Women and the New Conservative Family: Paternalism, Identity and Value Change

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The intellectual content of this dissertation, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

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Abstract

Women and the New Conservative Family: Paternalism, Identity and Value Change

Esra Özdil Gümüş, Doctoral Candidate at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2025

Professor Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Dissertation Advisor

This thesis aims to reveal how family values have undergone social transformation by examining the process of identity construction and family life of upper middle class conservative women in the face of paternalistic practices towards the creation of a contemporary ideal family. It addresses the family not as a tool used by the state to control society or as a means of reproduction, but as one of the links of the power network that constructs the social structure. Within the scope of this thesis, the attitudes of women, who are ideally positioned within the family, towards the paternalistic approach and the tactics they produce in everyday life are analyzed. As a result of in-depth interviews conducted with upper middle-class women in Istanbul, the family was analyzed as a three-layered structure in terms of the formation, transformation, and transmission of values as a realm of necessities, a realm of possibilities, and a future project. As a result of the research, it has been revealed that conservative women, who perpetuate the values they received from the family they grew up in and transmit them through their children, are not docile objects of paternalism, but active subjects of social transformation through their everyday life decisions.

131,483 words

Özet

Kadın ve Yeni Muhafazakar Aile: Paternalizm, Kimlik ve Değer Dönüşümü

Esra Özdil Gümüş, Doktora Adayı, 2025
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Bu tez, günümüz ideal ailesinin oluşturulması doğrultusundaki paternalist uygulamalar karşısında, orta üst sınıf muhafazakâr kadınların kimlik inşası ve aile yaşantısı sürecine mercek tutarak aile değerlerinin nasıl toplumsal dönüşüme uğradığını ortaya koymayı hedefler. Aileyi sadece devletin toplumu kontrol etmek için kullandığı bir vasıta ya da yeniden üretim aracı olarak değil, toplum yapısını inşa eden güç ağının halkalarından biri olarak ele alır. İdeal olarak ailenin içinde konumlandırılan kadının, paternalist yaklaşıma takındığı tutumlar ve gündelikte ürettiği taktikler, bu tezin kapsamında incelenmiştir. İstanbul'da orta üst sınıf kadınlarla gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine mülakatlar neticesinde aile; değerlerin oluşumu, dönüşümü ve aktarımı açısından zorunluluklar alanı, esneklikler alanı ve gelecekler alanı olarak üç katmanlı bir yapı olarak ele alınmıştır. Araştırma neticesinde, içinde yetiştikleri aileden aldıkları değerleri kurdukları ailede yaşatan ve çocuklar aracılığıyla aktaran muhafazakâr kadınların, paternalizmin uysal nesneleri değil, gündelikte verdikleri kararlarla, toplumsal dönüşümün aktif özneleri olduğu ortaya konulmuştur.

131.483 kelime

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Table of Contents

List of Tables *xvi*
Abbreviations and Acronyms *xvii*
Note on Transliteration *xvii*
Acknowledgements *xx*

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 In Pursuit of the Ideal Family 3
1.2 Women's Role to Realize the Ideal 10
1.3 Family in Flux: Adapting to Modern Challenges 12
1.4 Research Question 37
1.5 The Dynamic Family: Interweaving Stability, Flexibility and Future Aspirations 39
1.6 The Scope and The Limitations of the Thesis 50
1.7 Organization of the Thesis 51

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 53

2.1 The Dawn of the Advanced West 54
2.2 Women and Family in Modernizing Turkey 65

3 FAMILY AS A REALM OF NECESSITIES 97

3.1 The Realm of Necessities in Family Studies 100
3.2 Crafting Selfhood and Navigating Existential Necessities 101
3.3 Physical Necessities 131
3.4 Social and Familial Necessities 161
3.5 Synthesis of Findings 174

4 FAMILY AS A REALM OF FLEXIBILITIES 177

4.1 The Realm of Flexibilities in Family Studies 178
4.2 The Way to Marriage 180
4.3 Marriage Technologies 215
4.4 Flexibility in Family Life: Embracing Change and Difference 232
4.5 The Power of Flexibility: Overcoming Family Challenge 281

4.6 Synthesis of Findings 290

5 FAMILY AS A REALM OF FUTURES 293

5.1 Realm of Futures in Family Studies 295
5.2 Ideal Visions: Future in the Making 299
5.3 How to Transfer Values? 312
5.4 Raising Future Generations: Care, Labor, and Division of Responsibilities in Child Rearing 329
5.5 Parenting in Crisis: The Struggles Within the Realm of Futures 345
5.6 Synthesis of Findings 358

6 CONCLUSION 361

APPENDICES

A Birth Place of the Interviewees 386
B Birth Date of the Interviewees 387
C Education Level of the Interviewees 388
D Marriage Age of the Interviewees 389
E Occupation of the Interviewees 390

BIBLIOGRAPHY 391

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Number of births and total fertility rate, 2001-2023 6

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Democrat Party DP
Istanbul Technical University ITU
Justice and Development Party JDP
Republican Peoples' Party RPP

A Note on Transliteration

In the thesis interviews, concepts that do not have a literal equivalent in English, especially those used in religious literature, are left in their original form and their meaning is given in the footnote where they are first used.

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1

Introduction

Family is the foundation of the Turkish society and based on the equality between the spouses.

The State shall take the necessary measures and establish the necessary organization to protect peace and welfare of the family, especially mother and children, and to ensure the instruction of family planning and its practice.
- Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Article 41

Throughout history, governments have always endeavored to reimagine the concept of the family and construct their own version of the ideal family. The family is not a passive structure that is simply driven by the policies of the state; rather, it is a living organism that lives with its own dynamics, the ability to adapt and transform, and the ability to preserve and reproduce values that are passed down from generation to generation. The purpose of this research is to get an understanding of the new family imagination that has emerged in Turkey over the course of the past twenty years, with a particular focus on the roles that women have played in this shift.

The political authority in Turkey puts a new family ideal into action in the last few decades. There are specific duties assigned to women during this idealization. It is generally accepted that women are essentially characterized as spouses and mothers, that they are positioned within the house, and that a significant amount of care services are handed to them. Because women are given the responsibility of caring for the disabled, aged, sick, and children, the state is able to rearrange the budget that it should allocate to these areas in the name of family solidarity. This is because women are more likely to carry out these tasks. In this way, the position of women within the house becomes not only a matter of cultural and ideological significance, but also a strategy that is directly connected to the functioning of the economy overall.

However, the reproduction of the conservative family model is not only accomplished through the imposition of state regulations, but also through the engagement of social actors. At the same time as women are subjects who carry and transmit conservative values, they also adjust to changing social and economic conditions by embracing some policies and excluding others. On the one hand, women are subjects who carry and transmit conservative values.

The conservative family structure and the ways in which it influences women throughout this time period are the subjects of this thesis. The purpose of this study is gaining an understanding of the interrelationships between state policies, societal dynamics, and individual strategies by making use of the family experiences of religious conservative women from the middle-upper class who live in Istanbul. It examines how policies that are shaped at the macro level are experienced, transformed, rejected, or repeated at the micro level. The analysis is based on the experiences of women who belong to three different generations.

Accordingly, family is conceptualized on three separate realms: the realm of necessities, the realm of flexibilities, and the realm of futures. When it comes to examining the family in the context of societal transformation, value transfer, and paternalistic interventions, these

three interconnected layers offer a framework that can be utilized. The realm of necessities is concerned with articulating the fundamental principles and essential elements that make up the family unit, whereas the realm of flexibility investigates the ways in which the family is negotiated and modified in accordance with the experiences that are actually lived. In the futures realm, the family's future goals and the family's ability to maintain their legacy through subsequent generations are discussed. This thesis proposes that a performative lens can be applied to the family context, where the scripts, routines, and rituals of daily life serve to shape and solidify a shared sense of identity, belonging, and values. The three layers presented to understand change offer a useful tool for comprehending the changing, flexible, and preserved values of the family and thanks to its performative nature, family members create and maintain their roles, relationships, and family identity through everyday practices, communication, and shared activities. This view challenges traditional notions of family as a static, biological unit and instead focuses on the dynamic processes through which families are continually made and remade.

1.1 In Pursuit of the Ideal Family

One of the most typical statements about the family is that “the family is the foundation of society,” which is even enshrined in the Turkish Constitution. This commonsensical unquestioned statement, is a reminder of the importance of the family in Turkish society. After a century of establishment of the Republic, this fundamental institution, on the one hand, is remarked as the target of destructive threats and tried to be protected; on the other hand, it is criticized as the site of patriarchy and male dominance under the influence of feminist criticism Which family is this the focus of glorification and praise on the one hand and so much criticism on the other? What is the ideal family?

Defining an ideal family inherently involves an intervention to impose a specific notion of what is good for society. This kind of intervention, in which a state or an individual imposes their will on

another person with the belief that it will benefit or protect them, is called paternalism.[1] This concept is closely tied to the ideals of family, as governments often formulate paternalistic population policies based on the understanding that the population can significantly impact a state's economic strength, political stability, military capabilities, and social cohesion. By implementing policies that prioritize education, health, social cohesion, and innovation, governments aim to effectively manage demographic resources to maximize the population's potential and enhance the overall power and stability of the state. Thus, governments seek to influence and manage demographic transitions through paternalistic policies that directly impact population and family structure changes.

From this perspective, the family is not simply a private entity but also the target and subject of political power. Governments try to define the family and create their own perfect family regardless of the era. But the family is a living entity with own dynamics that preserves and replays the values passed down through generations, not merely a passive structure directed by state programs. This thesis seeks to grasp the new family imagination molded in Turkey throughout the past two decades and the part women play in this change.

Underpinning cultural identity conceptions and extending horizontally across ideologies, the “ideal family” is a concept that is commonly seen on Turkey's mental map.[2] The modernization process in Turkey witnessed the emergence of the family as a central state institution due to many of the public disputes directly or indirectly related to the family. The dramatic changes in the political and economic systems majorly impact the demographic structure.

---

1 Gerald Dworkin, “Paternalism,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive* (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/paternalism.

2 İnci Özkan Kerestecioğlu, “Mahremiyetin Fethi: İdeal Aile Kurgularından İdeal Aile Politikalarına,” in *Başka Bir Aile Anlayışı Mümkün Mü?*, ed. Nihal Boztekin (İstanbul: Heinrich Böll Stiftung Derneği Türkiye Temsilciliği, 2014), 10.

The political power in today's Turkey aims to implement a new vision of the family that is referred as the new conservative family. This process can be considered as the third major wave of direct intervention by the state in the family structure in Turkey. The first is the policies shaped by the aim of population growth and the creation of a new citizen identity in the early period of the Republic; the second is the population policies that were brought under control by the Population Planning Law that came into force in 1965. The third intervention carried out today aims not only to encourage population growth but also to rebuild the family with religious-conservative principles in many aspects, morally, economically and socially.

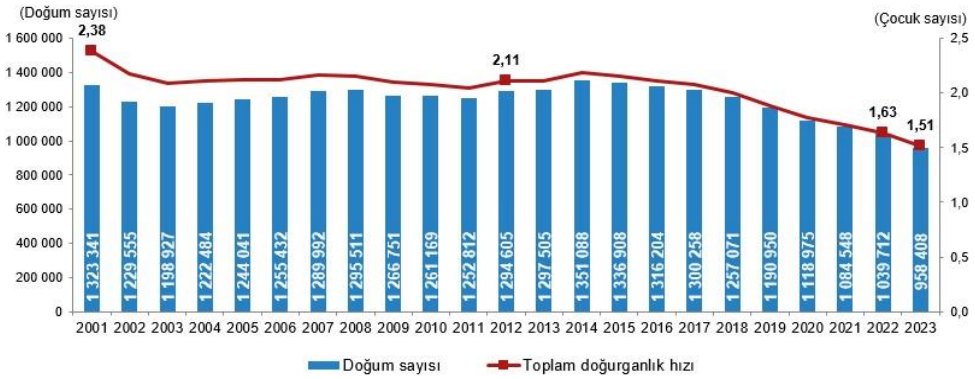
Since Turkey's population structure, proportion, and composition changed significantly in the 20th century, different familial and population "problems" were discussed in varying stages of demographic transformation. At the turn of the century, the "problem" areas were the lack of men and slow population growth stemming from continuous wars. Early marriages were encouraged, abortion was outlawed, and contraceptive methods were banned to increase fertility. As a result of paternalist policies, the population rose rapidly. The pro-natalist policies implemented until the 1960s were supported by social, economic, and legal measures. These policies resulted in another demographic phase, rapid population growth, which went along with high fertility rates.

While the rate of the young population increased with the upsurge in fertility, concerns emerged that young people with limited education and employment opportunities might make society unstable. Towards the end of the 1950s, these concerns that the increasing population would cause economic and social problems begot implementation of a planned period, which started in 1963, and paternalist measures were taken to reduce the population growth rate. With the adoption of the Law on Population Planning in 1965, the policy was changed to reduce the high fertility rate. The bans were lifted; the abortion ban was first relaxed and further liberalized in 1983. The minimum age needed to marry was raised. Programs were set up to educate women about family planning. The scope of family planning education enlarged to men in the barracks

following the coup in 1980. As a result, the fertility rate started to drop relatively quickly.[3]

Nowadays, when fertility and mortality rates have been decreasing, another "problem" arising from the increase in the elderly population has been added to this concern. According to TURKSTAT data, in 2023, Turkey's fertility rate fell for the eighth year in consecutive years to a historic low of 1.51 live births per woman. Given the threshold for a country's population to decrease, the renewal level is 2.1; Turkey's is below renewal and replacement levels. The total fertility rate, the average number of live births a woman would have assuming she survived her reproductive years (usually defined as ages 15 to 49), was 2.38 children in 2001. According to TURKSTAT data, there has not been an increase in the fertility rate since 2001.[4] Accordingly, Turkey, formerly proud of its youthful population, is now moving toward an elderly society. According to the estimates, by 2050, Turkey will have a population structure with a high proportion of older adults, as is the case in developed countries today.

Table 1.1 Number of births and total fertility rate, 2001-2023



Source: TURKSTAT, 2024

3 Ferhunde Özbay, "Demografik Dönüşüm Sürecinde İktidar, Kadın ve Aile," in *Başka Bir Aile Anlayışı Mümkün Mü?Mümkün Mü?* (İstanbul, 2014), 108, www.tr.boell.org.

4 TÜİK, "Doğum İstatistikleri, 2023," Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Haber Bülteni, 2024, https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Dogum-Istatistikleri-2023-53708#:~:text=Kaba doğum hızı binde 11,yılında 11%2C2 doğum düştü.

In the face of these data, nowadays, for the third time in Turkey, political powers are making paternalistic interventions to change fertility levels and solve familial problems in line with attaining the ideal family.[5] A new ideal family model is the new conservative family, emerged during the Justice and Development Party (JDP) administration, which pursued neoliberal and neoconservative policies. The resurgence of discourse on demography underpinned by arguments based on family politics has been implemented in the decades of rule of the JDP. The political tenets of the JDP are allegedly derived from "conservative democracy," dedication to EU membership, neo-liberal inclinations, and the conservative beliefs of its supporters.[6] To underline family values and handle demographic issues, Turkey has assigned 2025 as "Aile Yılı," ("Family Year"). Under government direction, this year-long program comprises activities and projects stressing the family's part in Turkish society. For usage in promotions, a unique logo including a mother, father, and three children has been developed.

Initiated by worries about dropping birth and marriage rates, growing divorces, and postponed motherhood, the project calling the 2023 fertility rate of 1.51 "alarmingly low" and a "threat to Turkey's future." President Erdoğan The initiative aims to spread awareness and apply encouraging policies. The government also seeks to offset outside cultural forces it considers as a challenge to conventional family configurations. Efforts to foster strong families will be supervised by the Ministry of Family and Social Services including financial incentives and educational programs.

While safeguarding the traditional family structure has long been a topic of political debate in Turkey, the family has become the focus of governmental policy in the last two decades. The party's new pro-family social policy agenda seeks to create a new ideal and reshape the family

5 Özbay, "Demografik Dönüşüm Sürecinde İktidar, Kadın ve Aile," 107–8.

6 Ayşe Güneş Ayata and Gökten Doğangün, "Gender Politics of the AKP: Restoration of a Religio-Conservative Gender Climate," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 19, no. 6 (2017): 2, https://doi.org/: 10.1080/19448953.2017.1328887.

following neoconservative ideals rather than just protecting the family, as publicly maintained. The significance placed on the family dates to the early Republican Era, when it became one of the most prominent areas of struggle between secularists and Islamists, liberals, and conservatives. Even though family protection has long been a component of mainstream political debate, particularly in right-wing conservative groups, it has become more of a focus of public policy than ever before during the JDP administration.

Speaking at the 8th Meeting of Family Council, President Erdoğan summarized the government policy on family:

> Family is the foundation of society, and societies without a solid foundation cannot survive. In this respect, the family is the steel core, essence, nucleus, and source of strength of society. The family is also the medium of our national culture and values passed down from generation to generation. Language is learned in the family, morality is embraced, and faith is established. National consciousness is acquired in the family, and mercy, compassion, respect, and love are acquired in the family. Character is shaped, and identity is built into the family. The individual becomes a responsible member of society under the family's roof. The family is the shield that protects children from the ills of the age.[7]

The referred ills of age are explained:

> It is indisputable that the modern individual is lonelier, more vulnerable to life's difficulties, and much weaker. Developing communication and transportation facilities has unfortunately not been able to remedy the loneliness of the modern individual. People have become more withdrawn and disconnected from society, especially screen and social media addiction. We see the adverse effects of this in an extensive range of areas. The age of

7 Ayşe Şensoy Boztepe, "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan, 8. Aile Şurası'nda Konuştu," *Anadolu Ajansı*, October 26, 2023.

> marriage is constantly rising, even in our society. Divorce rates increase every year. The average number of children is decreasing day by day. We don't say to have at least three children for nothing. Because this society especially needs it. Our population of 85 million in Turkey needs to be more. We need a larger population.[8]

Pointing out that the world, especially European countries, is getting older, President Erdoğan said that in societies that do not have a haven like the family, other problems such as suicide rates, addiction, and drug rates increase. He adds that:

> The family institution itself is the target of perverted movements supported by some international companies, organizations, and institutions. We must protect the family, and therefore the human being, in the face of attacks that target not only the relations between men and women but also our children. I want to declare once again that Turkey and the Turkish nation will never succumb to the imposition of global desexualization. We will not leave our children in the hands of these perverts. We will not allow our family structure to be dynamited.[9]

Strengthening family values and promoting conservative views on gender and reproduction are critical components of the JDP government's more extensive demographic, social service, and welfare programs based on neoconservative, neoliberal, and neo-patriarchal rationalities. Furthermore, the foundation of the JDP's long-term plan to reconstruct a "New Turkey" is its adherence to family values. The government aims to heal the nation's social cohesion and strength through this policy.[10] The third intervention, carried out today, not only encourages population growth but also aims to reconstruct the family on

8 Şensoy Boztepe.

9 Şensoy Boztepe.

10 Hikmet Kocamaner, "The Politics of Family Values in Erdogan's New Turkey," 2018, 37.

religious-conservative principles in many moral, economic and social aspects.

1.2 Women's Role to Realize the Ideal

In the framework of neoliberal policies, political governments tend to reduce state welfare services. In this case, families are expected to care for the non-productive population more, shifting responsibility from the state to the private sphere. This approach is rooted in conservative values that prioritize traditional family structures and gender roles.[11] Although not expressed directly, family politics is generally about the repositioning of women. Family politics often disproportionately impact women because of deeply entrenched social, cultural, and economic structures that assign specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations based on gender.

Women are placed specific roles in this process. The woman is mostly defined as a wife and mother, positioned inside the house, and most of the household chores are assigned to her. This dynamic is shaped by historical patterns, patriarchal systems, and societal norms that continue to prioritize traditional gender roles. To this extent, one dimension of the struggle between power, women, and the family is the sharing of care services. By assigning women to take care of the old, disabled, sick, and children, the state can reorganize the budget meant for these sectors under the cover of family solidarity. Therefore, the way women are positioned inside the house becomes not simply a cultural and ideological concern but also a strategy directly related to economic functioning.

These policies contribute to the marginalization of women in the labor market and public life by reinforcing their dependence on the family and limiting their opportunities for economic independence.

11 Berna Yazıcı, "The Return to the Family: Welfare, State, and Politics of the Family in Turkey," *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (2012): 104, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41427090.

Therefore, the ideological promotion of the phrase “strong family, strong society” should be critically examined, not only for hiding instances of subordination in the workplace but also because this phrase serves as justification for the government's attempts further to shift social care from the state to family sources and, implicitly, to women serving as the primary caregivers.[12]

Another “benefit” for the government of women being at home is to relieve the labor market. With the withdrawal of women from the still overcrowded working-age population, the problem of male unemployment is relatively reduced. Another dimension of the struggle between power, women, and family emerges with the state’s direct attempts to intervene in fertility levels. When increasing fertility is adopted as a state policy, the problem is again knotted in power-women-family relations. This means that policies are being made affecting women’s labor and their bodies and identities.[13]

Legal rules alone help to assist this change process; also, the media, civil society organizations, and particularly the Religious Affairs Directorate, are mobilized to support it. Additionally positioned as a political and financial building element is the family, which is sanctified with the words "Strong Family, Strong Society".[14] However, the reproduction of the conservative family model is realized not only through the imposition of state policies but also through the participation of social actors. Women become subjects who carry and transmit conservative values while adapting to changing social and economic conditions, adopting some policies and excluding others.

It is necessary to understand how the policies determined at the macro level regarding the family resonate in the lives of women at the micro level. This thesis examines the practices of conservative women within the family and investigates how these policies are accepted,

12 Yazıcı, 115.

13 Özbay, “Demografik Dönüşüm Sürecinde İktidar, Kadın ve Aile,” 107.

14 Hikmet Kocamaner, “Strengthening the Family through Television: Islamic Broadcasting, Secularism, and the Politics of Responsibility in Turkey,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 90, no. 3 (2017): 675–714.

rejected or transformed. This thesis proposes a new conceptualization by considering the family within a three-layered structure, namely realm of necessities, realm of flexibilities and realm of futures. This conceptualization can shed light not only on today's Turkey but also on understanding family structures in different periods and ideologies.

1.3 Family in Flux: Adapting to Modern Challenges

The world at the start of the twenty-first century is significantly different from what it was at the beginning, or even in the middle, of the twentieth century. Societies, families, and individuals tackle the issue of change "caught between yesterday's norms, today's new realities and an uncertain future."[15] Families encounter challenges trying to adjust to the new world.

> No changes today are more critical than those happening in our personal lives—in sexuality, emotional life, marriage, and the family. A global revolution is happening in how we think of ourselves and form ties and connections with others. It is a revolution advancing unevenly in different regions and cultures, with many resistances.[16]

Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist renowned for his comprehensive theory of modernity, describes the transformation of families as "the most difficult and disturbing transformation of all" due to the unforeseen ratio of anxieties and disadvantages. In that sense, the debate on families are universal in many ways. Although there has been a dramatic change in families in the last several decades, there is no consensus on what the changes refer to. Furthermore, not only different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, archaeology, economics, genetics, and

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15 S. Arlene Skolnick and H. Jerome Skolnick, "Introduction," in *The Family in Transition*, ed. S. Arlene Skolnick and H. Jerome Skolnick, Fifteenth (Pearson, 2009), 9.

16 Anthony Giddens, "The Global Revolution in Family and Personal Life," in *The Family in Transition*, ed. S. Arlene Skolnick and H. Jerome Skolnick, Fiftheenth (Boston: Pearson, 2009), 25, www.pearsonhighered.com.

so on touch on familial issues, but religious and ethical authorities also lay a claim that turns family studies into an interdisciplinary, disputed, and contested area.

Although there is general agreement that families have changed significantly over the past few decades, opinions on the implications of these changes are divided. The modernization paradigm that dominated social sciences until the 1970s is an important starting point for figuring out the debates on family and change. Influenced by Western civilization, these changes are spreading across the globe. This spread has endowed cultural shifts with a distinctively global character. Using functionalist and evolutionist approaches to theorize and understand the transition from traditional to modern society, modernizers viewed social change as unidirectional. This one-sided approach brought with it a value judgment regarding this transformation process. This path, which would lead to progress and civilization, was defined as good and right.

While the modern period was shaped by factors such as industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of the modern state, it also envisaged some basic features regarding the family structure. The paradigm of modernity is associated with social change, development, and progress. In this context, the ideal family structure proposed by the modernity paradigm generally points to a structure that emphasizes the importance of individuality, equality, democratic relations, and emotional bonds.

In the modern period, the family's role shifted from being a producer to a consumer unit. On the other hand, families play a crucial role in market economies by shaping future workers, influencing consumer behavior, and contributing to social stability. Recognizing and supporting the value of families can lead to a stronger, more sustainable economy. Families are the primary social unit that raises and educates children. They provide children with instruction, care, and encouragement—all of which support the development of their social and cognitive skills. These abilities result in a workforce that is ready and able to make valuable contributions to the market economy. In a market economy, families are also important consumers. They decide what

products and services to buy, which stimulates the economy. Market demand is influenced by spending patterns, family size, and income level.

Nevertheless, considering the special circumstances of this period, Giddens lists the six trends of change in the world that can be considered generally valid. Clans and other kin groups are declining in their influence; there is a general trend towards the free selection of a spouse; the rights of women are becoming more widely recognized, with respect to both the initiation of marriage and decision-making within the family; arranged marriages are becoming less common; higher levels of sexual freedom, for men and women, are developing in very restrictive societies; there is a general trend towards the extension of children's rights; there is an increased acceptance of same-sex partnerships.[17]

The change in family structure shows how social change affects the family and provides information about the quality and quantity of social change. Knowing family relations is particularly important in getting to see a society closely. Like all living systems, the social interaction network that makes up the family has a structure prone to disruption because it is open to all kinds of interactions. Like all balances in sociological reality, familial systems have a dynamic balance, not a static one. However, the disturbed balances will be re-established since living systems are self-renewing. Each new state of equilibrium may be a repetition of the old one or a new equilibrium that is different from the old one in one way or another.

1.3.1 Family in Conservative Thought

Conservatism emerged as a response to the rapid transformation of modernization. It is an ideology and a worldview that cautions against changes in social, political, and economic orders and prioritizes the preservation of traditional values and institutions such as family, religion, nationalism, and social hierarchy. The basis of conservatism is that social changes should occur slowly and organically, considering existing institutions and values. In that sense, conservatism protects

17 Anthony Giddens, *Sociology*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, Malden: Polity Press, 2006).

society as opposed to the individual, religion as opposed to ration, morality as opposed to liberation, and tradition as opposed to modernity.[18]

Beginning with the Enlightenment, the family issue came to the fore as a hot topic to discuss among intellectuals. Contemporary thinkers J.J. Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Edmund Burke developed theoretical conceptions of the family that essentially responded to the practice of family life during their time. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, an influx of treatises on child rearing, early childhood education, the interaction between men and women, and the role of women and girls in the home emerged. Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rousseau had read several of these books and were familiar with the framework they established for the Enlightenment's intellectual debate over whether and how the family might be altered. Some of these works took a more apprehensive view of the development of the family and early education and attempted to defend their patriarchal and hierarchical structure. Other writings directly or implicitly questioned the worth of the family's hierarchical and patriarchal structure, offering a more optimistic vision of the potential of transforming the family and early education into a more egalitarian model.[19]

Edmund Burke, a prominent 18th-century philosopher and political theorist, considered the father of modern conservatism, held traditional views on the family that are integral to understanding his broader social and political philosophy. Burke saw the family not merely as a biological unit but as a fundamental societal institution that mirrored and reinforced a well-ordered society's hierarchical and structured nature. One of the critical aspects of his ideas on the family is considering the

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18 M. Zeki Duman, "Aile Kurumu Üzerine Tarihsel Bir Okuma Girişimi ve Muhafazakâr İdeolojinin Aileye Bakışı," *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 4 (2012): 19–51, http://www.itobiad.com/tr/issue/8758/109270.

19 Eileen Hunt Botting, *Family Feuds Wollstonecraft, Rousseau and Burke on the Transformation of the Family* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1971), 4–5.

family as the microcosm of society. Burke viewed the family as a miniature model of society at large.

Edmund Burke's “little platoon” concept is a significant philosophical notion that encapsulates his views on social organization and the importance of small communities within larger societies. This idea is famously mentioned in his work "Reflections on the Revolution in France" (1790), which criticizes the radical changes and upheavals brought about by the French Revolution. In this work, Burke argues that society is best understood and preserved through its smaller units, like the family and local communities. He says:

> To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ, as it were) of public affection. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love for our country and mankind."[20]

Burke believes that these small, immediate social structures are crucial because they are the primary means through which individuals learn virtues and develop a sense of belonging and loyalty. According to him, our affection and moral engagement start at this intimate level and extend outward to larger collectives, such as the nation and humanity. Therefore, love towards family is the first link in a sequence that will lead us to love our country and society. The "little platoon" concept emphasizes the importance of these social units in nurturing personal identity, instilling moral values, and maintaining societal stability. Burke's idea suggests that undermining these foundational units, such as what he saw happening during the French Revolution, risks the disintegration of society itself. This perspective has been influential in conservative thought, highlighting the value of tradition, continuity, and the gradual development of institutions.

Burke's concept of the family is a basic structure of society that teaches morality, loyalty, and social obligations rather than just a

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20 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 51.

biological unit. According to him, the stability and continuation of society were highly reliant on the stability and order within the family unit. Burke also considered the family essential for transmitting moral values, traditions, and cultural heritage. He believed that the perseverance of any society depended on the continuity of these values across generations, facilitated primarily through familial instruction and upbringing. He emphasized the importance of traditional social institutions and customs, including the family, by approaching the family as a critical institution that helps inculcate moral values and social stability.

Central to Burke's conception of the family was a clear hierarchical structure, with the male as the head of the family. The father's authority and organized responsibilities within the family are critical to maintaining societal cohesiveness and moral order. This structure reflected societal organization and was necessary for maintaining order and discipline within the home. He believed that the relationships within a family—especially the deference and obedience shown to the family head—mirrored the respect and loyalty that citizens should show to state authority and feared the collapse of the family's patriarchal framework. He argues that the loss of the family's patriarchal structure will jeopardize its fundamental role as a source of morality and manners.[21] Burke's speeches and writings on English, French, Indian, and Irish politics revealed his deep fear that once the family lost its hierarchical structure, it would no longer reflect and reaffirm the natural order of the universe.

For conservative thought, the hierarchical family is the foundation of society and the state because its patriarchal and class hierarchies convey and direct natural feelings for kindred into the formation of stabilizing social relationships such as sympathy, civility, and patriotism.[22] Boulton discusses how Burke's thoughts about the family are intertwined with his more significant political and social theories,

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21 Botting, *Family Feuds Wollstonecraft, Rousseau and Burke on the Transformation of the Family*, 7.

22 Botting, 7–8.

particularly his support for existing institutions and skepticism of rapid societal change. Burke saw the family as a safeguard against the volatility of individual passions and the possible instability of democratic or revolutionary upheavals.

The family, religious entity, and local community—these, the conservatives contended, cannot be viewed as the exterior outputs of man's thought and behavior; they are fundamentally anterior to the individual and are the crucial supports of belief and conduct. Robert A. Nisbet claims that when man is removed from the settings of community, he is left with insufferable aloneness and submission to demonic fears and passions rather than freedom or rights. He adds, 'Mutilate the roots of society and tradition, and the result must inevitably be the isolation of a generation from its heritage, the isolation of individuals from their fellow men, and the creation of the sprawling, faceless masses.'[23]

Russell Kirk, a pillar of American conservatism, identifies six characteristics of conservatism. The first is believing in a transcendent order or set of natural laws governing society and conscience. The universe contains objective truth, which one can know. Furthermore, the great goal of politics is to understand and administer true justice to a "community of souls." In this sense, moral relativism is not an option for conservatives.

The second one is the belief that a civilized society requires the rule of law and a middle class instead of a "classless society." Conservatives think that men have natural differences that contribute to unequal conditions. Thirdly, in contrast to "radical" systems that prioritize uniformity and egalitarianism, there is a fascination with the complexities of human experience, which is the third characteristic. Fourthly, freedom and property are inextricably intertwined; without private property, the state is unstoppable. Redistribution of wealth does not represent economic development. Men require property to protect their rights, fulfill their obligations, and restrain government. The fifth characteristic is belief in prescriptions and suspicion of calculating men

23 Robert A. Nisbet, *Community&Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 25.

who would rebuild society based on their own abstract plans. Conservatives think traditional norms and conventions have been passed down through centuries and are still relevant. Customs act as a check against chaos and the desire for power. Lastly, recognizing that change may not be a positive thing. Hasty innovation may both damage and improve. Therefore, conservatives' approach changes with caution rather than passion.[24]

From a broader perspective, it could be claimed that the conservatives contributed three fundamental notions to modern thought: atomized masses, personal alienation, and the image of omnipotent political power resulting from the disintegration of social structures.

Considering that the conservative family refers to the family structure that tends to preserve traditional values and norms, it is generally more resistant to social change. It adopts classical structures in terms of family roles and relationships. Such families often have traditional views on marriage, child-rearing, gender roles, and family relationships. Ties between family members, mutual responsibilities, and strict adherence to conventional values are essential features.

Conservative thought sees the family as society's basic unit. According to conservatives, families should be protected, supported, and strengthened. The family is considered the most basic unit of society and the most important institution in transmitting traditional values and cultural norms from generation to generation. The family's correct fulfillment of this duty is the priority of the conservative view. Solid family structures contribute to society's stability and well-being. They emphasize raising children with the right values. In this respect, in conservative thought, the family is responsible for teaching children moral, religious, and cultural values and guiding their character development. With the solid family ties built in this institution, where

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24 Russell Kirk, *A Condensation of Russell Kirk's The Conservative Mind* (Birmingham, Alabama: Alabama Policy Institute, 2012), 1–2, https://kirkcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/API-Research-Kirk-The-Conservative-Mind.pdf.

family members support each other, society's general well-being and harmony are established.

The problem of modern societies is the vanishing of the functioning of the family institution. Nisbet claims that:

> Historically, our problem must be seen in terms of the decline in the functional and psychological significance of such groups as the family, the small local community, and various others. Other traditional relationships have immemorially mediated between the individual and his society. These are the groups that have been morally decisive in the concrete lives of individuals. Other and more powerful forms of association exist, but the major moral and psychological influences on the individual's life emanate from the family, the local community, and the church. Within such groups have been engendered the primary types of identification: affection, friendship, prestige, and recognition. Within them have also been engendered or intensified the principal incentives of work, love, prayer, and devotion to freedom and order.[25]

Despite the conservative critique of modern family theories, which emphasize preserving tradition, the evolution of family structures cannot be overlooked. A distinction is observed within the Western-centric narrative of modernization: urban spaces tend to nurture nuclear families, while rural areas remain bastions of extended family network. There is a presumption that there will naturally be a shift from the extended family to the nuclear family when rural to urban areas change and the industrial society supplants the agricultural civilization. As a result, whereas the conservative perspective supports protecting the extended family, the progressive paradigm upholds the nuclear family as the ideal.

In his groundbreaking book The Third Wave, Alvin Toffler introduced the Third Wave Theory, which suggests that cultures move cyclically through three different historical periods. The first wave is agricultural

[25] Nisbet, *Community&Power*, 50.

era, whereas industrialization and urbanization shape the second one. Information societies, or the Third Wave, are defined by information technology, knowledge as the primary resource, and a move away from mass production toward flexible, specialized manufacturing. Toffler thought we were approaching these societies in the middle of the 20th century.[26] According to Toffler, families will be significantly impacted by the Third Wave. The Third Wave may see a decline in the traditional nuclear family structure. Single-parent homes, mixed families, and cohabitation arrangements may become more prevalent as family structures become more diverse. Gender norms in households will probably become less rigid. Shared domestic tasks and more flexible family arrangements may be necessary if both parents work additional hours. Communication and child-rearing will be more heavily influenced by technology, which could lead to altered family dynamics.[27]

The idea of the extinction of families was appalling, especially for conservative groups in that time, which impelled the book to severe criticism and discussions. Conservatives view the deterioration of traditional moral and cultural norms as a threat that could eventually cause the principles that underpin families to disappear. This is linked to the normalization of non-traditional lifestyles, expanded sexual liberties, and shifts in popular culture and the media. Conservatives, on the other hand, think that a high divorce rate harms children and undermines family unity. The traditional views that family unity should be maintained is challenged by the increasing acceptance of divorce. Changes like men taking on more home duties and women joining the workforce at a higher rate can be blamed for this. Some conservatives might argue that issues like same-sex marriage legalization and the expansion of LGBT+ rights pose a danger to the traditional family unit. Conservatives may see increased government involvement in family choices and parenting styles as a threat to parental rights and family autonomy. Conservative thought support implementing a range of social

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26 Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York, Toronto, London, Sydney, Auckland: Bantom Books, 1984).

27 Toffler, 208–23.

and political initiatives that strengthen and preserve family values from these dangers. The promotion of moral principles via educational institutions, family-supporting initiatives, and laws to fortify marriage and family life are a few examples of these strategies.

The modern secularization of religious practices and the recession of religious affiliations caused cultural and moral weakening that paved the way for the breakdown of traditional families, increasing divorce rates, illegitimacy, and the spread of adultery. Correspondingly, society must face future generations being raised with father absence, school failure, poverty, crime, drug use, unemployment, and antisocial behavior. According to the conservative perspective, the adults' short-term personal desires, selfishness, and policy support deepen social illnesses. The only remedies for ongoing problems for conservatives are restoring family commitments with religious faith and re-institutionalizing marriage institutions by revitalizing values.[28]

1.3.2 Conservative Thought in Turkey

Although conservatism is a political ideology that marked the political thought history of the last two centuries, together with socialism and liberalism in the West, in Turkey, this ideology is treated with typical despise or not appreciated by enlightened intellectuals. There are certain reasons for this attitude, which presents a tangled set of methodological problems that are hard to solve in terms of Turkish conservatism. One theoretical reason is the domination of modernization theory in Turkish sociology since the early years of the Republic. According to modernists, conservatism is equated with reactionism, and institutions are accepted as the reasons for underdevelopment that should be eliminated.[29] As modernization turned into a severe 'culture fight,' conservatism was

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28 Janet Z. Giele, "Decline of the Family: Conservative, Liberal, and Feminist Views," in *Family in Transition*, ed. S. Arlene Skolnick and H. Jerome Skolnick, Fifteenth (Boston: Pearson, 2009), 76–97.

29 Bekir Berat Özipek, *Muhafazakârlık Akıl, Toplum, Siyaset*, Fourth Edi (İstanbul: Timaş, 2011).

loaded with pejorative meanings, which eventually caused long-lasting blindness to tradition in the social sciences.[30]

The main question to be asked is, are modernization and tradition categorical oppositions? According to Fırat Mollaer, there is not a single form of tradition, and not all the forms could be reduced to reactionist traditionalism. Modernization is not unidimensional, either.[31] Although the main tendency of conservatism is not through modernity, it should still be understood as a modern ideology, considering that modernity does not exclude conservatism politically. The semantic world of conservatism is a gift of modernity, and the distinctive boundaries that form its characteristics are not attainments of conservatism, but they are protected by and nourished by the history of modernity.[32] Hence, as modernity is not a process for once but a continuum, depending on the course of modernity, conservatism is also changing and renewing.[33]

Mollaer claims that the emergence of Turkish conservatism is parallel to the emergence of modern Turkey. Islamism, Turkism, and Westernism all emerged as results of the same processes, and despite their coming from different directions, their commonality stems from following the same route. From this perspective, conservative opposition to modernity is not compelling, and it even helps to unclog the bottlenecks of modernity. So, conservatism is a facet of the historical development of modernity, and its opposition is not against modernization itself but to its radical, fundamentalist branch that approaches society as a tabula rasa.[34] Although it is criticized for being against change, it should be stated that conservatism determines a positioning depending on the route and characteristics each time. The point is not the change itself but

30 Fırat Mollaer, *Muhafazakârlığın İki Yüzü* (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2009).

31 Mollaer.

32 Ahmet Çiğdem, *Taşra Epiği "'Türk'" İdeolojileri ve İslâmcılık* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 2001).

