2017, p.7). This implies that while subjects are shaped by the hegemonic order, they also possess the capacity to shape themselves. In other words, "the subject is both crafted and crafting" (Butler, 2017, p.11). It is crucial to recall Foucault's assertion that "critique would essentially ensure the desubjugation [désassujetiisement] of the subject in the context [le jeu] of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth" (Foucault, 1997, p.32). This highlights the transformative potential of critique -which is finding ways "to fight"- in liberating the subject from subjugation within the politics of truth. To see the relationship between violence, critique, and subjectivity is to see that violence is "the source of both oppression and resistance" (Zengin, 2024, p.7). Then, the very "violent conditions" that oppress life can also become the background for "empowerment, resistance, resilience, and struggle" (Zengin, 2024, p.6). In this context, Butler's framework regarding the relationship between vulnerability and resistance is particularly significant as it underscores that "to understand those extra-juridical modes of resistance, we would have to think about how resistance and vulnerability work together" (2016, p.15).

In our conversation with Hazal, she shared how, following "this incident" (being raped), she established "her own justice system"[50]. She told me: "this incident has turned me into a different person in many ways. How can I put it... I get triggered

[50] "… kendi adalet sistemimi kurdum" in Turkish, in her own words.

a lot, I'm constantly in defense mode, extremely defensive".[51] Then, she "channeled her anger towards other perpetrators"[52] by connecting with other survivors and creating her own strategies for dealing with perpetrators. Engaging more deeply with feminist organizations and advocacy work on sexual violence, she found purpose and built herself as a feminist subject. She was also one of the key persons who helped Mayıs meet other people whom Professor Mehmet harassed. She engaged with different processes at various universities, worked against sexual violence, and told me that these endeavors made her feel like she was doing "politically useful things" against sexual violence. When anger is "translated into action in the service of our vision, and our future is a liberating and strengthening act" (Lorde, 1997, p.280). Then, this translation into action is deeply related to the formation of subjectivities in the aftermath of sexual violence. It suggests that not only being subjected to sexual violence but also actively constructing mechanisms to counter it becomes unfolded in the formation of survivors' political subjectivity.

The construction of the subject also involves a reflexive dimension in the sense that it includes some form of self-awareness (Butler, 2017). From this perspective, I argue that engaging in the strategies against sexual violence or politics against it entails this stance of self-awareness, a process of turning and reflecting inward. It represents a conscious effort, a deliberate act to disrupt the hegemonic politics of truth imposed upon the subject:

> But if that self forming is done in disobedience to the principles by which one is formed, then virtue becomes the practice by which the self forms itself in desubjugation, which is to say that it risks its deformation as a subject, occupying that ontologically insecure position. (Butler, 2017, p.12).

[51] ".. bu olay beni birçok açıdan farklı bir insan haline getirdi. Yani nasıl söylesem… çok fazla trigger'lanıyorum, sürekli defansif bir moddayım, aşırı defansif hem de." in Turkish, in her own words.
[52] "öfkemi diğer faillere yönelttim" in Turkish, in her own words.

Building on this, for survivors, disclosing or filing complaints means an insistence on a certain type of subject position, one that involves and one that is constructed by a marginal position. Nevertheless, it also means making oneself embrace an "ontologically insecure" position, where individuals must confront and deal with the uncertainties about their own existence and identity as well as being scattered in a spiral of violence. This ontologically insecure position is also sometimes used strategically by the subjects themselves. Nihan told me:

> But I mean, as a feminist woman in this university, I am aware that they think I am this angry killjoy who is always shouting. I don't care and I actually enjoy making them uncomfortable, ahaha. Anyway, about disclosure, you know these patriarchal justice structures never work, so I want to take revenge on these perpetrators based on some of the rights I have (ironically) won as a hysterical woman. (my translation) (Appendix B, 29)

This quotation resonates with the discussions from Chapter 3 on how disclosures result in stigmatization. The act of "appropriating … blatant stereotypes in order to undermine the perception of the dominant order" and challenge the prevailing societal norms is a tactic that has been employed by marginalized groups (Schulman, 1992, p.2). In this process, this ontologically insecure position sometimes becomes a place where they both confront and embrace stigma and use it as a foundation to construct their feminist political subjectivity.

4.4.2 Formation of subjectivity and narration

> *The killjoy is testimony.*
> -Sara Ahmed[53]

Subjectivity emerges not solely from bodily experiences but also from discursive frameworks that are built around these experiences (Das, 2006). Following this line of thought, the subject becomes "the site of experience, memory, [and] storytelling"

[53] (Ahmed, 2021, p.290)

(Biehl, p.14). Therefore, sharing one's own story means engaging in an act that is ingrained in the formation of their subjectivity. This theorization does not fall far from Rose, who further expands on this idea by suggesting that identities take shape through self-narrations of events where the process of reassembling a story into a coherent whole during recollection becomes pivotal for subjectivity formation (1990). Therefore, "the articulation of suffering assign[s] a subject position as the place from which suffering may be voiced" (Das and Kleinmann, 2001, p.5).

In this thesis, I have explored complaints and disclosures as mechanisms against sexual violence at universities. While disciplinary investigations typically rely on survivors' testimonies, I argue that disclosure practices also possess a testimonial dimension. Particularly on social media, disclosures often unfold through detailed personal accounts of the sexual violence experience, resembling testimonial practices. Gossiping, too, can be considered testimony, as survivors narrate their experiences to others in an effort to gain belief and support (Rogoff, 1996). Additionally, the iconographies and visual representations of the perpetrators created during the #MeToo movement serve "as testimon[ies] about sexual harassment, abuse, and violence rooted in feminist, intersectional activism by and on behalf of survivors" (Gilmore, 2020, p.25). Hence, including those on the walls, since they reveal the names and/or pictures of the perpetrators, I view all practices of disclosures as forms of testimonies.

In the formation of political subjectivity and "political community" lies "the idea of suffering and testimony" (Das, 2006, p.211). As testimonial forms, both disclosures and complaints become "self-representational practice[s] that bear on history, politics and subjectivity" (Gilmore, 2017, p.80). These practices "offer a means by which to position personal history within the public sphere," through a

"potentially disruptive performance" to the status quo (Gilmore, 2017, p.80). Then, in a place where victimhood is reduced to passivity and a harmless form of survivorship, "creating oneself as a subject by embracing the signs of subjection gives a very different direction to the meaning of being a victim" (Das, 2009, p.217). In a parallel line to this, bell hooks explores the act of "choosing the margin as a space of radical openness" and further elucidates:

> For me this space of radical openness is a margin - a profound edge. Locating oneself there is difficult yet necessary. It is not a "safe" place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance (2015, p.19).

In resonance with bell hooks' perspective, I interpret disclosures or complaints as a means of reclaiming, reappropriating, and embracing marginality -whether as a survivor of sexual violence, a woman, or a member of the queer community- and steadfastly asserting this marginality. Throughout this thesis, I have reiterated the notion that both filing complaints and making disclosures render survivors vulnerable in various ways, even as they serve as mechanisms for fighting against sexual violence. In this sense, be it marginality or "vulnerability," it becomes a "part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment" that is performed through the testimonial aspect of these processes (Butler, 2016, p.12). Then, the resistance may originate from those who are oppressed in they embrace and hold onto the margin (hooks, 2015). Then, margins, too, become "both sites of repression and sites of resistance" (hooks, 2015, p.21).