33 Tanıl Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hali Milliyetçilik, Muhafazakârlık, İslâmcılık* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1998).

34 Mollaer, *Muhafazakârlığın İki Yüzü*.

the source of the change; however, the rapid and abrupt change is convicted by the conservatives in any case.[35]

Analyzing rightist movements in Turkey, Tanıl Bora alleges that nationalism, Islamism, and conservatism are nested in each other as three forms of Turkish right where the boundaries are blurred hence, they could transform into each other easily. Nationalism is the solid form, the grammar of the Turkish right having the power of adapting contents, concepts, and images. Islamism is the liquid form, the vocabulary with the ability to fit each container and find ways. Conservatism is the gas form of Turkish right, a state of mind, a certain style of attitude and perception.[36] For this reason, conservatism in Turkey is sometimes interpreted as synonymous with religiosity or even Islam, but this is not the case. Not every religious person is conservative and not every conservative is religious. In the case of Turkey, it can be seen that secular groups also have very strictly conservative ways of thinking and practicing. Yasin Aktay employs this approach by defining conservatism as a universal state of mind that could articulate different political or cultural ideologies smoothly and be observed in all layers of society. Thus, he adds, this ideological tone is hard to appropriate to any political ideology, and it is like a virus that acquires all the political flows in particular periods, which is contingent upon finding convenient conditions.[37]

Defining conservatism as a state of mind or as an ambiguity[38] is criticized by Mollaer, who claims that this approach itself is another methodological problem, a mumpsimus, that prevents analysis of conservatism as a political-philosophical language and reproduces the modernist theses that hinder criticizing conservatism properly. This mumpsimus, by situating conservatism in an undefinable sphere, unites with the provincial and reactionary portraits of conservatism and

35 Özipek, *Muhafazakârlık Akıl, Toplum, Siyaset*.

36 Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hali Milliyetçilik, Muhafazakârlık, İslâmcılık*.

37 Yasin Aktay, "İslamcılıkta Muhafazakar Bakiye," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, ed. Ahmet Çiğdem (İstanbul: İletişim, 2017), 346–61.

38 Çiğdem, *Taşra Epiği "'Türk'" İdeolojileri ve İslâmcılık*.

empowers modernist prejudices. In fact, this situation is no more than a reflection of political power and its pragmatism in actual politics compared to the concept of Turkish conservatism. The tendencies of the political power from liberalism to nationalism and authoritarianism, and then from Islamism to conservatism, and then again from conservatism to Islamism should be interpreted as Turkish conservatism's lack of entrenched values, indefinableness, and lack of conceptualized-systematic thinking.[39]

Another methodological obstacle to the conceptualization of Turkish conservatism is its equation with Islamism. Although there is a consanguineal affinity between Islamism and conservatism, the superficial interchange of the two concepts is problematic and contributes to ambiguity. Islamism is a constant source of tension, not in terms of protecting the stability of society, but as an opposition to the prevailing power relations that govern Turkey. Conservatism, on the other hand, largely rejects and despises the political, despite the political tone of Islamism. According to Ahmet Çiğdem, the complementarity and consubstantiality of conservatism with right-wing ideologies shows its reactive character. The self-expression of this reactive character is crystallized in tradition and denies any transformation that targets the realm of tradition. The indifference of conservatism to political action and the knowledge of political action led to the institutionalization of conservatism not as anti-politics but as anti-politics. Conservatism, politically, comes to the fore with realism, moderation, and permanence; this is why it remains distant from Islamism, which presupposes a utopian and radical transformation.

For a metaphoric opening, Aktay offers the concept of 'conservative balance' to explain the relationship between Islamism and conservatism. He invites us to consider the conservatives remaining in Islamism as receivables of conservatism from Islamism or the debt of Islamism to acquit conservatism. Due to this remaining receivable, he says, Islamism

39 Fırat Mollaer, *Türk Muhafazakârlığında Bir Cevelan* (İStanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2017).

could easily turn into conservative discourse historically.[40] Religion is another important factor that shapes the relationship between Islamism and conservatism. The affinity between them is accepted as ordinary because conservatism instrumentalizes religion, as it does tradition. Due to its consecrating function that enables consistency and fixation of certain political and social relations, religion has always been subjected to instrumental political appetite. Furthermore, although religious references are an aspect of consubstantiality, the utilization of religion by these ideologies differs. While the Islamists back up universalism, the conservatives insist on accommodating Islam to a more traditional and nationalist sphere.[41] The discourse on civilization is also dissociated; conservatism emphasizes "The Turkish-Islam civilization," whereas the Islamists underline "The Islam Civilization." Therefore, the place of religion in conservatism is typical and critical. Conservatism, through a modern intervention, reinterprets religion, its irreplaceable treasure, with mundane reasons and wishes to reshape it. Regards it inevitable not for the sake of itself but for the sake of society's stability and authority.[42]

This tendency of instrumentalization of religion creates an affinity between conservatism and Kemalism. Although Kemalism stays close to the positivism that considers metaphysics as futility, it adopts the idea of instrumentalization of religion to support the nation-building process. Nationalized religion is indispensable in terms of order, albeit it is against progress. However, this togetherness that lasted during the Independence War began to break during revolutions, and the concept of nation was purified from religious connotations.[43] In this era, says Tanıl Bora, the reformist modernist discourse settled Islamism as its opposite pole that represents the old regime and bigotry.[44] The total

40 Aktay, "İslamcılıkta Muhafazakar Bakiye."

41 Mollaer, *Muhafazakârlığın İki Yüzü*.

42 Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hali Milliyetçilik, Muhafazakârlık, İslâmcılık*.

43 Mollaer, *Muhafazakârlığın İki Yüzü*.

44 Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hali Milliyetçilik, Muhafazakârlık, İslâmcılık*.

abolishment of the legal grounds of Islamism in the early Republican era, conservative ideology was the most legitimate and eligible channel.[45]

As a result, the end of Islamism signifies the vanishing or death of Islamism[46] and the rise of conservatism. From this standpoint, Mehmet Doğan calls this process normalization and defines Islamism as a mere denomination of an era.[47] The self-positioning of the JDP, one of the two successor parties of national outlook view, as conservative instead of Islamist, reproduced the relationship between Islamism and conservatism. This Islamist movement searched for a legitimate discourse, and conservatism served it properly due to its positioning in Republican history.[48]

1.3.3 The Rise of Political Islam

The rise of political Islam in Turkey is generally explained by three main theories. The first, modernization, argues that the spread of capitalism should erode traditional structures and reduce the influence of religion in society. One of the proponents of this theory, Ahmet Naci Yücekök, argues that Islam, as a conservative force, has maintained the status quo of society. He believes that strict secularism is necessary not only to deal with religious issues, but also to achieve a modern industrial society. Many admire the early Republican era for its revolutionary spirit. This period saw a reduction in religion's negative impact on political and cultural modernization.[49] This group of theorists admires the early Republican period for its revolutionary spirit. During this period, the negative influence of religion on political and cultural modernization

45 Aktay, "İslamcılıkta Muhafazakar Bakiye."

46 Mümtaz'er Türköne, "The Birth and Death of Islamism," Insight Turkey, accessed January 5, 2020,https://www.insightturkey.com/mumtaz-er-turkone/the-birth-and-death-of-islamism.

47 D. Mehmet Doğan, "İslâmcılık: Bir Adlandırma Meselesi," in *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi*, ed. İsmail Kara and Asım Öz (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi, 2013), 120–29.

48 Aktay, "İslamcılıkta Muhafazakar Bakiye."

49 Niyazi Berkes, *Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma*, 23rd ed. (istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2016).

diminished. Kemalist intellectuals mapped the evolution of the family and religiosity using the framework of Western sociology. They argued that urbanization and social change would reduce the fulfillment of religious obligations and replace them with secular values. They also predict that extended families will shrink into nuclear families in the process of modernization and eventually disappear as their functions cease to exist. But while this fits Anglo-American history, it does not fit the Turkish experience.[50]

Contrary to modernization theory's expectations, political Islam began to surge in the 1960s. The Constitutional Court closed almost every political party with Islamist leanings, citing violations of secularism. Nevertheless, Islamists learned from these setbacks. They devised new forms of political activism that led to their expansion. Moving from the periphery to city centers, they found opportunities for secular education and social advancement. This shift allowed them to engage with modernity more constructively.

In the 1980s, Islamists started to engage in identity politics, asserting their place in public life.[51] This decade also marked a significant turn towards economic liberalization, aligning with global neoliberal policies. This shift, coupled with state support, fostered a new class of Islamist bourgeoisie. It also led to the rise of new Islamist intellectuals, who supported this bourgeoning class and influenced new lifestyle choices.

In order to explain this social transformation that also has repercussions on the political area, the center-periphery theory is utilized by Şerif Mardin and Nilüfer Göle. For this approach, society has experienced cultural segregation instead of class-based cleavage during the history of modernization.[52] Hence, the Islamists, who represent the

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50 İslam Can, "Ailenin Tarihsel Gelişimi: Dünü, Bugünü ve Yarını", Sistematik Aile Sosyolojisi, ed. by Mustafa Aydın, (Ankara: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2019)

51 Cagla Diner and Şule Toktaş, "Waves of Feminism in Turkey: Kemalist, Islamist and Kurdish Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 2010, https://doi.org/10.1080/19448950903507388.

52 Şamil Sarıkaya, "Türkiye'de Siyasal İslam'ın Yükselişine Farklı Yaklaşımların Tarihsel ve Kültürel Bir Perspektifle Değerlendirilmesi" (Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, 2015).

periphery, strove in the cultural domain against the secular state that imposes a top-down modernization movement and the elites created by this regime.

Conservatism and Islamism were byproducts of Turkish modernization, which never violated the unspoken boundaries of the Republic and did not commemorate the Ottoman past or directly oppose the regime. Conservatism, in the earlier Republican era, created its own values to be preserved. Diverging from the earlier era, the Islamist intelligentsia of the 1980s began to criticize secular values and the reformist project of Turkish modernization. The loss of Islamic essence and departure from the true path of Islam were highly debated issues among the Islamist groups that blame Westernization and secularization for this corruption. Media, publishing, and literature peaked in this era as crucial tools for organizing mass movements, such as daily newspapers, weekly and monthly journals, private radio and TV channels, movies, and cartoon agencies.[53] Islamist intellectuals strongly opposed the hegemony of the West and modernity in daily lives, and they earnestly warned the Muslim people to be cautious about the tricks of modernity, capitalism, and moral decline.

However, the reconciliation of modernization and Islam heated the debates among the public and intelligentsia. Moreover, many of them were critical of the up-down imposition of secular reforms, expressed criticisms of the ongoing rule, and formed a demand for a fair and just order. All spheres of life were reconsidered within the Islamic perspective, and the non-Islamic way of living was harshly attempted to be eliminated from both the social and political spheres. This attitude brought about the demands of alternative lifestyles in terms of consumption, education, culture, and leisure.

The revival of Islamism lost its charm in social sciences, and the new Islamists began to gain a place in academia. *Living Islam* was one of the most prominent examples of the anthropological work on the

53 Doğan Duman, "Türkiye'de İslamcı Yayıncılık," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 2 (1995).

politicization of culture. By considering religion as a living social practice, Ayşe Saktanber aims to present how the boundaries of an Islamic way of life are defined and how Islamic solidarity is strengthened. And wants to understand what the Islamist thing in the Islamist movement is through conducting fieldwork in Ankara.[54]

With the establishment of JDP in 2002, the studies on conservatism and political Islam have shifted to a new research field that focuses on the political and social impacts of transition in Islamism. Tuğal analyzes this process by concepts of 'hegemony' and 'passive revolution.' Considering political Islam as a radical opposition to the capitalist system, he claims that moderate Islam, together with capitalism, has absorbed this challenge through the consent of the masses, in other words, hegemony.[55] By following Tuğal, Akçaoğlu examines the transformation of the conservative fractions of the middle classes following the transformation of Islamist conservatism in Turkey based on an ethnographic study conducted in Çukurambar, Ankara, between November 2012-June 2013.[56]

The emergence of the new bourgeois and the new lifestyles attracted the attention of recent studies. Dilek Yankaya analyzed the Islamic financial bourgeois with the case of MUSİAD (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association), an association that unites religious businessmen around an Islamist work ethic and offers a societal evolution different from the Western style. She claims that the occurrence of Islamic bourgeois in Turkey presents that modernity did not work despite religion, but in reverse, it involved the process of drawing the boundaries of religious identity, its interpretations, and experiences, and transformed the performance of religiosity itself.[57]

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54 Ayşe Saktanber, *Living Islam: Women, Religion and Politicization of Culture in Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).

55 Cihan Tuğal, *Pasif Devrim: İslami Muhalefetin Düzenle Bütünleşmesi* (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010).

56 Aksu Akçaoğlu, *Zarif ve Dinen Makbul Muhafazakâr Üst-Orta Sınıf Habitusu* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2019).

57 Dilek Yankaya, *Yeni İslami Burjuvazi: Türk Modeli* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014).

1.3.4 Islamist Women as New Actors

This era witnessed the emergence of Islamist women as novel societal actors. The Islamist mobilization of the masses recruited women to take an active part in political propaganda. Jenny White, a social anthropologist known for her significant contributions to the understanding of Turkish society and politics, explains this process with the concept of vernacular politics. White's research highlights the importance of looking beyond traditional political arenas to understand how politics is lived and experienced on a daily basis, including the critical role women play in these processes. Women engage in political discourse and action not only within the formal spheres of politics but also through everyday interactions, social networks, and cultural practices. This includes participation in local community organizations, activism, social media, and family discussions, where they contribute to shaping and contesting political ideologies, national identity, and social norms. With women's activism and passionate work during the 1994 elections, the Welfare Party saw the highest vote rate. [58]

The struggle against the ban on headscarves at universities and public institutions also fostered the political participation of women. In this era, women began to get organized around non-governmental organizations to defend their rights. This ban continued for almost two decades, and it was mostly men who came to the fore in debates on headscarves.[59] This situation brought about a questioning of the positioning of men and women in which women demanded just and equal treatment and were disregarded by men. From this point, the Islamist women began fighting on two sides: against secular prejudices and against patriarchal prejudices. Islamist women earnestly began discussing the status of women in society; by expanding the scope of womanhood, they redefined the roles of women that transcend

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58 Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2002).

59 Diner and Toktaş, "Waves of Feminism in Turkey: Kemalist, Islamist and Kurdish Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization."

motherhood and housekeeping. Islamist men, on the other hand, were reluctant to share their status with women and preferred to turn a deaf ear to women's questions by asserting that 'Islam treats women fairly and no further discussion on the woman question is necessary'[60]

The religious women in Turkey have been symbolizing particular meanings for different groups depending on changing contexts since the establishment of the Republic. These meanings have been attributed by second or third parties on behalf of the women themselves. However, different from earlier decades, in the postmodern era, women experienced a transformation together with the rest of society. This transformation engaged the women with the concepts of individuality, identity, objectification, secularism, and normalization. As a result of this process, approaching religious women as if a homogenous group is no longer possible. The diverseness of attitudes, worldviews, and lifestyles preclude the mentioning of Muslim women as a united category.

1.3.5 Family Studies in Turkey

There are many disciplines that deal with the family such as biology, law, economics, psychology, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology etc. Nevertheless, there is no separate family science nor is there a common and generally recognized definition of the family.[61] Therefore, family studies can be found in practically every department of social science in Turkey. Furthermore, because the family is an institution that affects the entire social organization and structuring, all inquiries are multidimensional and not restricted to a single discipline of science. Family is handled as a whole, with all of its legal, social, economic, and political aspects.

Zeynep Sadıkoğlu claims that family sociology studies in Turkey are shaped on two lines: The first line consists of literature and archive

60 Diner and Toktaş.

61 Mustafa Aydın, "Giriş," in *Sistematik Aile Sosyolojisi*, ed. Mustafa Aydın (Konya: Çizgi, 2014), 22.

studies dealing with the family through history, ethnography, and law, and the second line consists of empirical studies on the family. The first line includes studies that include the first comments of Ziya Gökalp and Prince Sabahaddin about the Turkish family, which are distinguished by the effort to define the stages that the family has gone through since the ancient Turkish communities and which family form was common in different historical stages.[62] These two names laid the foundations of sociological approaches that continue to this day. Gökalp tried to establish a collectivist sociology inspired by the solidaristic views of Emile Durkheim; Sabahattin, on the other hand, tried to establish an individualist sociology inspired by the Science Sociale school, the followers of Le Play, and pioneered the spread of the principles of the Science Sociale school in the Ottoman Empire under the name İlm-i İçtima. Prince stipulates that this social condition, which he sees as the source of all problems, must be absolutely transformed, and proposes two ways to transition to an individualist social model: the first of these is private enterprise in private life, i.e., in the family, and the other is decentralization in administration. According to the Prince, private enterprise means that everyone constituting a society, no matter which society he/she is in relies directly on himself/herself for survival instead of relying on his/her family, community, and government and seeks his/her success in his/her own enterprise. In fact, what both names did was not only sociology but also social and political philosophy. These two founding figures not only analyzed the changes in Ottoman society at the beginning of the twentieth century but also made suggestions for the planning of change in the modernization process and laid the theoretical foundations of ideas that could be called contradictory. While the Constitutional Monarchy Period II political elites were moving towards a polarization around these two names, they became acquainted with Durkheim's sociology and the sociology of the Le Play school. This polarization resulted in the triumph of Gökalp's sociology, whose ideas

62 Z. Zeynep Sadıkoğlu, "Paradigmatic Shifts in the Sociology of Family and Knowledge Production on Family in Türkiye," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyoloji Dergisi* 43, no. 1 (2023): 6.

were accepted by the Committee of Union and Progress and formed the source of the official ideology in the first years of the Republic.[63] Heavily influenced by Durkheim, Gökalp asserts that social solidarity is the cement of a peaceful and consensual society. The morality of the family, herewith society, is. based on national-patriotism and it is a part of Moral Turkism that supports human rights and feminism. According to Gökalp, feminism is originated with the Turks; democracy and feminism are accepted as the founding stones of the ancient Turkish life and modern Turkish nationalists must adopt those values to reconstruct the honor of womanhood and the family.[64]

Following the proclamation of the Republic in the post-1923 period, family and women's roles in society were an important aspect of the new state's modernization and Westernization aims. This process attempted to make fundamental changes to the family structure and the position of women in society. Fındıkoğlu's "Sociology of Family in Turks,"[65] H. Z. Ulken's "Family"[66], and Kemal Karpat's "The Statist and Individualist Views on the Family" are also among the first examples on this second axis. [67]

The overarching theme in family studies in the 1930s and 1960s was the attempt to create a unique description by taking into account the stages of family development since ancient Turkish societies and emphasizing which family types were prevalent and when. By the 1950s, family issues, as well as shifts, had caused internal migration from rural to urban areas as a result of factors such as agricultural mechanization

63 Cevat Özyurt, "Bireyci Toplum Savunusu Olarak Prens Sabahattin Sosyolojisi," *Muhafazakâr Düşünce* 8, no. 32 (2012): 176.

64 Zafer Toprak, "The Family, Feminism, and the State during the Young Turk Period, 1908-1918," in *Première Rencontre Internationale Sur l'Empire Ottoman et La Turquie Moderne* (Istanbul and Paris: Éditions ISIS, 1991), 445.

65 Ziyaeddin Fahri Fındıkoğlu, "Türklerde Aile Içtimaiyatı," *Yeni Türk Mecmuası* 42-43-44–4 (1936): 277–82, 339–43, 401–7, 534–39.

66 Hilmi Ziya Ülken, "Aile," in *Aile Yazıları I* (T.C. Başbakanlık Aile Araştırma Kurumu, 1943), 37–42.

67 Kemaş Karpat, "Ailede Devletçi ve Ferdiyetçi Görüş," *İstanbul Kültür Dergisi* 47 (1945): 14–17.

and the formation of a surplus labor force in rural areas; the spread of the market economy to rural areas via import substitution policies also led to the differentiation of studies in family sociology. With the emergence of mechanization in agriculture, the land in rural areas was not sufficient for families, and unemployment brought migration to cities. The fact that rural people migrating to cities do not have sufficient knowledge, skills, and educational equipment has created difficulties in adapting to the market economy and urban lifestyle. The improvement of economic and social conditions in various segments, the increase in social security opportunities, and the spread and accessibility of all kinds of communication networks have provided the individual with the opportunity to think independently and make decisions on his own, partially eliminating the adaptation difficulties.

After the 1950s, this transformation was inevitably reflected in academic studies. The aspects of family studies began to diverge due to the conditions that compelled the family to undergo major change. In particular, the primary goal of sociology as a field of science is to determine the current social condition, prompting sociologists to reflect this change in their study. The first researchers that place importance on families in Turkey from the structural-functionalist viewpoint are Mübeccel B. Kıray's "Ereğli: A Coastal Town Before Heavy Industry" [68], İbrahim Yasa's "Gecekondu Families in Ankara" [69], Serim Timur's "Family Structure in Türkiye"[70] and Emre Kongar's "Urban Family in İzmir"[71] which examined the urban family structure within the framework of its relations with extended relatives and bureaucratic organizations. These studies should be considered in studies on the consequences of social change resulting from industrialization and urbanization on Turkish families.

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68 Mübeccel B. Kıray, *Ereğli Ağır Sanayiden Önce Bir Sahil Kasabası*, (Ankara: Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 1964)

69 İbrahim Yasa, *Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı ve Temel Sorunları*, (Ankara: TODAİE Yayınları, 1970)

70 Serim Timur, *Türkiye'de Aile Yapısı*, (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1972)

71 Emre Kongar, *Izmir'de Kentsel Aile.* (Türk Sosyal Bilimler Derneği, 1972).

Since the family in Turkey is of great importance in terms of raising the generations that will ensure the continuation of the Republic of Turkey, education, youth and child psychology, and moral values have come to the fore in the work of educators and psychologists. Types of marriage, marriage ceremonies, the way marriage is interpreted within the law, and illegal unions have been examined by anthropologists, sociologists, and lawyers by entering into each other's fields. Situations still seen in our society, such as dowry, engagement, engagement, consanguineous marriage, early marriage, marriage with a religious ceremony, and polygamy, have formed the literature on the family. Childbearing, infant deaths, attitudes towards fertility, values and judgments about birth, and birth control problems that arise as a result of marriage are also discussed in terms of genetic, health, social, economic, demographic, and moral dimensions. Politicians, sociologists, and philosophers find it challenging to determine if the state regulates family or family planning and, if so, to what extent.[72]

In the 1970s, large-scale quantitative research methodologies were introduced to study family structures in Turkey. The state's studies on family help examine what the "family, which is the basis of Turkish society" is, how it is formed, its boundaries, the level of the individuals within the family individually, and the family's relationship network, without bringing any political concerns or prejudiced definitive criticisms. It will ensure that new formations are healthier and more realistic.

The research, as mentioned earlier, of Serim Timur on urban and rural family structures was carried out in tandem with affiliation with Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (HUIPS). Additionally, the Turkish Demographic and Health Survey has been conducted every five years since 1993 by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies on topics such as family structure, population, health, birth control, and child health in Turkey. These

72 Belma Tokuroğlu, "Türkiye'de Aile Araştırmaları," in *Türk Aile Ansiklopedisi 1* (T.C. Başbakanlık Aile Araştırma Kurumu, 1991), 38–39.

surveys, which allow researchers studying the family to make historical comparisons, were preceded by the Turkish Family Structure and Population Problems Survey, Population Structure and Population Problems Survey, and Turkish Fertility Survey. These studies approached the family from a macro viewpoint, followed by research that highlighted the necessity to consider the specificities of society and even distinct parts of society while evaluating the family structure. These prior studies questioned the appropriateness of Western theoretical frameworks for explaining the family in Turkey.[73]

The period after 1980 was a period in which significant developments took place in the field of social sciences, especially family sociology in Turkey. In this era, the emphasis on family and women's issues grew even more robust, becoming a prominent theme in family studies. Globalization, technological development, economic shifts, and societal shifts have provided fresh angles on family dynamics and structure. Researchers have started investigating further topics such as shifting gender roles, immigrant families, urbanization processes, and intergenerational relationships. Today, the concept of family as a governmental policy has a higher priority on Turkey's agenda than ever before.

1.4 Research Question

Changes in the paradigm of family sociology in the Western setting show that the requirements and issue domains that have accompanied the changes in Western society have led to diverse approaches to understanding and addressing the family. The shift in Turkey's historical adventure parallels the change in the sociological perspective on the family and the shift in interest in family-related topics. In the West, macro and micro perspectives have emerged sequentially, but in Turkey, micro-perspective studies were included in the macro-perspective

73 Sadıkoğlu, "Paradigmatic Shifts in the Sociology of Family and Knowledge Production on Family in Türkiye."

studies that dominated until the 1980s. This is evident when comparing the two environments. However, one significant flaw in Turkish family sociology is that the studies have primarily employed concepts that originated in the West without developing any original ideas or expanding existing concepts to comprehend the Turkish family better.[74] A research on women as members of the family prototype identified as the ideal at such an era contributed to this thesis. It is the outcome of an attempt to comprehend how the conservative family structure was maintained despite the state's evolving policies, how some policies were adopted while others were left out, at which points the changing conditions were adapted to, at which points they were resisted, and what means were used to do so. Based on the family experiences of upper-middle class women between 23 and 60 living in Istanbul, the thesis offers new ideas definition of family. Therefore, by addressing the experiences of three different generations of women, the thesis aims to comprehend how macro policies on the family are responded to, lived, generated, rejected, or modified in the micro level in the life of women. This research was undertaken as a result of such an effort. This study aims to consider Turkey in the 2000s, contributing to the discussions on family and women from a bottom-up perspective based on women's experiences.

The position of women in the public sphere has been brought to discussion and has become the subject of many studies. This study focuses on the effect of this transformation in the public sphere on the private sphere and how it transformed it. The public sphere, which became problematic with the publicization of the Islamic movement, became an area where the Islamic segment encountered modernism and Western values and defended their local values and lifestyles in these encounters. So, what happened in the private sphere? How did family life change and transform?

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74 Z. Zeynep Sadikoglu, "Paradigmatic Shifts in the Sociology of Family and Knowledge Production on Family in Türkiye," *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 1 (2023): 8.

Considering that, this research aims to probe into family conceptions of women, who were the target of the macro structures such as the government, the market, the religious authorities, and the media. Under the effect of all these structures and manifold discourses, the first question to be answered is how they choose to live their family life and on what basis. Another question seeks to understand, depending on this base, the flexible and versatile aspects of family life that rely on changing conditions and actors. The last question is, once the family values are constructed and somehow evolved, how are they transferred to the next generations? How this family ideal is inherited, protected, and transmitted? The scope of this thesis is not limited to presenting what happened, but more importantly, the question of how and under what condition, with which motive will be asked during the study.

1.5 The Dynamic Family: Interweaving Stability, Flexibility, and Future Aspirations

This thesis conceptualizes the family as a three-tiered structure, with each tier representing unique facets of its organization and functionality. The layers—realm of requirements, realm of flexibilities, and realm of futures—embody the fundamental principles, flexible components, and future-oriented aspirations of familial existence. Collectively, they offer an extensive framework for comprehending the dynamics of family functioning, evolution, and future projection.

The initial layer, the Realm of Necessities, comprises the unalterable principles and regulations that constitute the base of familial existence. This realm includes the fundamental structures, roles and values that guarantee the family's stability and continuation. The necessities are the essential elements of the family, including cultural values, traditional duties, and fundamental responsibilities that members are obliged to maintain. This layer establishes a secure foundation for the family, guaranteeing physical, emotional, and social security for all members.

The second layer, known as the Realm of Flexibilities, signifies the family's ability to adapt and respond to both internal and external

changes. This realm encompasses the negotiable elements of family life, when collaboration, compromise, and adaptability are paramount. Flexibility is shown in the capacity to redefine roles, alter duties, and modify relational dynamics as situations change. This layer aims to preserve harmony and functionality within the family by facilitating adaptability and growth. Flexibility also influences the family's ability to manage problems and disagreements effectively. The boundaries of this adaptability are challenged during crises, and undue pressure on this layer may result in cracks in relationships or the disintegration of familial cohesion.

The third layer emphasizes the family's future objectives and projections. This realm embodies the aspirations, desires, and creative constructs that shape the family's vision for the future. Futures are influenced by the collective and individual ambitions of family members, including dreams for future generations and the family's legacy. This layer functions as the directive for long-term planning and investment in the family's development and societal influence. Another function of this layer is establishing traditions or cultivating ideals that the family intends to transmit to subsequent generations. This layer functions on an aspirational level, frequently inspiring families to pursue development and fortitude in the face of adversity. It also illustrates the family's extensive position in society, highlighting its contributions to communal advancement and future growth. Through intergenerational transmission, this realm represents a space that is also a transmitter of worldviews and values.

These three layers are not linear and static stages to transition between; rather, they exhibit a dynamic interaction with one another, a dynamic system that evolves over time, shaped by the interconnections among the three layers of family structure. Rather than operating autonomously, these layers influence and shape each other to create an integrated framework for understanding how families adapt, persevere, and anticipate the future. Primarily, necessities serve as the foundation for flexibility and the aspirations of the future. It provides the stability and reliability necessary for the family to explore flexibility and envision

the future. Adaptability deteriorates into disorder without a stable foundation. The family's future objectives are rooted in its fundamental principles.

Secondly, flexibilities serve as a mediating variable between aspiration and stability. The realm of flexibilities serves as a connection between the anticipatory nature of ideals and the unchangeable elements of demands. It allows the family to navigate challenges and transitions while remaining faithful to its fundamental beliefs and objectives. Adaptability enables the family to respond to changes without compromising its stability. Flexibilities provides a framework in which future aspirations and stable demands can coexist. The efficacy of adaptability generally characterizes a family's resilience. If adaptability falters under pressure, the family's stability may deteriorate, rendering its objectives unachievable.

Lastly, ideals serve as a catalyst for both change and continuity. The realm of futures is fundamentally future-oriented, providing the family with a sense of purpose and direction. Although ideals are aspirational, they necessitate the realms of essentials and adaptability for their actualization. Aspirations often modify essential principles and behaviors.

The layers are interconnected through feedback loops, wherein alterations or stress in one layer influence the others. A rigid or outdated regulation of essentials may require increased adaptability in flexibilities, thereby undermining the family's ability to live together. It is posited that effective adaptability, ranging from flexibilities to futures, may bolster a family's confidence in achieving their objectives, hence strengthening the realm of futures. In light of aspirations and necessities, long-term goals may require the reassessment and alteration of essential rules and practices to ensure the family aligns with its future aims.

The interrelation of the three realms demonstrates the dynamic and evolving nature of family systems. The foundation is stability, resilience is guaranteed via adaptability, and growth is driven by aspiration. These layers collaborate to form a cohesive framework that allows families to achieve long-term goals while managing the complexities of daily life.

Understanding the interplay of these characteristics illustrates how families navigate change, surmount challenges, and strategize for the future.

1.5.1 Facilitating Individual Agency in Structural Contexts: Performativity

So far, the structural formation of the family is defined. Now comes another question to be answered which is, how are families made? This question pursues the possibility of seeking the agency of the individual. The family model envisaged by this thesis, while structurally consisting of these three layers in a cyclical manner, does not ignore the role of the individual. What provides this dynamism of the layered family structure is that it also takes into account the performativity of individuals. For this reason, while the family is evaluated as a cyclical structure consisting of temporal and developmental layers, it is also performative in that it takes into account the agency of individuals.

J.L. Austin's notion of the "performative" - the idea that certain utterances do not simply describe reality but actively constitute it - appropriated and transformed across various theoretical landscapes such as literary theory and deconstructive criticism. Judith Butler introduces the concept of performativity by asserting that “gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed”. This suggests that gender is not an inherent state but rather an action, specifically a series of actions, a verb instead of a noun, an expression of "doing" rather than "being."[75] Gender constitutes not merely a process, but a specific type of process, characterized as “a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame,” according to Butler. Performativity denotes the

75 Sara Salih, “On Judith Butler and Performativity,” in *Sexualities and Communication in Everyday Life: A Reader*, ed. Karen E. Lovaas and Mercilee M. Jenkins (Sage Publications, 2006), 55.

process by which the recurrent employment of verbal and nonverbal symbols linked to established conventions for recognizing and discussing identities, such as gender and sexuality, actively constructs those identity categories. Similar to social constructionism, performativity posits that a singular, objective social reality is not universally recognized. Our social environments are perpetually constructed and reconstructed through various symbolic exchanges.

This performative lens can be fruitfully applied to the family context, where the scripts, routines, and rituals of daily life serve to shape and solidify a shared sense of identity, belonging, and values. The concept of "performative family" refers to the idea that family relationships and identities are not fixed or natural, but are actively constructed and enacted through social interactions, behaviors, and rituals. In the context of family studies, the performative approach emphasizes how family members create and maintain their roles, relationships, and family identity through everyday practices, communication, and shared activities. This view challenges traditional notions of family as a static, biological unit and instead focuses on the dynamic processes through which families are continually made and remade. Performativity involves the repetitive enactment of societal norms, which gives the illusion of a stable identity. Similarly, family identities and structures are maintained through repeated performances that align with societal expectations, such as caregiving, cohabitation, and rituals. This perspective sees family as a process, not a pre-given reality.[76]

Families are not solely biological or legal entities; they are formed and maintained through collective behaviors, rituals, and duties. These acts collectively delineate the essence of "family." Family members "perform" roles such as parent, child, or sibling in accordance with cultural norms. These performances frequently entail emotional work, caring, or compliance with cultural rituals. The performative aspect of family is

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76 John Gillis, *A World of Their Own Making: Myth, Ritual and the Quest for Family Values, John Gillis, 1996. Basic Books, New York. 256 Pages. ISBN: 0-465-05414-5. $28.00.*, *Http://Dx.Doi.Org/10.1177/027046769801800423* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), https://doi.org/10.1177/027046769801800423.

profoundly shaped by cultural and societal standards that prescribe appropriate behaviors and presentations for families. Families may adhere to these rules to attain societal legitimacy or acceptability. The concept of family is subject to change throughout time due to the evolution of cultural standards or the redefinition of responsibilities by individual family members. The performative family notion departs from rigid categories rooted in biology, marriage, or cohabitation. Rather, it accommodates various family arrangements, including chosen families, foster families, and blended families. It underscores the autonomy of individuals in shaping familial ties. Families are not merely "bestowed" but actively constructed with significant actions. Understanding family as performative allows for the evaluation of how cultural, economic, and political pressures shape household roles and dynamics. This thesis asserts that family is not as a simple reflection of biological realities and kinship, but is made by performativity.

There are several mechanisms of family performances such as role enactment, rituals and practices and cultural scripts. Considering role enactment, it is argued that family members adopt roles such as "mother," "father," or "child" through performative acts. For example, a mother may demonstrate nurturing behavior, while a father might perform acts of protection or provision. These roles are learned and reinforced through socialization within the family and broader cultural contexts.[77] Rituals such as weddings, birthdays, and holiday celebrations are performative acts that reinforce family bonds and identities. These acts signal belonging and legitimacy both within the family and to the external community.[78] Families perform in accordance with cultural scripts that define what a "proper" family looks like. These scripts vary across societies but often emphasize heteronormativity, gender roles,

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77 David H. J. Morgan, *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies* (Polity Press, 1996), https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Family+Connections%3A+An+Introduction+to+Family+Studies-p-9780745610795.

78 Gillis, *A World of Their Own Making: Myth, Ritual and the Quest for Family Values, John Gillis, 1996. Basic Books, New York. 256 Pages. ISBN: 0-465-05414-5. $28.00.*

and economic stability. The performative family provides a lens to understand families as dynamic and evolving entities shaped by societal norms, cultural practices, and individual actions. This perspective not only highlights the diversity of family forms but also offers critical insights into the broader social forces that influence familial life.

Central to this layered theory is the idea that performativity is not merely a factor influencing the realms but the very mechanism through which they exist. The realms are not pre-existing categories but effects of sustained performances, making them fluid and constantly evolving. For example, a single performative act—such as a woman pursuing a career while upholding family caregiving responsibilities or marrying in accordance with her Islamic belief—can simultaneously engage all three realms. It may challenge a core value (necessities), demonstrate adaptability in family roles (flexibilities), and represent a progressive vision for future generations (futures).

Moreover, the boundaries between these realms are not fixed but porous. Performative acts often blur distinctions between them, demonstrating their mutual dependence. A conservative family's observance of religious rituals (necessities) can be simultaneously an expression of present stability (flexibilities) and a projection of a moral legacy for future generations (futures). These realms fold into one another, with performativity acting as the binding force that sustains and transforms them.

This layered model reframes family life not as a linear progression or a hierarchical structure but as an ongoing, dynamic process. The performative actions of family members continuously negotiate between continuity and change, tradition, and innovation. This theoretical synthesis emphasizes both structure and agency, showing how the family can maintain core values while remaining adaptable to individual choices and societal shifts.

By placing performativity at the focal point of this framework, the layered realm system offers a richer understanding of family life—encompassing the fluid negotiations, everyday rituals, and aspirational projects that make family both a site of stability and transformation. The

realms of necessities, flexibilities, and futures represent the structural dimensions of family life, focusing on the functional and aspirational aspects of the family as a system whereas agency shapes and transforms structure.

The framework also highlights the dialectical tension between stability and transformation within family processes. Necessities provide stability, ensuring continuity across generations. Flexibilities enables adaptability, allowing families to respond to external pressures and internal conflicts. Futures drive change, inspiring innovation, and long-term growth. Through this lens, the family emerges as a system that maintains order while evolving over time, mediated by individual agency. The unifying theoretical lens positions the family as a dynamic, layered system where individuals navigate interconnected realms and roles. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of family processes, capturing both the structural forces that shape family life and the agency of individuals who enact and transform those structures. By uniting structure and agency under this framework, this research contributes to the duality debate by bridging stability and change. It aims to show how family processes maintain continuity while evolving over time. By capturing interdependence, it highlights the recursive relationship between structural dimensions and individual roles. Moreover, allowing for cultural and historical variation within a universal framework, it enhances contextual sensitivity.

1.5.2 Methodology

Within the scope of the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 21 women. The common characteristics of these 21 women are that they are conservative women living in Istanbul, belonging to the middle-upper income group. These women, the youngest of whom is 24 years old and the oldest of whom is 61 years old, were mostly born in Istanbul or came to Istanbul shortly after and spent most of their lives in Istanbul, especially their post-marital period. In these semi-structured interviews, questions were asked about women's religious and family lives. As the most urbanized city in Turkey, Istanbul was chosen as a field for the

study. It is also the most extensive and most populous city in Turkey, with its best education and all other social services. There are many districts, from the poorest to the richest, but the districts mentioned in this research are usually the decent places where the conservative upper-class lives. Apart from the industrial and economic concerns, Istanbul is a center of attraction with its educational opportunities. In that sense, this city creates a profile of Turkey. It operates as a dynamic entity that offers resources, opportunities, and limitations. Istanbul's upper-middle-class families encounter a distinctive convergence of cultural wealth, economic vitality, and socio-spatial disparities, which influence their access to and enjoyment of essential resources. This analysis examines Istanbul's significance as a physical requirement for the upper-middle class, emphasizing its economic, cultural, and infrastructural aspects. Istanbul is crucial not just for its economic, cultural, and infrastructural importance but also for its influence on social movements, especially the religious women's movements in Turkey. Istanbul, in conjunction with Ankara, has functioned as a pivotal center for the development and progression of religious women's activism, providing a distinctive socio-political environment that nurtures these movements. All the women interviewed for this research live in Istanbul.

The determinant of belonging to the upper class is not merely economic. The lifestyles and social status are also accepted as the determinants of class. The new consumption practices parallel to the proliferation of Islamic spaces, such as fashion boutiques, women-only beauty salons and fitness centers, upscale compounds, Islamic holiday resorts, non-alcoholic cafes, and restaurants, as well as the emergence of both print and new media, such as Islamic lifestyle and fashion magazines, Islamic blogs and social media. Therefore, the women are expected to show specific characteristics which will be traced during the interviews. These characteristics could include living in certain compounds, such as strict security, socializing places, sports areas, swimming pools, etc. Moreover, as the Islamic bourgeois created its lifestyles, it made its own social media stars followed by millions as

agents of the new lifestyles. These women are also targeted in this research.