Subjectivity is "constituted discursively, and experience is a linguistic event" that unfolds within "established meanings" (Scott, 2016, p.252). However, given that discourse is inherently "shared," experience is simultaneously personal and communal (Scott, 2016, p.252). When a survivor engages in disclosures or files complaints, language becomes "not just a medium of communication … but an

experience which allows not only a message but also the subject to be projected outwards" (Das and Kleinman, 2001, p.22). In doing so, survivors, by putting their experiences into words, assert their agency and reclaim control over their narratives. It is also a way to foster a collective subjectivity and political potential around the issue. Mayıs told me:

> No matter what anyone says, when you are a young woman starting university, you don't always come here, to this campus, with total awareness. At least I didn't. There were so many things that I internalized, so many things that seemed normal to me, like this is how it should be. So, I think disclosure is important. I can say that I had an awakening through this. I made sense of what I was going through. I realized that what was done to me was something I shouldn't accept. These things don't happen all of a sudden. You read what is written in these disclosure texts, you think about it, and you say, oh, I have experienced almost the same thing. You realize that what you experienced is not an isolated incident. Then you realize what you've been through, and you say, "Oh okay, I'm not alone". And maybe after that you find the strength to seek support in some way. (my translation) (Appendix B, 30)

To revisit the discussion from Chapter 3, where I framed disclosures as a plea for solidarity among survivors through cautioning them about perpetrators and advocating for collective action. In this line, beneath these individual narratives lies a collective experience of structural sexual violence and a story of patriarchy which can be read as not only as personal accounts but rather collective stories of womanhood. Mayıs' words parallel the perspective that violence narratives contribute to constructing a "counterdiscourse … both at the level of collective experience and at the level of individual subjectivity" (Das and Kleinman, 2001, p.21). Then, as Ahmed associates "becoming feminist" with "redescrib[ing] the world we are in," as a process as in which "we begin to identify what happens to me, happens to others. We begin to identify patterns and regularities" (Ahmed, 2021, p.37). Therefore, complaints and disclosures as testimonies not only shape subjectivity for the survivor but also for the others who receive them.

4.4.3 Solidarity networks and relational subjectivity

The discussions presented so far underscore the relational nature of subjectivity, but now, I aim to delve deeper into this relational aspect by focusing particularly on solidarity networks. In this way, my objective is to explore how individuals (re)constitute themselves in relation to these networks and how they relate to the specific ways of engaging in the fight against sexual violence. In the relational conceptualization of subjectivity, we see that "both the individual and the group are constituted by their interactions with one another" (Leach, 2014, p.41-2). This is to say that the central "unit of analysis" of subjectivity should be the interactions between individuals, groups, and objects" instead of attempting to understand them "in isolation (Leach, 2014, p.1). This implies that all forms of subject positions are shaped by relational dynamics, further emphasizing the importance of examining solidarity within a relational framework.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown different ways in which feminist methods are employed against sexual violence in organized ways. Disclosures and complaints often times evolve into collective undertakings, where individual actions are also supported by groups. In this sense, as I have observed, both survivors' and allies' political subjectivities are shaped around and within these solidarity groups through their interactions (Farías, 2021). This points out that experiences of suffering or formation of subjectivity do not happen "only through acts of narration" but also through "giving recognition to those whom the official norms had condemned" (Das, 2000, p.223). Thus, in the formation of political subjectivity through these mechanisms, there lies another critical issue that speaks to the construction of a collective subjectivity around sexual violence that is interwoven with solidarity.

As part of collective action, solidarity in the face of sexual violence often serves as a tool for empowerment. Individuals who may feel unsafe to file complaints often find the courage to do so when they are part of a solidarity network or encounter others who have shared similar experiences and taken action, as I have explored in the previous sections. Further, for many, engaging in these networks becomes a means of "gaining a deeper feminist perspective"[54] and "becoming more political,"[55] as expressed by Nihan. She shared that after experiencing sexual harassment and feeling increasingly susceptible, she joined a group for sexual violence survivors where she felt "heard"[56] and "not alone"[57]. In this sense, these "spaces of solidarity" are vital arenas for reconstituting subjects "through the enactment of different forms of being, acting, and building relationships" (Farías, 2021, p.323). When I asked Hazal about the impact of her involvement in a solidarity network, she explained that she became more informed about the issue and felt that she has "more power in her hands to be helpful". She realized that even if her own case did not yield the desired outcome, there was more to be done to center the survivors rather than focusing on what would happen to the perpetrator. Doing so eventually gave her a sense of "healing"[58] as the solidarity made her feel "safe"[59]. In this sense, solidarity has a transformative potential "where subjects are (re)created" as "relational political subjects" as they go "through processes of self-transformation by means of collective and concrete actions" (Farías, 2021, p.316-319).

In addition to the empowering aspects of solidarity networks, Ahmed points out "the fragility of feminist shelters," a phenomenon I have observed and

[54] "daha derin bir feminist bakış kazanmak" in Turkish.
[55] "daha politik olmak" in Turkish.
[56] "duyulmuş" in Turkish.
[57] "yalnız olmadığını hissetmek" in Turkish.
[58] "iyileşme" in Turkish.
[59] "güven" in Turkish.

experienced firsthand (2021, p.197). While individuals become empowered subjects through solidarity networks, neither the relationships individuals build with these solidarity groups nor their effects on them are fixed, but rather affecting each people in different manners, which can help us understand the "fragile" aspect of solidarity and subjectivity. In this sense:

> When we have to fight for an existence, it can shape our encounters with each other. There is no doubt we can experience each other as sharp and brittle. We come up against each other. This is why the feminist killjoy does not disappear when we are building feminist shelters. (Ahmed, 2021, p.197)

At this point, I will share Sinem's story, which was neither a unique nor a singular case. My friend Öykü and others initiated a complaint process in which I was also involved as a witness. Before the complaint, we formed a support group to discuss our own experiences and navigate the institutional process as a collective. At the outset, I knew that my friend Sinem had also been harassed by the person we planned to file complaints against. After speaking with her, I informed the group that she would like to join the group to share her experience, but she did not want to participate in the complaint process. Understanding Sinem's concerns, I felt that including her in the group was a perfect idea. The other women in the group were also pleased to hear this. During our conversation, I assured Sinem that she was not obligated to engage in the complaint process but was welcome to join the group.

It started off well, and sharing her experiences made Sinem feel better. Others in the group were also quite supportive. However, after a while, Sinem called me to express her discomfort about a particular person in the group who was persistently calling and pressuring her to join the complaint case. Sinem told her that she needed to be cautious because it was a matter her family should never hear about. Yet again, she kept insisting on arranging meetings and emphasized the importance of Sinem's story. She suggested that a more "serious" narrative like hers would enhance the

success of their complaint. This pressure from the group member caused Sinem considerable distress. This situation stretched out over a couple of weeks. In the end, Sinem firmly declined the other person's pressure and ceased attending group meetings altogether. I felt terrible because I had initially assured Sinem that she did not have to file a complaint and that the group was intended as a support mechanism beyond just filing the formal complaints. Sinem did not express direct anger towards me, at least not to the extent of what she told me, but these interactions drained her. During one of our conversations, she mentioned feeling "like a coward" because of the pressure she faced. Hence, even though she believed in solidarity, she felt more at risk and more vulnerable than others for certain reasons. She needed more time to be able to speak, but the insistence made her quit. Sinem's case was not the only one; I heard similar stories a couple of times from my participants. Some survivors, who felt the need for silence and privacy from the public, told me that they could not feel comfortable in solidarity groups. In this sense, while solidarity groups are generally places of empowerment for survivors and feminists, they can also sometimes become environments where survivors encounter challenges and experience ingroup violence.

In the previous sections of this thesis, I discussed the allocation of responsibility within institutional structures in cases of sexual violence. This chapter also explored the concept of the implicated subject, which provides a more comprehensive understanding, both horizontally and vertically, of the subject positions individuals may occupy in the context of sexual violence. This discussion further introduced a critical questioning of responsibility, guilt, and the ambiguous zones where individuals may bear responsibility for various forms of violence. This understanding of implication can and should be applied to our own actions,

prompting us to question ourselves and our positions in relation to sexual violence, even within the solidarity networks we create for ourselves.

In our discussions with Rüya, she highlighted the pressure "to talk" from others, which she perceived as a form of violence. While many view silence as one of the elements that reproduce the trauma of the violence, and the empowerment is tied to the availability to speak out (Felman & Laub, 1992; Casalini, 2013), Rüya offers a different perspective. She suggested that instead of always opting for disclosures or complaints, survivors can find solace in talking to each other while still choosing to remain silent to others, and growth and healing can still occur through shared experiences. In this sense, for some, keeping their stories to themselves is a way of self-preservation, a condition for keeping their lives intact and ongoing. Hence, while silence is conceptualized as "the essence of oppression and traumatization" for many, it can also be a way for survivors to "escape" and "resist" (Felman, 2002, p.58-p.23). Survivors sometimes prefer "silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to" (Felman, 2002, p.58). Therefore, silence is not solely indicative of "defeat;" it can serve "as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage" (Felman, 2002, p.58).

The underestimation of silence or the insistence on speaking, as seen in Sinem's case, arises from the "binary between speaking and silence that forgets that both are part of processes that many engage with at different times in their histories" (Thompson, 2009, p.67). While the literature acknowledges the difficulty of telling, it also emphasizes its necessity, leading to "the dominance of the tell your story demand" (Thompson, 2009, p.59). Consequently, for trauma survivors, telling becomes a mandatory task. This binary renders silence "to a passive failure rather than giving it any possibility for agency" (Miller & Tougaw, 2002, p.11). As a result,

the existence of survivors in solidarity groups may become more challenging and oppressive while imposing a constraint their subjectivity.

In a similar vein, İpek, a queer feminist friend, had previously endured prolonged psychological abuse from a queer man she was romantically involved with. Upon sharing this experience with her close friends from a feminist network, they urged her to disclose the individual. However, İpek held differing views. She clarified that her reluctance was not to shield the man, but instead, she doubted the efficacy of disclosing or filing a complaint since her experiences were quite common in many relationships. This disagreement led to tension, with two of her close friends deeming her stance as anti-feminist and counter to solidarity, especially since the man in question remained active within queer circles, posing potential risks to others. This process was challenging for her, and over time, she gradually became less active in the group. İpek's narrative highlights the fragility inherent in solidarity networks. While these networks offer crucial support, they are also susceptible to internal conflicts. İpek's differing stance on disclosure caused rifts; some even labeled her anti-feminist. Her choice to remain silent also fell apart from the expectations of visibility, a discussion from the previous chapter. Her experience also points out the complexities surrounding disclosure dynamics and the ramifications of publicizing personal experiences, this time within feminist and queer communities, where diverse perspectives on solidarity and seeking justice exist.

Reconstitution of the self in relation to feminist solidarity involves grappling with both its boundaries and its potentialities. The experiences I have explored underscore the diversity and multiplicity within these networks and reveal that there are no homogenous feminist agents. Within these networks is a rich tapestry of perspectives, experiences, and approaches to feminist politics. Hence, survivors and

other participants in feminist circles do not necessarily share the same grounds of perspectives or experiences. Thus, it is inaccurate to consider a monolithic feminist subject or a uniform feminist solidarity. While these networks offer crucial support to survivors, they may also inadvertently perpetuate violence, not from external sources but from within the community itself. Hence, solidarity is a dynamic process that is continuously being shaped and reshaped (Vijay, Monin & Kulkarni, 2023). Then, understanding how survivor subjectivity is reshaped within the context of solidarity necessitates acknowledging the internal complexities and divergences within feminist networks. The complexities inherent in feminist solidarity are more than mere opinion differences; they talk about power dynamics, broader hierarchies, and intersecting forms of oppression.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Throughout this research, in addition to my advisor, I engaged in numerous conversations with friends, acquaintances, and even with people I somehow come across. All these conversations have been influential in shaping my mind and each interaction contributed to my research direction. In fact, while the main topic and initial questions remained the same, both the research itself and my own opinions regarding the subject matter have undergone profound changes as I delved deeper into it.

Being highly involved in a research topic both academically and personally can indeed be tiring at times. Nevertheless, some of the participants in this study were individuals with whom I shared longstanding friendships. Therefore, I consider myself fortunate to have a chance to craft this thesis while being in touch with my friends and learning from their diverse perspectives.

I began this thesis by recounting a story about Doruk, an old friend, who was disclosed on social media and ultimately suspended as a result of a disciplinary investigation. However, Doruk was not the center of this thesis. Rather, I believe this story is not merely about Doruk; it is a collective story involving myself, my friends, the women who were subjected to sexual violence by him, third parties who were in some way involved in the issue, and the whole of the processes that happened afterwards.

Not only through Doruk's story but also through the accounts of myself and others, this thesis was an attempt at exploring the dynamics surrounding complaints and disclosures as responses to sexual violence. By demonstrating the experiences

and perceptions of survivors within the framework of these mechanisms, I aimed for a holistic perspective that fully acknowledges and does justice to the inherent complexities and controversies of the subject matter at hand.

In doing so, my overarching goal was to demonstrate the tangled and multifaceted layers of both complaints and disclosures of sexual violence. While these are the mechanisms survivors use to fight against sexual violence, they also have the capacity to perpetuate various forms and cycles of violence that survivors find themselves in. Then, sexual violence is not an experience that is confined within the violent act itself. It is not limited to the initial incident; rather, it seeps into the everyday, into the various facets of the survivors' lives. It manifests as a continuum and exerts its influence over time.