The interviews lasted between 1.5-3.5 hours. First, a pilot interview was held with eight women, and the fieldwork continued with the feedback received. The research uses non-probability and snowball sampling methods for population selection. The sample is not statistically representative, but instead, the characteristics of the population are used as a basis of selection. This is a semi-structured study with a set of issues to be discussed. Considering the open-ended nature of the interviews, I have some concepts that revolve around some common themes, such as the families' values, the gender roles, the decision-making process, and the wedding rituals. Some patterns are sought during the interviews and when data maturity is provided, the interviews come to an end with 21 women.

All of these women have both civil and religious marriages and they are monogamous. They live in nuclear families. Interviewees and their children have Islamic names. It is observed theirs is first marriage for all of the women, second marriage for only one of the husbands. 5 of these women are high school graduates or drop outs, 13 of them are university graduates and 3 of them are MA graduates. 10 of them are housewives, 11 are working 9 of them work outside the home. Husbands are generally self-employed such as 2 lawyers, many engineers and a dentist who work in their own businesses and a few works in public institutions, such as 2 doctors.

The field research was conducted in March and April 2021. This period can be considered as the immediate aftermath of a period in which intense discussions about the family took place and became so intense that it led to the termination of the Istanbul Convention. The amount of criticism initiated by conservative groups, basically claiming that the family was under serious threats and wanted to be destroyed, gradually increased and forced the government to reverse a political step it had taken. While this is the first debate that effectively determines the agenda, the other is the pandemic process that started in March 2020 and ended in March 2022. Therefore, this field study was carried out at a time

when people had to stay at home due to the pandemic, and their ideas about home and family began to change. Conducting field research during the pandemic had a number of challenges. One of them was that public spaces could not be used to avoid crowds. Cafés and restaurants had to comply with certain restrictions. For this reason, most of the interviews were conducted at home. Another challenge that needs to be mentioned is that the researcher had to temporarily halt fieldwork because she contracted an illness from whom she was interviewing.

Once the interviews were completed, each recorded conversation was transcribed and decoded. These decipherments produced an abundance of hundreds of pages of data. These transcripts were examined using software in order to identify any significant patterns. The findings of the research are analyzed through qualitative analysis software named Quirkos, which provides a useful tool to understand and manage the data. The primary purpose of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software CAQDAS, often known as QDAS (qualitative data analysis software), is to handle the qualitative data associated with a project. In simple terms, this qualitative software is a tool for organizing, categorizing, and investigating qualitative data. Text parts were tracked by software, and classifications were made into a myriad of interesting subjects or themes. A collection of themes, topics, or nodes that correspond to the researcher's interest categories is generated. The framework of codes that are used to classify and analyze the text can be created in a variety of ways. Once more, the software's function is to give the user the ability to organize and manage these subjects. It can remember a lot more topics than a human user could ever know at once. Additionally, the program will let the researcher organize or search through codes in a hierarchy that may have subcategories for better use.

Initially, the decoded materials are loaded into the application. The data sources are stored and categorized by the software to facilitate cross-referencing and easy access. In framework analysis, roughly, there are two different approaches in terms of level of coding, which are top-down and bottom-up. The coding procedure differs depending on the approach. In the first approach, the researcher begins with broad claims or ideas and then breaks them down into simpler observations that

support or disprove those statements. On the other hand, in the bottom-up strategy, the researcher might generate dozens of very basic codes before grouping them together, identifying patterns, and inferring a higher degree of meaning from subsequent reading. Because the unstructured data might benefit more from a bottom-up approach, the semi-structured interviews were subjected to this kind of analysis to let the data guide the results and speak for itself. Without imposing a pre-existing framework, this research intends to uncover patterns within it. In this way, a nuanced and detailed understanding of the data is revealed, which might identify unexpected patterns and insights.

1.6 The Scope and the Limitations of the Thesis

The sample of this thesis is a small group which is not inclusive like survey research; it includes conservative women from different age groups. Its aim is giving an idea about the new family; it is not possible to observe all religious conservative family structures in Turkey. Religious conservative women are chosen for the scope of this study, yet it is not a homogenous category but there is a significant congregation-sect connection in Turkey. These affiliations are not taken into consideration. In some narratives, it is observed that such affiliations are indicated, in others they are not. Educated and uneducated, young and old, born in Istanbul, who came later, immigration is not a significant factor. For example, there are two Balkan immigrants but these were handled mixed. Party affiliation is also not a determining criterion. Within the scope of this study, ethnic sensitivity was not taken into consideration. If different ethnic groups in Turkey, such as Kurdish women or Circassian women, had been studied, different dynamics would have been involved and different results would have emerged. Singles were also not included in the study; if they had been included, a completely different analysis could have emerged. It would be very valuable to analyze the results of future studies with these sample groups in comparison with this research.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which provides a clear overview of the study, including its background, objectives, and significance. The broad overview of the thesis question being researched will be provided by establishing the context and relevance of the study within its field. Moreover, this chapter identifies the specific problem or gap in knowledge that the thesis aims to address. The research questions that the thesis will explore. These are specific, focused questions that guide the research process. Then, it explains the importance of the research and its potential contributions to the field or broader implications for practice, policy, or further research. Moreover, the scope of the thesis, including what is and is not covered by the research, will be discussed, and its delimitations will be provided, detailing the geographical location, time period, subjects, or other parameters of the study.

In the second chapter, the historical background will be evaluated from a broader perspective. As the modernization process and the ongoing political situation in Turkey are directly and indirectly linked to Europe, this broader perspective is required for a further understanding of today's society. Therefore, firstly, the political and historical context of the sociological transformation of Europe, which unintendedly paved the way for the emergence of a new woman and family planning, will be presented. Secondly, the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the late era of the Ottoman Empire will be explained to observe its effects on Turkish women. The new Turkish women who are at work, in public service, in military service, and in the media are also evaluated who are loaned new roles in the upcoming wars that eventually resulted in the dissolution of the empire and the emergence of the secular Turkish state. Following Özbay, Turkish families are categorized into three eras in terms of government intervention. Namely national family, happy family, and neoconservative sacralized family.

The rest of the thesis will be an analysis of the fieldwork conducted within the scope of the research. The findings of the field research

strongly advocate a three-tiered definition of family. Based on this, the remaining parts of the thesis will be discussed in three separate chapters. The third chapter addresses the problem of constructing the groundwork and foundation of the family. In other words, it analyzes how this foundation, which is seen as an essential component of the family and its constitution, was developed. This part, which assesses the family as a static structure, discusses the fundamental building blocks, criteria, and essential features that define the family. The first is the fixed end of the compass, the solid ground that is confidential and reliable to the self. Here is the realm of necessities that cannot be deterred.

The fourth chapter, on the other hand, handles family as a process. Considering this process, the pace of change will be the primary focus. What does it tolerate, and what does it change? There is improvement here, as well as an openness to new experiences and a family structure that is flexible. In other words, this second stage builds on the foundation level. Here, in open-mindedness, what is pursued is what can be modified based on the information gathered from the field study. The family's evolution and change, as well as how open-ended it can be viewed, by considering it as a flexible structure. In other words, unlike the first stage, which is concerned with duties, this step will focus on options; it is the realm of opportunities.

The last chapter will build a third level on the two others that will evaluate the family as a future projection. Considering the family as a vision of the future, the women’s reflections on the forthcoming family structure will be discussed. Childrearing is an important aspect of this reflection. How they internalize their values and transfer them will be the issue to be considered. As a result, the family will be depicted as a three-layered structure, namely as a static base, as a process, and as a future vision.

2

Historical Background

Governments' political ideologies produce ideal family models and population strategies that are woven into the overall ruling mechanisms. The desire to modify the social order, as well as the direction in which such change should be made, is symbolized by family planning. One of the ways governments justify reproductive regulation is by presenting an ideal family model based on morals and ethics in accordance with the governing ideology of the time, as well as a promise of future prosperity. Nevertheless, while focusing on the population policies and family projections of governments, the dimension of this issue related to the female body and women activism in society can be ignored. Addressing the political historical context in which the women's movement was born, in a range from Ottoman modernization to the present, this chapter aims to address the approaches to the female body in the state-society relationship.

From the turn of the century to the present, women's movement in the Middle East has had a distinct trajectory that reflects both its engagement with local debates and its discussion with broader currents of thought. It is impossible to present an account of this trajectory without referring to the local feminist activism that has formed in certain places and in response to specific historical occurrences. Indeed, one of

the most striking qualities of regional research is that it has developed against a backdrop of highly politicized and emotionally charged contemplation of significant political events and turning moments that have a powerful, if sometimes hidden, influence.[79]

To understand this influence, firstly, the political trajectory that has strong implications on societal life in Europe, which paved the way for emergence of women's movement in Turkey, will be briefly described. Secondly, the modernization of the Ottomans and the policies on the family and the women will be elaborated in relation to the changing political atmosphere. The earliest example of family planning policies in Turkish history carried out by the Committee of Union and Progress will also be discussed. Lastly, the family projections of the rulers of the Turkish Republic will be examined by considering for the third time, the governments have intervened to adjust fertility rates to further their political objectives. [80]

2.1 The Dawn of the "Advanced West"

2.1.1 Revolutionizing Europe

Historians writing the history of the 19th and the early 20th century can hardly frame the broad scope of human experience without referring to the revolutions and the Enlightenment movement in Europe, and the First World War which are milestones of the world history that changed the path of everything that happened afterward due to the intensity and breadth of their impact on society. Following their path, the historical framework will be roughly drawn to present the zeitgeist, the spirit or mood of a historical period as reflected in the thoughts and beliefs of the period, that is needed for the rest of the chapter.

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79 Deniz Kandiyoti, "Contemporary Feminist Scholarship and Middle East Studies," in *Gendering the Middle East Emerging Perspectives* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 7–8.

80 Özbay, "Demografik Dönüşüm Sürecinde İktidar, Kadın ve Aile," 106.

Beginning in the 1750's, various forms of economic, intellectual, and social reconstruction in Europe were initiated that had the radical potential to revolutionize the lives of all women and men in various parts of Europe and then the rest of the world. There occurred a sophisticated and interconnecting series of events that could be grouped under the two branches of the "Dual Revolution", namely the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution.[81]

In Europe, the 17th and 18th centuries experienced the Age of Enlightenment, a philosophical and intellectual movement that dominated the realm of ideas. The Enlightenment was characterized by a set of concepts focusing on the importance of human happiness, the pursuit of knowledge through reason and the evidence of the senses, and goals such as liberty, progress, fraternity, constitutional government, and separation of church and state. Streams of notable revolutionary movements occurred across most of America and Europe from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century, influenced by the new ideas of the Enlightenment. This period draws attention to the move from absolutist monarchy to representative governments with written constitutions and the emergence of nation states.

Greatly influenced by the Anglo-French Enlightenment movement in Europe, the American colonies initiated a war of independence and therefore it could be claimed that the Enlightenment movement influenced America extensively before continental Europe. It was very clear that the consciousness of individual rights and freedoms was the most important element of the ideologies of the Patriots during the American War of Independence. The American Revolution, which lasted from 1776 to 1783, sparked the French Revolution in 1789, which swiftly expanded across Europe through wars. Followingly, two similar revolutionary waves, commonly named as the Springtime of Nations by Hobsbawm, shook continental Europe in 1830 and 1848. At first, they

81 Marilyn Jane Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, "Women in Industrializing, Liberalizing and Imperializing Europe, Overwiew 1750-1890," in *Connecting Spheres, European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 115.

were all successful, but were violently repressed, defeated quickly and en masse. Even though it marked a brief historical episode, it was the end of traditional politics in Western Europe. Faith in the monarchs sanctioned by traditional religion appointed by God and in the patriarchal rights and duties of the socially and economically superior came to an end. The biggest novelty that came after the revolutions was the defenders of the social order had to learn the language of the people.[82]

As the end of 19th century and the early 20th century, correspond to the terminus of the pre-modern era, the era of empires; and the beginning of modern age with nation-states that are established upon the ideals of equal citizenship, which is defined through voting rights. As the political participation extended to over widening segments of the population, the cumulative interaction of other socioeconomic and political factors came to the fore, following the Dual Revolution. Boxer and Quataert compile certain occurrences to explain the spirit of the irreversible transformations of the time, specifically, demographic, agricultural, transportation, ideological, and industrial revolutions. Ultimately, there was a population explosion from 190 million in 1800, to 500 million in 1900 leading more people who sought work could not work in rural anymore and to migrate to urban which eventually caused the growth of urban centers; thanks to the development of machinery in agriculture, fewer people were required in the rural areas; the invention of steam engine generated factories and offered low-standard jobs for hundreds and thousands as workers; the construction of canals and roads together with locomotives and steamships that opened up heavy industries and demanded more workers for the iron and steel factories, that eventually ended up with proletarianization of masses.[83]

To conclude it could be asserted that, the industrialization of Western Europe, which began with increased trade and commercialization in the emerging Atlantic community of Europe, Africa, and the Americas, was a

82 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848-1875* (London: Abacus, 1997), 22.

83 Boxer and Quataert, "Women in Industrializing, Liberalizing and Imperializing Europe, Overwiew 1750-1890," 114–16.

long and complex process in the ways that human beings transformed new materials into the commodities necessary for life. Hence, this era experienced a demographic revolution, an agricultural revolution, a transportation revolution, an ideological revolution, and an industrial revolution altogether concurrently. The Industrial Revolution was about the application of new technologies that eventually paved the way for the other revolutions. By the end of the 19th century, massive population changes had taken place both in numbers and location, which was paralleled with movements of people within territories. Thanks to the development of machinery in agriculture, more people were required in the urban areas; the invention of the steam engine generated factories and offered low-standard jobs for thousands as workers; the construction of canals and roads together with locomotives and steamships that opened up heavy industries and demanded more workers for iron and steel factories, that eventually ended up with proletarianization of masses, which is, the dispossession of peasants of their lands and artisans of their tools and workshops.[84]

2.1.2 *Emergence of 'The New Woman' and Family Planning*

Referring many revolutions and transformations in this period, the question of how the arrival of the new industrial society changed the lives of women comes to the fore. Standard indicators of change may have had little, if any, impact on women's life, and then only gradually, because women were practically barred from the formal sphere of politics and the battlegrounds. Nevertheless, by the mid-nineteenth century, many women's lives had begun to diverge significantly from those of their foremothers, which indicates the complicated rhythms of social change.

Hobsbawm warns us that at first glance, it may seem meaningless to consider the history of the half of humanity in the context of the history of the western middle classes, which is a relatively small group, even in developed and developing countries. However, he adds, to the extent that

84 Boxer and Quataert, 114–15.

historians turn their attention on changes and transformations in the condition of women, this is a reasonable stance; because the most prominent feature of this change and transformation, "women's emancipation", occurred under the leadership of the middle and upper strata of society, which were statistically insignificant, and remained almost entirely limited to these segments. The demand for freedom of a small but unprecedented number of women who were active and truly upper class in fields previously confined to men, was so strong during this period that it gave rise to a new type, the "new woman", in bourgeois milieus.[85]

Women's movement has always embodied that sort of a contradictory –both emancipatory and disclaimer- nature. One example of this nature was experienced during the French Revolution. For all segments of people, politics was the sphere of men and what revolutionary leaders intended was to reconstruct society and create "a new man". Political philosophy of the Enlightenment gave way to the inception of civil society in revolutionary France; and this civil society itself was a patriarchal one with masculine order. Most of the enlightenment thinkers, speculated over human rights, liberties, and natural laws; however, all the liberties demanded were merely for the men and for most thinkers, women were destined to childbearing and child rearing. Women were labeled as irrational and emotional; thusly were not equipped with the ability to vote. "The woman question", as discussion over women's duties was labeled expressively in the nineteenth century, caught attention like never, amongst the forces of revolution and the countervailing tendencies for reaction. Within that context, this era also witnessed the emergence of a "new woman" and the vital demand of the first women's movement was equality with man before the law and right to education.

Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), which was inspired by this social and political upheaval in the flow of revolutions, could be accepted as a prologue to the modern feminism. She

85 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (London: Abacus, 2007), 192.

used the phrase “revolution in female manners” referring to a call for a dramatic shift in the way women act and are viewed in society. Her desire for a revolution suggests a significant departure from the status quo. Wollstonecraft believed that the way women were expected to behave required fundamental change. Manner in this context encompasses more than just etiquette. It includes the social behaviors, roles, and expectations imposed on women. So, “revolution in female manners” refers to a complete alteration in how women live and interact with the world. Wollstonecraft claimed that women were denied a good education, leaving them intellectually dependent on men. Wollstonecraft, claimed that the disadvantageous position of the women can be overcome through education and texts belonging that era put emphasis on the importance of rational education.[86] She believed that education was critical for women to realize their full potential.

The revolution sought to destroy the concept of female inferiority. Women deserve equal rights and opportunity to engage in society, rather than being limited to household tasks. Wollstonecraft felt that women should be financially independent and not rely completely on their husbands. This would grant people greater agency and control over their life. The "revolution in female manners" she fought for laid the groundwork for subsequent feminist movements that continue to strive for women's equality.[87] While her contemporaries, one of the earlier republican thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau and one of the earlier conservative thinker Edmund Burke were concerned about the negative consequences of a social revolution and the subsequent loss of the patriarchal family with sex-role differentiation, Wollstonecraft hoped that the egalitarian transformation of the family would eliminate unjust hierarchies and abuses of power between husbands and wives, parents and children, and brothers and sisters. She argued that the republican political revolutions in America in 1776 and France in 1789 would not

86 Valerie Sanders, “First Wave Feminism,” in *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*, ed. Sarah Gamble (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 15.

87 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Boston, 1972), 31.

be complete until a social revolution in the home fueled the formation of a more equal culture throughout society and government. Wollstonecraft recognized Rousseau and Burke's leading roles in late-eighteenth-century family debates, critical identified them as philosophical and political partners in the defense of the patriarchal structure of the family and used Rousseau's quasi-egalitarian theories of childhood education and maternal empowerment as a theoretical foundation for her own egalitarian family vision.[88]

Despite the women's active participation and force to dismantle the Old Regime, during the establishment of the new order and civil society, they were subordinated by depriving the right of citizenship both rhetorically and legally.[89] This subordination faced with women's resistance and many debates were inspired about the women's rights and abilities; besides, many of them participated in political events directly in the Revolution, joined on political clubs, and even organized their own political clubs such as Revolutionary Republican Women Citizens. However, they could not achieve being part of the parliament and the clubs were shot down after a short time.[90] During the emergence of the new world order by destroying the old one, through the ideals of equal citizenship and civil society, the women were excluded from the sphere of the citizenship and almost totally removed from the male-dominated and ruled public space. Moreover, as Davis claims, the emergence of this new public space double disadvantages women by cutting off even previously existing ways of public life and politics.[91]

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88 Botting, *Family Feuds Wollstonecraft, Rousseau and Burke on the Transformation of the Family*, 1–2.

89 Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship* (Ithaca&London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 19–20.

90 Boxer and Quataert, "Women in Industrializing, Liberalizing and Imperializing Europe, Overwiew 1750-1890," 128.

91 Belinda Davis, "Reconsidering Habermas, Gender and the Public Sphere: The Case of Wilhelmine Germany," in *Society, Culture and the State in Germany 1870-1930*, ed. Geoff Eley (University of Michigan Press, 1996), 401.

2.1.3 *Paternalist Interventions to Family and Sexuality in the Age of Revolutions*

Industrial Revolution brought about the industrialization of women's work. As a part and vital force of this new system, women and young girls dominated the earliest factory labor forces by offering the cheapest labor available that was lately denotes to the idea that "gender shaped the industrial revolution".[92] Women's traditional roles of domestic labor and agricultural work changed into the industrial production. Textile manufacturing, tobacco and food processing were overwhelmingly women employed sectors. Women and children were more suitable for doing handwork and as handwork increased, the earning decreased. Due to the implementation of violent capitalism, women were forced to work and live under unhealthy conditions and factory dormitories. This low-skilled, repetitive piecework in terrible conditions of sweatshops by living in dormitories; or the homeworking with very few earnings no doubt oppressed the women and repositioned them as a cheap labor in the market; still on the other hand, encouraged women left the unpaid domestic labor and moved into the sphere of paid labor in factories.[93]

As a result, from 1875 onwards, there was a noticeable change in the situation of working-class women which was, in the developed world began to have significantly fewer children.[94] By enabling women to earn money and get out of their homes and traditional roles, working made women empowered in some way but at the same time, strengthened their economic inferiority in comparison to men. Industrialization had a considerably bigger impact on women's status by dividing the home from the workplace, excluding women from the socially recognized—

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92 Boxer and Quataert, "Women in Industrializing, Liberalizing and Imperializing Europe, Overwiew 1750-1890," 118.

93 Marilyn Jane Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, "Women in the Era of Interventionist State, Overview, 1890 to the Present," in *Connecting Spheres, European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present*, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 117–20.

94 Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, 194.

that is, paid-for-people—economics, and combining women's traditional inferiority to males with a new economic dependency.

At the time of the systematic exploitation of the labor force, could it be tolerated that this power be dispersed by the pursuit of pleasures other than those which would be reproduced, and which were minimized? For Foucault, the answer was “no” and to make this system work in the second half of the 18th century, a whole new technology of sexuality, which was suppressed by the modern bourgeois family was emerging. This emergence coincided with the development of capitalism and thus the age of oppression coexists with the bourgeois order which provided a powerful historical and political guarantor to this discourse. [95] This technique was brand-new because while not truly independent of the theme of sin, it was largely outside the church establishment. This technology, through medicine, pedagogy, and economics, was transforming sexuality not only into a secular issue but also into a state issue; and even an issue arose in which both the whole of the social body and almost every single one of its constituents was called upon to supervise herself. So, this brand-new technology developed around three axes: pedagogy targeting the specific sexual activity of the child, medicine targeting female sexual physiology, and demographics targeting spontaneous or planned birth control. [96] As the sexuality had been well contained and had now moved into the home, it was taken into the custody of the conjugal family and assimilated into the serious duty of reproduction. This norm was established by the legitimate and procreative couple. In social space as well as in the center of every family, a single locus of sexuality was recognized, but it was a functional and fertile one: the parent's bedroom.[97]

Accordingly, the eighteenth century is the time of the formation of four discursive "figures" who, followingly by the nineteenth century, function as "the four fundamental techniques" in the arrangement of discourses on "sexuality." These types were "privileged objects of

95 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 5–6.

96 Foucault, 115–16.

97 Foucault, 3–4.

knowledge which were also targets and anchoring points for the ventures of knowledge: the hysterical lady, the masturbating infant, the Malthusian pair, and the perverted adult." Foucault is arguing here that sexuality discourses did not stumble upon these four figures by coincidence, but that the way we understand our sexuality and larger identity today has been influenced by the constitutive significance of these four figures. Each of these strategies, he claims, "passed via a family," which "must be understood not as a powerful agent of prohibition, but as a key contributor in sexualization." As a result, Foucault focuses on how discourse about these four personalities helped to shape a conception of the sexual instinct as the secret of normal or abnormal identity. The appearance of a natural form of human life from which deviation would always signify danger might be created by dominating discourses' ongoing difference between "normal" and "abnormal" forms of desire and behavior. These new "sexuality" discourses were inextricably linked to the family. Such a connection seemed logical and natural at the time, and it still does today, but Foucault insists that the family's role as the source and ultimate objective of desire is a historical invention. [98]

This transition of the family, which is the control authority and saturation point of sexuality, may be said to have occurred in an area that is only accessible to privileged and limited groups. The "bourgeois" or "aristocratic" family was the first to be warned about the possible pathology of sexuality, the urgency of preserving sex, and the need to find a rational technology of correction; woman's sexual activity was medicalized in it; and it was the first to be warned about the possible pathology of sexuality, the urgency of preserving sex, and the need to find a rational technology of correction. The first plane of the psychiatrization of sexuality has been this family. It was also the first to encounter with excessive sexual arousal by finding fears for itself, inventing prescriptions, invoking wise techniques, and coming up with

98 Robbie Duschinsky and Leon Antonia Rocha, eds., *Foucault, the Family and Politics* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 6–7.

innumerable discourses that he could repeat to itself. The bourgeoisie begins by thinking that what matters, the fragile treasure and the must-know secret, is its sexual activity. It should not be forgotten that the first person to whom the sexual apparatus touches, the first person who is among the first of the "sexualized", is the "idle woman" who is on the border of the family, which imposes new wife and maternity obligations on her with the society that she must take her place as a "value".[99]

In this era marriage and respectable family living remained as the sole reputable, and most likely the only convenient career for women. For men, making good marriages was a key to the middle-class culture. In nineteenth century, birthrates and fertility rates dropped firmly probably with the new attitudes about human control over their lives. For women, motherhood provides strong grounds to establish their social status and role in public life. The deliberate reduction of the number of children born to the average woman, along with a parallel intensification of emotional bonds between generations, has been possibly the most fundamental alteration in the evolution of the contemporary family. Most Western populations have used purposeful ways to reduce their fertility since the 1870s in much of Europe. The capacity to limit births and so minimize economic burdens has contributed to both earlier and later marriage rates. It can be argued that "family planning" come to fore as answer to the "social question".[100]

Foucault argues that in contrast to the bourgeois classes, the masses were for a long time excluded from the apparatus of "sexuality". Mechanisms of sexualization were introduced into the poorer classes slowly and undoubtedly in three successive phases. The first phase covered birth control issues. Then, in the 1830s, when it came to regulating the "church-law" family, a necessary instrument of political control and economic regulation appeared for the subordination of the urban proletariat: it was the great campaign for the "moralization of the poor classes"; and finally, the third phase was passed when, at the end of

99 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 118.

100 Boxer and Quataert, "Women in Industrializing, Liberalizing and Imperializing Europe, Overwiew 1750-1890," 145–49.

the 19th century, legal and medical control of heresies appeared in the name of general social and racial protection. It can be said that the apparatus of "sexuality" developed in its most complex and intense forms by and for the privileged classes spread throughout the entire social body from this moment on. [101]

Women had to wait until 1894, the year novelist Sarah Grand firstly used the term of "the New Women" in the North American Review, to express their dissatisfaction with the typical stay-at-home life of marriage and childbirth that was regarded fitting for middle-class women. The "New Woman" argument helped to rekindle interest in feminism, particularly the position of women in marriage, at the close of the nineteenth century. Though it was essentially a journalistic creation, it mirrored a genuine crisis in women's sexuality construction, a worry that was subsequently overtaken by early twentieth-century suffrage drives.[102]

2.2 Women and Family in Modernizing Turkey

Discussing the familial issues and the positioning of women in society has always been a more complex issue in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. From the Ottoman Empire to the present day, the family has come to the fore as an important institute in the debates on progressivism-reactionism, traditionalism-modernism, and issues such as child rearing, education, family relations, and parenthood have become topics of current debate. Secondarily, the way the family is perceived and the relations within the family have come to the fore in the context of how the relations between the state and the individual should be organized.

In academic literature, Ottoman Turkish, Iranian, and Arabic cases are generally accepted as a part of the Middle Eastern women movements' experience due to their assumed sharing of a cultural and political

101 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 119–20.

102 Sarah Gamble, ed., "A–Z of Key Themes and Major Figures," in *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 259–60.

collectivity. However, this thesis suggests that -by not ignoring the cultural collectivity, which is generally shaped around Islam- the more important factors to define the positioning and power of women in society are political and economic ones. Following Deniz Kandiyoti, it could be argued that feminist scholarship in the West and studies on women in the Middle East have followed parallel and highly interrelated trajectories and that Middle East studies have been described by selective incorporation of broader agendas generated by feminist criticism, alongside home-grown debates strongly rooted in local historical and political precisions.[103] That is not to say that feminist discourse in the Middle East must emerge in response to, or dialogue with, Western currents of thought, but rather to point to the effects of political and economic context to the women's movement and hence discussions on family. Therefore, the role of the aforementioned political historical context of the World and Europe is nonignorable considering its economic and political effects on the Ottoman society that eventually paved the way for certain societal transformations, following more or less the same path as Europe.

The Ottoman women were mostly referred to in pre-accepted contexts of Islam, and its byproduct perceptions of segregation, veil, polygamy, harem, etc., and this kind of setting directly positions women in the private sphere by treating them as subjects of the pre-given structure with no visibility or activity in the public sphere. Concerning the larger paradigms of Orientalism, the rise of nationalism, imperialism, and Westernization, the academic literature on late Ottoman women cannot abstain from the hegemonic pressure of the West. However, this kind of approach has been contested by the newer paradigms that claim that women are objects and agents instead of being passive elements of the system. Co-evalness, which refers to "studying geographies related with each other in a given time frame as co-temporal entities that share the same world-historical environment", is a way of overcoming the consideration of being "behind or belated" and "ahead or advanced". So,

103 Kandiyoti, "Contemporary Feminist Scholarship and Middle East Studies," 1.

these geographies are part of a greater system of power relations that may be affected in disparate but related ways. [104]

Similarly, when considering the status of women and family life in the Ottoman Empire, it could be assumed that a schema is formed in the minds of both contemporary Westerners and Turks. This schema, which Alan Duben describes as a "family myth" woven with misconceptions, is shaped by concepts such as early marriage, extended families, the custom of living with the groom's family after marriage, patriarchal order, polygamy etc. It should be noted that the concept of Ottoman family life is a concept that does not have integrity. The absurdity of the idea of having a single standard family model will be better understood when considering a multilingual, multi-religious, multi-national, demographically variable structure that has survived for more than six centuries and has reached very wide geographical borders.[105] For example, the most conservative elements of family life would be anticipated when only Muslim households are considered. However, the 1907 Census of Istanbul's Muslim population reveals a pattern of late marriage for both men and women, relatively low fertility, and nuclear family households as prevalent, which is in stark contrast to expectations. Polygamy was observed in only 2.2% of households. The image of Muslim Istanbul families in newspapers and journals of the era, despite the census data, emphasized "orientalist" characteristics. Newspapers and journals complained about early marriages, polygamy, and high fecundity, while advocating for late marriage and a limited number of children.[106]

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104 Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou, "Historiography of the Late Ottoman Women," in *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women: New Perspectives*, ed. Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 2.

105 Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *İstanbul Households Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880-1940* (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 122.

106 Duben and Behar, *İstanbul Households Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880-1940*.

2.2.1 *The Awakening Period of the Women in Turkey*

From the Ottoman Empire to the present day, the family has come to the fore as an important institution in the debates on progressivism-reactionism, traditionalism-modernism, and issues such as children, education, family relations, and parenthood have become topics of current debate. Moreover, the way the family is perceived and the relations within the family have come to the fore in the context of how the relations between the state and the individual should be organized. As Turkish modernization is in a way a judicial project, legal regulations and the legal approach have come to represent one of the most important features of Turkish modernization.[107]

In contexts where dramatic societal shifts take place, the family ceases to be a "private sphere" and becomes a "public sphere". Concrete evidence of this transition was visible in the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and, lastly, the Turkish Revolution. In addition to the political system, the family is one of the state's involvement areas during times of social crises. In other words, the family is shaped by the integration of political and social structures, albeit over time. The position of women underwent profound alteration when the family transitioned from private to public space.[108]

The women's issue in Turkey, inherited from the Ottoman Empire, had a different nature than in the West. In the West, women have been sharing public spaces with men for centuries. In the Ottoman Empire, public space was reserved for men, and women's "violation" of this space was sometimes reacted on the grounds of religion. The expansion of women into the public sphere in Turkey would largely take place in 1908 with the "Declaration of Freedom". And thus, the women's issue came to the agenda with the Constitutional Monarchy. The "new woman" transition process that occurred in Europe in the second half of the

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107 Ahmet Murat Aytaç, *Ailenin Serencamı Türkiye'de Modern Aile Fikrinin Oluşması* (İstanbul: Dipnot, 2007), 130.

108 Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat İnkılap ve Travma 1908-1928* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2017), 36.

nineteenth century was noticed in Turkey in the first half of the twentieth century, albeit half a century later. In contrast to the West, the street performed a liberating function for the "new woman" in the Ottoman Empire.[109]

The women's movement in the Ottoman Empire could be explained by Fleischmann's argument that makes a threefold category of the Middle Eastern women's history as the awakening, the nationalist movements, and the state-led movements.[110] The awakening stage refers to the bringing the issues of women to social -not necessarily political or institutional- agenda. This stage also witnesses the proliferation of women's organizations that provide an environment for reformers' and intellectuals' debate on women's status. Generally, this period begins with the involvement of women in press and newspapers. What characterizes the awakening period of women's movement and their integration to modern economy in Turkey was bifurcation in terms of class relations. The first branch, consisted of the lower-class girls and women who played a central role in the labor force especially in textile, silk, mohair, carpet making and tobacco industries.[111] The emergence of the second branch of women's movement, a bourgeois activism that was predominantly organized around press and associations was fostered by Second Constitutional Period and its ideological roots, namely freedom, brotherhood and equality.

The women pioneer of the movement was belonged to the national bourgeoisie created by the rule under Union and Progress, and were mostly intellectual daughters or wives of the enlightened bureaucrats who aimed to show the capacity of the Muslim modern women to the rest

109 Toprak, 35–36.

110 Ellen Fleischmann, "The Other 'Awakening': The Emergence of Women's Movements in the Modern Middle East, 1900-1940," in *A Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Margaret L Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 104.

111 Emine Tutku Vardağlı, "Searching For Women's Agency in the Tobacco Workshops: Female Tobacco Workers of the Province Selanik," in *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women: New Perspectives*, ed. Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 52.

of the world.[112] With this purpose, in this era before the Republic, alone or with contributions to their man supporters, the women published almost 40-woman journals. Fatma Aliye and her generation were the prominent figures of this period with their references and aims to invent 'the Muslim woman'. Moreover, these women also established tens of NGO's each served different roles mainly, philanthropic activities, associations that create and find jobs, cultural activities, patriotic associations, associations of the political parties and feminist ones.[113] By this way, "the new woman" of the Ottoman Empire was emerged as a brand-new image that showed no parallel with the earlier periods and the support it got by the enlightened men was significant.

According to Yavuz Selim Karakışla, the highest, well-educated, and prosperous class was the only segment of the Ottoman society that in any way had a relation with the working class. The emergence of the new class also brought about the emergence of other service sectors such as maids and designer dressmakers. He claims that a woman had five duties to her husband in traditional division of labor, which were cleaning and housework, doing laundry and ironing, cooking, child rearing and sewing. In time, in the bourgeois families, these 'women jobs' these jobs were assigned to the lower-class workingwomen; housework to maids, laundry to part-time washwomen, cooking to cooks, sewing to stylists and child rearing to the governesses. By this way, the worker women were employed by the women employers although they had never experienced any kind of business and paid the salaries of their workers thanks to their husbands' or fathers' assets.[114]

This situation brought about a difference between the two classes of the upper-class employers and the lower-class employees as "lady (*hanım*)" and "woman (*kadın*)". The women journals presented the most prominent examples of this segregation. As Karakışla asserts, the literacy

112 Ümüt Akagündüz, *II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Kadın Olmak* (İstanbul: Yeni İnsan, 2015), 86.

113 Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınevi, 1994), 18–75.

114 Yavuz Selim Karakışla, *Osmanlı Hanımları ve Kadın Terzileri 1869-1923* (İstanbul: Akıl Fikir Yayınları, 2014), 86.

rate among the Ottoman women were very low and the target audience were addressed as "the ladies of the Ottomans (*Osmanlı hanımları*)", which means merely Turkish, upper class, well-educated, Muslim women. Moreover, they put great emphasis on the difference between themselves and the lower class by using the terms of "we and them" and this means, by no way the upper-class women regarded the other classes as equivalents.[115]

Despite this argument, it should be noted that, the journals and the associations established by these women paved the way for the political, social, and economic emancipation of the entire women. Many of these associations educated and provided jobs by opening sewing workshops, factories, schools for the poor, desperate and orphan girls and needy women. Not only Muslim but also non-Muslims and non-Turks were encouraged by the means of these associations. When these two approaches are considered, it could be argued that the woman's movement in the late nineteenth century was corresponded with the international context, and it was an awakening period that create awareness for the women of all classes about the new world and their role in it. The bourgeois women achieved this by education and the lower class-at least some part of- experienced the activism on the ground. Still, at the end of the day, they had channels to get in touch to each other's lives, which were the journals and the associations.

2.2.2 *The Nationalist Women of the Wartime*

According to Fleischmann nationalist struggles of the Middle Eastern women, was a way on which the feminist consciousness and identity could be gained through. Although many pioneers of the women movements were not feminists, national drives urged them to gain their identity against the colonial rule as new national actors; mothers, educators, workers and even fighters. Fighting alongside men to save the nation was the motive and by this way, the nationalist struggle became

115 Yavuz Selim Karakışla, *Osmanlı Hanımları ve Hizmetçi Kadınlar 1869-1927* (İstanbul: Akıl Fikir Yayınları, 2014), 62.

"the most honorable door" to the public life. Moreover, the gender awareness is developed through experiences of women to get organize and act together; through this act, an internal critique of gender relations, which were suppressed or not spoken, come to the fore. Therefore, as consciousness is not a necessarily preexisting condition, it is created during nationalist movements and depending on different historical contexts, national struggles turn into a liberating discourse for women.[116]

In Turkish case, the second stage of feminism begins with the declaration of the Second Constitution in 1908 and lasts until the end of armistice era. The morality of the family, herewith society, is based on national-patriotism and it is a part of Moral Turkism that supports human rights and feminism.[117] This nationalist ideology, together with the wars corresponds to the ideological transformation of the women's movement. The women actors of the second stage differed from the "Ottomanist" pioneers of the constitutional period with their nationalist positioning. Unlike Fatma Aliye and their religious references that aimed to create 'the Muslim woman'; Nezihe Muhiddin, who aimed to revive "the Turkish woman" with nationalist motives, represented the second phase of the movement.[118]

With the coming of the First World War, a labor vacuum broke out due to the shortage in manpower. Women's working was not a new phenomenon in the late Ottoman era, in sectors such as textile or tobacco. However, working of especially the Muslim women who never had work experience before out of their houses and in masses was a new phenomenon.

The existence of the women in the public sphere, by working in the newly opening war industries expanded the scope of the women's labor. Only in a sock factory in Urfa, 1000 women were employed. 4.780

116 Fleischmann, "The Other 'Awakening': The Emergence of Women's Movements in the Modern Middle East, 1900-1940," 91–93.

117 Toprak, "The Family, Feminism, and the State during the Young Turk Period, 1908-1918," 445.

118 Yaprak Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap:Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınevi, 2003), 76.

women were working in the carpet-making sector in İzmir, Sivas, Ankara, and Konya. 11.000 women were working in textile industry in Aydın. Together with the private entrepreneurs, the public sector, banks, post-office departments, hospitals, and local public administrations also opened their doors to the women. Entrepreneur women established many associations to provide jobs in different sectors of the industry for women; even the wife of Ismail Enver Pasha, Princess Emine Naciye was one of these entrepreneur women who established an association in 1916. These changes were realized because of the accelerating demands of the war industry.[119] Together with the women's efforts, men associations also supported the lower-class women, such as the example of 'The Association for Women Labor (*Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti*)', by opening factories in Fatih, Üsküdar and Beyoğlu. These factories attracted great attention and got more than ten thousand applications in the first week and had 300 employers only for cleaning the factory.[120] The war also witnessed the attendance of the women to the National Forces (*Kuvay-ı Milliye)* in person instead of providing supportive services. Many women's associations, with their women delegates and representational power, attended the National Congress after the end of the war.[121] In that sense, the women had a quite extended scope of activism in this era.

The First World War, which had a profound impact on how families, jobs, and welfare were organized and paved the way for the rise of militarized and feminized civic societies, was another period in which women were actively involved in politics. Social historical research on how families, jobs, and welfare were reorganized during wartime gave rise to the history of women in the First World War and soon showed that the twentieth-century total wars were anything from "entirely male enterprises." Research, both national and international in scope,

119 Nermin Abadan Unat, *Türk Toplumunda Kadın* (İstanbul: Türk Sosyal Bilimler Derneği, 1982), 11.

120 Zafer Toprak, *Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti (1916-1923)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 69.