5.1 Limitations

Although I initially aimed for comprehensive examination of the research topic, I recognize that this study is subject to a number of limitations and challenges. Throughout this thesis, I tried to adopt a self-reflexive approach. This reflexivity was also crucial in the sense that it has gradually become evident that my own ideas and perceptions about the research topic were evolving. Initially, I perceived complaints as formal mechanisms and disclosures as their informal counterparts, viewing them as opposites to one another; the former meant being lost in a patriarchal justice system, whereas the latter meant the actual liberating mechanism that resists against it. However, my perspective on this has evolved over time and recognizing this shift was one of the initial challenges and reflexive moments for my fieldwork.

Furthermore, my deep connection and commitment to the subject matter have served as both a blessing and a curse. My position, while enriching my

understanding, also posed challenges. Conducting this research also meant a process of self-inquiry. I felt like having a dual role, both as a researcher and a subject, which has been a real difficulty at times. I was also emotionally and politically invested in the topic, which intensified my research experience, made it profoundly meaningful but also quite overwhelming, especially during the interviews and the writing part.

In addition to these, I believe another limitation of this research is the lack of an intersectional perspective (Calafell, 2014). Having an intersectional lens reveals "how oppression is reproduced" on multiple layers during disclosure processes (Trott, 2021, p.1139) as well the shortcomings of "single-axis thinking [which] undermines legal thinking, disciplinary knowledge production, and struggles for social justice" (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p.787). I interviewed 21 people, and almost all of the narratives about complaints and disclosures I unpack in this thesis are predominantly based in heteronormative relationships. Consequently, it tells little about non-heteronormative relationships and the dynamics of complaints and disclosures in such relationships. Therefore, it also does not illuminate the divergent experiences between heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ individuals in navigating such processes, in their encounters with institutions as well as with organizational structures and third parties in disclosure processes. Hence, while it is acknowledged that a significant portion of sexual violence transpires within heteronormative contexts, it is crucial to delve into the queer people's experiences regarding these processes, as previous research in different contexts has revealed the disadvantages revealed by LGBTQ+ people in these processes and the shortcomings of a limited cisgender feminist lens (Hsu, 2021; Rosenberg, 2021; Bergeron et al., 2019; Harris & Linder, 2023).

The impact of class, race, and religion on the processes of complaints and disclosures also constitutes a crucial aspect, as demonstrated in prior studies (Tambe, 2018; Phipps 2019; 2020). Similar aspects have been visible during my research, for instance, cases wherein perpetrators from advantaged backgrounds were more adept at navigating these systems and thereby sustaining less damage. Additionally, I believe that such a research conducted in Turkey should also focus more on the issue of race to ascertain how the experiences of survivors and perpetrators of different racial backgrounds differ from each other. Furthermore, religious backgrounds also significantly shape survivors' experiences within these processes (Istidiah, Indah & Rosdiana, 2020; Quanlan et al., 2017; Morris & LeCount 2022). For instance, during this research, I have observed indications suggesting that survivors from pious backgrounds tend to experience the burden of sexual violence as well as complaint and disclosure processes more profoundly than others.

Moreover, in terms of disclosures, I should also remark that the issue of disclosure is not confined to instances of sexual violence but can be practiced due to various other reasons. The primary focus here is that the processes, possibilities and setbacks I describe predominantly pertain to sexual violence disclosures. Disclosures related to other forms of human rights violations, phobias, harms, and injustices inevitably unfold differently. Additionally, people may disclose not only individuals but also organizations and places. In this sense, when individuals disclose members of their own groups, especially those within the same the same minority group, I believe the act and experience of disclosure would take on a different meaning for both the discloser and the disclosed.

Lastly, the participants in my research represent are from five universities in Istanbul and Ankara. In this sense, while these stories represent a collective

experience, the scope of the research should also be remembered. By and large, I believe these limitations altogether call attention to crucial areas for future studies, as important focal points to be addressed.

5.2 Conclusive discussion

In closing this thesis, I would like to once again remark the pervasive nature of sexual violence at universities, both historically and currently, across various parts of the world. In addition to its widespread occurrence, it is also a phenomenon that profoundly impacts one's life. Yet, as I have previously mentioned, there are also various strategies and mechanisms employed by survivors to fight against it.

The existing literature has explored the prevalence of sexual violence in universities (Lüleci et al., 2016; Schuster, Krahé & Toplu-Demirtaş, 2017; Siyez et al., 2021; Durmuş, 2013) and the use of social media disclosures across various realms (Dede Özdemir, 2015; Cankurtaran & Şaldırdak, 2021) in Turkey. Furthermore, feminist scholarship has also undertaken critical examination of the complaint processes and the ongoing efforts for their improvement in Turkey (Kalem, 2021; Uygur & Şimga, 2018). However, despite the existing research in these areas, there remains is a notable absence of academic studies concerning survivors' lived experiences in navigating processes of complaints and various forms of disclosures within university contexts in Turkey. I believe addressing this gap is significant for our understanding of the challenges faced by survivors and the efficacy of existing complaint and disclosure responses.

Throughout this research, I have explored the limitations and potentials of these processes for survivors. Particularly, feminist academics in Turkey working in the field of gender studies have worked on developing policies to address sexual

violence in academia for many years, attempting to establish and improve institutional mechanisms. Despite significant strides being made in universities over the years, unfortunately, sexual violence and complaint processes still remain as a major problem. In practice, these units dedicated to combating sexual harassment cannot operate properly and uniformly across all universities. Moreover, the regulations currently established by the Higher Education Council (YÖK) are insufficient in addressing the issue. While YÖK's 2015 policy document on combating sexual harassment was a significant achievement and support, it was later rescinded by YÖK (O'Neil et al., 2018).

On the other side of the issue is the disclosures of sexual violence employed by survivors, which I conceive both as an empowering and challenging tool for survivors. I believe it is important to consider disclosures in all their complexity and multiple layers; trying to grasp how and why they are enacted, the reasons behind them, and their political impact. While disclosures can serve as empowering and liberating moments, they are also laden with deadlocks that can damage both survivors and solidarities.

Understanding this complexity of disclosures in the context of sexual violence at universities also reveals the need for examining complaint processes, to see how institutions act and how they affect survivors. Therefore, I believe another significance of this study lies in its attempt to have a wider look at mechanisms employed against sexual violence at universities with a dual focus on complaints and disclosures. By creating a dialogic link between the two, I believe we can better uncover the potential avenues that needs improvement and have a deeper understanding of how to address them. In this line, I suppose that this research has the potential to foster a stream of fertile discussions on this critical issue.

In a conversation with friends, one of them told me that while we all recognize that institutional structures are often ineffective, we rarely discuss the problem of disclosures and how we lack policies for managing the aftermath, which is essential for constituting sustainable political change against sexual violence. Nevertheless, coming up with solutions these concerns is no easy task. I think this research in some ways shows the complexity and difficulty of transforming anger into sustainable political action. This raises questions similar to those I explored in Chapter 3 regarding the motivations behind disclosures. What forms of justice are we looking for? What outcomes do we seek, and what do we want to happen to the perpetrators? These are difficult questions to answer, and to speak on my behalf, their answers also do change over time.