121 Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap:Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği*, 93.

demonstrated the importance of women to the conduct of war, from their work in munitions plants and field hospitals to the restructuring of home life, whether in the public domains of social hygiene, education, and welfare or in the day-to-day administration of private homes and hearths during an extended and severe crisis. The scope of total war was expanded by new research on these subjects to include domestic civil society, which was successfully divided along class, gender, generational, and ethnic lines. The conduct of war became recognized as an "activity that ritually marked the gender of all members of a society" due to the fact that nation-states required men and women to perform separate but related responsibilities.[122]

Men and women were thus separately mobilized by the nation-states, but they were assigned to roles that were mutually exclusive in the waging of war. Nevertheless, it is questionable if the war improved women's liberation or if it was only emancipation on loan, which was revoked upon the soldiers' return. Approximately fifty percent more women were working in November 1918 than in July 1914. However, while some jobs were more popular than others, only a small number of jobs saw a major increase in "feminization" during the war. Nevertheless, there is currently no available data that sheds light on the number of women who started working for the first time. As a result, the history of women is not a simple one of liberty but rather one of rupture and restoration, referring to the overthrow and reinstatement of patriarchies as well as the affirmation and negation of emancipation. Therefore, it would be reasonable to conclude that many women entered a wide range of occupations during the First World War.[123]

From the Armistice years until the end of the twenties, especially in the big cities, there was a trauma of social dimensions. As a result of the long war years, the institution of the family suffered a major collapse. While the men perished at the front, the women were left behind miserable, hungry and forced to beg, and prostitution became a

122 Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship*, 65–127.

123 Canning, 42–46.

widespread disease. Women who lost their chastity were forced to abort their children with the most primitive methods, while on the other hand, a bourgeois 'modern' woman emerged in pursuit of a 'monden' life with a longing for debauchery. Young people pursued a nihilistic, uninhibited freedom, with irreparable consequences, especially for young girls.[124]

2.2.3 *The National Family and Women*

The dissolution of the empires after the First World War and the establishment of the nation-states brought about irrevocable changes in the traditional social structures and governance. The Republic of Turkey that is established after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire is a case in point of a societal transition from a traditional to a modern one. Established upon the basis of secularism and modernity, the newly established state, embarked on a total modernization and secularization project which is not limited to political and economic areas but also has implications in societal life and the daily lives of the people. Disregarding the Ottoman legacy meant the refusal of every traditional aspect which is assumed as the remnants of backwardness and failure. Even in the early stages of the modernization process, it was understood that the lifestyles and mental structures of the actors acting in this structure had to be transformed to establish a modern political structure.[125]

Reform initiatives of early republican elites focused on the modern family and its re-constitution in accordance with modern social standards and advocated Western values as the key reference for Turkish society's transformation. The family was supposed to transmit modern lifestyles, institutionalize emotional commitment to the emerging republic, and reorganize society around citizenship. These factors made the family a prime target of modernization and policy discussions in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. Nationalists, feminists, liberals, and Islamists participated in such

124 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat İnkılap ve Travma 1908-1928*, 35.

125 Aytaç, *Ailenin Serencamı Türkiye'de Modern Aile Fikrinin Oluşması*.

disputes.[126] By turning their face to the West, the state elites carried out a modern nation-building project with the imagination of a new nation, family, and citizenship that was assumed to construct a modern citizen instead of a subject of the king, and this citizen should be modernized and secularized by detaining beliefs, morals, values, and ethics to the private sphere. The ultimate goal this transformation process was expected to reach was the realization of the ideal of a community of citizens made up of autonomous and rational individuals who desired to lead a happy and peaceful life in their own homes.[127] By inventing a traditional past to refrain, this new family required the creation of a new citizen woman together with the invention of traditional family and society.[128] Imagining an urbanized nuclear family based on modernist reasoning, the elites created a misrepresentation of the traditional family by labeling it with the terms of extended family, child marriages, polygamy, agricultural society, veil, and high fertility rate. Although this idealization was challenged by asserting that the Ottoman rural society had a monogamist nuclear family structure to a large extent; the stereotypical images of the traditional family were associated with backwardness which should be eliminated.[129]

Hence, the "New Life" understanding, which has been on the agenda since the first years of the constitutional monarchy, gained strength with the Republican era. This was the main axis that brought the Republic to the crossroads of the Ottoman Empire. However, the state's capacity and financial possibilities were limited due to the post-war conditions to

126 Zafer Yılmaz, "'Strengthening the Family' Policies in Turkey: Managing the Social Question and Armoring Conservative–Neoliberal Populism," *Turkish Studies* 16, no. 3 (2015): 380, https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2015.1067863.

127 Aytaç, *Ailenin Serencamı Türkiye'de Modern Aile Fikrinin Oluşması*, 17.

128 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107295636.

129 Duben and Behar, *İstanbul Households Marriage, Family and Fertility 1880-1940*; Emilie A. Olson, "Duofocal Family Structure and an Alternative Model of Husband – Wife Relationship," in *Sex Roles, Family and Community in Turkey*, ed. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), 33–72.

realize a cultural revolution. The new nation-state was starting as poor and underpopulated where the population fell from 20 million to 13 million within today's borders.[130] Medical capacity was limited which caused a dramatic increase in child deaths. Due to the loss of adult males, poverty was increased together with prostitution. In the whole world, the loss of the adult generation because of wars made the intergenerational problem more pronounced. Young generations lost their trust in their parents and religious beliefs were weakened. Technological innovations and Taylorism initiated a revolutionary process in production that paved the way for new consumerism. In Turkey, these crises were felt more deeply due to the reform concerns of the Republic, longing for secular norms abandoning Eastern cultural norms, and transitioning to Western civilization. So, the incompatibility to reforms was experienced together with trauma.[131]

As society was shaken to a great extent, the family institution, which was the backbone of the order, collapsed, and moral problems came to the fore. Hence, the issues of family and women occupied the agenda of the intellectuals since the early modernization movements.[132] In a similar vein, these issues protected their privileged position in the new Republic. The Ottoman Empire went with its moral and cultural codes, and the new state had to build a new person. According to this frame, theology was positioned against reason and the role of the new secular state was to abolish the power of religious ideas, laws, values, and customs to enhance people to higher rationality by cleaning off superstitions.[133] Rejecting the past was not enough, it had to instill new values in his people and 'becoming modern' and 'raising the people to the level of

130 Frederic C. Shorter, "The Population of Turkey After the War of Independence," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17, no. 4 (1985): 421, https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074380002941X.

131 (Toprak 2017, 16)

132 Nükhet Sirman, "The Making of Familial Citizenship in Turkey," in *Citizenship in a Global World: European Questions and Turkish Experiences*, ed. Fuat Keyman and Ahmet İçduygu (London, 2013), 3, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203001288.

133 Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: A Hermeneutic Reconsideration* (Yale University Press, 1998), 179.

modern civilization' were the mottos.[134] The traditional, patriarchal extended family of Ottoman society was one of the institutions that revolutions aimed to change.[135]

As modernism grounds its existence based on traditional-modern dichotomy, Chatterjee, claims that the binary relationship between traditional and modern was also an indicator of a much stronger dichotomy between outer and inner.[136] Serpil Sancar adds that modernism, capitalism, and nationalism processes that describe the last two centuries of Turkish history by focusing on state and market-based strategies would remain incomplete without family-based regulatory strategies. While western oriented modernity has gained a very strong regulatory power with the feature of dividing human life into different areas such as society-state, family-society, private-public, civil-political, and personal-social and attributing different aspects to sociability; it also creates a division between family life and social life. In this share, family is defined as the sphere of spirituality and morality, sentimentality, together with biological needs and sentimental values whereas society is defined as the sphere of the material, namely the profit, conflict, violence, and power. These two opposite spheres are also constructed with gendered characteristics. The femininity of the family and private sphere creates a unity based on difference with the masculinity of the social sphere.[137] With this mindset, the family is excluded from the economic interest represented by society and the power to establish politics. Seeing that the Turkish modernization project is fictionalized upon the creation of a modern national Turkish family based upon the image of a contemporary Turkish woman, what happens is the repositioning of the women in the family by excluding them from the area of politics and economics.

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134 Yael Navaro Yashin, "'Evde Taylorizm': Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin İlk Yıllarında Ev İşinin Rasyonelleşmesi (1928-40)," *Toplum ve Bilim* 84, no. Spring (2000): 52.

135 Emre Kongar, *21. Yüzyılda Türkiye: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı*, 20th ed. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1999), 586.

136 (Chatterjee 1989, 625)

137 (Sancar 2004, 3)

The nationalist struggle mobilized and pushed many women into the public sphere as an integral part of the production sector. However, the war came to an end and men returned to their homes and wanted back their jobs. What the women required was not factories anymore but homes. The political actions also supported the return of women to their homes and nationalism gave women some reasons to go back to their domestic life. Women were at the heart of the modern nation-state building process; however, women's rights were not conceived as civic and individual rights but formulated within the borders of serving to social good. The feminist movement was limited within the elite's envisaged framework of liberation and the roles of women are assessed as 'new motherhood' and 'housewives' in a frame of a new ideal of femininity while constructing the home and the family. This type of ideal woman should be modest, hardworking, virtuous, Western-looking but observant to tradition in private, dedicated to the principles of the Republic, good wife, and self-sacrificing mother.[138] These orientations began to rein back the rapid development of women in every sector. [139]

In 1935, the population was about 13 million in Turkey; 6.2 million were men and 6.6 million were women. More than ten years after the establishment of the Republic, illiterate women were %90.2 of the society. One other dismal table shows that, in 1927, %96.16 percent of the women worked in agriculture, %1.85 in industry, %0.5 in commerce, %0.08 as public servants. In 1935, these numbers turned to %94.2 agriculture, % 3.9 in industry, %0.3 in commerce. As the numbers show, the literacy rate was very low, and the rate of women in the sectors that required an educated labor force.[140]

Being aware of this situation, in this period, the activist women dedicatedly supported the egalitarian ideas of the first wave of feminism

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138 Narınç Ataman, "Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu" (Ankara University, 1999), 90–92.

139 Elif Mahir Metinsoy, *Mütareke Dönemi İstanbul'unda Moda ve Kadın, 1918-1923* (İstanbul: Libra, 2014), 153.

140 Emel Doğramacı, *Türkiye'de Kadının Dünü ve Bugünü* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 1992), 122.

and suffrage rights. They had the self-confidence that originated from their economic and political participation in the freedom fights and demanded their share after the victory. This process was followed by the establishment of the Republican Women's Party with progressive political and economic demands in 1923; and the establishment of the Women's Union in 1924. However, during the process of consolidating the centralized state, the regime thought the society was not ready for the revolution of women and put an end to these women's movements. After the extinguishment of the indigenous women's movement, in 1935, the state declared the suffrage rights of women. Moreover, many schools were opened, and women were supported in social life. However, in economic terms, women's positioning in the economic system showed continuity with the late Ottoman Empire. However, the promises of egalitarianism did not show up in the economic sphere.

2.2.4 *Early Family Policies and the State-led Feminism*

Population policies were regarded as one of the most essential components of contemporary nation-state construction during the early Republican period. Turkey's demographic structure was influenced by both natural population growth and compelled migration beginning in 1923. In addition to promoting population growth, the state implemented policies that were designed to reconstruct the socio-economic framework. The late Ottoman period's conflicts and migrations resulted in significant population losses during the early Republican period. The demographic structure was directly impacted by the population exchange between Turkey and Greece, which occurred within the framework of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). In order to establish a robust nation-state, the Republican administration implemented policies that promoted population expansion. In this context, laws were implemented to promote population growth, and social policies were established to promote fertility. While discussing the influence of population policies on family structure and gender roles in Turkey, Ferhunde Özbay underscores the state's endeavors to fortify the family

from a young age. The modern family structure was established by the 1926 Turkish Civil Code, which guaranteed that women had the same legal rights as men. Nevertheless, the primary function of women during this era was to define their position within the family and their role as mothers.[141] Population policies implemented in the early period of the Republic were one of the cornerstones of nation-state building. The state both encouraged population growth and tried to shape the demographic structure in line with its own ideological framework.

The subject of family planning is principally the women whose lives are directly affected by changing policies that usually end up with the repositioning of the women at home, at the market, and in society and the target was the liberation of women.[142] To disconnect from the past, a legal revolution, that brought new rights to women for a more egalitarian and harmonious family life, began. The Swiss Civil Code was accepted, and women gained political, economic, and social rights.[143] However, these state-led modernization movements controlled by the elites did not evolve because of demands originating within society and let women's movements to determine their agenda, but they were imposed from above.[144] Hence, the liberalization movements were limited within elites' envisaged framework.[145]

The value of the family as an institution and the repositioning of women in a nation-state, stems from production of populations. There is not only a health concern but also a moral aim to keep the citizens under control behind the state's incentives for fertility to take place especially within the family. Since the definition of a good citizen requires one to respect the law as well as to respect his social duties and therefore to be

141 Ferhunde Özbay, *Dünden Bugüne Aile, Kent ve Nüfus* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), www.iletisim.com.tr.

142 (Bilge Zafer, 1; Kongar 1999, 586)

143 Nermin Abadan-Unat, "The Modernization of Turkish Women," *The Middle East Journal* 32, no. 3 (1978): 291–306; Tezer Taşkıran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları* (Ankara: Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1973).

144 Jenny B. White, "State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman," *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2017): 145–59.

145 Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap:Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği*.

responsible to his family, raising good sons or good citizens is not considered as two different projects on the basis of nationalist ideology. While good citizenship for women means motherhood, for men this status corresponds to the father who has a job to support his family. In countries where modernization movement comes top-down like Turkey, ensuring the legitimate ground of coexistence of the people under the roof of a single nation is the state's duty. At this stage, the state resorts to systematic propaganda or political socialization through institutions for the establishment of national consciousness. By this way, the moral structure of the society is ensured by the solidarity between the family members.[146]

Women were undergoing a transformation in line with the progress of the country and were part of the revolution.[147] Consequently, the new roles of women were defined as new motherhood and housewives in a frame of a new ideal of femininity while constructing the home and the family. Women operated as political actors only to the extent that they performed sexual and reproductive rather than social or political roles. According to Miller, the sexual and reproductive nature of citizenship is situated in the modern state's relentless inclusion.[148] This new positioning of women as mother and wife also drew the line of realm of freedom.

Both Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Kadıoğlu define the republican woman who is a citizen before being an individual. This type of woman is modest, hardworking, faithful, Western looking but observant to tradition in private, dedicated to the principles of the Republic, good wife, and self-sacrificing mother. In that sense, the image of Kemalist woman reflects the pragmatism of Kemalist ideology and it occurs as a combination of confounding images. An educated businesswoman at work; organizer woman that has social mobility at social clubs, associations, and organizations; a good wife and mother that is aware of

146 (Şerifsoy 2000, 157)

147 Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat İnkılap ve Travma 1908-1928*, 128.

148 Ruth A. Miller, "Rights, Reproduction, Sexuality, and Citizenship in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey," *Signs* 32, no. 2 (2007): 349, https://doi.org/10.1086/508218.

her duties at home; a woman who has biologic function; a feminine woman that pleases her husband at parties and balls.[149] Reproduction turned into a political duty as one of the most basic peculiarity of citizenship; in other words, motherhood made identical to citizenship. The house and the family occupied central places in cultural spaces that would become modernized. In fact, idealizing the modern Turkish household was complementary to the modern nation-state designs of Turkish nationalists. As opposed to the primitive and traditional methods of the old generations, the authors reported more scientific and modern housework methods.[150] In short, the republican women were idealized as well-educated, well-behaved daughters of the Kemalist fathers. These daughters were educated by modern methods, and they can be socialized in men's society. In this context, the women were emancipated by reformist laws but remained unliberated in practice.[151] However, it should also be noted that this ideal determined by the state was not an ideal embraced by all segments of society, and over time it came to exclude women from segments of society who did not conform to this standardization.

2.2.5 *Economic Development and the Happy Family*

Governments adopted population growth as official view to strengthen the new republic. With the General Health Protection Law enacted in the 1930s, the mission of increasing the population was given to the Ministry of Health and Social. Importing, domestic production and sale and use of all kinds of contraceptive and abortion drugs, and equipment were prohibited. Providing information on this matter was prevented and it was a crime to abort intentionally. Over time, the population increased rapidly. On the other hand, health, education, housing, and similar

149 Ayşe Kadıoğlu, *Zaman Lekesi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006), 31.

150 Yashin, "'Evde Taylorizm': Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin İlk Yıllarında Ev İşinin Rasyonelleşmesi (1928-40)."

151 Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (October 26, 1987): 330, https://doi.org/10.2307/3177804.

services remained far from meeting the needs of the society.[152] Thousands of women died of miscarriage on their own, became disabled, worn out due to excessive births and became ill especially in rural areas.[153]

The slogan of the early republican government was "tough, cheerful and populated Turkey". However, by the 1960s, it became a hungry, unhappy, and crowded country.[154] Therefore, in 1965, the new ideal was achieving economic development through lowering the fertility rate. Through legislating the Law on Population Planning numbered 557, which constitutes a turning point in population policies, propaganda regarding the import, distribution and sale of contraceptive tools and drugs was legalized, the way for abortion was paved, and the General Directorate of Population Planning of the Ministry of Health, the implementing unit of the New Population Policy, was established. For the ideal family, fertility was not encouraged but reduced. The "happy" family was also a Western-looking nuclear family; but now few children were targeted instead of many. Happiness meant quality of life. Families could improve their quality of life by having as many children as they could take care of and raise well. In summary, few children were necessary for the happiness of the family, and the welfare of the state.[155]

Until the emergence of leftism and Islamism as contestant frames to suppress the potentially feminist voices in the 1970s, republican patriarchy claimed a monopoly over women's issues.[156] It was only after the 1980 coup d'e´tat that women started to voice their demands from an independent feminist perspective. Beginning with the 1980s, the

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152 Kongar, *21. Yüzyılda Türkiye: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı*, 596.

153 Özbay, *Dünden Bugüne Aile, Kent ve Nüfus*, 89; Kongar, *21. Yüzyılda Türkiye: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı*.

154 Ferhunde Özbay and Frederic C Shorter, "TURKEY: Changes in Birth Control Practices, 1963 to 1968" 1, no. 51 (1970): 1–7; TUSİAD, *Türkiye'nin Fırsat Penceresi: Demografik Dönüşüm ve İzdüşümleri* (İstanbul, 1999).

155 Özbay, "Demografik Dönüşüm Sürecinde İktidar, Kadın ve Aile," 108.

156 Simten Coşar and Metin Yeğenoğlu, "New Grounds for Patriarchy in Turkey? Gender Policy in the Age of AKP," *South European Society and Politics*, 2011, 558, https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2011.571919.

Islamists began to adopt identity politics with a demand to exist in the public sphere.[157] Moreover, the 1980s were a milestone for economic liberalization compatible with the neoliberal policies of the world. The articulation of neoliberal policies with the government-backed rise of Islamic capital resulted in the emergence of a new Islamist bourgeois class and a change in Islamists' relationship with the state. One other result of this transformation was the emergence of new Islamist intellectuals accompanying to bourgeoisie, and consequently new lifestyles.

Diverging from the earlier era, the Islamist intelligentsia of the 1980s began to criticize secular values and the reformist project of Turkish modernization. The loss of Islamic essence and departure from the true path of Islam were highly debated issues among the Islamist groups that blame Westernization and secularization for this corruption. Media, publishing, and literature peaked in this era as crucial tools to organize mass movements through daily newspapers, weekly and monthly journals, private radio and TV channels, and movie and cartoon agencies.[158] Islamist intellectuals were strongly opposing the hegemony of the West and modernity in daily lives, and they earnestly warned the Muslim people to be cautious about the tricks of modernity, capitalism, and moral decline.

2.2.6 *Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and the Sacralized Family*

The JDP's emergence out of a split within Islamist politics was marked by its intention to refashion itself as a 'conservative democrat' party. At the same time, it was keen to differentiate its interpretation of conservatism from more conventional forms by embracing reform and change, and emphasizing a commitment to a neoliberal economic vision, while also

157 Diner and Toktaş, "Waves of Feminism in Turkey: Kemalist, Islamist and Kurdish Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization."

158 Duman, "Türkiye'de İslamcı Yayıncılık"; Kenan Çayır, *Islamic Literature in Contemporary Turkey: From Epic to Novel* (England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

reiterating the importance of traditional and national values.[159] This ideological positioning was more like American neoconservatism, which adopts social and economic modernity with a future-oriented rhetoric while maintaining that it 'needs to be embedded in the traditional and religious values and morality of the society'.[160]

With the rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in 2002, neoliberal policies come to a climax which built its road upon conservative politics. The articulation of neoliberal policies with the government-backed rise of capital resulted in the emergence of a new conservative bourgeois class and a change in conservatives' relationship with the state. Unlike pre-1980s, the times when capitalism was declared as an arch enemy based upon its contradictory character with religious Islamist values, contemporary conservatives adopted the image of, secular, consumerist, and individualized. Despite their seemingly irreconcilable differences, how the conservatives adopt neoliberal policies? Cihan Tuğal's answer, absorbing the Islamic challenge to capitalism post-2000 and Islamist supporters began incorporating neoliberalism and values of modernity so smoothly, as opposed to the Islamism's historical disaffection of the Western capitalist ideology.[161]

Melinda Cooper claims that, the union of neoliberals and social conservatives is more than merely political; it reflects a shared, if sometimes disavowed, understanding that the market does not supply its own pre-requisites but requires the family as a necessary support.[162] The neoliberalization of economic and social policies has been accompanied by the strengthening of their conservative aspects in many

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159 Sevgi Adak, "Grassroots Familialism? NGO Mobilization and Neoconservatism in Contemporary Turkey," *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 33 (September 28, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4000/EJTS.7644.

160 Kürşad Ertuğrul, "AKP's Neo-Conservatism and Politics of Otherness in Europe-Turkey Relations," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 46 (2012): 165, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0896634600001540.

161 Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009).

162 Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (Zone Books, 2017).

countries and combined effects of neoliberalism and neoconservatism on feminist studies has discussed in literature.[163]

During two decades of rule, the family has always been a fundamental constituent of the conservative Justice and Development Party. Thus, in the last few years, the solidarity of the family has been underlined heavily and represented as the treasure of the nation which ensures the survival of the country and became the target of enemies. Moreover, family is assumed as power of the nation, core of the civilizations and strengthening the families is the only way to maintain a strong state and a peaceful society.[164] Together with the economic losses, the undertone denouncements upsurge in the conservative groups and made inroads to severe self-critiques. According to conservative segment, this transformation had unfavorable unintended consequences in terms of moral values, family structure, rising devoted generations and solidarity of the society. In this atmosphere, moral values and family come into prominence as effective remedies to consolidate the solidarity of the people.

In Turkey, "family values" discourse, frequently laced with religious references, has become the trademark of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) since it came to power in 2002. The JDP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's reference to "family values" is based on their larger understanding of the family's crucial role in addressing Turkey's political and economic issues in the new millennium. Since its establishment in 2001, the JDP has made "strengthening the family" the focal point of its social policy agenda. According to its party policy, Turkish people owe their "survival as a nation" to their "strong family structure", which "constitutes the foundation of society" and "despite all the negative

163 Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (2006): 690–714; Ann Porter, "Neo-Conservatism, Neo-Liberalism and Canadian Social Policy: Challenges for Feminism," *Canadian Woman Studies* 29 (2012).

164 "Family Council Discusses the State of Family," *Daily Sabah*, May 3, 2019; "Başkan Erdoğan: Aile Yapımızı Sarsmaya Yönelik Saldırılar Altındayız," *Sabah Gazetesi*, March 8, 2019.

developments and economic problems." Strengthening the family was at the core of its social policy vision since its founding. Accordingly, strengthening the family equates with strengthening the nation likewise governing the family equates with governing the nation.[165] In other words, the JDP's familialism was in accordance with a neoconservative authoritarian agenda as it facilitated the transformation of the Turkish state. Several critical episodes have resulted in the integration of women's rights concerns into family policies, as viewed through the lens of the JDP's gender politics. In 2010, the symbolic turning point occurred when Prime Minister Erdoğan declared that he did not believe in gender equality, but rather in the divinely ordained differences – and therefore roles – between men and women. This was followed by a series of pro-natalist family policies that encouraged women to have a minimum of three children, an attempt to ban abortion in 2012, which has since significantly restricted access to abortion in practice, and attacks on the penal code with respect to provisions for child abuse, child marriages, and sexual assault.[166]

The institution of family is sanctified by today's government to fulfill its duties to neoliberalism, neoconservatism and nationalism. To regulate intimacy and the family, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, under Turkey's neoconservative government, deploys state-employed religious functionaries to provide citizens with advice and guidance on family life despite the assumed separation of religion and politics. [167] When it comes to religious discourses on gender and sexuality, as well as the government's endeavor to regulate the family with the help of The Directorate of Religious Affairs, the international media and secularist circles in Turkey tend to dismiss these trends as signs of a growing Islamization. Nevertheless, for Hikmet Kocamaner, this explanation is

165 Kocamaner, "The Politics of Family Values in Erdogan's New Turkey," 36–37.

166 Adak, "Grassroots Familialism? NGO Mobilization and Neoconservatism in Contemporary Turkey."

167 Hikmet Kocamaner, "Regulating the Family through Religion: Secularism, Islam, and the Politics of the Family in Contemporary Turkey," *American Ethnologist* 46, no. 4 (2019): 495, https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12836.

insufficient because it ignores the role of religious discourses, rationales, and religiously driven groups in family politics in most of the contemporary world administered by secular governments.

Regarding Turkey, the state recruit religious bureaucrats to advise Sunni Muslim citizens on family-related issues through The Directorate of Religious Affairs, an office of the Turkish government. These Islamic authorities have been instrumental in extending state control to the families of the majority faith by fostering kinship-related and state-approved sensibilities and attitudes. This specific integration of religion and government authority is not a rare occurrence. In fact, despite the widespread belief that religion and politics should be kept apart, the Turkish situation highlights a fundamental contradiction in secular governance: the persistence of religious influence in family politics. To match intimate relationships and family dynamics with secular laws and expertise, as well as with biopolitical rationalities, secular regimes may appropriate religious discourses and authority.[168]

The government advocates for pro-natalist population policies because it believes that population increase is essential for economic success: a larger and younger labor force attracts more foreign investment. It contributes to Turkey's competitive advantage in the global market. Therefore, the government has developed a variety of financial inducements and other targeted policies to encourage larger families. Economic recessions, rural-to-urban migration, the shift from extended to nuclear families, and rising divorce rates have all harmed the family's care giving roles in recent decades. However, rather than addressing these changes through national social welfare policy, the government has attempted to revitalize the family as the primary site of care giving by providing direct financial and social service support to families who home-care their elderly, disabled, and children who were previously dependent on state care. In recent years, targeted help has made up the vast majority of welfare provisions. By delegating care to

168 Kocamaner, "Strengthening the Family through Television: Islamic Broadcasting, Secularism, and the Politics of Responsibility in Turkey"; Kocamaner, "The Politics of Family Values in Erdogan's New Turkey."

families, the government decreases spending on care for its most vulnerable residents, as institutional care is more expensive than these little monetary payments.[169] Başak Akkan calls this process 'sacred familialism' in which the state places care on the family and makes women the main caregivers. She claims that Turkish welfare policies are family-based and support family-based care rather than institutionalization. She claims that women are expected to perform caregiving at home and in public, but this is not obvious. Conservative social policies and a language that limited women to mother and wife were strengthened during the JDP. Women either work low-wage or unpaid care due to poor institutional care services. Akkan stresses that Turkish care policies hinder women's work and are unequal. She believes caring should be a family and society obligation.

Berna Yazıcı also argues that the family is the major source of social security, with the state delegating this responsibility to families. This arrangement places an additional load on the family system, both economically and socially, and reduces the state's role in providing social services. By doing so, the government has transitioned from robust social programs to a system where the family is expected to shoulder the main responsibility for welfare provision. Moreover, she argues that focusing on the family has significant implications for gender roles, individual liberty, and societal equality. This emphasis on family may support traditional family patterns and gender roles, maintaining inequities between men and women.[170]

The family is expected to perform various vital responsibilities such as preservation of the core values of the society and maintain the pass down of these values to new generations; and raising the future generations of the country who will be the warrant of a strong and peaceful society. These slogans of strong family-strong society are promoted to legitimize its welfare politics which attempts at shifting social care from state to familial sources and essentially to women as

169 Kocamaner, "The Politics of Family Values in Erdogan's New Turkey," 38.

170 Yazıcı, "The Return to the Family: Welfare, State, and Politics of the Family in Turkey."

primary care givers.[171] The idiom of sanctity of the family, requires a family that creates social bonds to provide service to disabled and aged members, babies, and children, that eventually relieves the state from an economic burden. Although it applies to religious and traditional discourse, this new family ideal should not be considered as a retreat, but it is the product of the neoliberal policies economically and neoconservatism culturally.

Media is a crucial mediator to spread familial ideals to the society. Since broadcasting was liberalized in the 1990s, Turkey has seen an increase in the number of Islamic television networks. The programming on these TV stations was initially primarily theological in nature, with shows focusing on the doctrinal, scriptural, and liturgical aspects of Islam. Recently, however, they have begun to produce family-friendly entertainment programs as well as shows targeted at "strengthening the family." Islamic broadcasters consider their family-focused programming to be civil initiatives in response to what they regard as the deterioration of the "moral fabric of the family" and the depreciation of "family values" in modern Turkish society. These television series provide audiences with counsel and approaches to assist people acquire ethical dispositions, knowledge, and skills, allowing them to embrace greater autonomy and responsibility for governing their families. The anthropology of Islamic media has mostly focused on the alternative or oppositional nature of such media in terms of how they circulate and promote discourses, practices, and ethical sensibilities that are incompatible with secular standards and national state power. Such an approach is insufficient to describe Islamic television in Turkey, where Islamic broadcasters clearly identify their position as supporting the state in combating societal problems through their content. Furthermore, the discourses and sensibilities pushed on television are consistent with the nation-state's biopolitical concerns as well as growing governance rationalities. While Islamic television professionals' self-described mission to "strengthen the family" stems from a

171 Yazıcı.

religiously inspired moral imperative to provide service, it also demonstrates their internalization of neoliberal governance rationalities that promote the responsibility of non-governmental actors for providing social services, as well as individuals for supporting and caring for their family members.[172]

The government is not the only institution who calls attention to the importance of the family; tens of non-governmental organizations were established in the past few years to protect the family together with the active participations and contributions of the prominent figures, intellectuals, activists, writers, and volunteers of the conservative segment of society. In order to strengthen this ideal family, Islamic broadcasters started producing family-friendly entertainment programs and shows. Islamic TV channels intend to their family-focused programming as civil initiatives against what they see as the increasing corrosion of the "moral fabric of the family" and weakening of family values in the society.[173] "Paternalistic Benevolence" explains the understanding that the state and male authority have a protective and benevolent attitude towards women, but that this attitude makes women dependent.

Apart from family politics, in the last 20 years, many steps have been taken to empower women, eliminate discrimination against women and transform their disadvantaged position in social, cultural, economic, political and social spheres into an advantage through legislation and reforms. These steps include women's rights, individual and social empowerment, increasing their effectiveness in decision-making mechanisms, improving the quality of their education, ensuring positive discrimination and increasing their employment. Positive discrimination for women has been enshrined in basic legislation, particularly in the Constitution, while egalitarian reforms have been introduced in basic laws such as the Civil Code, the Labor Code and the Turkish Penal Code,

172 Kocamaner, "Regulating the Family through Religion: Secularism, Islam, and the Politics of the Family in Contemporary Turkey," 665–66.

173 Kocamaner, "Strengthening the Family through Television: Islamic Broadcasting, Secularism, and the Politics of Responsibility in Turkey."

which respect the principle of equal opportunities for women and men and address violence against women with a zero-tolerance approach.

Education policies are another domain to empower women. The two main indicators of education are school enrollment and literacy rates. Over the past 20 years, there have been significant increases in both school enrollment and literacy rates. While the enrollment rate of girls in primary education was 87.34 percent in the 2002-2003 academic year, the net enrollment rate of girls in primary education increased to 93.4 percent by 2022-2023.[174] While the enrollment rate of girls in secondary education was 45 percent in the 2002-2003 academic year, this rate increased to 91.2 percent in 2022-2023.[175] While in 2002, the female literacy rate among the population aged 6 years and above was 79.9 percent, this rate increased to 96 percent in 2023.[176]

Another topic as important as education is health. Maternal and child health has an important place in health policies. In Turkey, there have been very positive changes and progress in maternal and infant health indicators in the last 20 years. According to statistics published annually by the Ministry of Health, in 2021, the birth rate in health institutions was 97.5% and the rate of receiving prenatal care was 99.7%.[177] Women's active participation in economic and social life is another determiner that shows increasing women's employment, women having professions and jobs, working, producing and earning. While the female labor force participation rate increased from 27.9% to 35.7%, the female employment rate increased from 25.3% to 30.5%, the rate of women working informally decreased from 72.5% to 32.5% between years 2002-2022.[178]

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174 TÜİK, "İstatistiklerle Çocuk," 2024, https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Cocuk-2023-53679#:~:text=Beş yaşındaki çocukların net okullaşma oranı %85%2C0 oldu&text=Beş yaş net okullaşma oranı,için %84%2C7 oldu.

175 TÜİK.

176 TÜİK, "Ulusal Eğitim İstatistikleri," 2024, https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Ulusal-Egitim-Istatistikleri-2023-53444.

177 "Türkiye'de Kadın" (Ankara, 2023).

178 "Türkiye'de Kadın."

On the one hand, the women are positioned in the families by attaining certain roles with patriarchal interventions, on the other hand, empowering women is on the agenda. This contradictory situation is referred as 'patchwork politics' by Simten Coşar. Observing that the political landscape has become increasingly fragmented and ideologically inconsistent in Turkey she uses the concept of patchwork politics which is reflected in the way different political parties and actors engage in shifting alliances and adopt policies that are not necessarily aligned with a consistent ideological stance but are instead driven by immediate political gains or pressures. Coşar's analysis highlights how this type of politics can lead to instability, as the lack of a coherent vision or strategy makes it difficult for political actors to maintain long-term support or to govern effectively. It also complicates the relationship between the state and its citizens, as the shifting nature of political commitments and alliances creates uncertainty and a sense of unpredictability in governance. Deniz Kandiyoti on the other hand, uses the concept of "emancipated but unliberated", expresses that although women have gained certain rights, social and cultural structures have not made them fully free.[179]

In other respects, Ayşe Buğra uses the concept of "Wollstonecraft Dilemma" as a framework to explore how women's roles as workers and caregivers are often seen as incompatible and how this tension is managed or exacerbated by the state's policies and ideological stances. The "Wollstonecraft Dilemma" refers to the conflicting expectations placed on women to be both economically independent through paid employment and to fulfill their traditional roles as primary caregivers in the family. This dilemma, named after the early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, highlights the difficulties women face in balancing work and family life, a challenge that is often exacerbated by state policies and societal norms. Buğra discusses the rise of conservative liberalism in Turkey, particularly under the JDP. This ideology combines free-market economic policies with conservative social values. In the context of female employment, this means that while women are encouraged to participate in the labor market, they are also expected to

179 Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case."

adhere to traditional gender roles that prioritize their responsibilities as mothers and wives. This dual expectation creates a tension for women, as they are pressured to contribute to the economy while also being expected to maintain their traditional roles in the family.[180]

The historical and political process shows that, family is not merely an institution in which modernization policies put into practice and eventually transform it. Family is also a 'priviledged subject' positioned in the discursive and practical configuration of Turkish state–society relations Consequently, it is deceptive to perceive the family just as a straight conduit for top-down governmental initiatives. Conversely, the family emerged as a distinct entity, for which advocacy and action in the political sphere or the pursuit of equitable access to public resources has consistently been regarded as legitimate. The family's unique function has also influenced collective policy initiatives aimed at reconciling the paternalistic structure of families with that of the state. Continuity between familial and official authority will be established to regulate Turkish society towards Westernization, modernization, and subsequently conservative principles.

180 Ayse Bugra, "Revisiting the Wollstonecraft Dilemma in the Context of Conservative Liberalism: The Case of Female Employment in Turkey," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 21, no. 1 (2021): 148–66.

3

Family as a Realm of Necessities

> *Family is very important. Because everything is given in the family. The family is the mountain of man. A harbor of refuge. It really is. But I call the family people who love unconditionally, for better or worse, but no matter what. Unconditionally.*
>
> – Halime, *45*

The results of the field research support a three-tiered concept of family. Based on this, the remaining thesis sections will be discussed in three separate chapters. This chapter addresses the issue of building the framework and foundation of the family. In other words, it explores how this foundation, seen as a vital component of the family and its constitution, is formed. Focusing on the influence of the family on creating an individual's identity and values, this chapter examines the process leading up to forming one's own family. Family background and identity construction in the acquisition of values, religious life, social

environment, and education; acquiring a profession; the formation of convictions about the roles of femininity and masculinity; considerations about the family; and the steps taken for the family to be established and the experiences gained in this process will be the subject of this chapter. This chapter will focus on the intimate and reliable foundation on which one builds oneself.

Realm of necessities refers to the basic conditions and resources required for human survival and well-being. It encompasses both physical and social needs. Physical needs can be roughly defined as food, shelter, sleep, access to healthcare, clean environment, and protection from harm whereas social needs are social connections like family, friends, and society; economic security such as employment, income and financial stability, and cultural social participation such as arts and recreation. Considering social justice realm of necessities refers ensuring that everyone has access to the basic necessities of life, and in terms of social policy, the concern is designing programs that address social problems, such as homelessness and hunger. It's important to note that the specific needs and resources considered essential can vary across cultures and historical periods. However, the underlying concept of the "realm of necessities" remains a fundamental concern in the social sciences.

Adam Smith, often considered the father of modern economics, wrote extensively about the concept of needs in his foundational work "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations," published in 1776. Smith's idea of needs focuses on the products and services required for an individual to sustain an acceptable standard of life in their community. Smith defines necessities as those needed not only for survival but also for an individual to seem respectable in society. This concept extends beyond basic survival necessities (such as food, housing, and clothing) to encompass what is considered socially necessary. Smith highlights that what constitutes a necessity varies greatly between societies and might alter over time within the same civilization.[181] Smith

181 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (İstanbul: Karbon Kitaplar, 2016), 11–17.

claims that extending what is needed causes and boosts economic growth. More prosperous societies continually broaden the list of necessary products and services as their people can buy more than just the necessities of life. As demand for more goods and services rises, economic growth and living standards improve. Smith adds a moral and ethical component to economic discourse by including socially determined demands in his analysis. It shows how social norms and economic policy ensure that everyone can live a decent life.

To put it simply, Adam Smith's definition of necessities includes a social component that represents the minimal standards of living acceptable in a community and the basic needs for survival. This comprehensive view highlights the interaction of economics, social norms, and ethical issues, demonstrating how these factors affect labor markets, pay decisions, and economic policy.

On the other hand, the term "realm of necessity" is primarily associated with Marxist theory to define the set of economic conditions and material limits that influence human civilization. This concept is profoundly ingrained in the dichotomy between what Karl Marx called the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom." Marx used these terms to describe two distinct spheres of human existence under capitalism. The realm of necessity refers to the economic activity that is required for human survival and societal function. It encompasses all the actions related to generating commodities and services needed to meet fundamental human necessities such as food, housing, and clothes. Individuals in this domain are driven to work to support themselves and their communities. Economic limits, technological capabilities, and resource availability frequently define the form of necessary jobs. This work is, by definition, mandatory because it is needed for survival. In contrast to the realm of necessity, freedom is envisioned as a sphere in which individuals engage in activities willingly and for personal fulfillment beyond basic survival necessities.