An attempt at answering these questions requires us to avoid being trapped between the two poles of victims and perpetrators. Drawing the connection between unawareness and implication, Rothberg astutely remarks that "the realm of implication is also a site from which to launch a new consideration of collective responsibility" (2019, p.42). In Chapter 4, I discussed how subjectivity is neither an inherent nor a stable feature but rather a discontinuous surface, where individuals may occupy different subject positions at different times and in various contexts. This insight, along with the previous discussion on Aylin and Professor Derya, as well as many others, launches the questions of how and with whom we should construct solidarity while urging us to scrutinize our indirect involvement in violence. It brings forth important considerations about self-reflection and the criteria we use to determine our alliances.

Then, I believe the realm of implication offers a powerful ground for moving beyond simplistic notions of guilt and blame, on which we can confront our own

positions and actions. While it is a question that whether anyone can be entirely exempt from involvement in some form of violence, in contexts where we cannot be neatly categorized as perpetrators or victims, implication demands a deeper consideration of our roles and responsibilities.

Thinking about this responsibility and solidarity "can lead to new versions of collective politics that build on alliances and assemblages of differently situated subjects" (Rothberg, 2019, p.21). This is not to imply aligning with those who directly perpetrate harm but rather calls for a critical examination of our own collectives and solidarities. It is an invitation to question the presumed righteousness of our actions and perspectives. Then, the crucial aspect of this reflection lies in a two-fold acknowledgment: recognizing our part in perpetuating violence and holding ourselves accountable. By doing so, we can foster more inclusive and responsible forms of solidarity, grounded in a genuine understanding of our shared and individual responsibilities.

I concluded the previous chapter with a discussion on solidarity networks and subjectivity. I should remark that feminist solidarity has profoundly enriched my life and the lives of my friends, providing us with support and empowerment in countless ways. In her work on abolitionist feminism, Cullors outlines the principles of her "abolitionist journey" as such: "(1) have courageous conversations; (2) commit to response versus reaction; (3) experiment: nothing is fixed" (2018, p.1687). I believe that particularly the last point here on experimenting tells us a lot. Feminists have long been developing their own methods for fighting against sexual violence. I think it is crucial to be aware of the controversies and deadlocks inherent in these approaches. Recognizing and negotiating these complexities demands a commitment

to reflexivity and ongoing dialogue within feminist spaces. It is through such dedicated efforts we can dismantle and change the system.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Cinsel şiddetle ilgili üniversitedeki algıyı genel olarak nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Bu konuda farkındalığın artması için sizce neler yapılabilir?
    a. Cinsel şiddetle mücadelede üniversite topluluklarının ve kurumlarının rolü hakkındaki düşüncelerinizi paylaşabilir misiniz?
    b. Cinsel şiddete karşı sizce nasıl adalet sağlanabilir?
2. Cinsel şiddetle karşı hukuki mücadele hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
    a. Sizce hukuki yollar adalet sağlamada başarılı mı?
    b. Hukuki süreçler haricinde sizce ne gibi yollara başvurulabilir?
3. Cinsel şiddete maruz kalanların üniversite ortamlarında cinsel şiddetle başa çıkma/mücadele etme biçimlerine dair kendi gözlemlerinizi paylaşabilir misiniz?
    a. Cinsel şiddete maruz kalan veya tanık olan kişilere sağlanan destek hizmetlerinin rolü hakkında neler düşünüyorsunuz?
4. Cinsel şiddet failini sosyal medya veya diğer yollarla ifşa etmek hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
    a. Bunu farklı şekillerde yapmak gerektiğini düşündüğünüz noktalar nelerdir?
5. Üniversite ortamlarında cinsel şiddetle ilgili resmi şikayetlerin yapılması, disiplin süreçlerinin yürütülmesi hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
6. Eğer bu mücadele etme süreçlerden herhangi birini geçirdiyseniz veya bu süreçleri geçiren birini gözlemlediyseniz, bu süreç sizi/onları nasıl etkiledi, nasıl hissettirdi?

a. Bu süreçte siz/onlar hangi zorluklarla ve olumlu durumlarla karşılaştınız?
b. Bu süreçleri nasıl yürüttünüz?
c. Bu süreçlerde sizin için etkili olan başa çıkma mekanizmaları nelerdi?
d. Bu süreçlerde ve sonrasında çevrenizdekilerden ne gibi yorumlar ve tepkiler aldınız?
e. Şimdi olsaydı, bu süreçlerle ilgili farklı yapmak istediğiniz şeyler olur muydu?
f. Neden böyle bir ifşa ya da resmi şikâyet yoluna gittiniz/gittiler? Esas motivasyonunuz neydi? Sizce bu süreçler istediğiniz gibi mi sonuçlandı?
g. Bu süreçler üniversitedeki varlığınızı, deneyiminizi nasıl etkiledi?

7. Bir cinsel şiddet ifşasıyla karşılaştığınızda veya tanıdığınız birinin bir cinsel şiddet faili olduğunu öğrendiğinizde nasıl hissediyorsunuz?
    a. Bu süreçler sizin çevrenizdekilerle ilişkilerinizi nasıl etkiledi?
8. Bu süreçlerin bir parçası olarak dayanışma ağlarının bir üyesi oldunuz mu? Bu dayanışma ağlarının deneyiminizde nasıl bir rol oynadığını sizce anlatabilir misiniz?
    a. Sizce bu dayanışma ağlarının olumlu, olumsuz ve ikircikleri yanları neler? Bu ağların bulunması üniversitelerde cinsel şiddet meselesini nasıl etkiliyor olabilir?
    b. Topluluklar içinde cinsel şiddetle mücadelede daha destekleyici bir ortamın oluşturulması için neler yapılabilir?

APPENDIX B

LONG QUOTES IN TURKISH

1. Ahah e tabii ki ilk taciz deneyimim değildi bu. Yani eminim bu üniversitedeki bütün kadınlar da tacize uğramıştır zaten, fiziksel ya da en azından sözel olarak. Hepimiz bu bokla uğraşıyoruz sonuçta. O yüzden beni o kadar derinden etkilemedi bu olay. Ama şeyi kaldıramadım, sanki böyle bir şey olmamış gibi insan içinde bu kadar rahat davranabilmesini hazmedemedim. Hazmedemedim ve çok etkilendim bundan. … Tacizcini görmek, onunla karşılaşmak zaten yeterince zor, tacizcini ifşaladıktan sonra diğer insanlarla uğraşmak daha zor. Ya da işte derslerini, insanlarla interaction'larını ayarlamak. … Çok detaya girmeyeceğim ama mutluyum bu süreç bittiği için.
2. Ben bu sürece başlarken ne olacağına dair hiçbir fikrim yoktu. CİTÖK hiçbir şey söyleyemedi soruşturmanın sonucuna dair. Zaten o süreçte ve kararda onların direkt bir etkisi yok. Başkalarıyla konuştum ben de, bu süreci yaşamış başka insanlarla. Bazı soruşturmalar hakkaniyetli sonuçlanmış bazıları öyle olmamış. Bazı olaylarda, protokolü takip etmişler, hatta bazılarından üniversite precautinary uzaklaştırma da vermiş. Ama benim soruşturmamda beni haksız buldular en sonunda. Hatta mahkemeden aldığım uzaklaştırma kararını da uygulamadılar. İnanabiliyor musun? Mahkemeye gidiyorum, uzaklaştırma kararı alıyorum, e çünkü çok belli bu adamın beni tehdit ettiği. Ama üniversite umursamıyor. … böyle söylemek hoşuma gitmiyor ama çok korkuyordum o sırada bu adamdan ve bana yapabileceklerinden. Onu disipline verdiğim için kızar ve bana bir şey yapar diye. Şikayet ettiğim ve bir sürü şeyle uğraştığım için

aptal gibi hissettim bu yüzden. Bu aptal okulla uğraşmasaydım çok daha huzurlu olurdum.