Marx believed that as society advanced technologically and economically, more human activity would shift from necessity to freedom, lowering time spent on mandatory labor and boosting

opportunities for personal and societal fulfillment.[182] The interaction of two realms is fundamental to Marxist thinking about the evolution of human societies and the possibility of creating a communist future in which the constraints of obligatory work are minimized while freedom is enhanced. This concept also critiques capitalism, which Marx claims unnecessarily confines human action to the sphere of need due to its exploitative nature and unequal distribution of resources and power.

3.1 The Realm of Necessities in Family Studies

Borrowing from Smith and Marx, within the scope of this study, I define this area, which Marx described as the minimum economic activity and needs necessary for a person to live, as the area of basic beliefs and values required for the establishment and continuity of a family. As a realm of necessities, family is, in a sense, the field of family constants, red lines, or the must-haves. A constitution that determines the conditions for the establishment, continuity, and dissolution of the family. The fixed end of the compass. For this reason, I define it as a first step where the minimum necessities are defined. As the cornerstone of family life, the realm of necessities stands for the fundamental institutions, guidelines, and duties that provide consistency and stability. When the family is considered as a meaningful whole, as a constituted entity, the constitutive actors of this entity determine the characteristics of the constitutive elements.

Individuals have a crucial role in this layer since their interactions and behaviors support the fundamental roles of the family. This layer shapes individual behaviors and expectations in accordance with what is required to preserve the family unit. People adopt particular, frequently predetermined positions in the realm of necessities in accordance with societal, cultural, and familial conventions. Because of its roots in tradition and general resistance to change, these positions give the

182 Karl Marx, *Capital A Critique of Political Economy Volume III*, ed. Friedrich Engels (New York: International Publishers, 2010), 593.

family a sense of stability and order. In this layer, individuals have to strike a balance between their obligations to their families and their personal demands. This realm places a higher priority on group stability, which frequently calls for personal compromises or sacrifices. People are socialized into their positions and learn the standards and expectations that govern their behavior in the family within the realm of necessity. People are essential preserving the family's foundation because they comply with their duties, responsibilities, and norms. In the realm of necessities, the individual, who will also come out of a family existence and build a new one, has accumulated before this new construction process.

3.2 Crafting Selfhood and Navigating Existential Necessities

Identity formation and the meeting of existential needs are central processes in human development, deeply interwoven with family life. Families are the basic social units within which individuals develop their identity and meet their fundamental existential needs, such as purpose, belonging, and meaning. These processes evolve dynamically, influenced by familial interactions, societal norms, and individual experiences. Family is an entirely unique relationship context that forms identity processes and content. At least in part, belonging to a family shapes an individual's identity. Furthermore, the family setting affects other facets of a person's identity in addition to how their personal identity as a family member develops. The family is not a neutral setting for the formation of identity.[183] On the contrary, identity formation is a core developmental task influenced by family environment.[184]

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183 Eugenia Scabini and Claudia Manzi, "Family Processes and Identity," in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, ed. Seth J. Schwartz, Koen Luyckx, and Vivian L. Vignoles (NY: Springer New York, 2011), 565, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-7988-9_23.

184 Harold D. Grotevant and Catherine R. Cooper, "Individuation in Family Relationships: A Perspective on Individual Differences in the Development of Identity and Role-Taking Skill in Adolescence," *Human Development* 29, no. 2 (1986): 82.

This realm is evaluated as a tripartite structure. The first stage is realm of necessities where women focus on shaping their individual identity and fulfilling their fundamental needs. This realm addresses physical, emotional, and social needs. It is a process of self-discovery, establishing independence, and setting personal boundaries. The primary aim during this stage is survival, self-preservation, and understanding one's value. It lays the foundation for roles that women may take on within the family later. Building identity and values, pursuing education, setting career goals, and creating a personal living space. This stage also introduces women's early perceptions of family and marriage, influenced by their childhood, societal norms, and cultural expectations. These perceptions shape their dreams and expectations about forming their own families.

The process of forming one's own values is a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors. This process usually begins in childhood and adolescence, but it is a dynamic process that continues throughout life. Personal values are shaped by the individual's environment, experiences, and beliefs. Different essential components influence this process. Accordingly, an individual's self-concept is not purely personal but is also deeply embedded in their social relationships and group memberships. This perspective of the collective aspect of the self emphasizes the interdependence between the self and the social environment. The collective self refers to the part of an individual's self-concept derived from membership in social groups, primarily families. The aspect of a person's self-concept that results from belonging to social groupings is known as the collective self.[185] This includes the values, norms, and objectives of the organizations to which they belong, which influence how people behave and view themselves.

In terms of identity building, performative theory suggests that identities are not innate or fixed, but are constructed through repeated actions, behaviors, and performances. This perspective emphasizes that

185 Anthony G. Greenwald and Anthony R. Pratkanis, "The Self," in *Handbook of Social Cognition*, ed. Robert S. Wyer Jr. and Thomas K. Srull, 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 1984), 158.

identities are actively created and maintained through social interactions and cultural practices.

The key aspects of performative theory in identity building include, firstly, repetition, which means identities are formed through the repetition of specific behaviors and actions over time. The second aspect is social context. The performance of identity is shaped by social norms, expectations, and cultural contexts. The third aspect is the degree of agency individuals have to perform their identities, although this is constrained by social structures. The last aspect is fluidity which presupposes that, identities are not static but can change and evolve through different performances.

In value building, performative theory highlights how values are not simply abstract concepts but are enacted and reinforced through social practices. This approach suggests that values are embodied, contextual, relational, and performative. Embodied means values are expressed through bodily actions and behaviors. They are contextual because the meaning and expression of values can vary depending on the social and cultural context. Values are negotiated and reinforced through interactions with others and thus they are relational. Values gain meaning and significance through their repeated performance in everyday life, which makes them performative.

From the field study, it is observed that the interviewees touched on the effects of virtuous attitudes and behaviors on their lives rather than the information they received from their families. Aysel is, 60-year-old religious scholar mentions the role of her parents' wisdom and how their wisdom set an example in her life.

> I actually took the life of my parents as a very good example. My parents were not scholars, but they were wise people. They taught us very good values and channeled us, all three siblings to very good schools. I always thought that I could not be as good as my parents. We are supposedly more educated than them, but being a scholar is not enough. It is much better to be wise. (Aysel, 60)

When asked where to get her first education, 40-year-old Melek says, she did not go to courses or kindergarten, but role modelled her parents.

> Learned from the family. I didn't get anything from school. I didn't go to kindergarten. I went straight to primary school. We had knowledge acquired by listening from my parents. My mother is veiled, my all family pray and do ablution. (Melek, 40)

Mentioning her first value education, she stresses how religious her parents were. That is what she meant by the value formation.

Not only parents but also grandparents are very influential in terms of moral education. As can be seen from this quotation, the passing down of values through generations, together with the role of the grandparents in identity shaping, forms a great part of family dynamics and individual development. The role of grandparents can be unique in intergenerational relationships for the conduit of cultural, moral, and social values that guide identity formation in younger persons. Grandparents embody certain values, such as resilience, generosity, or religious practices, which grandchildren may adopt through observation and role modelling. One of the interviewees, Halime, explained how her grandparents raised her after her mother passed away and became her nuclear family. In case of loss, grandparents may have constituted the role of parents.

> My father got married. I didn't go with him. Because I was older, I couldn't accept it. My younger brother was very young, one and a half years old. He didn't go anyway. We didn't let him go. My grandparents took care of us, we were a family consisting of my grandfather, my grandmother, my uncle, like parents. We even had fights with my aunt, like brother and sister. My middle brother used to live with my father. Because my grandma was a bit old and we had grown up with the culture and discipline of this house, we were used to it. My brother came and he couldn't keep up with it and went back to my father’s home. (Halime, 45)

As Halime mentions, not only religious values, but also discipline and cultural preservation are two spheres that the grandparents strengthen. Grandparents often act as custodians of cultural identity, ensuring that traditions, rituals, and histories are preserved and passed on. This can be especially important in multicultural or immigrant families, where grandparents may connect younger generations to their heritage. One important aspect of intergenerational family relationships is the transmission of values from one generation to the next. Beyond promoting communication and understanding among different generations of a family, a continuity of values helps strengthen the intergenerational bonds, family identity, and loyalty.

Migration requires a renegotiation of adherence to "old" values and practices from the country of origin and "new" ones encountered in the nation of settlement, thus making the intergenerational transfer of values and culture a unique undertaking.[186] Both Selma and her husband were born in Istanbul, but they are children of Albanian migrant families. She claims that her husband teaches her family values to the children through storytelling.

> My husband is very interested in history. When the children go to bed, he stays with them for a while and tells them stories. He tells his grandfather without mentioning his name. He said that he immigrated here, worked here, lived through these things... Then he gave his name and said "He is my grandpa. Your freedom today is thanks to your grandfather, we are continuing the work he founded." And he asked the children to pray for his grandfather. (Selma, 32)

The interviewees express the role of the family in the construction and process of self and identity. The interviewees who touched upon the primary role of the family in the construction of values, mentioned the

186 Isabelle Albert, "Older Migrants as Transmitters of Values and Culture," in *Handbook on Migration and Ageing*, ed. Sandra Torres and Alistair Hunter (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 280–89, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839106774.

virtue and piety of their families, and how they protected them from the dangers of the time and guided them to goodness. It should also be noted here that the family in the narratives is not only meant as the nuclear family. Grandparents are considered a natural part of the family. Although these grandparents do not necessarily live together, it is seen that expanded family also have a place in the construction of values.

3.2.1 *Religious Identity and Practices*

Once my friend told me an anecdote about her fieldwork. “When we ask women, 'How religious do you define yourself?', they say, 'I fulfill my prayers; I pray five times a week, but I still have shortcomings', and mark 3. When we ask the same question to men, they only go to Friday prayers once a week, but they mark 5 saying they are very religious.” As can be seen in this example, how religious people define themselves may not yield very meaningful results when scored in this way. The aim of this study is not to measure the religiosity of the participants but to understand the relationship they establish with piety and the references they give to it in their search for self and identity construction while defining the essentials of the family. Generally speaking, religion and morality are inseparable, with religion often providing a basis for moral principles and directives. However, the nature of the relationship between the two concepts varies depending on perspectives and contexts. Explaining her childhood period, 59-year-old Fahriye mentions the merits of her parents and claims that she was privileged to have such a good, religious family.

> The first seeds in our lives are my grandfather and my mother. My grandfather always used to tell such verses, stories, and parables; verses and stories from the Holy Quran. He had a very affectionate nature. Everything my grandfather said during my childhood remained in our memories, reflected in our soul. As we grew up, we brought it into our lives, *alhamdulillah*[187]. My mother is also a

187 Alhamdulillah: It is an Arabic phrase meaning "praise be to God", sometimes translated as "thank God" or "thanks be to the Lord".

> very well educated, sincere and faithful lady. May God give my mother a long life. She is a very talented and hardworking lady who has a love for people, nature, and God. My father is also a very honest, brave, honorable, religious, and educated person. Thank God, we were blessed with such a family, to grow up and be born in such a family, even though we live in the republican era. My grandfather lived close to us. We spent most of our childhood with him. He used to read the Surah Yasin in morning prayers when we were children. We used to die of sleeplessness. We went and kissed my grandfather after every prayer, and we would say, "Grandpa, recite it to us shorter tomorrow so we can sleep." Then, in Fatih Çarşamba, I went to Efendi's Quran course and learned reciting Quran there. We were very idealistic children. We learn, but we also teach. I would gather the children on weekends and teach them Quran. (Fahriye, 59)

Such as Fahriye, some of the interviewees mention their grandparents as well as their mothers and fathers when they talk about the influence of their families on their lives. Religion often positions morality as absolute and unchanging, grounded in divine wisdom. Still, a moral dilemma can occur, conflicts can arise when religious teachings contradict contemporary ethical standards.

Religion provides the base of the moral values, and religious identity offers a way of being a good person and living a meaningful life. Considering that religious beliefs and practices often shape moral values, ethical standards, and behavioral expectations, the role of religion is a significant aspect of value formation for many families. It is observed that, when the interviewees were asked about their values, most of them directly referred to the religious values and mentioned how religious their parents were, generally in positive sense. Regarding religious values, practices and education, it could be claimed that all the women interviewed obtained it firstly from family, and them some of them obtained values from religious courses their families sent them or from the private schools they went to, such as 28-year-old designer Sena.

> I got my first education from my family. There were a lot of young girls in our apartment, thanks to my parents, they hired a teacher for us. We used to take lessons together. They also sent us to the Quran course, but the *sohbet*-style[188] education we received at home was more effective. To a certain extent, I need to read more and live in it more. But if I can continue without breaking my path in line with the teachings I have received, then I believe there is something good is going on. (Sena, 28)

Except for two of them, all of the interviewees are veiled and do their prayers regularly. Even though they say that they have received enough information for their daily prayers because of these trainings, when it comes to the religious field, there is an attitude that more than learning is needed. There is a reluctance about calling themselves as pious. Several reasons are observed about this reluctance. The first reason is unworthiness that stems from the shortcomings. For example, born in 1967, Latife claims that 'Islamic life is a wonderful life. Very fabulous. So that... I can't describe... I can't describe it. But I think I have many shortcomings.' In this respect, it can be said that women hesitate to define themselves as pious because they do not consider themselves worthy of the great Islam, cannot live it properly or do not have enough Islamic knowledge.

Likewise, Sevde, born in 1998, says, 'Of course, I cannot be called pious, but I try to live as much as possible. Both my husband and I try to pay attention to our values.' Not being able to live their religion fully and sufficiently, the idea that they are not adequately knowledgeable about religion is a thought shared by other respondents.

> I have many shortcomings in terms of religion. Reciting the Holy Quran and its meaning opens a different door for me each time. It

188 *Sohbet*: Means "to be together for a short time" in the dictionary, is used in meanings such as "to establish friendship and familiarity, a state of being together with the body or heart for a long time, a meeting where religious or worldly issues are discussed". It is commonly used in the sense of "a religious-sufistic meeting organized to listen to the words of a sheikh or a scholar".

> makes me look from a different window each time. So many points will make me say that I never thought about it like this. (Banu, 36)

Doctor Aysun, whose mother is a religious officer, claims that her shortcoming is a lack of knowledge about religious practices and criticizes herself severely about this lack.

> I am 34 years old and I am very lacking in some issues. Sometimes, I understand what is being talked about, what is positive and what is evil in terms of concepts. But if I was asked a straightforward question about the obligations of ablution, for example. At this point, I have a shortcoming. This is a criticism of myself. (Aysun, 34)

34-year-old Beyza has been working in corporate companies for 12 years and also has hesitations about calling herself pious:

> I wouldn't call myself a conservative or pious because I'm not very conservative. I try to do as much as I can, but I can't define myself religious. I'm a middle-of-the-road person in general, and I'm not very extreme in every aspect. It sounds a bit extreme, but not in a negative way. I think in order to call yourself religious, you really need to be doing those practices. Just doing the basic level of obligations… I don't think it's enough to define oneself as religious. (Beyza, 34)

One side of this remorse is not being able to live religion properly whereas another side is about lack of knowledge. Saide is a dentist who actively work for Nationalist Outlook Movement. She stresses the importance of Islamic knowledge especially confronting ideas about principles and holiness of religion. She has a more societal concern about knowing.

> I feel so sad, I suffer so much, and I want to cry. Someone comes out and says, "This does not exist in Islam; we have been deceived by this until today. This is a superstition." I don't have the knowledge to prove its existence. What will you do? You will read.

> Who will you read? I don't know which book to read and what to do with it. For example, it is said, "There is no *Regaip Kandili*[189]." Well, the Ottomans survived for 600 years with these, and the Seljuks survived with these, Andalusia did these things, even when you look at time of Selahattin Ayyubi you see they celebrated it. But telling these things is not considered as a proof. (Saide, 60)

Instead of emphasizing empowerment by treating knowledge of religious issues as part of a social dispute, the importance of knowledge for individual religious practice is also emphasized. PhD student Sümeyra believes that Islamic knowledge cannot be fully obtained by learning because there is always more to learn. Her definition of religious identity has a much broader meaning than worship or prayers, one should have an affinity with God and that affinity should be felt in every sphere of life.

> I never thought that my knowledge was enough. This knowledge is like an ocean. But important thing is the relationship you establish with God. Knowledge provides it. It allows you to talk to God and feel that closeness. I am a practitioner. I fulfill my prayers. Of course, it is valuable to read the Quran in Arabic, but I am trying to do studies to understand that message. For example, I consider working or doing a doctorate is a form of worship for me. In the path of science, in my journey of knowledge, I do not separate all of these from my religious personality. I could not

189 Regaip: According to the Hijri calendar, the first Friday night of the seventh month of the month of Rajab, which is considered sacred among Muslims, is the *Kandil* of Regaib. During the reign of the Ottoman sultan Selim II (1566–1574), these nights were called *kandil*s because they were celebrated by illuminating mosques and lighting lamps (kandil) in minarets. It is generally accepted among scholars to pray on the nights of Regaib, to make repentance and forgiveness, and to spend this night with various worships by accepting this night as sacred. However, there are hadith scholars who claim that the narrations about this night are very weak or fabricated has caused controversy about the night of *Regaip*.

> accept the non-completion process of that doctorate in France because it touched something fundamentally existential in me. It's not because I'm a very ambitious person but because I consider it worship, and I cannot accept it does not happen. (Sümeyra, 36)

The second reason for women's hesitation to define themselves as pious is the criticisms they may face. Designer Sena, who married a year ago and has a showroom in a fancy district, states that instead of refraining from the critiques, she does not define herself as conservative.

> I design my costumes in line with my religious beliefs. That's for sure. But if I say that I am very pious or conservative, it usually causes criticisms such as a pious person shouldn't do this or that. So, I define myself as a Turkish fashion designer. Our customers are mostly conservatives, especially those who want clothes suitable with their belief. Because they said, they can't find proper clothes. For example, a wedding dress shouldn't be too tight or too revealing. Hence, let's say I am a Turkish fashion designer who appeals to a more conservative segment. (Sena, 28)

Depending on the narratives, it is observed that dissuading earthly pleasures and affairs prevent these women declaring openly that they are fully devoted Muslims.

> I don't call myself religious because I am a very relaxed person, probably because of that. For example, in our religion, women alone cannot go beyond 90 km, right? I went to Mardin last week with a group of girls, for example. (Melek, 40)

It is observed that these women basically have two approaches to religious values. On the one hand, they mention the responsibilities of the religion and occasionally have a guilty conscience for not fully obeying the rules or not learning the religion thoroughly. On the other hand, religion is the inner connection with God, not totally independent from the prayers, but it is something beyond. For Nazife, religion is about

being a moral person. If one does not discipline herself with good manners, prayers lose their meanings.

> Religion organizes our lives. But I think Allah is more interested in our morals and relationships with people. Satan can put down the mischief in your heart. A lot of mischief can pass through your heart in any minute, right? The point is holding your tongue and heart, keeping thoughts under control. Religion is interested in putting your will into action. Maybe for some people it is very important not to go to the 91st kilometer. But basically, religion is very interested in human morality. We have reduced it to *fiqh*[190], this is something we missed. If you pray five times a day and do all kinds of immoral things, your prayers don't work. Where do you put your prayers? Is it a ritual? Is it an exercise? What is it? For me, prayer is a reminder. It reminds me five times every day that I am in the presence of Allah. Otherwise, you may pray and then commit all kinds of prohibitions. (Nazife, 45)

She adds that relentlessly feeling guilty about one's deficiencies and lack of performing prayers destroys her relationship with God. She overcomes this feeling by accepting that she is an impotent servant of God and love is the key point in relation to him, not the sense of duty.

> I used to be very depressed by what I couldn't do, blamed myself a lot and this would put a lot of pressure on me. I used to be a very unhappy servant. Even though I had a relationship with Allah, it wasn't based on love, it was more based on worship, punishment and duty. We were told things like 'Allah turns you into stone', we used to wait, when would our arms or feet turn into stone, etc. It was very difficult to cope with this feeling. I always felt bad. I want to fulfill my duties, I love Allah, I am aware of my love, but when a worship is delayed, I felt terrible. There is heedlessness that I fall into as a human being and I realized that this damages my communication with Allah and I accepted recently, 'I am a helpless

190 Fiqh: The discipline of Islamic worship and jurisprudence.

> servant, accept it now. Sometimes you will pray on time, sometimes you will skip the *sunnah*[191], sometimes the *fard*[192] will be missing. But there is always a door that you can take refuge in and accept you, as long as you do not deny it.' This calmed me down a lot. (Nazife, 45)

Obeying religious rules is innate for some of the interviewees such as Latife who enjoys living a religious life. They were born in religious families, raised as pious people and never criticize it.

> My whole education was centered on religious education, starting from the family. My parents' families are classic Turkish families, they pray, but don't wear headscarves. When my father came to Istanbul from Manisa in 1961, he fellowshipped to a religious community. My mother was born and raised in Istanbul. When my father met The Efendi Community[193] here, he made a conversion at a very young age. He even went on Hajj when I was one year old. At that time, going to Hajj and Umrah was not something that young people did. My father grew a beard, and my mother veiled herself. Of course, the families on both sides were against it. Everyone was against it. As the first child, I never knew myself unveiled. My father raised me veiled since I was a baby. May Allah be pleased with him. I'm glad he did; it didn't have an adverse effect on me. I don't know why, and I couldn't understand how my father managed it. It wasn't pressure, and it was just the way life was. Every weekend or on Mondays, hodjas used to come to our house, we had the Quran recitations and *sohbets*. This went on like this for years. When I was a child, I used to go to the mosque

191 Sunnah: The collective name for the Prophet's words, deeds and affirmations, together with the Qur'an, the second of the sharia evidences.

192 Fard: In the Islamic understanding, they are considered to be rules or acts of worship that are explicitly commanded to be performed by Muslims in the Qur'an, which is considered the word of Allah. Fard are religious duties and obligations that are commanded to be performed by clear and unequivocal evidence.

193 One of the biggest *cemaat*s in Turkey. Pseudo names are used to signify *cemaat*s.

> and the ladies would have *sohbet*s. And I used to listen at my mother's knee. I had an aptitude and enjoyed them very much, be very touched and tried to live it. (Latife, 54)

Enjoying religious life and considering it innate is also mentioned by Fahriye and Sümeyra. Fahriye said she never questioned the religious values she learned and how much she was bothered by other ways of life.

> I have never questioned the Islamic values I received in my childhood and I lived on those values. I praise my God; they gave me the freedom to do so. So, I'm glad I had such a life. When I go through difficult times in life, I always think about what the Prophet would do now. What does Allah say to me? What does the Qur'an command me? That's how I saw it, how I looked at it, how I lived. I don't know how to live differently. When I was a child, I was troubled in my soul by empty lives. For example, my friends would say let's hang out. It used to bother me, it used to give me restlessness. Even one day, I was still young, in the age of thirteen or fourteen, there was a *women's matinee*[194]. It was very famous at that time. One of our neighbors said, 'Fahriye, come, I'll get your mother's permission to take you there, see something different!' I went with her. Singers came out and sang. But my soul felt like it was in prison. I felt very uncomfortable. I realized, it's not for me. I mean, it was such a boring thing and I felt at a young age that I shouldn't be there. And I never wanted to be in such a place, I never wanted to be in a different life.

Some of the respondents criticize their parents for being habitual and traditionally religious. Their claim is that their religiosity is not proper and learned from an institution but shaped by customs.

> Being religious was something that came from their traditions. My parents were born in 1939. For example, they learned to pray

194 A women's matinée is an event for women called daytime entertainment with a meal. It usually takes place in venues such as casinos, bars, or pavilions and features performances by artists such as singers, comedians, or social media influencers.

> from their parents so deeply rooted that they did it as a mundane custom, a daily routine. They are believers, but my father was a bit harsh against congregations. My brother used to go to *sohbet*s for a while, I remember I was just a child. 'One day you will be arrested, don't go to such places, do your prayers, and perform ablution' he says. For them, it was enough to pray, perform ablutions, go to Umrah, and read the Qur'an. They didn't have any extra worship. My father is still like that, I mean on Fridays he reads the Surah Cuma, he reads Surah Yasin, he prays and that's it. My mother is different, she is more spiritual. She never socializes with men. We are Balkan, Greek immigrants from Kavala. For example, at a wedding, she would never be together in a place with men. (Sare, 45)

It is seen that they are in pursuit of a faith that is more spiritual or lived and deepened with more intellectual considerations, criticizing the traditional and imitative faith they see in their families, which performs worship without deepening in its meaning. Beyza also wants to refresh her belief through religious talks.

> I can't say that I have seen much from my family. Yes, they pray; yes, they fast, they do basic things, but they didn't have a detailed religious education. I am more on the intellectual side of religion. Of course, they don't read and study that much. They know as much as what they see on TV and what they practice in daily life. I mean, they are not curious, they do as much as they saw. I do more research, I go to *sohbet*s. It makes me keep my piety fresher, because as long as you don't do it, it atrophies. (Beyza, 34)

However, obeying the rules is not always that easy and a happy experience for all. Especially wearing a veil is a tough decision for some of the interviewees, such as Melek, who also has a very pious family whose uncles and grandparents are themselves leading a large religious community. When I visited her at her home, what set her apart from the other women I met was her prominent makeup and blue eyeliner. Her

family is a very well-known leaders of a prominent religious community in Turkey, she feels divergent although she performs all her prayers. She defines her difference by the hardship she has about obeying the rules and how earnestly she endeavors to live in compliance with the religious rules. She is concerned about not being considered as religious by society, despite being so sensitive to religious values and rules.

> I don't like regulations, but we attempt to obey Allah's even if they're hard. Let's take wearing hijab. It was very difficult for me. I was the only one in my neighborhood who was unveiled. Normally everyone wears a hijab until university, I had a difficulty with it. I married on one condition. When my husband saw me for the first time, I was unveiled and I said, if I don't wear it when I get married, I will never be able to wear it again. That was a new turning point in my life. I did it willingly, but because it is compulsory. I wore headscarf on the wedding day. I have been veiled since that day, but I had a hard time. I wear a bonnet or a hat in the summer, but I do my prayers, God accept it, but I am not very pious. Let's say medium. I know religion but I have problems practicing it. We all went to Hajj, we go to Umrah every year. We pray, we fast and try to be a good person... We do all the obligatory things and try not to do anything morally wrong, but I don't think I look religious from the outside. (Melek, 40)

It is observed that the vast majority of Muslim women today are caught in a dilemma between cultural codes that degrade them and idealized modernity that liberates them. Asma Lamrabet claims that Muslim women are educated to live in accordance with Islam, not as a choice but as an imposed cultural tradition and are exposed to both the benefits and harms of modernity, which is seen as "anti-religious" and highly attractive with its slogans of freedom and liberation. The choice between the two may seem easy at first glance, but for many of these women, women who want to strike an emotional balance between their desire to experience a peaceful and rewarding spirituality and their desire to be liberated and free

- a legitimate desire - it is a very difficult choice. For some Muslim women today, reconciling faith and spirituality with the principles of liberation and freedom seems very difficult, even contradictory to Islamic values. These are the only two options that modernity provides them.[195] Despite this, it is seen that women make efforts to live their beliefs.

32 years old, Selma felt this in-between situation strongly, and embracing religious orders and wearing a hijab was also a very hard decision to make. Although she has a religious family and defines herself as conservative, living a religious life requires her to have a peculiar spiritual experience.

> I am conservative. I used to wear short tights, make-up, go to the beaches, wear bikinis, share photos on social media, have no privacy. But my family is religious, and my mother is veiled. She taught us the Quran. I had been fasting since middle school, but I had only prayed for maybe a month. Before I got married, my father was very strict with us in these matters. He especially forced us to learn the Quran. We were believers but there was nothing in our lives to reflect this. Then I got married. Most of my husband's family is veiled. Perhaps my husband didn't want me to be non-hijabi but didn't say so. One day, my husband's grandmother passed away. She was a good person, but she had no prayers, no veil. I said to myself, 'If something happened to me right now, if I was lying on that coffin rest, what would I do if I couldn't go back?' I cried so much. I sincerely tell you; I will be veiled?! I would think of my death, but not that. It was so hard for me to wear a hijab. One night, I had a dream that seeing the wavy sea was a sign for a sinful servant, that my Lord was calling me, saying come and follow my orders and prohibitions. It was a sign that if I obeyed, my status would rise. "God, what can I do to overcome the devil?", I thought for ten days. When I went out, I

195 Asma Lamrabet, "Özcülüğün Reddi Ile Müslüman Düşüncenin Radikal Reformu Arasında," in *İslami Feminizmler*, ed. Zahra Ali (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008), 55.

> started to feel uncomfortable because people saw me. I was in between. My *nafs*[196] says, "I am so beautiful; how can I veil?" While questioning these things, I started praying. I said I can't go to the beach, I can't go to the hairdresser, I can't wear what I want. I was in a dilemma. One night I opened the Qur'an and decided to obey whatever came out. I opened a page, and there was a verse about hell. 'We know very well what is whispering in your ears. We are as close to you as a breath. There are angels on your right and left, recording every moment.' When those verses ended, the verses about paradise began. It was like two options were presented to me at that moment. I read and cried so much. When I woke up in the morning, I went to a store, I bought some clothes, and immediately got veiled. People experience things they never expected and never thought of. I experienced this with my own veiling. I said there is nothing impossible in life. (Selma, 32)

To overcome these difficulties, this restrictive binary model, which forces Muslim women to choose between a certain traditionalist and literalist view of Islam and a modernity that belongs to the ethnocentrism of the West, must be abandoned, states Lamrabet. According to her, the women's issue and other universal concepts such as freedom, development, and reason are not under the monopoly of Western civilization; they are structurally included in a typical "universal culture," and Islam has also made more significant contributions to this culture than is generally known.[197]

Zehra Yılmaz asserts that women's headscarf wearing is more complex than just obeying religious orders. Women internalized this conduct as a habit and an integral element of their pieties. The way someone acts and modesty are essential to piety and the method by which one becomes religious. According to Yılmaz, women viewed the removal of headscarves as losing a significant practice that bound them

196 Nafs: Nafs is an Arabic word occurring in the Quran, literally meaning "self", and has been translated as "psyche", "ego" or "soul".

197 Lamrabet, "Özcülüğün Reddi Ile Müslüman Düşüncenin Radikal Reformu Arasında," 55.

to piety, rather than a sin. For Muslim women, wearing headscarves was a means to piety.[198] Veiling, particularly in religious or cultural contexts, is a highly significant performative act that communicates an individual's piety and adherence to specific moral or spiritual values. Judith Butler's concept of performativity, which posits that identities are constructed through repeated acts that conform to societal norms, veiling can be understood as a reiterative practice that not only reflects but actively constitutes a woman's identity as pious. Veiling is often framed as an outward expression of inner faith and devotion. In societies where veiling is associated with religious observance, wearing a hijab, niqab, or other forms of covering is a visible declaration of commitment to God and adherence to religious prescriptions. Through the act of veiling, a woman signals her alignment with religious values, which are often associated with modesty, humility, and self-discipline. From a performative perspective, the act of veiling is not merely a reflection of an already established pious identity; it is through the repeated act of veiling that the identity of a "pious woman" is materialized. By consistently veiling in appropriate social and religious contexts, the individual reiterates her commitment to the principles of her faith, thereby "performing" piety.

35-year-old Nihal, is critical of her family's attitude towards religious education and ascetic, fatalistic interpretation of religion. She got religious education from pre-school to university, is critical about the intensity of education. She thinks that the feeling of inadequacy is not the appropriate one relating to God. She does not want to be with her family due to this negative electricity and unhappiness around them. Moreover, the idea that every wicked thing is caused by imperfect worship is disturbing to her.

> Having Erzurum-born parents, I was born and raised in Istanbul My family has a strong history, with both grandfathers being

198 Zehra Yılmaz, "Küreselleşen İslam ve Türkiye'de İslamcı Kadınlar" (Ankara Üniversitesi, 2013).

> *hafiz*.[199] We teach our kids a love-based religion, but we weren't taught that. My father put a lot of pressure on me, and if he hadn't, I might have veiled in high school or something, but not so early. What I received from my family was not systematic religious education but rather worship in a community. I have cousins at my age. When we gather, our grandfather says, 'Let's recite the memorizations; let's open this page and read it.' I learned Quran in kindergarten. Kindergartens like this were rare then. As a lucky minority student, I attended a religious kindergarten. We had Quran classes in the neighborhood in summer. We would pray in the congregation in the morning. I attended an imam-hatip school after primary. It was mandatory there. Sometimes I wonder whether I was too forced. Too many classes, for instance. I'm talking middle school. If I could choose, I would not send my child to an imam-hatip in middle school. (Nihal, 35)

Although in many instances religiosity is described as a happy, peaceful process shaped by values that come from within or are inherited from the family, it could be argued that such an atmosphere did not have the same effect on Nihal. Her family's early warnings to cover her head and refrain from bans of Allah, and the fact that she lived her life only in a religious environment made her feel under pressure. It can be noted that Selma and Nihal, who were veiled during the interviews, stopped covering their heads during the field research process. In that sense, it could be argued that they cannot stand to the dilemma reconciling faith and spirituality with the principles of liberation and freedom argued by Lamrabet.

Performativity hinges on repetition. For veiling and prayers to signify piety, it must be enacted repeatedly in ways that align with the expectations of the community and religious doctrine. Each instance of veiling reinforces the connection between the act and the identity of being pious. Over time, the act becomes naturalized, to the point where

199 Hafiz: Literally meaning 'guardian'. It is a term used by Muslims for people who have learnt completely the Qur'an by heart.

veiling is seen as a "natural" expression of piety rather than a constructed performance. The consistency of this act across contexts strengthens the association between veiling and piousness in the collective consciousness. The performative nature of veiling also opens it to challenges and reinterpretations. In some cases, veiling may be imposed by societal or familial pressure rather than chosen as an act of faith. This can create a disconnect between the performative act and the internal identity of piety.

3.2.2 The Constant Nature of Men and Women, The Issue of Fıtrat[200]

In religious discourse, *fitrat*, refers to the basic structure and character of the species of beings at the moment of their initial creation and their initial state, which has not yet been affected by external influences. Although there are different definitions, the most plausible of these views, and the one that is gaining the most attention, is the understanding that *fitrat* refers to the positive abilities and predispositions, such as the tendency to recognize the Creator, purity of spirit, etc., that Allah endowed human nature with at the time of the creation.[201] Although there is no gender-specific reference to gender in terms of the essence of the word and its occurrence in primary sources, due to its emphasis on 'protecting the essence', assumptions about femininity and masculinity have been established through this concept, and these have become an important tool in determining social roles of femininity and masculinity. These ideas stem from the beliefs about the constant nature of humans, namely, man and woman.

The opinions of many theologians and opinion leaders have reinforced these roles. For example, Said Nursi, leader of a prominent religious group, wrote: “Hijab is natural for women and their nature demands it. Because women are weak and delicate by nature, they need the protection and help of a man who will protect them and their

200 Hayati Hökelekli, “Fıtrat,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1996), https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/fitrat.

201 Hökelekli.

offspring, whom they love more than their lives, they have a natural inclination to make themselves loved and hated and not to be subjected to abuse."[202] Another aspect of women that is defined in accordance with their nature is motherhood. "Yes, the fact that a mother sacrifices her soul to save her child from danger without asking for any remuneration and sacrifices herself to her child in accordance with her duty with true devotion shows that there is a very high heroism in women. With the development of this heroism, she can save both her worldly life and her eternal life with it."[203] This view is shared by many other groups and writers. Such as Sema Maraşlı, one of the most radical conservative women in Turkey, who claims that: "The basic characteristics of a woman's nature: Tenderness, softness, submission, sensory perception, depth of feeling, elegance, gentleness... The basic characteristics of a man's nature: Willpower, strength, courage, composure, protective instincts, logical mathematical thinking, reasoning power..."[204] Defining the nature of the sexes also has certain behavioral outcomes for the writers: There are inherent needs arising from inherent differences. "Women need love and men need respect due to the characteristics of their creation. If both sides consider the differences and do not withhold what their spouse needs, the right steps will be taken for family peace and happiness."[205] Such gendered labels might be perceived as universal, however in Turkey they are also supported by mainstream religious discourse that affects the general acceptance in society and the identity formation of women about themselves. However, it should be noted that, lately, the stationary aspect of *fitrat* is being questioned.[206] In addition, the gender-specific grounding of nature is opposed, arguing that "there

202 Said Nursi, *Lem'alar* (İstanbul: Doğuş Limited Şirketi Matbaası, 1957), 195.

203 Nursi, 199.

204 Sema Maraşlı, "Kadın ve Erkek Fıtrat Farklılıkları," *Kadın ve Aile*, n.d., https://kadinveaile.com/kadin-ve-erkek-fitrat-farkliliklari/.

205 Maraşlı.

206 Sertaç Sehlikoğlu, "Intimate Publics, Public Intimacies: Natural Limits, Creation and the Culture of Mahremiyet in Turkey," *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 33, no. 2 (2015): 77–89.

is no verse in the Qur'an that clearly defines the nature of men and women. On the contrary, there are verses that define human nature".[207]

The issue of God-given nature turned into a political polemic with the statements of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who expressed first in 2010 his doubts about gender equality at a meeting with feminist organizations saying that men and women cannot be considered equal as they have different natures (*fitrat*). Erdoğan claimed, "What women need is to be equal rather than equality." "(Women and men) have different natures and different bodies." So, the term "*fitrat*," which is employed in JDP discourses, refers to the delineation of men's and women's roles based on their "natural essences," which are reliant on the "natural" and "spiritual" distinctions between the sexes. As a result, through this meaning of *fitrat*, it started to be used in conservative political discourses. Following Erdoğan's remarks, the idea of *fitrat* has become more and more central to the JDP's gender policies and discourses. The government's gender ideology has been promoted through state institutions, such as through the redesign of the work of female preachers in the Presidency of Religious Affairs' Family and Religious Guidance Offices.[208]

In addition to being a material for political polemics, we also see that *fitrat*, which is essentially a religious concept, is frequently mentioned in conservative women's narratives about their self-constructions and roles. For Latife, the precondition for a woman to establish a family is thinking intuitively instead of rationally. Carrying the responsibility requires this inherent power.

> Of course, being a family brings awareness and responsibility. Only if a person thought instinctively rather than consciously, and thought with the foresight given by God, she could establish a family by embracing the values of it. (Latife, 54)

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207 "Erdoğan'ın Fıtrat Sözlerine Cevap: Kuran'da Kadın ve Erkek Fıtratını Tanımlayan Ayet Yok," T24, 2014.

208 Betül Ergin, "Construction Of Womanhood Through Fıtrat, The Case Of Female Preachers In Turkey" (Middle East Technical University, 2020).

Supporting the complimentary approach, Fahriye claims that the responsibility of men is much heavier than that of women, not only in material needs but in all familial aspects. He is the head of the family.

> Men and women are not equal. Because a man is someone who has very heavy responsibilities, God has given such a responsibility to his nature. He gave the burden of all the responsibility of the family to the man. It's not necessarily material… Everything. God will ask him. (Fahriye, 59)

Likewise, Sena also mentions the responsibilities of women towards men, considering the power of men. For her, managing the man requires being smart, and using gentle tactics. If a woman is able to be gentle towards her husband, she can make him do whatever she wants but many women are unable to handle their husbands' wills.

> Women should know their responsibilities to men. Our religion does not promote equality, men are powerful. Women should softly confirm their husbands and insist on their wishes. Our women may not be smart about these matters. Do what you want, but don't go against the man. You must understand politics. I can't usually either. But the mother, the married lady, undoubtedly determines the house's energy. Due to her intelligence, I believe the woman can handle any male. (Sena, 28)

Women's soft power should be used against the hard power of men, it is claimed. Biological determinism can legitimize gender-based inequalities by reducing human behavior, social roles, abilities and even inequalities to biological characteristics. Because of these biology-based characteristics, it assumes that human behavior and social structures are largely immutable. This view of what women and men "naturally" possess can lead to accepting existing social inequalities as "natural". The argument based on religion emphasizes the different duties and responsibilities of men and women. Both perspectives lead women to behave within certain patterns, both in their self-construction and in the establishment of family structures.

Considering gender roles, 40 years old psychologist Melek says, men and women should not be alike in terms of gender roles. The loss of traditional roles paves the way for the loss of gender identity for Melek. It ends up with the lack of order and dissolve of the families. Rising divorces were caused by this confusion for her. The peace of the families depends on the immutability of gender roles.

> Women should be like women, and men should be like men. Men should work, earn money and shop. And she should cook, clean, and watch the kids. I am a bit classical. Despite my extremes, families should be in order. That's why everything has been turned upside down now. Why so many divorces, because women have become men, and men became women. Men take care of children; women work in the public. Moreover, everything gets slack. Everyone is flirting with each other; marriage doesn't make much sense anymore. (Melek, 40)

Religious officer Aysel also refers to the nature of men and women defining their roles and responsibilities.

> Women were created naive; and men were strong. What I mean by strength is brute force. Therefore, men have more burden. He has to earn his family's livelihood. As he gives his surname to them, he will maintain his family. For instance, in terms of prayer, a woman is not accountable for her husband if he doesn't pray. Unless she prays, her husband is accountable. Our religion is beautiful; thus women have less burden. Her moral obligation is to educate her child. Her rewards for breastfeeding are great, but she doesn't have to. (Aysel, 60)

Debates about the nature of women in Islam involve a wide range of perspectives and interpretations, reflecting diverse cultural, theological, and social viewpoints within the Muslim world. These debates often center around religious texts' interpretations, women's role in society, and the balance between tradition and modernity. One area of discussion is equality against complementarity. Some scholars and activists argue

that Islam advocates for the essential equality of men and women, citing Quranic verses that emphasize spiritual and moral equality. Other scholars, on the other hand, emphasize the notion of complementarity, where men and women are seen as having different but complementary roles in society. This view often supports traditional roles where men are typically the breadwinners and women are the primary caregivers, based on interpretations of certain Hadiths and Quranic verses. Religious-conservative women, believes in equality before law. Still, there is a tendency to protect traditional roles both through a biologic determinist perspective and religious teachings. Different interpretations of Sharia, or Islamic law, can result in varied degrees of rights and safeguards for women, influencing everything from family law to criminal justice. The role of creation, in terms of responsibilities and rights is stressed by Neva either, referring to the rights of inheritance.

> I don't think men and women are equal; not in terms of power. Everyone has different characteristics. For example, a woman is a mother. It is a very high value in the eyes of Allah. I'm being a bit old-fashioned. Man is a superior being. Allah has given some rights to men, and to women, maybe they can be equal in terms of rights. Because a woman has rights over a man and vice versa. But for example, in inheritance, the man gets two and the woman one. (Neva, 60)

Going along with them, Nazife also mentions that because of her nature, the women should support his husband in terms of his leadership. However, she criticizes the nonentity of men, which eventually empowered the women and increased their burden.

> Women and men are not religiously equal, but balancing, and complimentary. Religiously, man is the leader of the house and responsible for religious upbringing. Men should finance the house. Yet in today's conservative neighborhood, no such thing exists. Women increasingly outperform their husbands by intellectually improving themselves. Religion doesn't contradict

> me. It varies by community whether the head of the family is a man, but even if he is, he decides on the woman's axis. This regime isn't totalitarian. He consults with the woman, therefore the male heads a family with a woman. It doesn't mean the woman doesn't exist. She exists but stays one step behind man. Her nature necessitates it. (Nazife, 45)

According to this determinist approach, the capabilities of women even determine occupational choices. Saide argues that some jobs are not suitable for women because of their physical qualities. Not only sacredness but also biological properties are outstanding in pointing out differences between men and women, such as the strength of men and the emotionality of women. There is a persistent stereotype that positions men and women differently in the workforce, often typecasting women into roles that are considered 'softer' or less technical. This can steer women towards service-oriented professions and away from construction, engineering, or heavy manufacturing industries. Nevertheless, if these shortcomings are somehow surpassed, then they should have equality in terms of rights for Saide.

> Men and women should have equal rights but they are not equal in creation. As an example, they should be paid the same if they do the same job in a workplace, and if they finish the same school. Equal work, equal pay. The mother has more responsibility at home... Both the public and private sectors should consider the situation of the woman, especially if she is a mother, and the child she will raise there, and make a reduction in working hours. There is time off for breastfeeding, but only in the state sector, not in the private sector. Can a woman today work as a building worker like a man? It's not possible. What about a doctor who isn't in surgery but is an ophthalmologist? I believe that ophthalmologists, both men and women, do the same job. Surgery, on the other hand, takes 10 hours. Of course, male doctors are better in this situation. Just think about how thin women's fingers are. One other example is that women are more sensitive. People are also becoming so heartless that when you look at it. One example is that a woman

> can also kill someone. People say that women are emotional, naïve, kind, and ladylike, but when they get angry, women can also kill very clearly. May God keep the devil away. (Saide, 60)

Diverging from traditional views on women's creation and rights, a movement that seeks to reconcile the principles of Islam with women's rights and gender equality emerged, which is called Islamic feminism. This movement seeks to advance gender equality within the framework of Islamic law and theology. It combines the principles of Islam with feminist ideals to argue for women's rights, gender equality, and social justice. Islamic feminists utilize the Quran, Hadiths (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), and other Islamic texts as foundational sources to argue for women's rights. They advocate for a re-reading of these texts with a focus on justice and equality, which they believe are central to Islam. They challenge patriarchal interpretations of Islamic texts, suggesting that many discriminatory practices against women are based on misinterpretations or cultural biases rather than on the essential teachings of Islam. A significant focus of Islamic feminism is on legal reform within the framework of *Sharia*[209]. This involves advocating for changes in family law, marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other areas where women have historically been disadvantaged. Islamic feminists often work within the system to push for laws that are both true to Islamic principles and supportive of women's rights. Islamic feminists emphasize the importance of education for women, not only in religious matters but also in secular subjects. They promote women's access to education as a fundamental right and a necessity for achieving broader societal equality. Empowering women through education helps them make informed decisions about their lives and increases their contributions to their communities and economies. Working to challenge and dismantle patriarchal structures and interpretations within Muslim societies, they argue that patriarchy has been wrongly infused with

209 Sharia: Islamic law. The law signifies a divinely required code of behavior that directs Muslims towards a tangible manifestation of their religious beliefs in this life and the pursuit of heavenly grace in the afterlife.

religious practices, leading to gender inequalities. By reinterpreting religious texts and challenging traditional clerical authority, they seek to provide an alternative understanding of Islam that strongly supports gender equality. They argue for equal rights and treatment for all Muslims, regardless of gender. This applies to both public lives, namely, education, work, politics, and private life issues such as family and relationships. The contemporary discussions on women's rights have challenged traditional gender roles in politics. A growing number of women hold political office and advocate for women's rights within Islamic frameworks. As a result of these rereadings, many women, take the equality of men and women as a basic right. Lawyer Esma claims that 'Men and women are equal. Equal as servants. We are not physically equal. But I see them equal in terms of humanity.' Sümeyra, on the other hand, signifies that equality cannot be achieved in real terms but the ideal is equality in terms of the law. She claims:

> Conditions for men and women in Turkey are not equal in any way. Equality according to what? There is no equality in terms of social justice. We definitely have serious problems in terms of laws. There is a problem with the infrastructure. They should be dug up and replaced. The ideal is to abide by the law, to bring conscience to the fore, and to be compassionate individuals. So, when we bring that compassion to the fore, naturally, everything can be solved. (Sümeyra, 36)

Going one step further in terms of equality, Nihal believes that women are superior to men in many ways.

> I don't discuss these basic things anymore. Men and women are equal. Women are even superior to men in many matters. I generally see men as beings who need to be managed. A woman's quick intelligence and ability to discover that power within her when she wants and acts with it are tremendous powers that men do not have. There is equality and even superiority when we are together. (Nihal, 35)

It is observed that the interplay between paternalism and performativity in identity construction is complex and multifaceted. While paternalism seeks to impose fixed hierarchies and roles, performativity highlights the fluid and constructed nature of these roles. This tension creates a dynamic space where traditional family structures are both reproduced and contested.

Paternalistic remarks on family models often rely on performative acts to sustain political authority. The paternalistic approach believes that the roles of women and men are natural and invites the sexes to act in accordance with their nature. A man's role as the "head of the household" is not an inherent quality but is enacted through behaviors such as decision-making, discipline, and providing resources. These performances, in turn, reinforce the paternalistic structure of the family.

Conversely, performativity also serves as a tool for challenging paternalism. Acts of resistance—such Sümeyra and Nihal questioning natural inequalities between sexes—can disrupt the performance of traditional roles and open up possibilities for reimagining family dynamics. These disruptions highlight the potential for agency within performative frameworks, even in the face of paternalistic constraints.

3.2.3 In Brief: Crafting Selfhood and Navigating Existential Necessities

Formation of identity and existential necessities is one phase of the realm of necessities. This phase is characterized by a process of self-actualization, as women strive to understand their identities and aspirations. This section explores how women define their religiosity and the moral framework they construct through their relationship with faith. The narratives highlight a tension between self-perceived religious inadequacy and deep personal engagement with Islam. This involves the development of personal values, the setting of life goals, and the formulation of a sense of purpose. Many women hesitate to call themselves "pious" due to perceived shortcomings in religious practice or knowledge, fear of social scrutiny, or the belief that true religiosity encompasses more than outward rituals. Despite these hesitations,

religious values remain central to their moral compass, shaping their identities, family upbringing, and professional lives.

The formation of religious and moral values is a part of this phase. The earlier thoughts on womanhood and manhood also have an impact on the self-building process. Mentioning the constants of the actors also requires pointing out the ideas on the nature and creation of the human. Considering the religious paradigm on the gendered human nature, the men's and women's positioning in the family also be questioned depending on their thoughts on constants. Simultaneously, these processes influence the shaping of future familial roles and expectations. Women acquire their religious foundation primarily from their families, with grandfathers, mothers, and religious courses playing key roles. Their relationship with faith is not limited to prayers and rituals; it extends to ethics, intellectual pursuits, and self-discipline. Some interviewees emphasize internal spirituality and moral integrity over strict rule-following, arguing that religiosity is not just about fiqh (jurisprudence) but about a deeper moral and emotional connection with God. Others express frustration at lacking religious knowledge, especially in confronting modern critiques of traditional beliefs.

Ultimately, religiosity is framed as both a personal and social experience—rooted in family traditions but continuously negotiated in contemporary life.

3.3 Physical Necessities

In the context of realm of necessities, physical necessities are those concrete, basic elements that directly affect a person's prospects, development, and well-being. Deeply ingrained in the family system, these components are absolutely essential for determining a person's socioeconomic path and identity. For the scope of this research, the role of education and professional life will be elaborated.

3.3.1 The Role of Education

Education constitutes a fundamental necessity in an individual's life, as it establishes the groundwork for intellectual growth, skill development, and social integration. In the family setting, education is usually underlined as a means of helping people to reach both personal and occupational goals. Quality of education affects a person's cognitive ability, analytical capacity, and social development as well as their capacity to Families that value education provides their members tools for personal satisfaction, civic involvement, and financial independence. Other factors that impact this process are education and the social environment. School, the circle of friends, and other social interactions play a critical role in developing one's values. Children and young people are exposed to new ideas and different perspectives through teachers, friends, and social institutions at school. In this process, the individual may question or expand their family values and encounter new value systems belonging to different groups.

In terms of religious education, it can be asserted that religious education in Turkey has been shaped under the influence of various practices and policies in different periods from the Ottoman period to the present day. This process has experienced great changes, especially in the Republican period. After the proclamation of the Republic, religious education underwent a major transformation in line with the principle of secularism.[210] Since that time, the relationship between religion and the state has remained a continual source of conflict throughout the history of Republican Turkey, profoundly affecting religious education. State interventions—whether direct or indirect—aimed at shaping religion often diverged from societal perceptions and lifestyles, leading to public resistance and viewing such policies as threats. Political authorities consistently utilized religion and religious education as tools to advance their ideological agendas, embedding religious education within the

210 Demet Lüküslü, "Creating a Pious Generation: Youth and Education Policies of the AKP in Turkey," *Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea* 16, no. 4 (2016): 639, https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2016.1243332.

broader framework of politics.[211] Therefore, the women's narratives about their education are very much linked to the state policies.

3.3.1.1 Pre-School Courses

In the Ottoman Empire, *sıbyan mektepleri (schools)*[212] addressed the demand in preschool education by imparting fundamental religious education and literacy to children. Following the establishment of the Republic, initiatives for educational upgrading were implemented. During this period, pre-school education was constrained and persisted through private initiatives. Due to the state's prioritization of primary education during this period, pre-school could not achieve widespread adoption. Recognition of pre-school education commenced in the 1950s. The initial kindergartens and day-care facilities were established to assist the offspring of employed moms. The 1961 Constitution designated pre-school education as a responsibility of the state. Since the 1980s, pre-school education has gained increased prominence in the policies of the Ministry of National Education. The 1982 Constitution underscored the significance of advancing this education, leading to the initiation of the first comprehensive curriculum studies. Furthermore, values education was incorporated into the curriculum. During the 2000s, early childhood education gained increased prevalence. As kindergarten programs were instituted in public schools, the private

211 İbrahim Turan, "Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi'nde Din Eğitimi Politikaları," *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 19, no. 2 (2019): 269–92.

212 Sıbyan schools were primary school level institutions where children received basic education during the Ottoman period. The word "Sıbyan" means "children" in Arabic and these schools usually educated children from the ages of 4-6 years old up to 13-15 years old. The education provided in Sıbyan schools was based on religious and moral foundations. In addition to learning the Holy Quran, children were taught the rules of worship such as prayer and fasting and basic moral values, as well as literacy skills. Sıbyan Schools were the first step of basic education in Ottoman society and played an important role in maintaining social order based on a religious-moral foundation. these schools constitute the historical foundations of pre-school and primary education in Turkey. For detailed informatin see, Sıbyan Schools And Organization Of Primary Education During The Ottoman Period, Zülfü Demirtaş.

sector simultaneously expanded in this domain. The 2023 Education Vision intends to mandate preschool education. Preschool education in Turkey has attained a significant degree of accessibility for children aged 3-6 and is acknowledged as a crucial phase of education, particularly for cognitive, social, and emotional development. Investment in this area has risen due to collaboration between the government and the business sector.

Islamic pre-school education in Turkey predominantly gained prevalence following the 1980s. The incorporation of such instruction within formal schooling is a very recent development. Therefore, the generation older that millennials typically did not get preschool education. During the 1980s, commercial entities and non-governmental groups commenced providing Qur'an courses and preschools that prioritized Islamic ideals. Islamic-themed private kindergartens typically provide instruction in Quranic education, fundamental religious knowledge, and ethical principles. Still, it should be noted that, these were individual initiatives and number of these schools were very few compared to the public schools. Moreover, as all of them are private schools, these schools were allocated to the children of economically well-off families. By lucky minority, Nihal meant that she went to one of these schools in her early childhood.

> I went to a school that offered Quranic education in kindergarten. At that time, we lived in Sultanahmet, there was Elif Yuva.[213] It was the early 90s. There were not many such kindergartens back then. (Nihal, 35)

213 *Elif Yuva* emerged in 1987 as a self-initiative of a group of friends born in the early 60s, who were concerned about raising children after having them. For more information on how this initiative, which can be considered as an application from theory to practice in child education, entered into institutional dilemmas with Turkey's political adventure and how it continued on its way with solutions, see: https://erhanerken.com/2018/02/28/28-subat-zorbaligina-elif-yuvadan-bir-ornek/; https://erhanerken.com/2015/10/26/cocuk-egitiminde-teoriden-pratige-bir-uygulama/

54-year-old Latife, explains the openings of the earlier examples of these schools and how much sacrifice they do to send her son to these schools.

> S College was opened in Istanbul. There were no such private schools at that time. There was Fevziye Nuroğlu, she passed away. Nevzat Yalçıntaş together with his wife Meliha Yalçıntaş, they had established the S Foundation. Firstly, they opened a kindergarten, then we heard they opened a primary school. We live in Fatih. S College was in Güneşli[214]. In the conditions of that time, the roads were difficult, they were muddy, and my son went to primary school there. Of course, he learned a lot from there. For example, he used to commute by school bus. They had a bus driver. If he is alive, may God bless him, if he is dead, may God have mercy on him. The children learned all the prayer surahs and Ayat al-Kursi from that driver. He always prays, my son learned it all there. It was a very good school. Later, when we moved to Ankara, they went to L College in Ankara. (Latife, 54)

It is observed that preschool period, an area that is highly emphasized and invested in today due to its importance in human life, does not have a dominant place in these women's narratives. In a period when pre-school education has not yet become widespread, it is possible to say that the alternatives for those who prefer religious pre-school education have become even narrower. Those who preferred this alternative had to make different sacrifices in addition to the economic price they had to pay.

During the 2000s, the proliferation of Islamic-themed preschools established by private entities surged, particularly in reaction to the needs of families with heightened religious sensitivities. Subsequent to 2010, the Ministry of National Education's initiatives for imam hatip schools and imam hatip kindergartens established a formal framework for religious-themed preschool education. Subsequent to the 2012 reform of the 4+4+4 education system, numerous measures were

214 The distance between Fatih and Güneşli is roughly 35 kms.

undertaken to enhance enrollment in pre-school education, and certain initiatives incorporated curricula infused with Islamic values. Certain initiatives of the Ministry of National Education provide content on Islamic ethics and culture under the designation "values education." This method has evolved in response to societal religious sensitivities and has established a framework that integrates contemporary preschool education with religious instruction.

3.3.1.2 Primary Schools and Public Education

All the interviewees got primary school education and all of them were educated in secular public schools. Generally, even the name of the school seems unnecessary to mention. It is observed that women's educational experiences differ after getting primary school education. When the girls began to move from childhood to adolescence, more concerns on the educational institutions and choices come to the fore. Meral was born in Malatya and got an undergraduate degree in Istanbul.

> This comes from my conservative family. I attended public elementary and middle schools in Malatya. No pious schools existed then. I was the oldest of four siblings. I attended a pioneering private ladies' college. I loved my professors and sisters' posture, speech, and education. We became like a family. Family values shaped me, but school taught me more. I started wearing hijab in high school. After graduating, my father mandated either enrolling at *cemaat* University in Istanbul or İnönü University in Malatya. I came to Istanbul. (Meral, 37)

Doctor Aysun also went to both public and private schools. She believes that since her early adolesce, she felt the difference between public schools and private schools. She adds that, she feels more comfortable with the private schools because she felt she was with people who are like her. Public space plays a crucial role in identity formation, serving as a venue for social interactions, societal communication, and the cultivation of a sense of belonging. The public realm serves as a platform for individuals to confront and assimilate social norms, beliefs, and

cultural expectations. An individual's self-definition and identity construction are significantly shaped by encounters in the public domain. Specifically, domains such as schooling, professional life, and social engagements are the primary contexts that influence an individual's personal and social identities. The initial entry of a youngster into the public domain via school represents a pivotal moment in identity formation. In contrast to their behavior within the familial setting, the youngster encounters the overarching standards and regulations of society. This initiates the process of aligning personal identity with social identity. They recognize their similarities and distinctions with other persons. This fosters the cultivation of a feeling of identity. Children reared in religious traditions undergo a cultural and ideological negotiation of their identity when confronted with secular school curricula and activities.

> I went to Anatolian High School and I see none of my high school friends except two. I felt I didn't belong there. I went to a public school until the fourth grade. In the fifth grade, I went to a *cemaat* college with a scholarship and I told my mother that my friends were like us. Their mothers were veiled too. They were the years of February 28. And when I went from there to public high school, I said to myself, this is not my place. And the worst part was that there was always a group of teachers to compare. We had teachers who were republican, leftist, communist, Alevi, who showed their identities openly. On the other hand, there were my course teachers. They were all veiled. Therefore, I always felt that I am not a person of that world. I have always separated myself from my high school like that. (Aysun, 34)

It is necessary to mention a rupture that separates the educational lives of the older generation of women from the younger generation. That is the February 28 process, and the headscarf bans in public institutions. Beginning in the late 1960s and until the early 2000s, women in Turkey who wore headscarf were legally barred and restricted from entering higher education, public institutions and, de facto if not de jure, the

private sector. This ban, which was in place for more than three decades, affected not only the state and its institutions, but also society's approach to human, woman, and citizenship rights. In other words, discriminatory practices that started as a violation of freedom of belief soon led to the violation of many basic citizenship rights such as the rights to education, work, participation in social life and equality.[215] This ban, which reached its peak with the February 28th process and was officially repealed in 2013, directly or indirectly affected the lives of many women and caused a social wound whose effects still continue today and whose dimensions have not been fully revealed. Neva is one of the interviewees who could not go to university due to the headscarf ban claims that:

> I went to Atikali Primary school inn Fatih, next to the Hırka-i Şerif Mosque. Then I went to middle school at Cibali Girls' High School, and then we moved to Kızıltoprak. My mother wanted me to go to Moda Girls' Vocational High School. I graduated from Moda Girls' Vocational High School, Department of Clothing. I couldn't study at the university because of the headscarf ban. It was very troublesome at that time. I had to uncover my hijab. So, my father was not very willing. Then I got engaged when I was already in the second grade of high school, and when I was graduated, I was engaged too. (Neva, 60)

Although this issue is seen as a matter of faith-related veiling, in essence, headscarf bans are the visible face of general debates about Turkish modernization. For this reason, it would be meaningful to read this discrimination against hijabi women in coordination with the new republic's efforts to become a part of the civilized world.

The Republic of Turkey was built on the foundations of modernity and secularism. The sense of backwardness vis-à-vis the West and the country's concern to 'rise to the level of contemporary civilizations' brought about a total transformation not only in the economic and

215 Dilek Cindoğlu, *Başörtüsü Yasağı ve Ayrımcılık: İş Hayatında Meslek Sahibi Başörtülü Kadınlar* (İstanbul: Tesev, 2010), 6, www.tesev.org.tr.

political spheres, but also in society, culture, religion, and every field. It was understood that to establish a modern political structure, the lifestyles and mental structures of the actors involved in this structure had to be transformed even in the early stages of the modernization process. Headscarf was the signifier of the fogeydom and bigotry. Living in Levent, one of the most modern districts of Istanbul, during the 1960s, Fahriye states that:

> I entered high school after middle school and suddenly developed into a large, bulky female. My headscarf was banned at school. My grandfather told my mother to keep me home from school. I still wanted my headscarf. We had arguments with the school principal. He kept me from school and class. My parents said, 'My daughter, you can uncover in class,' but I refused. Not many headscarves existed then. No other young ladies in Levent wore headscarves save my sister and me. It was rare. Once, we crossed into Anatoliian side and spotted a veiled lady in Koşuyolu. My sister and I chased her to greet her. (Fahriye, 59)

The rulers of the newly established Republic, who took on the task of building a new nation, saw education as an important tool in this change. In Kemalist ideology, education had to be inextricably compatible with political, economic, and social independence. Breaking the chains of traditional beliefs and perspectives, nourishing national feelings, becoming a free and national state, raising new leaders, and paving the way for a dynamic and modern society could only be possible through education. The Turkish national education ideology, which was formed in the 1920s, declared from the very beginning that the most important purpose of education was to create national character in new generations.[216] In this path, knowledge and science were seen as a force, and education was seen as a lever to transform and uplift the entire society.

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216 İsmail Kaplan, *Türkiye'de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi ve Siyasal Toplumsallaşma Üzerindeki Etkisi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2005).

During the Ottoman period, the Islamic religion was a unifying idea in society and the foundation on which the state was based. Accordingly, religious schools and religious lessons in schools were unquestioned places in the Ottoman theocratic ideology. On the other hand, the revolutionary elite viewed such education as a stumbling block in the modernization of the new nation and conceived it as an integral part of the old order that needed to be eliminated. Through a series of radical rejectionist strikes, the theocratic structure of the state was destroyed, and with it all the supporting tools. In 1923, the Ministry of Education took over the management and control of all religious schools and all their support instruments namely donations and funds. In the same year, the teaching of religion was banned in all public schools. The abolition of the caliphate in 1924 was followed by the closure of all madrassas and other separate religious schools. In 1928, Article 2 of the first Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, which made Islam the state religion, was amended to provide for its abolition; In 1937, the principle of secularism was included in the Constitution.

This modernization project brought with it attempts to ban the headscarf, which were implemented at different times with different intensities. As a result of the arbitrary practices of the ban, supported by judicial decisions, it transformed a certain group of women into objects for whom decisions could be made. Moreover, since this ban failed to eliminate women's demands to study and work while wearing the headscarf, the issue has never been off the public agenda and has been shaped by the 'open-close' commands of the changing governments and the actors affiliated with them.[217] These practices, which have led to segregation and marginalization in politics, education, business life and the social sphere, are still having an impact in different spheres today.

> I was born in 1967 in Fatih, Istanbul. I went to primary school in Fatih. I enrolled in the Tuba Girls' Quran Course afterward. Unfortunately, we caught up to the headscarf issue at that time.

217 Fatma Benli, "1964-2011 Türkiye'de ve Dünya'da Başörtüsü Yasağı Kronolojisi" (İstanbul, 2011).

> An imam-hatip was opened in Zeytinburnu, the girls' section, so I enrolled there. I finished middle school and started high school, but unfortunately, it was left unfinished. Because at that time, the February 28 Revolution happened. Kenan Evren introduced national security courses in schools, and girls were banned from wearing headscarves, even in imam-hatip schools. So, my father was already reluctant to send me to school. I had to leave school in tears, and then I studied at a *madrasah*[218] in Fatih. Unfortunately, it was closed. When it reopened, we started again and so on, so we went through a very difficult process at that time. Then I met my husband; I was sixteen years old. (Latife, 54)

For many of the women who participated in this study, school was the first place where they encountered publicness. In the narratives of many of them, we see a questioning of whether they belong or not, especially in adolescence. As a result of this situation, some of the participants went to private schools founded by people with their own views, go to girls' schools, while some others were taken out of school and had to finish their education at high school with family intervention. While in the older generation, education ended earlier and engagement and marriage were on the agenda, as we approach the present day, we see that the duration of education has lengthened, and marriages have been postponed. However, even though the duration of education has increased, educational institutions can be considered as a means of negotiating the process of finding oneself, wanting to be like oneself, or recognizing those who are different. The state's direct intervention against women going to school wearing the headscarf has also led some women to alternatives such as home schooling or attending Quran courses.

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218 Madrasah: The Arabic madrasah literally means "a place of study," and refers to any school at all, whether religious or secular. In Turkey, the word "madrasah" generally refers to the religious educational institutions of the past. Today, however, some sects and communities have established their own special educational structures, which they call madrasas, where religious sciences are taught. These structures are not part of the formal education system and generally aim to continue traditional Islamic education, such as a course Latife went.

3.3.1.3 Qur'an Courses

In the 1930s and 1940s, there were no more institutions offering religious education and training, nor were there any religious courses in the curricula of schools. When the teaching of the Qur'an was liberalized in the 1950s, citizens showed a special interest in learning the Qur'an. Citizens built course buildings themselves in city centers, towns, and villages. Increasing every year, thousands of course buildings were built for male students and female students. In addition to these, night courses started. As a result, hundreds of thousands of students attended these courses. During the summer vacations, millions of children went to mosques or courses and started their Qur'an education. By 1997, the number of courses affiliated to the Presidency of Religious Affairs reached 6514.[219] Such as Latife, ten years younger Sare also enrolled to a Quran course after primary school with her twin sister. Although she did not complete her memorization of Quran, she tried for a year.

> I was born in Istanbul's Atışalanı. My family educated me first, then the Quran course. At that time, such courses were not affiliated to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, later they became institutionalized. There was a Qur'an course in every neighborhood. I tried to become a *hafiz* for one year. I quit after that. My sister is a *hafiz*. But we memorized everything from the 30th *juz*[220] onwards, all the Surahs of *Fetih*, *Yasin*, *Vakıa*, *Amme*, *Tebareke*. After that, I went to middle school at the Süleymaniye Girls' Qur'an course and Ihlamur Beşiktaş Girls' Qur'an Course; completed it with distance education. After a long break, I got married. I never took the university exam or anything or went to university. There is an Islamic University in Fatih. It is affiliated to a university in the Netherlands but not recognized in Turkey. After I had two children, I enrolled to Arabic Language Literature

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219 Mustafa Öcal, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi ve Öğretimi," *Uludağ Üniversitedi İlahiyat Fakültesi* 7, no. 7 (1998): 265–66.

220 Juz: A juz is one of thirty parts of varying lengths into which the Quran is divided. It is also known as parah in Iran and subsequently the Indian subcontinent.

> Department. I did one year of Arabic prep. I dropped out in the second year. I had a lot of difficulty with the children. Then I studied theology via distant education. (Sare, 45)

Her whole education process was distance education except Quran courses. She studied in Quran courses for years. One consequence of the headscarf bans is the preference for distance university alternatives. The most famous of these, Newport University, is an is an American post-secondary academic and professional institution that offers a variety of academic degrees through distance and online education. However, there are serious concerns about the recognition of this university and the validity of the diplomas it offers. In Turkey in particular, it is known that it is not recognized by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and its diplomas are not granted equivalence. This restricts the opportunities for graduates to be employed in the public sector or to pursue an academic career. Although the distance education programs offered by these universities may seem attractive to students seeking alternative education, especially due to the headscarf bans, there are serious problems regarding the recognition and validity of their diplomas.

Apart from these institutional boarding Quran courses, in summer times, Qur'an courses are offered to children in every neighborhood that were mentioned in many women's narratives in terms of religious education, such as Dentist Saide.

> When I was little, my mother had Ottoman books, telling parables. I used to listen to the stories and spiritual events from the books left from her father. My mother was reading, she was not educated, she was a regimented. But she used to read and cry. We used to cry too. During primary school, we would go to the mosque the very next day schools were closed. Our teacher had a lot of influence on us, God bless him. The Quran course in the normal neighborhood, in the mosque. (Saide, 60)

In the lack of institutional religious education, such courses seem to fill a gap. For many, these are the only source of religious education besides their family, the women get, such as Sümeyra.

> I attended Quran courses during summer when I was little. My grandmother was a very religious woman. I started praying at a very young age. By nature, I was very spiritual as a child. In terms of religious and spiritual education, I did not receive such an education apart from those courses. (Sümeyra, 36)

Banu who spent her childhood in Bursa adds that these courses give a neighborhood culture apart from religious education:

> It comes from the family; we have no outside support. We used to go to Quran courses every summer, that's how we learned our Quran. We grew up with neighborhood culture. (Banu, 36)

34-year-old Beyza is a manager in a corporate company, and she also went to Quran courses in summers for years. Schools and courses of religious communities also have an impact on value building and religious education.

> I got a little religious education from my family. My mother wears headscarf. My parents are already people who pray. But I don't remember receiving much religious education from my family. In the summers, I used to go to the mosque for Quran education... It happens like that, when you pass to the Qur'an from juz[221], school starts. That's why, after going for a few years, I skipped the juz and started to read Quran. After that, I went to a public school but attended to a *cemaat* course during middle school. I spent my youth in Acıbadem. I learn many things through the *cemaat* connection. (Beyza, 34)

In Turkey, Qur'an courses operate under different organizations and structures. These can be broadly classified as official Qur'an courses affiliated with the Presidency of Religious Affairs, private Qur'an courses organized by congregations, and summer Qur'an courses held in mosques. Each offers a model of religious education that addresses different needs and goals. These courses, which

221 The juz mentioned here is a Quran reading practice book for beginners.

have a critical role in providing children with religious knowledge at an early age, appeal to large segments of society and increase the sense of social belonging through religious education. Qur'an courses not only fill the lack of religious knowledge in society, but also serve as a social solidarity mechanism that transmits religious values. These courses, which contribute to the preservation of cultural and spiritual heritage by disseminating religious knowledge throughout society, have become the first and often the only address for children seeking religious education.

3.3.1.4 High School Education and *Imam-Hatip* Schools

Imam-hatip schools are secondary and high school educational institutes designed to teach faith-based lessons following primary schooling. The opening of imam hatip schools in Turkey has been influenced by discussions around religious education and secularism from prior to the Republic to the present day. Consequently, the disposition of the governmental power has influenced the various historical periods of imam hatip schools.

The establishment of Imam-Hatip Schools stemmed from the closure of 479 madrasas, enacted by the Law on Unification of Education, and their subsequent transfer to the Ministry of National Education in 1924. Twenty-nine Imam and Hatip Schools, along with a Faculty of Theology at Darülfunun, were established to replace the shuttered madrasas. However, this number decreased to two within two years. The monolithic framework of single-party existence commenced to disintegrate with the shift to multi-party dynamics, allowing previously marginalized social groups to mobilize and articulate their voices in the public domain.[222]

As a more pluralistic political approach emerged, criticism of the limitations imposed by the single-party administration was anticipated. The ten-year dominance of the Democratic Party, commencing with a decisive victory in the May 1950 elections and persisting until 1960, can

222 Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest For Modernity in Turkey* (London: George Allen&Unwin, 1966).

be elucidated through its commitments and policies concerning religion in education and public life, as well as the empowerment of previously marginalized groups to voice their concerns. One of the most significant achievements of the Democratic Party was in the realm of education. The party focused on higher education to cultivate the skilled workforce required for the rapid development project undertaken during this period.[223]

The Republican People's Party commenced addressing societal demands with the shift to a multi-party system. In 1949, it permitted the inclusion of religious classes in the curriculum for fourth and fifth grades of elementary schools. During this period, a notable advancement in religious education was the establishment of a Faculty of Theology at Ankara University, overseen by the Ministry of National Education. During this period, six-year secondary schools (imam-hatip schools) designed to train religious officials were re-established following primary schools; however, the proliferation of these institutions and the expansion of religious education throughout all levels of the educational system occurred during the Democrat Party (DP) era. DP has established policies for religious education across all educational tiers. Furthermore, Imam Hatip schools were established in other provinces of Anatolia and in Istanbul. In 1951, the DP administration established seven Imam Hatip Schools, and following the graduation of their inaugural class, three-year high schools were instituted at the conclusion of the 1954-1955 academic year. [224]

In response to the necessity for training educators for the growing number of imam-hatip schools, the establishment and operation of a four-year Higher Islamic Institute was initiated at the commencement of the 1959-1960 academic year.[225] Subsequent to the 1960 revolution,

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223 Tunay Karakök, "Menderes Dönemi'nde (1950-1960) Türkiye'de Eğitim," *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (August 2011): 89–97, http://higheredu-sci.beun.edu.tr/pdf/pdf_HIG_1532.pdf.

224 Zafer Tangülü, "Demokrat Parti Dönemi Eğitim Politikalarrı (1950-1960)," *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* Bahar, no. 10(2) (2012): 389–410.

225 Tangülü.

imam-hatip schools experienced significant expansion and proliferation. During this period, there was a swift escalation in both the quantity of imam hatip institutions and the enrollment of students.[226] As of 1962, the nation possessed secondary religious institutions accommodating 4,400 students, high school level establishments with 1,200 students, and a higher Islamic Institute enrolling 220 students.[227]

The enhancements in an educational system catering to conservative families led to the emergence of hijabi women in public areas throughout the 1960s in Turkey. This period coincides with the enrollment of hijabi students, who had been connected with the illiterate and disadvantaged sectors of society, as generations educated in imam-hatip schools began to attend universities. The emergence of political Islam globally led to the manifestation of head-scarved women's campaign for veiling their heads as a political demand beginning in the 1970s. Concurrently, women in Turkey have undertaken an intellectual endeavor to attain education. During this period, hijabi female figures emerged as societal role models, pursuing university education, contributing to newspapers, delivering conferences, publishing periodicals, and engaging in civil society organization. In 1976, when imam-hatip institutions commenced the admission of female students, head-scarved individuals began to emerge in public settings. Presence in the public domain elicited responses and discriminatory practices.

Born in 1961, Aysel is a religious officer and the first graduates of the imam hatip schools in her city, Ordu. She was enrolled to imam hatip because her unofficial madrasah education was not recognized legally.

> We were the first graduates of imam hatip schools and the first of the generations who are conscious and educated that live Islam. We had such dedication. After primary school, we, a group of

226 Elif Gençkal Eroler, *Dindar Nesil Yetiştirmek Türkiye'nin Eğitim Politikalarında Ulus ve Vatandaş İnşası (2002-2016)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019), 62.

227 Kazamias, *Education and the Quest For Modernity in Turkey*.

> friends, received *madrasah*[228] education. I received my first spiritual education there. We are all religious officials now, alhamdulillah. We studied at an imam-hatip school in parallel with it. Imam hatip also gave a lot of spirituality. But the *madrasah* provided a very qualified education where I got *ijazah*[229]. The *madrasah* was affiliated with the Diyanet, but our teacher, Fatsa mufti, said: 'I made you take a course that was not in the Diyanet's program. You are my daughters; you will come and kiss my hand.' We received the *ijazah* that people received to become muftis not forty or fifty years ago but sixty or seventy years ago. But in parallel with this, our teacher made us study imam hatip because the *ijazah* was not valid in Turkey at that moment. And that's how we become religious officials. It was not possible to get an education with the certificate given in madrasah education. Then, I studied theology and social sciences. But when I graduated from theology, I saw that theology was very shallow compared to madrasah education. (Aysel, 60)

Spent her childhood in Sakarya, Halime also went to imam hatip high school, and she did not get any other degree after high school graduation. Although imam hatip schools and private religious courses and schools offer an opportunity for conservative families for education, not all the experiences are satisfying. Melek, born in 1981, claims that:

> My parents are conservative, yet my mother wanted us to get a good education. I had an older brother who went to ST the coolest and best school of that time, and got some reaction from the extended family. Then my parents took him to an imam hatip

228 Madrasah: A madrasah is an institution of higher education in Islamic studies. In Arabic-speaking countries the term in contemporary usage denotes any educational institution, particularly at the basic or secondary level.

229 Ijazah: Ijazah is an Arabic word means "permission", "authorization", "license". It is a license authorizing its holder to transmit a certain text or subject, which is issued by someone already possessing such authority. It is particularly associated with transmission of Islamic religious knowledge.

> school. He ended up in a bad class. He went through a lot of hardship there, beaten up by the kids and had very bad memories. He is nine years older than me. Then, when I was old enough to go to school, our relatives told my mother to enroll me in a religious school. My mother said, we tested it on my son; you can't interfere with my daughter. She researched; while residing in Acıbadem, the closest school was the Private D College. I entered there in the first grade and left at the end of high school. I never had a conservative environment. My dream was to finish high school, go to Umrah, wear a hijab, and come back. But it was the year the headscarf bans the events erupted. I gave up. I said I'll go to university; I don't want to go through the trouble of veiling and unveiling; I'll get veiled when I finish university. I studied psychology major at Istanbul University. I got married in my second year and I finished school married. (Melek, 40)

As in the case of Melek, not all of the experiences about imam-hatip schools are positive. The security and happiness of the child may prevail the desire to provide a conservative environment. Out of three interviewees, only 4 of them were graduates of imam-hatip schools and two of them lived in other cities. Istanbul was probably one of the strictest cities about implementation of headscarf ban. That's why for example, Latife had to drop out from school. Only Nihal was graduated from imam hatip in Istanbul and that is because she was younger than other interviewees and in her generation the ban was much relaxed.

3.3.1.5 University Education

Despite the February 28 period being historically recognized for the widespread and stringent enforcement of the headscarf prohibition, discriminatory practices and severe sanctions in universities existed prior to that time. The initial prohibition on headscarves was enacted at the Faculty of Theology of Ankara University in 1968. Despite the absence of legislative barriers to hijabi individuals' employment, professional chambers and organizations in the workforce promptly instituted this prohibition. Consequently, the experiences of women born

in the 1960s residing in Istanbul, where the prohibition was more rigorously implemented, are marked by a lack of access to higher education and work opportunities. A significant number of these women discontinue their education, enter early marriages, and assume the role of homemakers. It could be argued that although the political context is not the only factor affecting head scarved women's access to university, it is undeniable that it has a substantial impact. The trend in university education shows a generational difference. Getting a bachelor's degree is very rare in the generation born in 60s, and not getting it is very rare after 80s.