3. … ve hep sessiz kalmamı söylediler bana, disiplin süreci bitene kadar, üniversite bir karara varana kadar. Ama yani biliyorsun, çok zaman alıyor bunlar ve konuşamamak büyük bir yük oluyor insana. Beklemek cehennem gibi bir şey zaten, en kötüsü o onu diyebilirim. Ne olabilir ya da sana ve onlara ne olacak bilmiyorsun. Yani böyle yara bandı gibi değil, sürecin belirsiz bir yavaşlığı var.
4. Üniversiteye şikayet etmeyi asla düşünmedim. Yani, dava açmak zaten neredeyse imkansız. Onu asla yapmazdım. Ama yani ne olacaktı ki sanki disipline verseydim, o süreci başlatsaydım? Gösterecek hiçbir şeyim yok, kanıt falan. Çıkar benim o sırada her şeye okey olduğumu, consent verdiğimi söyleyiverirdi.
5. Bence benim disiplin sürecim ne kadar iyi olabilirse o kadar iyiydi. Başka insanlardan biliyorum komisyonla konuşurken çok kötü deneyimler yaşayanlar falan filan. Ama benim komisyonumdaki hocaların hepsi baya iyiydi. Ama bu da bi şey değiştirmiyor. Süreci başlatabilmek için okula beş kere falan gitmek zorunda kaldım ya da işte bir sürü şey imzalamam gerekiyordu sonrasında, yani bir haber alabilmek için, çünkü insanlara ulaşmak kolay değildi. Memurlarla ilgili değil bu arada, onlar da çok iyiydi ve sürekli özür diliyorlardı benden, sürekli ıslak imza için oraya çağırdıkları için kusura bakma diyorlardı. Ama bu iş böyle yürüyor, e ve ben de bundan mutlu değilim. … aslında beni de bazı meselelerle ilgili, gizli tutulması gereken bazı şeylerle ilgili, o kadın [orada çalışan memur] bilgilendirdi çünkü bana üzülüyordu hep.
6. Benim case'imle ilgilenen hocalar düzgün tiplerdi. Yani tabi hiçbir şekilde oraya çıkıp ne olduğunu anlatmak kolay değil ama onların da bir seçeneği yok, ve görüşmede baya düşüncelilerdi. Dekanlıkta çalışan kadın da çok tatlı biri ama

sürekli aradı beni birtakım şeyleri imzalatmak için. Onun suçu da değil ama. Onun bu süreçlerle hiç ilgisi yok aslında. O yüzden oraya birkaç kere gitmek zorunda kaldım, bir şeyler imzalatmak durumundaydı ve dışardan yapmak mümkün değildi. O da benim için üzgündü ama yani neyse.

7. Ben bu durumu yaşadığımda şikayet etmenin ya da çocuğu mahkemeye vermek benim için bir seçenek bile değildi. Çünkü benim haksız çıkacağımı ve onun herhangi bir ceza almayacağını biliyordum. Hem de dava için bir sürü para harcadığımla kalmış olurdum en sonunda. Okuldan atılmasını da istemedim açıkçası ya da ne biliyim hapse girmesini falan. Bunların bir anlamı olacağını düşünmüyorum, böyle bir adalet sistemine de inanmıyorum çünkü bir faydası olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Bu insanlar yaptıklarının sonuçlarına katlanmasınlar değil, katlansınlar tabii. Ama okuldan ya da mahkemeden gelecek herhangi bir cezanın iyi olmayacağına eminim. Kafamdaki en doğru şekli nasıl onu bilmiyorum ama bir tür adaletin olmasını, gelmesini istedim. O yüzden başka bir yol seçtim, sosyal çevrelerimizde ifşalamaya karar verdim. Yani en iyi yol bu muydu emin değilim, ahah, ama devletin hukuk sistemine girmekten iyiydi bence.
8. İfşa en iyi çözümdür, hiçbir sıkıntısı yoktur falan demeyeceğim. Bunun hakkında konuşuyoruz, ifşa ne demek, nasıl gerçekleştirmeliyiz, teorik ve pratik anlamda. Bazı durumlarda şikayet etmek ya da direkt mahkemeye gitmek daha iyi olabilir. Ama yani senin de bildiğin gibi, bazen öyle olaylar oluyor ki bu sistemlerin asla tanımayacağı. … Bunun bazı controversial ve insanın kafasını karıştıran tarafları olduğunu biliyorum. Bazıları işte neoliberal diyor, bazıları reformist bir yöntem diyor. Bir noktaya kadar katılıyorum. Ayrıca sonrasında insanlara çok zarar da veriyor, ifşalayanlara.

9. Bütün tacizciler hakkında aynı şekilde düşünmüyorum. Bence tacizci olmak çok garip ya da enteresan bir şey değil. Bence, erkeklerin birçoğunun birilerini taciz etme ihtimali var, bence bu toplumsal cinsiyetler arasındaki güç dinamikleri ve gender performanslarıyla ilgili bir şey. Bunları tacize bahane bulmak için söylemiyorum ama consent'in ne olduğuna dair hiçbir fikri olmayan bir üniversite birinci sınıf öğrencisiyle 50 yaşındaki bir profesör aynı değil. Yaptıkları hataları birbirine eşit görmüyorum ben. Küçük olanla ilgili mesela rehabilitasyon, self-reflection, hatalarını kabul edip sorumluluk alması gibi şeyler beni tatmin ederdi. Ama hayır yani diğeri için, bence mümkün olan tüm şekillerde ifşalanmalı. İntikam isterdim mesela. Sahip olduğu her şeyi kaybetmesini ve bir daha şans verilmemesini.
10. Bu üniversitedeki herkesin onun ne yaptığını bilmesini ve konuşmasını istedim. [İfşayı] facebook'ta paylaşırsam bunun çok büyük bir mesele olacağını da biliyordum.
11. Şimdi bir arkadaşım davayla uğraşıyor çünkü kendini taciz eden adamı alenen ifşaladı. Şimdiki aklım olsa bunu (ifşayı) bu şekilde yapmasına izin vermezdim. Gerekli önlemleri almasını sağlardım, işte anonim bir hesap kullanmak falan onun gibi şeyler sen de biliyorsun.
12. Evet açıkçası ben de farkındayım neler yaşadığını sosyal medyada anlatmak biraz garip bir şey. İnsanı biraz savunmasız kılıyor. … ama bir süre sonra aslında diğer seninle aynı şeyi yaşamış kadınlarla tanışman için alan açıyor. Yani bu sürecin önemli bir parçası. Asla pişman değilim. … diğer kadınlarla tanışmak aslında en önemli şey. Yani aynı kişi tarafından taciz edilmiş başka insanlarla tanışıp dayanışmayı büyütebilirsin. Bu baya değerli ve empowering bir şey.