> I couldn't study at university because of the headscarf. It was very troublesome at that time. I had to take off my headscarf and my father wasn't very willing. When I finished high school, I was engaged, so I couldn't insist too much that I had to study. I didn't want to uncover my head either. After that, it stayed like that. I got married at the age of eighteen. I had my first child when I was twenty and my second child when I was twenty-five. (Neva, 60)

This is how 60-year-old Neva told her story of dropping out of school. She was engaged during high school. 59-year-old Fahriye also has a very similar story.

> When I was in my second year of high school, the headscarf issue came up and we couldn't continue our education, so I thought I could have distant education. Then I got married at the age of seventeen. I finished high school via distant education. (Fahriye, 59)

Like Neva, Fahriye, and Halime, 54-year-old Latife is very sorry because she had to leave high school or could not continue to university education. Born in 1961, Saide is member of a lucky minority, and had an opportunity of education as dentist because she enrolled to school before 1980 coup d'etat.

> Although I wanted medicine very much, I got into dentistry. When I finished, I opened a clinic immediately, about 3 years later, I got

> married. I was 26 years old. I wasn't very young. My elder brother is an Istanbul Technical University (ITU) mechanical graduate. Actually, I wanted to study ITU architecture, construction, aviation engineering etc. always numerical sciences. Those years were the anarchy periods before the 1980s because we entered the university in 1977. My brother said there are no girls in their class, only one or two; and they always took the girls out when they swear, etc. "Come," he said, "I'll make your choice." Medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, law, economics... My brother made the list, and I accepted. My brother is not a dominant character; even my father does not listen to him, and I do not listen either, but that time I did; it was my luck. And I pray a lot for my brother, I'm glad he wrote dentistry to the form. God bless him; I really love my job. (Saide, 60)

It is possible to follow the traces of the headscarf ban in all their narratives about their youth. It is observed that generation becomes an important determinant here. The older generation, who experienced the headscarf bans, generally cannot continue their education, and get married at a young age. While the experiences were mostly like this in the 1960s, it is possible to see that educational opportunities diversified in the 1970s and 80s, and the age of marriage increased accordingly.

In Turkey, where civil and/or religious marriages are common, the age at first marriage is an important demographic indicator. In the Turkish Family Structure Survey (TAYA), all individuals with marital experience were asked about their age at first marriage, regardless of their age group. According to the answers received from the question on the age at first marriage, while the rate of first marriages under the age of 18 was 19.5% in 2006[230], this rate decreased to 17.9% in 2016[231] and to 15% in 2021[232]. In Turkey, the age between 18-24 is preferred as the age of first marriage. The proportion of marriages in this age group is

230 Mustafa Nuri Nuruan, "Türkiye Aile Yapısı Araştırması" (Ankara, 2006).

231 Dr. Yasemin Esen, "Türkiye Aile Yapısı Araştırması" (Ankara, 2016).

232 "Türkiye Aile Yapısı Araştırması" (Ankara, 2021).

59% in both urban and rural areas. While the rate of those married before the age of 18 is 17% in urban areas, this rate increases slightly to 24% in rural areas, as expected. The proportion of those who marry after the age of 25 decreases in parallel in both urban and rural areas. [233] The rate of marriage before the age of 18 is higher among women than men. In 2006, this figure was 31% for women and 7% for men[234], but by 2021[235], the figures have fallen to 24% and 4% respectively.

When the 2006 research data on the age at first marriage are analyzed according to educational attainment, it is observed that almost half (47%) of the illiterate respondents were married before the age of 18. Among those who are literate but have never attended school, 32% were married before the age of 18. Only 6 ‰ of those with university and postgraduate education were married before the age of 18.

The other half of illiterates were married between the ages of 18-24 (47%). Among those who are literate but have never attended school, 56% marry between the ages of 18-24. In this case, the majority of illiterates or those who are literate but never attended school were married by the age of 24 in Turkey. Among those with university and graduate education, 39% were married between the ages of 18-24, 46% between the ages of 25-29, and 12% between the ages of 30-34. As can be seen, the rate of early marriage decreases as the level of education increases.[236] Although educational attainment is not the sole criteria that effects marriage age, there is a clear correlation between age at marriage and education. Considering religious conservative women group, the data obtained from the field study is congruent with the Turkish Family Structure Survey data.

It can be observed that the opportunities offered to girls have increased with the spread of distance education channels, private religious courses, and the opening of Islamic private schools. After the 1980s, together with the increase in education opportunities, leaving

233 Nuruan, "Türkiye Aile Yapısı Araştırması."

234 Nuruan.

235 "Türkiye Aile Yapısı Araştırması."

236 Nuruan, "Türkiye Aile Yapısı Araştırması."

education became rarer, and it is observed that there are more women in the profession. The marriage age that began in high schools for the ladies of the 1960s went up to university education for those who were born in the 1980s. While for the first generation, high school education was considered sufficient and university education was a luxury that was beyond imagination and could easily be given up, for the last generation, not only university education but even post-university education became a fiercely defended goal. Sümeyra believes that this goal is changed version of her parents' concerns and anxieties.

> We are shaped by the sounds we bring from the past. My mother had some behaviors that I did not approve. My father, was a revolutionary person who never made us financially comfortable. My mother always had financial concerns and those economic concerns inflict deep wounds on me, always worry and worry. Thank God now I don't have financial concerns. If I had financial concerns, would I be like my mother? But the concerns changed dimensions. For example, making a PhD is always in my mind. Let's say I argue with my husband; I take my laptop and leave the house. I'm leaving the house but can't leave without my laptop. Do you see what I mean? PhD is such a thing; the biggest concern, that I have raised my children with a doctorate. Not having a doctorate would make me very unhappy. (Sümeyra, 36)

JDP Government has historically positioned itself as a proponent of more liberal policies regarding the headscarf and the freedom of education for women, at least in legal terms. This stance is part of their broader appeal to conservative and religious elements within Turkish society. Their rule of has been instrumental in lifting bans on wearing headscarves in various public and educational institutions. For instance, under their governance, restrictions on headscarves in universities were lifted in 2010, and subsequently in 2013, it was expanded to state institutions and public buildings. This was a significant shift from previous secular policies that restricted the wearing of headscarves in such settings.

Moreover, the JDP has advocated for increased access to education for women across Turkey, including the veiled. They have promoted this as part of a broader agenda to ensure that religious freedoms are protected and that women have the same educational opportunities as men, without facing discrimination. At large, the JDP's policies have aimed at integrating conservative Islamic values with modern democratic principles, advocating for what they consider a balance between personal religious expression and public life. This approach has played a significant role in their political narrative and electoral success, especially among more religious segments of the Turkish population.

Regarding the effect of political context to the education of women, it could be predicted that the women that spent their childhood and youth under the JDP rule, would not have a trouble having high education and a profession. In this field study, this prediction is relevant that all the interviewees but one, got license degree and three got master's degree. Families of most of the interviewees were somehow belong to a community that shape their religious life. Some others are skeptical about congregations and have a more individualistic way of living their belief. The families' attitude towards religion and moral values shapes individual's personalities and religious practices. Moreover, the schools they went also influence their values. Apart from family and education, personal experiences, such as loss of a relative in case of Selma, also might strengthen people's spiritual values and leads them to a more religious life.

3.3.2 Professional Life

Opinions on working Muslim women vary and have changed over time, affected by cultural, social, and religious interpretations. The dynamic character of religious-conservative women's employment shows changes based on historical and social context. Women's labor entering the market has been intimately associated with modernization, industrialization, and neoliberal economic systems as well as with development. Religious and conservative discourses have been used in several respects along this process.

Women in traditional communities typically worked in handicaps and agriculture as part of family chores. Still, this work was typically unpaid and regarded as "invisible." Women started working in manufacturing and the service industry from the 19th century forward as industrialization progressed. But religious and conservative organizations attacked this approach as "disrupting family roles. "Neoliberal policies have encouraged flexible work, small-scale business, and remote work since the late 20th century, therefore providing fresh opportunities that enable religious-conservative women's employment in the workforce. There are varying discourses that support women's participation to working life. One discourse underlines women's contribution to society. While supporting women's employment restricting it to professions perceived as "socially beneficial," such as healthcare, education, and social assistance. Aysel is one of the interviewees embraced this approach.

> As a religious officer, I like to express myself a religious volunteer. I love teaching the words of God Almighty to people. I have been a religious official for forty-two years, hoping that I can be useful, touch someone's heart, leave a mark to their hearts. That's why I work. Our profession is a way of life. I imagine people helping someone falling into the fire. There are more sacred professions, such as nursing, teaching and being a doctor. A teacher has a lot to give to a child. But otherwise, men and women are working together in a gender mixed environment, they lose a lot. Isn't that, right? Do I approve it? No, I'm not approving. (Aysel, 60)

Says religious officer Aysel underlining the sacredness of her duty and social responsibility. Traditionally, women have been associated with caregiving and nurturing roles, both in their families and in society at large. This societal expectation extends to the job market, where women are often seen as more suitable for roles that require empathy, patience, and interpersonal skills, such as nursing, teaching, and customer service. Cultural norms also highly supportive of women working, especially in professional fields like medicine, education, and business. There might

be more stringent restrictions based on traditional roles in other areas. In this respect, Aysel also defines the appropriateness of different types of work under the name of sacredness in terms of its benefit. Employment that does not compromise a woman's dignity, safety, and Islamic values is considered acceptable.

> Our teacher said, 'The stingiest person is the one who does not reveal what she knows. For what I have taught you to be halal, no matter whom you marry, even if his financial standing is high or low, your spouse will not tell you that you cannot work, and you will lay down working as a condition for marriage. My economic situation is good, and I will not let my wife work. No, your work is not such a work. You will explain religion and Islam to humanity.' Allah bless him in both worlds. We obeyed our teacher. Each of us took the Ankara Directorate of Religious Affairs exam. We worked throughout Turkey. Giresun was my first task. I went to Ordu and Fatsa. A few months later, I got engaged. Happily, by the writing of my Lord, I came to Istanbul in 1985. (Aysel, 60)

Considering the experience of Aysel, her education and profession become determiners in her marriage. Keeping her teacher's word, she makes working the ultimate goal of her life. She also emphasizes the religious boundaries of gender segregation in a work setting.

Another discourse is emphasizing that conventional family roles should not be overlooked, some interviewees view women's working as appropriate if it serves the framework of family economic requirements. Religious conservative teachings often emphasize women's roles in nurturing and caring for the home and children. However, this emphasis on family obligations does not inherently prohibit women from working in public. 54-year-old housewife Latife claims:

> I'm looking open-minded now about women working. I have never worked myself. I look at young people today, like my daughter and my daughter-in-law. It's a good thing that they spare time for their children. Because it happens once. If they don't neglect their children, if they can maintain that balance, they can

> work. But frankly, I am against them working too hard, too intensely. (Latife, 54)

Women are recognized as having the potential to contribute both at home and in the workforce. The decision to work should consider the impact on family responsibilities, and ideally, it should complement rather than conflict with them. As long as a woman's work does not interfere with her primary duties towards her family, or her work is necessary for the family's survival, it is permissible and sometimes commendable. Psychologist Melek, devoted her life to charity works, never worked as professional claims that:

> A woman should not work too much if it affects her domestic life and disrupts her marital life. She should be a woman first; she should be at home. Or if there is no extreme financial hardship if she is not at the hunger threshold... I see working women, they give half of her earning to the babysitter and half of it to the hairdresser. As she works, she shops accordingly. What she earns is already wasted on herself. I think the purpose is to change there; she runs away from home and works. (Melek, 40)

Considering the division of responsibilities at home, housewife Neva mentions the dual burden of the women and claims that working would make the women's burden heavier. Instead of calling for an egalitarian share of the responsibilities with men, she claims that it is better for women not to work for the best of women:

> It is said that women and men are equal; women and men will work. Okay. But when women work, the responsibility burden of the house and the child falls on the woman. The man comes in the evening and asks for dinner, but the woman can't tell him to cook for her, or 'I just came home, I'm tired too'. So, it seems to me that when a woman works, she gets worn out even worse. (Neva, 60)

In contexts where extended families live together or close by, working women often benefit from shared childcare and household responsibilities, making it easier to balance work and home life.

However, in case of lack of support, in case of choosing between the job and familial responsibilities, such as motherhood, the roles prevail. Newlywed lawyer Esma serves as an example, who does not mind quitting or intermitting working for a while for her children.

> I am a working person. Priorities drive women's work. Hope it's feasible, but I want 3 kids. My parents and my husband's parents live outside Istanbul, we have no backers. I must watch the baby because I have no one else to leave him for an hour. I suppose children are worlds unto themselves. I don't mean a mother who commits herself to her child, but motherhood is everything. Women may not work if necessary. I adore my job. As a business entrepreneur, I opened an office alone. I never got a cent from my dad. Not while renting or opening an office. I provided all my furnishings. I employed an intern. Why am I telling this? I know how to stand on my feet very well. For me, closing a house or an office is no problem. I will close it today and open it again tomorrow. I am strong in working life. Even though I love working very much, I can say such a thing because I am sensitive about the child. The environment is very important in terms of raising the child. To raise a child, you need work hard and read a lot, be attentive, and be a modern mother. (Esma, 31)

Urbanization, education, and economic necessity have led to more women entering the workforce in many countries. This shift is gradually changing traditional perceptions and roles. This change is perceivable in the narratives of the older generation, yet it is obviously apparent in young ladies. Instead of referring to moral values or religious principles, they point to material needs or individual well-being. The happiness of the individual, the friend network she has, and the empowerment of herself are referred to instead of mentioning duties and responsibilities. Although Güzide quit her job after marriage, she is very supportive of working:

> An income is crucial for women. I worked for a year. It is a very important in terms of establishing human relations and

> friendship. I think every woman should definitely work, even briefly. It empowers women. They gain experience because the conversations and the environment at work also affect normal life. The information we get there and the friendships we make there increase the women's equipment. It doesn't matter what she does as long as she experiences that professional environment. (Güzide, 28)

Lawyer Benan emphasizes that working is not the sole source of happiness and individual differences, and choices should be respected in terms of working, marrying, and having children. However, she prefers working considering her efforts in education.

> I want to work because of my school and effort. Due to our plans to have children, we need both salaries. Without job, I would be bored. Five months after marriage, I felt bored and depressed. I felt like the devil won't leave me. People should do what makes them happy. Some of my friends refuse to work. Everyone graduated college, but few are pleased. Not everyone must attend college. She must choose a career and get training. Maybe a 20-year-old girl wants to marry. Those who can marry should be able to. She does not need to attend university. Marriage should not be delayed because of education. She can skip school and get into business if she can. After all, four years is long. I didn't improve much in school. Too many lawyers—are they happy? Education is important for a diploma. A businessperson or hairdresser need not attend university. Ability and desire should be counted in this issue. (Benan, 24)

Although Islamic teachings recognize and support women's rights to own property, earn money, and manage their own finances, traditionally women are barred from work. Mentioning changing conditions of today, there is a discursive space opened for women to work. However, some conditions are mentioned by the interviewees such as ensuring family responsibilities and maintaining Islamic guidelines in the workplace, like dress code and having limited interaction with men. According to a more

traditional view, a women have a limited role, and their primary role is defined as wife and mother. Working outside the home is seen as acceptable in cases of financial hardship or with a husband's permission, but not necessarily encouraged. However, this does not exclude the possibility of working outside the home, provided that family obligations are not neglected. The decision often depends on individual circumstances, family dynamics, and cultural contexts. Islamic principles advocate for a work environment that upholds modesty and ethical behavior. This includes having a respectful and safe space for women to work, minimizing the chances of harassment or inappropriate interactions. Some interpretations also stress the importance of gender segregation in certain work settings.

3.3.3 In Brief: Physical Necessities

Physical necessities—education and occupational aspirations—constitute the structural framework through which individuals shape their lives. Families are pivotal in fulfilling these demands, impacting both the immediate welfare of their members and their long-term success and social contributions. Understanding the interrelatedness of these demands underscores the significance of focused family and policy interventions to guarantee fair chances and sustainable development for all individuals.

Women often seek to establish financial independence through education and career pursuits. These endeavors enable them to secure their own livelihoods and contribute to society. This process is affected by the paternalistic interventions of the state, which eventually direct women to certain routes. Education, profession, and the aspects of women's experiences in their personality building that touch the family institution together with paternalist policies is discussed under the realm of necessities. The constitutive part of realm of necessities in value building refers to the personal peculiarities of the individuals who founded the family, their upbringing, and backgrounds on their self-construction.

3.4 Social and Familial Necessities

In the context of the "realm of necessities" of the family, an individual's ideas, beliefs, and imaginations about the family play an important role in shaping these needs at both the individual and societal level. The family is not only a biological or economic unit, but also a microcosm in which values, beliefs and identities are constructed. Families provide one of those unique ecologies that from adolescence into the life course, strongly shapes individual self-concepts and roles inside and within family.[237] The family's realm of needs encompasses a range of requirements that are necessary to support both the physical and emotional, social, and spiritual well-being of individuals.

Social and familial needs, in this context, refer to the processes by which individuals meet their basic emotional needs, such as establishing social relationships, feeling belonging, love and trust. Therefore, a person's ideas and imaginings about the family are influential in meeting the material and spiritual needs of the family. These systems of thought shape what kind of place the family is, what values it carries and how needs are met. Thus, an individual's imaginings of the family shape not only the relationships within the family, but also the dynamics of society at large.

It is the need of individuals to exist within a community, establish relationships and find meaning in these relationships. Social needs are related to the desire for socialization that is innate to humans. One of the basic social needs is the sense of belonging. It is the need for an individual to feel that they belong to a group (family, circle of friends, society). The family is a micro-community where the individual first experiences and develops this belonging. Another need is the need for support during times of crisis or emotional difficulties. Family members form a fundamental part of the social support system. The need for acceptance is the individual's need to be accepted as they are, to be loved and respected without being judged. This need within the family contributes

237 Scabini and Manzi, "Family Processes and Identity."

to the development of the individual's self-confidence and social skills. The need for communication emphasizes the need for individuals to express themselves and establish meaningful dialogues with others. Intra-family communication is an area where individuals develop their empathy, understanding and problem-solving skills.

3.4.1 Family as Us

Being a family is about duplicating and then, in some cases, multiplying. So, family identity can be comprehended in multiple levels, the group level, the couple subsystem, and the individual subsystem. At the group level, the family unit cultivates a unified identity that is separate from the identities of its individual members. This collective identity is strengthened by shared experiences and mutual differentiation, when family members acknowledge both their similarities and individual distinctions. The concept of "us" arises as family members cultivate a shared identity that becomes an essential component of their individual identities. For Latife, being a family is being us instead of me.

> The family institution is about being us, not me. That is to say, one can be only be happy if the partnership can continue. Of course, it requires a lot of sacrifice, especially for women. Maybe it is the same for men, but it is true that men make houses and women make homes. (Latife, 54)

A couple functions as a subsystem; thus, when a couple is established, the characteristics of the new bond differ from the mere aggregation of the individual identities of the partners. Linda Acitelli and colleagues have emphasized that the marriage bond engenders a novel identity.[238] From this viewpoint, couple identification pertains to the degree to which the partnership is perceived as a singular entity, rather than merely as two

238 Linda K. Acitelli, Stephanie Rogers, and C. Raymond Knee, "The Role of Identity in the Link between Relationship Thinking and Relationship Satisfaction," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 16, no. 5 (1999): 591–618.

persons. 45-year-old Halime refers to the emotional bonds in the family beyond its social functions.

> Family is a social institution, existing institution. I think a very broad definition of family is needed. It combines both a spiritual and a biological bond. In other words, there is a biological relationship, but it is a relationship carried out with the strong bond of love that comes with it. (Halime, 45)

Individuals in intimate relationships integrate the bond between themselves and their spouse into their self-concepts. Analogous to group identification, individuals in a significant intimate connection cultivate a sense of "we-ness." For Halime, love is an integral part of this sense, whereas for Güzide, this intimate connection is based on respect.

> Considering the family consisting of husband and wife, I think two people respect each other and establish a home. But first, dignify, respect, and love. Caring for each other. (Güzide, 28)

The concept of 'family as us' underscores the collective identity and shared experiences among family members. The concept of 'we-ness' is intricately linked to family cohesion, which is essential for effective family functioning and overall satisfaction. The individual links to another individual as a spouse physically and psychologically, which eventually creates a relationship between the two. Considering all the responsibilities and rights towards each other, the affected side is the self that has to attune. Lawyer Esma is very busy in working but for her, being a family is about sharing and open conversation.

> Everyone has their own freedom in the family, but it ends when someone else's freedom begins. But I think it should be an environment with a common denominator, time spent together, and time shared. To some, this means praying together. Sitting at a table for some. Even an hour or 30 minutes at home is verbal conversation for me. We married two months ago, and I asked my

> husband to sit at the table with me every night. We can talk over tea without TV or phones, even if we don't eat. Because I want to talk. Trying to form the habit. I hope it continues. I know I'm busy. He is busy too. Otherwise, this hustle would separate us. I would forget wifehood too. (Esma, 31)

Couples who engage in frequent, meaningful dialogue are more likely to develop a cohesive sense of we-ness. This argument underlines how "we-ness" and "family as us" are inextricably bound up in the very processes of developing an identity in family contexts. This identity is established upon affinity provided by conversation. Communication plays a crucial role in the family, whether viewed as a process of mutually manifesting truths or as a means of constructing and sustaining notions of reality in relationships.[239] For Aysun, the ideal coupledom should base on sharing and being open to each other, and at the same time, having fun from this situation.

> Mine is not an ideal family but I would love to have it. In my ideal, I want to tell everything to my husband, and my husband tells me. I respect and value his opinion and he care about mine. So, this is also about trust. For example, being able to say, "I will give this job to this person, and he will take care of it." It defines the ideal marriage for me. I mean, being able to do something together such as watching the news and make similar comments on it. This would satisfy me. In my own marriage, there is no such thing. Being so open with each other in the family, honest with each other, and intimate, sharing secrets. Having your spouse as your closest confidant. You should marry someone with whom you can spend time with each other. When you are left in a place without wi-fi, you should be with someone you can have fun with. If I have more fun with a girlfriend or if I can't tell him about something, I

239 F. Koerner Ascan and Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, "Toward a Theory of Family Communication," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 1 (2002): 70.

> can go and tell it to another friend, I think it's a sad thing. (Aysun, 34)

The lives of the individuals continually changing and capacity of families to endure these changes indicates their adaptability, which is facilitated by the communication among family members. Moreover, despite the delegation of certain familial responsibilities to alternative social organizations, family members are anticipated to offer caregiving, support, and mutual nurturing.

3.4.2 Family as Touchstone of Society

The idea that family is the foundation of human society has long been debated in sociology and anthropology, and numerous thinkers have addressed it. This approach emphasizes that family structure and functions serve as the foundation for societal structure and order, as well as performing essential social functions such as individual socialization, cultural transmission, and social solidarity. This idea that family is the cornerstone of society is as old as human history. In ancient Greece and Rome, the family was seen as the fundamental unit of society. The family leader had complete authority over all family members. The family served as a unit for not only reproduction and childrearing, but also economic production and religious rites. During the Middle Ages, Christianity stressed the family's sacredness and hierarchy. The family was considered as a God-ordained institution. The modern family has evolved in an environment that values independence and freedom. The nuclear family paradigm has spread, and family duties have become more equal. Conservative thought places a strong emphasis on the role of family and family values in shaping society. This emphasis stems from the belief that stable families are the backbone of a healthy and functioning society. Stories and narratives that highlight the importance of stable families are often seen as a representation of social stability.

Edmund Burke, a founding father of conservatism argued that the family plays a crucial role in providing social stability. He believed that the emotional and psychological bonds formed within a family were vital

for individual security and societal peace. James Boulton, a scholar who has studied Edmund Burke's writings, concentrates on Burke's views on society and tradition, including his beliefs about the family. Burke's view of the family is based on a conservative, hierarchical paradigm in which the family serves as a microcosm of society at large, reflecting and supporting the social order. Boulton's analysis emphasizes Burke's concept of the family as a basic structure of society that teaches morality, loyalty, and social obligations, rather than being just a biological unit.

Burke believed that the stability and continuation of society were highly reliant on the stability and order within the family unit. Edmund Burke valued the family as an institution that resists rapid change and revolutionary ideas. He saw the preservation of traditional family structures as critical to the overall stability and continuity of society. He believed that the emotional and psychological bonds formed within a family were vital for individual security and societal peace. In conservative thought, the importance of stable families is deeply rooted in the belief that they contribute to societal stability and serve as a foundation for individual development. Conservative thought places a strong emphasis on the role of family and family values in shaping society. Considering the "little platoon" notion emphasizes the role of these social groupings in shaping human identity, establishing moral values, and ensuring societal stability,

Conservative thought also emphasizes the importance of traditional gender roles within the family structure. It asserts that the division of labor within the family, where men are the primary breadwinners and women are the primary caregivers, is essential for maintaining stability and order. This belief is rooted in the idea that traditional gender roles provide a sense of structure and identity within the family unit, which in turn contributes to the overall cohesiveness of society. Robert Nisbet is an influential American sociologist and conservative thinker known for his views on society and the importance of traditional values. He was a distinguished conservative thinker who often criticized modern societal trends, such as the expansion of centralized power and the erosion of traditional social institutions, including the family and local

communities. He emphasized the role of the family as the foundation of society and believed that strong family values were essential for a healthy and stable social order.

In agreement with classical conservative scholars, 59 years old Fahriye believes, the precondition for the strong societies are strong families. Family upholds the society, she claims. 28-year-old Designer Sena also believes that family is the institution that circles the family in.

> I think the family institution plays a very important role in society. When the family institution disintegrates, all the rules and morals of the society also disintegrate. (Sena, 28)

As conservative thinkers argue that strong families act as a bulwark against social and moral decay, providing a stable foundation for individuals to thrive and contribute positively to their communities. The perpetuation of family values through generations is seen as crucial for preserving societal morals and ethical standards. For Nisbet the nuclear family, with a married mother and father, is the fundamental unit of society. The breakdown of the family leads to social disintegration and a decline in moral values, he claims. Nisbet saw the family as a source of moral guidance and social stability, providing individuals with a sense of belonging, identity, and purpose. Conservative society relies on strong family values to maintain social order and coherence.[240] Halime approaches the family, such as the cells in the body. She adds that, the body is cured through cells.

> Family structure is definitely the cornerstone of society. I mean, I always believe that when you fix the family, society will get better. So, in my opinion, all the healing and the problem lies in the family. (Halime, 45)

In conservative thought, the definition of family is centered around the traditional nuclear family structure, consisting of a husband, wife, and

240 Nisbet, *Community&Power*, 8–9.

children. This traditional structure is seen as the ideal environment for raising children and instilling social and moral values. Conservative thought views the family as the primary unit of society, responsible for the transmission of values, culture, and traditions from one generation to the next.

> Very important. I care about family very much. Because if there is happiness in the family, it starts with the individual. It spreads around like a drop falling into the water. Since I care about the inner circle, I attach great importance to motherhood. (Aysel, 60)

The qualities of relationships within families reflect the moral feelings and values of society as a whole. According to this perspective, families play a vital role in the formation of moral concepts, improving identification processes, developing self-respect and self-control, and internalizing values. Conservative thought holds that family has a primary role in shaping and instilling human values. Moreover, family structure is considered as sacred referring to religious values. Marriage act in Islam is recognized as a highly religious sacred covenant, not in terms of sacrament, but rather in terms of realizing the essence of Islam.[241] Fahriye states that 'Family is sacred to me. I mean, it is my priority. My family comes first.' Aysel stresses to the sacredness of family referring to religious parables.

> It is very sacred. I always talk about family in terms of religion. Our religion cares about the family. The Satan sends the devils into the field every morning to see who will lead committing the biggest sin. By rewarding them or giving them bonuses? He would gather them in the evenings and ask what they did. One of them says, 'I made someone lie', the Satan gets up and kisses his forehead. Another one says, 'I made him steal', 'I made him act impudent', he kisses them all on the forehead. He would stand up

241 John L. Esposito and Natana J. DeLong-Bas, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse University Press, 2001), 15.

> and hug anyone who said he caused a rift between husband and wife. 'You have achieved the greatest success!' Because if the family collapses, individuals collapse. That's why family is sacred in our religion. I care very much about the sanctity of the family. (Aysel, 60)

A strong National Vision Movement supporter, 60 years old Saide is also a strong proponent of national and religious values of the family. She claims, the family is important only if the social system protects familial values, otherwise, she believes, the family loses its importance.

> The family is important if the society supports a solid family structure and national and moral values. Other than that, no. Because people are subject to the majority, teens are subject to their peers. How will you protect them if you're a poor country? the Istanbul Convention promotes gender equality in pilot schools. Mixed-gender restrooms opened in kindergartens. It opened at Istanbul University. You make your child to wear a headscarf at school, but everyone dresses indecent. What's occurring in society? Young girls can wear the headscarf for free, but movie stars, their beauty, and their attractiveness inspire young people to emulate them. I saw the Tic tocs recently. It is horrible... Thus, a child can only grow up in a family if the state and social institutions defend morality. Imagine getting a job. To illustrate, the boss responds, "There are many of you out there. Come wearing this outfit. " She gets depressed, and she says, I'd studied so much if I'd finished university. If not, she does everything; she sits at home, but only up to a point. We also have visual media and there are harams in it... For a prayer to be acceptable, Imam al-Azam states you cannot even consume something questionable. Now pork is legal. Interest is increasingly commonplace—house, car... Even Islamic banks buy and lend with interest. In such haram, prayers are not accepted. Then there are many visual temptations. Television Shows are

> like that. As Mr. Erbakan observed, "You cannot draw a straight line with a crooked ruler." How will you escape? (Saide, 60)

All in one breath, she makes such a long list of societal illnesses beginning with the importance of a system that protects family structure and values. Family is not enough for an individual to grow up, the whole system, from primary schools to universities, workplaces to social media is entire of threats against moral values, she claims. The whole society and institutions are corrupted because of the sins in society and there is no way out, no hope for individuals unless a thorough systemic change is applied.

It is observed that, compatible with the theorical perspective, many of the respondents of the research regard the family as the cornerstone of societal stability, moral development, and the preservation of traditional values. Moreover, the family plays a fundamental role in maintaining societal order and stability. It is seen as the primary unit of socialization, responsible for instilling values, norms, and practices in its members from an early age. This approach is supported by the 'sacredness' of the family discourse based on the religious sources.

3.4.3 Family as an Emotional Supporter

The family constitutes the fundamental setting in which an individual initially cultivates and encounters a sense of belonging. Affection, support, and trust within the family constitute the foundations of belonging. Support and solidarity are essential for individuals to experience trust, assistance, and collaboration in their social connections. This need pertains to an individual's requirement for support—be it physical, emotional, or practical—during challenging periods. The family serves as the primary and most significant source of support for the individual. Familial solidarity fosters a sense of security throughout crises. A sense of belonging and support are intricately interconnected. In organizations with a robust sense of belonging, the culture of solidarity is more pronounced. The family exemplifies this bond most concretely. Individuals who see a sense of belonging inside the

family utilize solidarity and support systems more efficiently. The interplay of these two aspects enhances both individual and societal well-being.

Hence, not only providing values, happiness and emotional support come to the fore as a function of the family. It is known that family plays a crucial role in providing happiness and satisfaction in individuals' lives. Research has shown that strong family connections and support contribute significantly to overall happiness levels.[242] Family serves as a source of happiness by providing unconditional love, emotional support, and a sense of belonging.[243] Additionally, it is observed in the scope of this research that shared experiences, traditions, and quality time spent together create lasting memories and foster positive emotions. Family acts as a source of happiness by fostering a sense of purpose and meaning in life. For Halime, family members serve as a support system during challenging times, offering guidance, encouragement, and reassurance. She hopes this is the greatest treasure in life.

> It is very important because everything is given in the family. Family is a person's mountain, the port one takes shelter in. I call family as people who love each other unconditionally no matter what, good or bad. Unconditionally. My sister-in-law's daughter was just engaged. She complained about her mother for not behaving the way she wants or something that and humiliated her in front of her new relatives. I say 'Okay, but she is your mother under any circumstances. Your family still loves you under any circumstances, without expecting anything in return. Your family prays for you.' This is it. Imagine, you have a child. No matter what he does, you pray for your child without any expectations. This is

242 A. Patricia Thomas, Hui Liu, and Debra Umberson, "Family Relationships and Well-Being," *Innovation in Aging* 1, no. 3 (2017): 1–11, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/geroni/igx025.

243 Dennis Grevenstein et al., "Better Family Relationships––Higher Well-Being: The Connection between Relationship Quality and Health Related Resources," *Mental Health & Prevention* 14 (2019): 200160, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mph.2019.200160.

> parenthood. I hope our children will be among those who pray for us. This is the greatest treasure for us. (Halime, 45)

Family is a key source of happiness, as it provides individuals with enduring connections and a sense of belonging. It serves as a source of happiness by providing love, support, shared experiences, and a sense of purpose in life. Happiness within a family is critical in creating a healthy, supportive, and thriving atmosphere. It has an impact not just each of the individuals, but also on the family unit as a whole. Happiness considerably improves the emotional health of family members. A positive family atmosphere reduces stress, anxiety, and sadness among its members. When people are joyful, they are more likely to be emotionally robust and capable of dealing with life's obstacles successfully. These strong relationships are essential for a functional family structure, as they increase everyone's sense of belonging and security.

> There is a blessing of being a community. In the family for example, eating together, spending time together, sharing things together. How much can you do something alone? Let's say you are not married and live alone. Your parents have passed away or you are living apart from them. How far alone? Well. Family gives me peace. (Sare, 45)

Not only happiness, but family also fosters companionship for 24 years old Benan.

> When I think of family, companionship comes to my mind. Lifelong friendship. Because people have so many friends around them, we started this process with friendship and having a good time. We enjoy being together. (Benan, 24)

Companionship within the family gives emotional support and stability for its members. Family members that have a strong companionship are often more adept at providing empathy, understanding, and comfort

during times of stress, grief, or celebration. This emotional availability and support are critical to the psychological well-being of all family members. 35 years old Nihal explains the role of the family as a school to have first emotional experiences.

> Family is the primary school. It is the place where people's dough is kneaded. You cannot choose your family, but no matter what, it is your family that created you and is the reason why you are who you are today. The first emotional formation, the first trauma, or the first life experiences... They are all within the family. Being an individual, brother-sister, sister-sister, struggling with conflicts of roles. You learn everything in the family. To love, to struggle. Well, that's why there can't be a society without a family; you can't be an individual without a family, and those without a family have more problems. (Nihal, 35)

Not only positive feelings going from the smallest unit to larger ones for Nihal, but also pejorative feelings and traumas also stem from the family. Not only love but also the earliest problems and conflicts are also experienced in the family. The fact that Nihal, who also stated during the interview that she had undergone psychological therapy, identified the family as the focus of traumas and conflict can be seen as a point where she diverged from the classical conservative view by gaining a consciousness on this issue. The family is the first and most important emotional supporter of the individual in developing psychological resilience and emotional well-being. Through love, understanding, and stability, families give their members the confidence and strength to confront the challenges of life. Such support goes beyond immediate needs, as it shapes long-term personal growth and relationships.

3.4.4 In Brief: Social and Familial Necessities

In this part, social necessities of the women are evaluated depending on their definitions of family; namely family as a locus of we-ness, family as a touchstone of society and family as an emotional supporter. So, family

is more than a biological and economical unit, it is a value producing and identity shaping institution. Through observation and personal experiences, women internalize societal norms and cultural values related to family. These internalized beliefs influence their aspirations for future relationships and family life. As women navigate the complexities of the necessities, they may encounter internal conflicts between societal expectations and personal desires. Balancing these competing demands is a significant challenge that shapes their decision-making processes and future life trajectories.

3.5 Synthesis of Findings

The realm of necessities serves as the foundation of family life, representing the essential institutions, principles, and responsibilities that ensure continuity and stability. When the family is regarded as a significant whole, as a formed entity, the foundational actors of this entity dictate the attributes of the constituent elements. This chapter evaluated this realm under three subtitles; existential necessities which refer to value building process, physical necessities and social familial necessities.

Considering the roles of women in the family, the "realm of necessities" is a critical developmental period during which women actively construct their individual identities, cultivate self-esteem, and strive for independence. This phase is not merely a life stage but a dynamic process characterized by introspection and the pursuit of personal fulfillment. Central to this process is the formation of a "realm of necessities" encompassing both tangible and intangible needs. While physical needs such as health, safety, and sustenance are paramount, women also grapple with abstract needs related to identity, meaning-making, and future aspirations. The "realm of necessities" is shaped by meeting both physical and existential needs in this process. However, these obligations are not limited to biological and material needs; they also include abstract needs such as creating identity, finding meaning, and imagining the future.

In this realm a woman constructs her own identity, meets her basic needs for survival, and shapes her first ideas and dreams about the concept of family and marriage. The thoughts formed in this realm become the basic elements that determine the roles she obtains in life such as being a wife and a mother. The realm of necessities, on the other hand, encompasses not only physical survival but also the woman's search for meaning, her individual goals and her first awareness of social roles. This is a critical period that lays the building blocks of future life.

Performative theory highlights that identities and values within families are not only influenced by internal family dynamics but also by broader societal and cultural norms. Families often perform identities that align with cultural expectations, but these performances can also challenge or subvert dominant ideologies. Gender roles in the family are often enacted through the repetitive performance of behaviors, rituals, and expectations. This can include the building of selfhood and navigating existential necessities, such as religious values, often associated with specific family roles. These performances not only reflect but also reinforce gendered expectations within the family, which can be difficult to change unless the performances themselves are disrupted or altered.

The performative aspect of identity enables the potential for transformation. Individuals are not simply passive recipients of familial standards but active contributors to their own identity formation. Through iterative actions, people can negotiate, modify, and reject the roles assigned to them. This phenomenon is most apparent in scenarios of societal transformation, where shifting norms on gender, sexuality, and familial structures generate novel prospects for identity development.

4

Family as a Realm of Flexibilities

Of course, I got married thinking whether I would be disappointed or not. You can understand that after marriage. I knew I wouldn't understand him from the beginning.

The concept of "realm of flexibilities" refers to the range or breadth of opportunities, outcomes, or situations that could occur in a particular setting or under specific conditions. It is frequently used to indicate everything theoretically possible in any given circumstance, emphasizing the various possibilities or courses that could be pursued. The realm of flexibilities refers to the whole range of things that could potentially happen. It encompasses all the outcomes, situations, or achievements that are conceivably achievable, even if some are unlikely. Thinking about a broad spectrum of possibilities is critical for effective decision-making and strategic planning in personal and professional settings. It enables individuals and organizations to anticipate and plan for multiple possible outcomes. In theoretical sciences such as physics or philosophy, it refers to all hypotheses or concepts that can be investigated rationally or scientifically.

When faced with a challenge, understanding the realm of possibilities allows problem solvers to identify various answers and approaches rather than relying on conventional approaches. This can result in more imaginative and practical solutions. Individually, the realm of possibilities encompasses the different life pathways, job opportunities, and personal development experiences that one may follow. Exploring this domain can provide motivation and inspiration for personal growth and development. Philosophically, the concept raises questions regarding determinism versus free choice, the nature of possibility, and the limits of human understanding and capability. Understanding the universe of possibilities can influence a person's perspective, leading them to be more open, hopeful, and proactive in their lives. It is related to a growth mindset, which emphasizes the ability to acquire core skills via devotion and hard work. In conclusion, the realm of possibilities is a broad and flexible notion that may be utilized in a variety of domains and contexts, expressing everything that could possibly be achieved or happen, limited only by current knowledge, resources, and imagination.

4.1 The Realm of Flexibilities in Family Studies

In the first chapter, a realm of necessities was defined. This layer is a field that cannot be given up, abandoned, or changed. The second stage is like a second floor built on top of this field. Here comes participation and experience, what you see as you live, and what you shape accordingly. the realm of possibilities occupies a critical space, where the rigidity of core values interacts with the fluidity of emerging choices and adaptations. This layer is where the family negotiates change, embraces diversity, and redefines its roles in response to evolving social and cultural contexts. When viewed through the lens of performative theory, the realm of possibilities emerges as a dynamic arena where identities and relationships within the family are actively constructed and reconstructed through iterative acts.