13. Gidip orda facebook'ta birini ifşalayınca sadece bir hikaye anlatmış olmuyorsun. Esasen birini işaret etmiş oluyorsun, sonuçlarına katlansın diye görünür kılıyorsun onu. En azından ben bu yüzden yaptım. Herkes tarafından tanınmasını ve bilinmesini istedim onun, (gülüyor) ama işe yaradı mı emin değilim.
14. Yani şikayet etmekten ya da sosyal medyada ifşamaktan korkuyordum. Çünkü mahkeme de üniversite de beni asla korumazdı. Bunlar hep erkek egemen, ataerkil sistemler. Aslında, hiçbir zaman üniversiteyle uğraşmak ve karşıma çıkacak birtakım aptal adamlarla yüz yüze gelmek zorunda kalmak istemedim. Onlara (üniversite) sığınmak istemedim. E peki ne yapabilirim diye düşündüm. Hiçbir şey. Ama konuşabiliyorum. Arkadaşlarımla konuşabilirim, onlara başkalarına anlatmalarını da söyleyebilirim. Böylece bu adamın taciz ettiği diğer insanlara da ulaşabilecektim. Ondan sonra bir araya gelip belki daha fazlasını yapmak için güç bulabilirdik. Zarar verebileceği başka insanları da korumak için bir şans yaratabilirdik.
15. Bu olayda, bir arkadaşımla konuştum ve ona anlatabildiği kadar çok arkadaşına bunu anlatmasını söyledim. Grup gibi bir şey oluşturduk, benzer şeyler yaşayan başka kimse var mı öğrenmek için insanlara ulaşmaya çalıştım. Yani, bil bakalım ne oldu, birden fazla kişiye ulaştım tabi ki, adam bunu birçok kişiye yapmış. Daha sonra onlarla bir araya geldik ve bir tür kolektif eylem üzerinde düşünmeye çalıştık.
16. Onu sosyal medyada ifşa etmekten korkuyordum çünkü benim için başkası bile paylaşsa [ifşayı], arkasında benim olduğumu anlardı. Riske atamadım. Daha sonra onu arkadaşlarımıza ifşalamaya karar verdim. Sosyal çevremde ifşalamaya başladığımda insanlardan bir sürü tavsiyeler vermeye başladı. Bunu yap, şunu yap falan gibi şeyler. Yaşadıklarımı anlattıktan sonra insanların bana tavsiye

vermelerinden nefret ediyorum sanki ben onların bana söylediklerini daha önce hiç düşünmemişim gibi. Ama insanlar küçümseyerek konuşmayı seviyor; neler yaşadığını bilmiyorlar, kadın olmanın ne demek olduğunu da anlamıyorlar sanırım. Ama yani bu ataerkil düzen karşısında kendimi çok savunmasız hissettim açıkçası ve dava açmayı hiç düşünmedim.

17. Bu üniversite sanki özgür bir yermiş gibi davranan bu liberal diskura ona bakmayın. İnsanlar mesela bu kampüsteki öğrencilerin ve akademisyenlerin profeminist ve demokrat olduğunu düşünüyor. Saçmalık işte. Bu kampüste o kadar çok fail var ki, biz de onların arasında kendimize yer bulmaya çalışıyoruz. Nefret ediyorum bu durumdan. Bazen düşünüyorum, evet bu adamları ifşa edelim. Yüzlerini fotoğraflarını her yere asalım ki burada kendilerini asla güvende hissedemesinler. Buranın, bu kampüsün onlara kalmadığını, bizim olduğunu bilmeliler.
18. Söz uçar yazı kalır, ahah. Yani gerçi posterler de sökülebilir ve yazılamalar da bir şekilde silinebilir tabi ama fark etmez ya. O adam isminin ve fotoğraflarının buraya asıldığını asla unutmayacak ve buraya gelemeyecek, bunu biliyorum. Başka hiçbir şey de umurumda değil.
19. Erkekler sanıyorlar ki istedikleri her şeyi, istedikleri yerde yapabilirler ve bu da yanlarına kalır. Bu kampüsü kendilerinin sanıyorlar. Bana kalırsa bu durumun böyle olmadığını onlara göstermenin en iyi yolu bu. Asla unutamayacakları izler bırakmak olarak görüyorum bunu. Bence bu taktikler de daha sık kullanılmalı çünkü bu erkeklerin nasıl tipler olduğunu diğer kadınlara da göstermiş oluruz. Onlar da böylece yanlışlıkla, bilmeden onlarla ilişkilenmek durumunda kalmazlar.

20. Bugün bana tecavüz eden adamı ifşa etmiyorsam eğer sebebinin bu olduğunu söyleyebilirim. İnsanların [üniversitenin Facebook Grubunda] nelerle uğraştığını, ne tür yanıtlar aldıklarını görüyoruz. Angry feminist gibi şeyler ohoo ortalıkta uçuşuyor. Açıkçası ne düşündükleri çok umurumda değil ama işte uğraşmak da istemiyorum.
21. Bunların hepsi ikiyüzlü. Herkes cancel culture'dan bahsediyor. Buradaki dinamiklerden o kadar habersizler ki. Burada kimin gerçekten cancel'landığını bilmiyorum. En son [politik bir eylem sürecinde] bir adam ifşa edildikten iki gün sonra bir grup kahvaltısında ortaya çıktı, herkes kahvaltıdan utanmadan fotoğraf paylaşıyordu. Artık cancel'lanmak ne anlama geliyor ben bilmiyorum. Ama tecavüzcümü ifşa ettiğim için dışlandığımı da ben biliyorum, bu kadarını biliyorum yani. Mesele benim üzerime kaldı, beni o kahvaltıya davet etmediler mesela.
22. Yani dediğim gibi onu tam olarak kamusal anlamda ifşalamadım ama lisedeki arkadaş grubumuza anlattım. Lisedeki durum farklı oluyor, ya da şey, o arkadaşlıklar farklı oluyor. Ben bunu söyledikten sonra bana üzülüyormuş gibi davrandılar ama sonra öğrendim ki bana haber vermeden onunla buluşup birlikte gezilere çıkıyorlarmış. İçlerinden birinin bana söylediğine göre bensiz yeni whatsapp grupları bile açmışlar. E ne diyebilirim ki? Yalan söylemeyeceğim, çok üzülmedim, nasıl insanlar olduklarını zaten biliyordum, onu iyice fark etmiş oldum. Benden kurtuldukları için rahatladılar, ben de en sonunda onların ne yaptığını umursamayı bıraktım. Hala ara sıra o çocuğu sosyal medyada ifşa etmeyi düşünüyorum ama sonra çoktan saldığım bir konu için kendimi tekrar tekrar rahatsız etmek istemiyorum, ama aynı zamanda sanki bunu diğer kadınlara borçluymuşum gibi de hissediyorum.

23. Bi anlamda o çok sevilen hocayı ifşa eden ve derslerinin iptal edilmesine sebep olan kızın ben olduğumu biliyordum. Ayrıca, birisini kamusal olarak ifşa ettiğinizde, kendinizi de ifşa etmiş oluyorsunuz. Biliyorsunuz işte erkekler size farklı bakmaya başlıyor, sanki tacizin sebebi sizsiniz ve onların da tacizci olmalarına sebep olabilirsiniz. Bu baya rahatsız ediciydi.
24. Yaşadıklarımızı kimseye anlatma zorunluluğumuz olduğunu düşünmüyorum, kendimizi meşrulaştırmak için her ayrıntıyı başkalarıyla paylaşmamız gerektiğini vesaire de. Bu durum beni biraz rahatsız da ediyor. Sanki her ayrıntıyı paylaşarak başkalarını deneyimlerimize ikna etmek zorunda kalıyoruz. Bunu etik açıdan da doğru bulmuyorum. Birini ifşa etmek istersem ifşalarım ve başkalarının inanıp inanmaması onlara kalır. Bir avuç adamın bana inanması için kendi değerlerimden taviz vermeme kesinlikle gerek yok. Burada yaptığımız politikanın da bu deneyimlerin güvenilirliği üzerine inşa edilmemesi gerektiğini düşünüyorum. Ayrıca deneyimimizin ne kadar çarpıcı, sansasyonel olduğu da ifşamızın etkisini belirliyor olmamalı.
25. İnsanların okudukları herhangi bi ifşa metninin güvenilirliğini sorgulaması bana normal geliyor açıkçası. Benzer şekilde, cinsel tacize maruz kalmış birinin bu deneyimi publicize etmek istememesinin de son derece makul bir istek olduğuna inanıyorum. Ama bu deneyim üzerinden siyaset yapabiliriz. Her ne kadar insanları açıklamalara inandırmak için herhangi bir müzakere gibi şeylere girmemize gerek olduğunu düşünmesem de bazen siyasi bir etki yaratmak istiyorsak bazı tavizlerin verilmesi de gerekiyor.
26. Facebook grubunda sürekli yeni bir ifşa gördüğümüz bir yaz vardı, başlarda gruba girip bütün o detaylarını falan okurdum. Bazı arkadaşlarımın veya arkadaşlarımın arkadaşlarının fail olduğunu öğrendiğim tuhaf bir süreçti o. Ve bu

postları okuduğunda, işte ne olduğunu anlatan yazılar bunlar genelde, eğer düzgün bir insansan, biraz suçluluk ve sorumluluk hissediyorsun. Ama sadece belli bir vakte kadar. İnsan bir süre sonra alışıyor çünkü hepsini hatırlamak zaten mümkün değil. Bazen kim faildi kim neydi unutuyorsun.

27. Herkesin kendi grubunu korumasına artık dayanamıyorum, bu doğru değil. Feminizmle ilk tanıştığımda ne olursa olsun tacizcilere karşı duracağımızı düşünmüştüm. Ama bazen bu insanlar özgürleştirici mekanizmalar olarak kullanmamız gereken şeyleri co-opt ediyor ve sonra bunları kendi arzularına göre kullanıyorlar. Kendi gruplarından biri olunca tüm tacizlerin üstünü örtüyorlar. Ama sonra kuir birini kadın düşmanı olarak label'lıyorlar orada burada. Ya da bir başkası gidip kendisini dolandırdığı ya da işte kirasını ödemediği için birini ifşa ediyor. Bunun çok yanlış olduğunu düşünüyorum.
28. … Sosyal ortamlarda, özellikle de erkek egemen ortamlarda kendimi mağdur olarak tanımlamaktan hep çekindim. Kullandığımız kelimeler politik tercihler sonuçta. Bence aslında insan bazen gerçekten mağdur hissedebilir de kendini çünkü işin içinde bir çaresizlik veya kırılganlık duygusu oluyor. Bunun illa kötü bir şey olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Bazen kendimizi öyle hissedebiliriz. Kendimize bu kadar alanı da açmalıyız, bu kadar yük almamalıyız üzerimize. Mağdur olmak da çaresiz olmak da kötü şeyler değil tabii ki. Ama yani ben erkeklerin olduğu ortamlarda kendimi asla bu şekilde tanıtmak, göstermek istemedim.
29. Ama yani bu okuldaki feminist bir kadın olarak benim böyle sürekli bağırıp duran sinirli, öfkeli bir killjoy olduğumu düşündüklerinin farkındayım. Umurumda değil ve onları huzursuz etmek hoşuma gidiyor aslında ahaha. Neyse ifşa konusuna gelince, bu patriyarkal adalet yapıları asla işlemiyor biliyorsun, e

ben de histerik bir kadın olarak (ironik bir şekilde) kazandığım bazı haklardan yola çıkarak bu faillerden intikam almak istiyorum.

30. Kim ne derse desin, üniversiteye yeni başlayan genç bir kadınsan, her zaman buraya, bu kampüse her şeyin bilincinde olarak gelmiyorsun. En azından ben öyle değildim. İçselleştirdiğim o kadar çok şey vardı ki. Pek çok şey bana normal, zaten olması gereken böyle bi geliyordu. Dolayısıyla ifşanın önemli olduğunu düşünüyorum. Ben bu sayede bir uyanış yaşadım diyebilirim. Yaşadıklarımı anlamlandırdım. Bana yapılanın kabul etmemem gereken bir şey olduğunu anladım. Bunlar birdenbire olmuyor. Bu ifşa metinlerinde yazanları okuyorsunuz, düşünüyorsunuz ve aa ben de neredeyse aynısını yaşadım diyorsunuz. Yaşadığınız şeyin münferit bir olay olmadığını anlıyorsunuz. Sonra yaşadıklarının farkına varıyorsun ve "Ah tamam ya yalnız değilmişim" diyorsun. İşte belki bundan sonra bir şekilde destek arayacak gücü buluyorsun kendinde.

APPENDIX C

APPROVAL OF THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

T.C.
BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (Sbinarek)

Sayı : E-84391427-050.01.04-174467 02.04.2024
Konu : 2024-09T Kayıt Numaralı Başvurunuz Hakkında

Sayın Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Saygun GÖKARIKSEL

Tez danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz öğrenciniz Yağmur Çağatay'ın "Disclosures and Complaints of Sexual Violence at Universities" başlıklı projesi ile Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (SBİNAREK)'e yaptığınız 2024-09T kayıt numaralı başvuru 14.03.2024 tarih ve 2024/02 sayılı kurul toplantısında incelenmiş ve projeye etik onay verilmesi uygun bulunmuştur.

Bu karar tüm üyelerin toplantıya on-line olarak katılımıyla ve oybirliği ile alınmıştır. Onay mektubu tüm üyeler adına Komisyon Başkanı tarafından e-imzalanmıştır. Bilgilerinizi rica ederiz.

Saygılarımızla,

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Işıl ERDUYAN
Kurul Başkanı

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
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[60] The title of this thesis was modified with the defense and has been updated to its current form, *Complaints and Disclosures of Sexual Violence at Universities in Turkey*. The ethical approval letter attached here corresponds to the previous title, and the content of the thesis has remained unchanged.

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