The realm of flexibilities defines a sphere that allows stretches and ruptures. While grounding, establishing, and building is the subject of the

first layer, flexibilities, satisfactions and disappointments are the subject of this second realm. The definition of individual roles and responsibilities in family life, the difficulties, challenges, or beauties experienced, and the adaptation and transformation according to the new situation encountered will be discussed in this chapter. Marriage is a kind of risk-taking, an acknowledgment of the unknown. 60 years old religious officer Aysel claims that:

> That's why you see it as you live. I have been married for thirty-seven years but I cannot say that I truly know my husband. He can't know me either. A person may react differently to every action. Oh, I thank God if he meets my expectations in terms of religion. If he doesn't meet my expectations, it's up to me to be patient. (Aysel, 60)

According to this explanation, marriage is unpredictable, an experience to be lived and seen. This experience is not only about getting to know and comprehending the husband or wife but also about a process in which one assumes various duties and responsibilities and adopts different roles, eventually changing and transforming her. The first time that Aysel was confronted with the duties that came with her marriage, she discovered that love and gratitude was a way that helped her cope with the situation. The marriage process involves a negotiation launched by two individuals, as well as their respective families, uniting. This process involves confronting disparities across various domains, experiencing unfamiliarity, questioning, compromising, and occasionally fracturing. This chapter seeks to elucidate these flexibilities.

The expectations and dreams of individuals are also shaped by the core elements of the family yet began to transform in daily life. Together with one's personal history and what one has seen from one's family, one's expectations and dreams for the family to be formed begin to take shape. Firstly, the way to marriage will be assessed together with determining the criteria of the candidate to marry, expectations and aspirations about the spouse. These features expected from the candidate are considered as flexible elements that change depending on

the experiences. The processes that precede marriage, which is the founding contract of the family, such as acquaintance, decision-making, engagement, exchanging vows, and relationship breakdowns, which can be considered as performative will be evaluated in this chapter. Presently, the boundaries and the musts and must nots of the family be fixed. Considering that each family is established as a different combination of individuals with different backgrounds and expectations, of course each family has peculiar characteristics found performatively. Without ignoring the characteristics that make up each unit, evaluations of the family will be put forward in the focus of commonalities and patterns.

Secondly the instruments, frameworks, and procedures utilized to establish, formalize, and maintain married partnerships will be assessed in the section on marriage technologies. Marriage technologies are divided into arranged marriages and romantic love marriages. The social and religious dimension of these types of dating has also influenced the performance and has evolved over time. This transformation and new approaches to marriage will be discussed within the scope of realm of flexibilities.

Such as marriage technologies, premarital relationships and flirting demand social and religious consent which depends on changing times and cultures. Thirdly, premarital relationships of couples are addressed as a flexible and performative act of the individuals. The establishment of a new family is an encounter. Encounter of different individuals, families, cultures, habits, daily routine and so on. After facing these differences, flexibility is needed in order to build a partnership. Where this flexibility cannot be shown, fractures occur. The difficulties are the fourth phase to be assessed whereas the ways to overcome the difficulties is elaborated as the fifth.

4.2 The Way to Marriage

The people's concepts of marriage, selection criteria for a spouse, and understanding of the purpose of marriage greatly influence family

dynamics and stability. These factors shape expectations, behaviors, and outcomes within marital relationships that touch on the family. Concepts surrounding marriage, criteria for mate selection, and perceptions of marriage are crucial in this realm as they address and satisfy the practical and emotional requirements of individuals initiating a family. Mate selection constitutes a pivotal decision in an individual's life, shaped by various biological, social, and cultural influences. Comprehending the criteria individuals employ to choose a mate is fundamental to the examination of human behavior, especially within evolutionary psychology and social sciences. From an evolutionary standpoint, mate selection is motivated by the objective of optimizing reproductive success. These theories underline such factors as physical attractiveness, fertility, and those features testifying to good genetic material. The concept is that an individual selects a mate that would be of help in furthering the survival and success of their offspring, often unconsciously choosing things like youth, health, and symmetry in physical features.

Psychological theories, such social exchange theory, propose that individuals select mates based on the anticipated advantages and costs associated with a possible spouse. The pleasures may encompass emotional satisfaction, companionship, and aligned values, whereas the costs may entail the potential for conflict, adultery, or personal sacrifice. Besides evolutionary and psychological aspects, mate selection is significantly shaped by social standards. Cultural influences dictate individual preferences for partners, frequently through societal norms, religion doctrines, and gender roles. In numerous societies, conventional gender norms continue to shape the distribution of labor and expectations in partnerships. Men are often anticipated to fulfill the duties of providers and guardians, whilst women are frequently esteemed for their caring capacities.

Furthermore, the notion of social homogamy, or the inclination to choose partners with comparable social origins, persists. Individuals frequently favor partners who share comparable financial, educational, and cultural origins, illustrating the impact of social stratification and

group identity on mate selection. Sociocultural variables, including media coverage and peer influence, change human preferences by highlighting specific features, actions, or relationship patterns as ideal. Sociocultural norms and expectations can influence the parameters individuals employ in mate selection.

The family serves as the primary source of concepts around marriage and standards for partner selection and shapes the individual's anticipations for marriage. Familial transmission occurs for cultural values, religious beliefs, and social conventions. Factors such as economic status, education, religious convictions, or physical appearance of a partner are influenced by familial models. The family frequently influences the goal, role, and technique of marriage. Concepts of marriage shape an individual's perception of their social identity and familial position. The person who comprehends this issue inside the family gains a clearer awareness of their responsibilities in marriage. It follows from research that an individual's representations concerning marriage, embedded in the knowledge gained from parents, will act as some sort of influence on personal marital experience. For instance, individuals from divorced families tend to marry people with similar backgrounds and marriages between two children of divorce are shown to have a higher likelihood of failure.[244]

That's why, the question of "What is marriage?" is a question posed other than the question "What is family?" The answers to this question and the meanings they attribute to their personal lives and marriages may differ from the meanings they attribute to their families. For some the bond of marriage is a sacred matter to be handled with importance. For Designer Sena, marriage is not definitely a worldly matter. It is sacred and care needs to be taken. Some others critical about the sacredness and the traditional codes attached to marriage.

244 Nicholas H. Wolfinger, "Family Structure Homogamy: The Effects of Parental Divorce on Partner Selection and Marital Stability," *Social Science Research* 32, no. 1 (2002): 80–97.

> Marriage is so sacred and in such a high place in our society. It is important and one of the turning points in a person's life. But we glorify marriage so much and hold it in such a sacred place that getting married becomes a status, the purpose of life for some. It is one of the important steps in human life, one of the important stops in the school of life, which is not sacred. In our society, 'When you get married, you go out wearing a shroud'. However, it is not such a thing. It is a master's degree or a doctorate in life. (Nihal, 35)

One of the reasons of these critiques is the society's pressures about marriage. Some of the women's own family founding process affects their opinions on marriage. Aysun is one of these women. She got married at a relatively late age for her family, which turned into a pressure for her. Not only marriage age, but she also felt pressure about having children by her relatives.

> We face social pressure. If I would live past, I wouldn't be unhappy about my miscarriages or infertility. I wouldn't feel pressure about getting married or having child. I married at 28. At that age, I felt alarm bells ringing everywhere, from everyone. 'You think these showers will continue; but they will be cut. These things of yours will end etc.' I kept hearing about them. I had suitors. My aunts always said, 'These rains and showers come and go. It appears there will be no one around you.' My family was pressuring me. My mother was cool till I graduated from college. 'My girl, what is arranged marriage? you're social. Is there no one around you?' she asked recently. What happened? Why nobody offered a hand for marriage? Or, 'We're not hiding you from anybody; you already have a life, don't you?' That was her thought. I wonder if these were required. Not getting married is fine too. Nothing is wrong with me. I married my husband lovingly. But I still think I physically pushed it. The same happened on having children. It exhausted me. Getting married doesn't important. Loving and being loved is fantastic. Sharing

> something close with someone is good. Besides that, I wish I can say to all women that, 'You are not deficient.' Marriage is not sacred at all. It's something I can piss about easily. It is very important to my mother, but no, I'm not really like that. I'm not in that mindset of being inseparable or not get divorced once married. (Aysun, 34)

Within the "realm of flexibilities" concerning family, the individual's conception of an ideal marriage, criteria for selecting a spouse, and comprehension of marriage hold a major role. Healthy family dynamics and strong value transmission contribute to a more harmonious and meaningful life at both individual and societal levels. As generations get younger, criticism against being a family, its processes, roles, and many other aspects are expressed easily. While traditional codes are questioned on the way to becoming a family, it is observed that they are not completely abandoned.

4.2.1 Expectations

The pre-marital era is a phase during which women's expectations of family life are formed, negotiated, and occasionally contentious. These expectations constitute a multifaceted process wherein gender, affection, tranquility, professional life, and socio-economic elements converge. The influence of gender roles is a significant component shaping women's expectations of family life prior to marriage. Traditional social norms often expect women to undertake roles such as domestic caregiving, emotional support, and family management. These expectations are subject to negotiation before to marriage and may differ. The manner in which women react to these expectations, their perspectives on gender equality, and their comprehension of the evolving responsibilities of the new generation of women are pivotal in this process. Nihal was an imam-hatip high school student, met and fell in love with her husband at the school. She claims that, in those adolescent ages, all they wanted was to be together without felling sinful.

> He was my high school sweetheart; we started flirting at high school. Then he moved to Ankara and visited me occasionally. Those were crazy times; emotions were always high. If we were in the same city, we would be able to meet. When we meet for a short time, emotions were like a waterfall. Let's get married as soon as possible, that was my only wish. My only expectation from marriage is just being together, there were no such forward-looking plans, plans, things. (Nihal, 35)

For Nihal, who has a traditional conservative family, the societal pressure was very decisive in her expectations and marriage process. If she lived differently, today she might have another life.

> We were taught to suppress our emotions. Getting married immediately at the age of twenty-one, falling in love... We were trained to control our emotions. At 21, falling in love and marrying immediately... Flirting with boys in middle and primary school isn't that bad, but we were taught it was. Perhaps if I had been more open to it in high school and university, I wouldn't have married the first person who showed interest in me. Perhaps I would have been more self-aware. We spend time together but always think it's a sin because we're sinful. I denounce it when others do it but do it myself. While I was doing it, I was already so self-critical, I did this, I did wrong... Our main concern was establishing a legitimate relationship immediately. (Nihal, 35)

So, what she expects from the marriage is legitimization of her relationship. She did not think further if she disappoints or not. Generally, expectations about marriage are being happy and comfortable.

> When I got married, I always thought that I would be good, I would be happy, and I would make the place where I was going comfortable. I always had that intention. I was young, but I was always thinking these things in my mind. My parents would always advise me like this, 'My daughter, don't mind us, mind

> them. Don't let them say anything bad to us; you are theirs now.' (Latife, 54)

For Latife, the marriage is about comforting where she goes and making them happy. Depending on her parents' advice, she thought she should not shame her family in her new home. Raised by her grandparents after her mother passed away, Halime, also had some worries about conjugal life and ask for an advice of her peacefully living relatives.

> Before marriage, I worried if I would be disappointed. I understand this only after marriage. I knew I wouldn't be able to understand him from the beginning. I asked a few people for advice because they had a peaceful family. For instance, when I went to Aunt Naciye's home, she was always happy. She had a lot of problems, concerns and issues. But never revealed them. Theirs was a happy, peaceful family environment. My other aunt and uncle had a lot of problems, I didn't prefer to visit them. My grandparents were slightly different in our house because they were older. We were happy, I mean so glad. The people I asked were happy. It's a plus that I predicate on them. (Halime, 45)

It is obvious that the gender roles and expectations from the women, shape their individual expectations about marriage and make them learn their new roles through asking to their families. They learn how to be happy, how to turn their homes into comfortable places and while doing it, being so good at it and be in justifiable lines to not embarrass their parents. If she is not very good at her feminine duties and have other aspirations in life, one felt the obligation to declare it to her future husband, such as religious officer Aysel.

> I told him about my expectations from a marriage. I told him that he should not expect a perfect housewife from me. I am a person who devoted herself to explaining Islam and has received an education in that field. My husband accepted it. (Aysel, 60)

Expectations about how women should combine work and family life are a mix of gendered roles, economic systems, and individual desires. The

expectations were not always about her home or work, but it might be about the relationship between the parents. Banu was married to a divorced man with a son. She also had some expectations about being a big family together with his husbands' and sharing things.

> I made decisions based on our friendship when I said yes to my husband. Some of his traits fit my ideal partner, but many do not. For example, he had a son. I never dreamt of it. I imagined a large family with my and my husband's families meeting more, sharing things, and being more affectionate. (Banu, 36)

Dreams about marriage, such as living a legitimate relationship and be happy in it, play a decisive role both in individuals' choice of a spouse and in their criteria for the spouse's family. This process is shaped by a combination of many factors such as cultural norms, gender roles and individual desires. In most cultures, marriage is not only a union between two people, but also an institution that brings two families together. Therefore, the expectations of the individual's family regarding marriage may also be influential in the selection of a spouse and the criteria for the spouse's family. Now the criteria about marriage, shaped by expectations about marriage will be offered.

4.2.2 Qualities of a Spouse

Sociocultural influences significantly influence mate choosing by establishing norms, expectations, and frameworks that direct individuals' decisions. These influences function at both the individual and communal levels, shaping perceptions of potential partners and the social roles individuals assume inside partnerships. From the standpoint of performative family theory, mate selection is perceived as a negotiation and enactment process, wherein individuals "perform" their

identities through partner choices, therefore supporting or contesting societal expectations.[245]

In various cultures, sociocultural factors such as religion, race, or social class determine the spectrum of acceptable mates. These variables are frequently internalized, rendering specific forms of partner selection appear natural or unavoidable. In civilizations with pronounced cultural or religious boundaries, the requirement to marry inside one's group can be significant, supporting endogamy—the practice of marrying within designated social, ethnic, or cultural groups. This is regarded as a performative action that sustains group identification and cohesion. Social class and education are key sociocultural determinants affecting mate choosing. In stratified societies, homogamy—selecting a spouse with comparable socioeconomic status or educational attainment—frequently contributes to the reinforcement of social hierarchies.[246] This establishes a situation in which family formation serves as a demonstration of social status, with individuals not only pursuing their personal aspirations but also fulfilling a socially endorsed and anticipated function. The choice of a spouse within one's social class can be perceived as a kind of "doing" class identity, whereby individuals preserve or elevate their social status through their partner selections.

This study indicates that partner selection among upper middle-class religio-conservative women is shaped by cultural, social, and performative factors. All the marriages in the scope of thesis are religiously homogamic. Homogamy emphasizes that individuals frequently choose partners from comparable social, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds, which can be perceived as social norms or behaviors performed to preserve group identity, cultural continuity, or social cohesiveness. It denotes the inclination of individuals to marry or

245 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203824979.

246 Matthijs Kalmijn, "Shifting Boundaries: Trends in Religious and Educational Homogamy," *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 6 (1991): 786–800, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/2096256.

establish relationships with those who share similar characteristics, such socioeconomic class, education, ethnicity, or religion.[247] From a performative theory standpoint, homogamy is examined as a mechanism via which individuals embody or play social roles or identities characterized by these similarities. Mate selection, in this instance, manifests as a demonstration of shared values, social class standings, and society norms.[248] In the case of homogamy, mate selection becomes a performance of cultural and social identity. Individuals select partners who reflect the values and expectations of their social group, and through this act, they "do" their social identity. Similarly, homogamy also plays a role in the performance of cultural and ethnic identity. For example, in many cultures, individuals may be expected to marry within their ethnic or religious group, thereby performing the identity of belonging to that group. By choosing a partner from the same cultural or religious background, individuals reaffirm cultural boundaries and perpetuate the norms and values associated with that group. The family formed through this selection process is a site of cultural reproduction, where the performance of identity is carried out through shared practices, beliefs, and values.

Within this performative framework, homogamy underscores that mate choosing is not solely an individual decision, but a communal act influenced by, and contributing to the perpetuation of, broader social structures, identities, and roles. Mate selection is a performative technique in which individuals express their social identities through partner choices, so reflecting and reinforcing societal expectations and cultural norms. This would provide a profound examination of mate choosing, as a component of family dynamics, being both an individual endeavor and a communal, socially ingrained performance.

247 Matthijs Kalmijn, “Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 395–421.

248 Giddens, *Sociology*.

4.2.2.1 Religiosit

Numerous researches conducted thus far have shown that religiosity is a substantial predictor of marital adjustment.[249] Notwithstanding considerable social transformations over the five decades, studies persist in identifying a robust and lasting correlation between religious homogamy and marriage quality.[250] Research demonstrates a robust correlation between aspects of religiosity and marital adjustment. The pattern is primarily linked to the ritualistic, experience, and belief components. Increased ritualistic involvement correlates with heightened religious experience, and more conservative beliefs are associated with greater dyadic adjustment.[251] Moreover it is observed that homogamous unions are more fulfilling than heterogamous unions.[252] Research examines the significance of religiosity in mate selection and marital satisfaction among married Muslim men and women, revealing that both genders consider spousal religiosity crucial in their partner choice.[253] Furthermore, a study conducted in Pakistan indicated that religious devotion and practice are essential for a fulfilling marital life.[254] Mehmet ali Balkanlıoğlu finds that in Turkey, religious

249 Stan L. Albrecht, "Correlates of Marital Happiness Among the Remarried," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 41, no. 8 (1979): 857–67; Erik E. Filsinger and Margaret R. Wilson, "Religiosity, Socioeconomic Rewards, and Family Development: Predictors of Marital Adjustment," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 46 (1984): 663–660.

250 Scott M. Myers, "Religious Homogamy and Marital Quality: Historical and Generational Patterns, 1980 – 1997," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68, no. 2 (2006): 292–306.

251 Margaret R. Wilson and Erik E. Filsinger, "Religiosity and Marital Adjustment: Multidimensional Interrelationships," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 48 (1986): 147–51.

252 Tim B. Heaton, "Religious Homogamy and Marital Satisfaction Reconsidered," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 46, no. 3 (1984): 729–33; Norval D. Glenn, "Interreligious Marriage in the United States: Patterns and Recent Trends," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 44, no. 3 (1982): 555–66.

253 Layla A. Asamarai, Kenneth B. Solberg, and Phyllis C. Solon, "The Role of Religiosity in Muslim Spouse Selection and Its Influence on Marital Satisfaction," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 3, no. 1 (2008): 37–52.

254 Jaffar Aman et al., "The Relationship of Religiosity and Marital Satisfaction: The Role of Religious Commitment and Practices on Marital Satisfaction Among Pakistani

beliefs are seen as a foundation that strengthens the institution of marriage. They can influence the distribution of roles within the family, conflict resolution methods and couples' commitment to each other. However, he states that this effect varies depending on the couples' personal beliefs and level of religious practice. For some couples, religion can be a source of guidance in resolving marital crises, while in other cases the influence of religion may be more limited. It is argued that couples with more traditional and strong religious values see their marriages as more stable.[255]

Classical literature on Islam lists some of the issues to be considered when choosing a spouse and makes it clear which issue is given priority. In a sense, the key to a happy and peaceful home is handed over to every couple who takes these points into consideration. Roughly speaking, these are: religiosity (*diyanet*), nobility, fertility (*walud*), love (*wadud*), virginity, beauty, wealth, and equality (*kefaet*). It is claimed that the most important thing to consider when choosing a spouse is piety. A person's nobility and good morals, developed in accordance with his religion, is one of the important conditions for a good livelihood and a happy life.[256] Generally, in this literature, men are the addressee. Therefore, not all the criteria are prevalent for women such as *kefaet* or virginity. Here are the criteria mentioned by the interviewees.

For the scope of this research, it is observed that piety is an important reference point, and all of the marriages are examples of religious homogamy. Religious homogamy is a practice in which people are married to others of the same religious belief or faith tradition. It falls under the category of assortative mating, wherein individuals choose

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Respondents," *Behavioral Sciences* 9, no. 30 (2019): 2–13, https://doi.org/doi:10.3390/bs9030030.

255 Mehmet Ali Balkanlıoğlu, "Questioning The Relationship Between Religion and Marriage: Does Religion Affect Long-Lasting Marriage? Turkish Couples' Practice of, Perception of, and Attitudes Towards Religion and Marriage," *The Journal of International Social Research* 7, no. 31 (2014): 515–23.

256 Muhammet Bener, "Dindarlık-Eş Seçimi İlişkisi (SDÜ Örneği)" (Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi, 2011), 25–30.

partners based on similarity of religious affiliation, practices, and values. Homogamous marriages happen in societies where religion stands as the core factor affecting identity, moral values, and social norms.

For religious officer Aysel, the candidates always present best parts of themselves before marriage which makes it impossible to know him thoroughly. That's why religiosity is the only criterion to rely on.

> To say I recognized his character in my marriage decision is a lie. His character was unfamiliar to me. People always exhibit the front side of the coin in first meetings. It was a display back then. I know him over time. After thirty-seven years, I still don't know my spouse well, and he doesn't know me well either. My husband's religiosity and our equal families made me say yes. My husband is the same too. He also wanted a religious wife. He adds "I want to marry a wife that I will not remind her to pray, so she should be conscious of that." Our families are similar in terms of piety. We expected to marry a pious spouse. (Aysel, 60)

For Melek, this reference point is summarized by the term of being a (*Allah korkusu olan insan*) 'God-fearing person'. If he has this fear, he will also have virtues and merits which goes beyond all other criteria including prosperity. Because, as mentioned, piousness is elaborated as a way of life and if this way of life is not shared with the spouse, a relationship cannot be sustained. Moreover, the spouse cannot be trusted.

> I just cared about piety in my husband, not material stuff etc. My daughter is 18 and she can find her own husband, I'm not against it, but the person she finds should have fear of God. If the criterion is being a God-fearer, the rest would be ok, he can handle anything. Then he will be decent, honest, earn well, be compassionate, not lie, and treat her well. Everything else is OK. If I didn't fear Allah or have these beliefs, I would live a very different life as a woman. I would live, eat, drink, and be merry without marriage or children. Without believing the hereafter or

> Allah, my life would be very different. How can you trust someone of a different lifestyle? That's why it's my priority. (Melek, 45)

Halime is an example of third-party intervention in homogamy. She was also trusted to her husband and confirmed his proposal depending on the advice she got from her uncle. This advice was about trusting to people whose foreheads is bowed down to God (*alnı secdeye giden insan*). Moreover, piousness is also considered as a shield to protect from bad habits such as smoking or drinking alcohol.

> Frankly speaking, we were not people who prayed a lot. We missed some prayers then. The groom was my uncle's friend. I asked my uncle, "You knew him, what do you think of him?" My uncle remarked, "Don't be afraid of people whose foreheads are bowed to God." That amazed me. "What do you mean, uncle? Can't religious people be bad, or don't gossip, or misbehave? I had that kind of questions. My uncle replied, "Look, no matter what he does, because he bows down and opens his hands to Allah, there will be compassion and softness in his heart." He must not smoke, as it was crucial to me. When I was 20, I always said, "O Allah, the person you let come to me should not smoke or drink alcohol." Now, we're telling our youngsters, "The one you're going to choose for marriage, may he pray to God, may he be close to Allah." Because our elders prayed for us that way. (Halime, 45)

In a similar vein to Halime, Doctor Aysun also mentions how alcohol drinking was a deterrent for her, as powerful as being married. 'The issue of alcohol drinking is a very big red line issue for me. Whether he is married or drinks alcohol, it's the same for me. Religiosity was definitely a criterion.' She says. The prerequisites for piety involve abstaining from negative actions and demonstrating a propensity for positive actions, specifically described as prayers. 45-year-old Sare claims that the only way to consider a candidate who does not pray is falling head over heels in love.

> My husband was living a religious life. Of course, he was. It was very important for me that he prayed. I probably wouldn't have thought about a candidate who didn't pray unless I madly fell in love with him. You know, when you fall in love, love sees ne faults.' (Sare, 45)

Aysel also underlines the importance of prostrating only to God because one will only refrain from Satan and find the true way only through worshipping Allah.

> My criterion that I attach great importance is prayer. Does he grovel to Allah? Because the friend of the one whose head does not prostrate is the devil. He who prostrates to Allah will surely find the truth one day. I always tell my students that; if you ask me: 'Mrs., I will do one of these two commands of Allah. I will either pray or wear the hijab'. I say, pray. Because prayer carries you to hijab. However, the hijab may not carry you to prayer. (Aysel, 60)

Religiosity is not only an individual characteristic, but also a social and cultural norm. Many families consider marriages between spouses with religious values to be important for the preservation of family unity and social peace. A religious spouse sets an example not only for the individual but also for society. In this respect, it is important that he embraces national values and is politically aligned with his spouse, for Neva. A polyamorous lifestyle also falls outside the norm of religiosity.

> I care about piety and moral values; it is important for me that he prays. Then I look at his past, does he have a lot of affairs of heart in his past? His national values are also important. I probably can't get along with a leftist or I don't know, someone who is not in my mentality. (Neva, 60)

Religiosity is also a determinant in socialization. Dentist Saide claims that, in addition to his husband's prayers, he should respect to her wish about socializing in gender-segregated places, which is a part of her piety, and it is a red line not to be crossed.

> When we first met, I set a condition to my husband: We, men, and women- will socialize separately when we get married. At my wedding, people will sit separately. These were my essentials. Moreover, I told, "I have a clinic. I'll work. You will never refrain me from working." He accepted. He was praying, was fasting, and he was a well-behaved person. (Saide, 60)

Generally, persons of the same religious background are likely to hold similar worldviews, moral standards, and life objectives. In this case, religiosity becomes a criterion of trust in an unknown journey of marriage. The religious rituals denote a life style that is practicable for the spouses. This can lead to a more harmonious relationship and a deeper understanding of one another. Religious homogamy allows continuity of culture through generations in regard to shared religious traditions, customs, and rituals. It often strengthens family identity and social cohesion in a community. That is why families and religious institutions often encourage homogamy to preserve faith-based values and avoid conflicts arising from interfaith differences, as in the example of Halime.

4.2.2.2 Good Morals

Religiosity can be limited to lifestyle or certain rituals. However, in Islam, piety is a phenomenon that integrates with one's inner world and behavior. Therefore, the criterion for choosing a spouse, following piety and worship, is the moral and spiritual depth of the person. A person's morality, which develops in accordance with his/her religion, is one of the important conditions for a good livelihood and a happy life. Aysel, mentions the importance of good morals and warning against the difference between outward appearance and inner morality.

> The Prophet Muhammad said marriage has four pillars. Beauty, lineage, knowledge—but choose the moral one. He promises you victory in this world and the next. We want this in marriage. Same for my marriage and child. We valued religion because God-fearers do not oppress. However, the book's outside may appear

> pious and elegant. It may contain different items when opened. (Aysel, 60)

Designer Sena says that spouses constantly set an example for each other in married life. A spouse with good morals positively inspires the other spouse's behavior and encourages them to strive to be a better person. This positive interaction strengthens the spiritual dimension of marriage and contributes to the family becoming a more solid structure. When asked her about the criteria, she claimed that:

> As the Prophet said, I care most about his prayers, or how he believes, since the spouses are influenced from each other. I assessed his faith. Financially, I don't think he should be rich but he should be generous. His good principles and his morality were the most crucial factors. You examine his behavior, character, occupation, and social standing. That reveals his morals. You observe his treatment of his mother, father, and environment. I checked that too. Looking at his family, one can learn about their personality and upbringing. (Sena, 28)

The sharing between the members of the family were not limited merely to moral spheres of love, peace or counselling, but also has a material sphere that narrows the distinction between the members. It should be mentioned that none of the interviewees mentioned the wealth or richness of the candidate as a criterion. The women demanded responsibility instead. Still, the parents' support is obvious for many young couples.

> I make little of his financial situation. I even wanted to have a modest ceremony instead of a glamorous wedding party. I am thankful that they organized a wedding party. However, the important thing is the characteristics of the husband. He must be a good man and treat me nicely. (Güzide, 28)

Good morality originates within the family and gradually permeates society. Based on the view that a family consisting of moral individuals contributes to the peace and order of society, Sena also evaluated

whether the person she was seeing was respected by the society. She obtained information about this person by observing his attitude towards the people around him and especially towards his family. Good morality is equated with being respected and nice to other people for Sena. Esma on the other hand, was impressed by his humility and respect towards her.

> His religious approach appealed to me. When we're dating, I praise my partner beautifully. He says, "Don't praise me in front of me; I'll get spoiled, God forbid." His sentence baited me. We remind each other the example of our Master, who used to make his wife, Aisha, talk in the assembly. When something happened, he would ask her; consult her, and they spend time together. (Esma, 31)

The interviewees mentioned the vitality of good morals such as being kind and humble, to ensure that the institution of marriage is long-lasting and fruitful. When spouses set an example for each other with good morals, both individuals and the family institution gain a stronger and happier structure. Therefore, prioritizing good morals in choosing a spouse is claimed as a fundamental step towards realizing the sacred meaning that Islam attributes to marriage.

4.2.2.3 Equity (*Kefaet*)

Kufā'ah (or kefaet in Turkish), which means "equality, equivalence, similarity, and sufficiency" in the dictionary, is a jurisprudential term that refers to the equivalence between the spouses in certain aspects, more specifically the equivalence of the man to the woman. A man who is equal is called kûfuv.[257] In the hadiths, the subject is mentioned as a recommendation or an expression of social reality to ensure harmony between spouses and the continuity of the family, rather than a legal condition and necessity. As a legal institution, *kefaet* is brought up as a

257 Hamza Aktan, "Kefaet," in *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 2022), https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/kefaet.

condition that protects the rights of the female party in marriages. For this purpose, the man must be equal to the woman in certain respects, and the man must not be inferior to the woman he marries in these respects. If the man is better than the woman, this is in favor of the woman and does not contradict equality.[258]

In religious discourse, *kefaet* includes the equivalence of spouses in different areas. In the context of marriage, *kefaat* refers to the idea that the social, religious, moral, and economic status of the spouses should be compatible. Religious officer Aysel explains it in terms of its conformity to human nature, referring to an example from the Prophet (*pbuh*).

> Family equity in material, spiritual and financial sense is very important. Because people sucked raw milk, over time, one can crush the other person both materially and spiritually. Our Prophet (*pbuh*) married the daughter of his aunt, mother Zeynep, to Zayd bin Harise, he wedded them. Zeyd is a a very great, spiritually great person who was freed from slavery. But there was no material equivalence. They could not make their marriage work. Then Hazrat Zeynep, had the honor of being the wife of the Prophet Muhammad. The Messenger of Allah says equality in families is important. Why, because we cannot hold our tongue. For instance, our mother Hazrat Hatice was a very rich woman throughout her life and marriage, but she did not make our Prophet (*pbuh*) feel it even once. She is one of the few women who handed over the keys of her properties completely to the hands of her husband, and passed away while starving for three days during the boycott. The same is true for men. If the man is financially inferior, he can oppress the woman. (Aysel, 60)

For Latife, the equity is not only about the individuals but also families. It is important that spouses are equal in terms of religious beliefs and good morals. This facilitates spiritual harmony in marriage and living a life in accordance with Allah's will. Individuals who come from the same

258 Bener, "Dindarlık-Eş Seçimi İlişkisi (SDÜ Örneği)," 30.

cultural and social environment can usually understand each other better and maintain a harmonious marriage.

> Equivalence is crucial. It is very important to share the same worldview. As the Prophet said, there should be equivalence between spouses. That's why equivalence is very important, not only in the material sense but in every sphere. Family is very important in marriage. In order for young people to be happy, families must be in harmony; they must be in such a correspondence with each other. That is very effective. (Latife, 54)

Referring to the importance of cultural equity, Designer Sena also mentions to the importance of cultural and material equivalence. A balanced economic situation can reduce financial difficulties in a marriage and balance the expectations of the spouses towards each other, because men can oppress women if she is wealthier, for her as also mentioned by Aysel. Fahriye emphasizes the significance of equivalence in matrimonial unions. There remains a caution that, regardless of how carefully a partner is chosen, not all marriages are devoid of issues, and there persists the possibility of experiencing unhappiness or bad circumstances within the union.

> Our Prophet says equivalence is really very important, not only material equivalence but also their hometowns, their appearance, and their education. Equivalence in everything is very important. But as I said, if you are going to live your test, you live it, so you can't escape it. (Fahriye, 59)

According to the women interviewed, *kefaet* increases harmony and understanding between spouses. Similar religious and moral values make it easier to build a common life. In an unequal marriage, disagreements can arise due to different values, expectations, or lifestyles. Equity has been emphasized to avoid such problems. Marriage is not only a relationship between individuals, but also an institution that affects families and society. Equity helps to maintain harmony and peace

between families. While the concept of *kefaet* is applied more strictly in traditional societies, it is interpreted more flexibly in the modern world. Today, an understanding is prevalent in which individuals prioritize relationships based on personal harmony and love. However, it is observed that *kefaet* still remains important for religious and moral harmony.

For the scope of this research, *kefaet* is the frame that defines religious homogamy. Homogamy, according to data, refers to the practice of choosing a mate who shares similar religious beliefs and practices that are roughly embedded to the framework of *kefaet*. Although a religious term, *kefaet* refers to equality. It is a broad framework of equality that encompasses not only religious but also cultural, social, educational, material, beauty, and many other aspects. In this respect, it can be argued that it sets the criteria for homogamic marriage.

4.2.2.4 Appearance

Among the conditions that constitute family, harmony, love and understanding of the spouses are prioritized. While recognizing the contribution of appearance in establishing harmony at the beginning of marriage, it is not seen as the main basis for marital bonds. It is observed that excessive emphasis on appearance risks neglecting the moral and spiritual values. Many women are advised that appearance is an attribute that can change over time, whereas love, understanding and moral harmony are essential in a long-term marriage. Love and compassion have been defined as bonds that are more lasting and deeper than outward appearances. Appearance may be a factor of attraction at the beginning of a marriage, but the permanence of marital bonds is based on love, understanding and moral harmony. Some women expected to have handsome mates. Aysel mentions that many people around her, advise her to not to consider handsomeness, but she cared for it and her husband meet her expectations.

> I cared about appearance, and I found that good looks in my husband. Yes, I would get a lot of advice not to pay attention to the apparel, but that was also one of my criteria. (Aysel, 60)

Sümeyra also is very proud of her husband's good looks. She said she fell in love after seeing his photograph.

> Our mutual friends introduce us. But he was very handsome, my husband. When I saw his photo... Yes, he was. The most handsome man in the Middle East and the Balkans. I fell in love, of course, but it's not difficult for me to fall in love. I wanted to fall in love. (Sümeyra, 36)

Some of the women, on the other hand, does not specifically want handsome mates. Still, they said that height was a criterion. Lawyer Benan also said that appearance was not in primary reason for her, but her husband's beauty was beyond her expectations, she calls a 'full package'.

> I am livelier with him, we are very happy when we are together and we can talk, our communication is strong. I think that's why he was attracted to me. Physical features like beauty were not in the first place. I used to say that physique was not important at all, he can be the ugliest person in the world, but he should be tall. I used to say that financial status is not important. Sait was a full package for me. Physical things caught my attention later. (Benan, 24)

When it comes to appearance, a woman's preference for men who look like the men in her family is also a topic that has been studied in psychology and sociology. The familiarity principle in social psychology suggests that individuals are more attracted to people who are familiar to them or who have characteristics they are familiar with. Women's preference for men who have similar characteristics to men in their own family may be based on this familiarity principle.

The familiarity principle, also known as the mere exposure effect, can include physical features. This principle suggests that people are more likely to feel attracted to or comfortable with individuals or things that they are familiar with. In the context of human relationships, this can extend to physical characteristics as well as other attributes such as

mannerisms, speech patterns, or personality traits. Research has shown that people often find faces like their own or to familiar family members more attractive. It is found that individuals tend to prefer faces with features resembling their parents or their own facial structure.[259] Halime's criteria are compatible with this familiarity principle who did not even recognize her husband's baldness.

> My husband once said, "I'm a bit bald, I don't have hair here, I wonder if you will like me." I've never considered this as a flaw since my uncle, father, and grandfather have no hair. But I look at hands and teeth. Now I'm thinking one can get his teeth done. Why to bother that much? I was rather young at the time. My husband and I are equal height. I love high heels too. My husband said I could wear them. Would I be taller than my husband, I thought?! They were childish thoughts. Aunt Naciye asked, "Are you obsessed? Height is only needed for photo. You don't need it forever; think carefully!" (Halime, 45)

In a similar vein with Aysel, Halime was also advised not to give too much importance to physical appearance. She considers her sensitivity about handsomeness in youth as ignorance and points out that physical characteristics are changeable. Dentist Saide, on the other hand, explaining the importance of equity, mentions that there should be equity in terms of beauty and that is why she rejected one of the handsome candidates. So, the definition of equity also involves physical appearance, still in line with the familiarity principle and also *kefaet*.

> Our elders say, if you ask Allah for an oil candle, He gives you an oil candle, if you ask Him for wax, He gives you wax. When I reached marriageable age, a very handsome man wanted to marry me. They used to live in Kısıklı, in Çamlıca. He was a rich merchant and his father was a lawyer and a friend of my father. I thought,

259 Lisa M. DeBruine, "Facial Resemblance Increases the Attractiveness of Same–Sex Faces More Than Other–Sex Faces," *Royal Society* 271, no. 1552 (2004): 2085–90, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2004.2824.

> 'Oh, I'm not a very beautiful woman but he is rich and handsome. I couldn't cope with him.' I didn't consider marrying him, I rejected him. (Saide, 60)

Doctor Aysun is one of the interviewees who does not pay attention to the handsomeness but refers to the physical harmony, which can be evaluated as *kefaet*, or equity in appearance.

> I've always wanted him to be tall. Mahmut is physically close to me, a person I can like in terms of type... But I've never had such a desire. For example, no one else likes the actors I like. Handsomeness, beauty is nothing for me. (Aysun, 34)

Overall, two different attitudes towards the effect of physical appearance are observed. The first approach explicitly states that physical characteristics are important in marriage, whereas the second approach states that appearance is not of primary importance, but it is still important that their partner is compatible with them, which can be explained by the familiarity principle.

4.2.2.5 Rationality

Rationality, characterized by the presence of logic, discipline, and intelligence, becomes a vital factor affecting women's choices in mate selection. Various sociological studies and qualitative research have shown that women tend to emphasize these aspects when choosing a partner. According to the data obtained from the field, rationality serves as an appealing trait among men from the female perspective by its links to stability, problem-solving, and long-term compatibility. Rational men are perceived as capable of making sound decisions, managing resources effectively, and navigating life's challenges with composure. These qualities contribute to a sense of security, which is highly valued in intimate partnerships. Another most appealing dimension of rationality that impresses women is problem-solving ability. A partner who can tackle conflicts and obstacles in a logical and methodical way is looked upon as an ally in establishing a harmonious and strong relationship. This problem-solving orientation ensures that issues are better addressed constructively to avoid

unresolved tensions. Sümeyra, explaining the difference between herself and her husband, values his certainness and concentration in contrast to her imagination.

> Mehmet is very straightforward in some matters. I am very flexible. Sometimes I sink to the bottom. I can't find my way. He says, “Don't be ridiculous, Sümeyra, you should think like that!” His mind is so clear, sometimes I need it so much, he is so rational. I get lost sometimes. I really can't get out. Their concentration is very high, he does what I cannot do in an hour in a day. (Sümeyra, 36)

Women often equate the disciplined and logical behavior associated with the ability to handle emotional tension constructively, avoiding sudden changes of mood or impulsive fits, with trust and confidence-building in the relationship, viewing men in touch with their rationality as better companions in both good times and bad. Lawyer Benan calls this maturity and admires it.

> He is mature, and I was very impressed by that. I was 24, and he was 26 when we got married. His maturity is like 30 in my eyes. Financial concerns were not the first priority for me, the personality was important. I loved him even more after we got married. (Benan, 24)

Discipline is another aspect of rationality in a man, which evidences his determination to personal and professional goals. Women see disciplined behavior as an implication that the partner is reliable, ambitious, and thus fulfilling their expectations for long-term compatibility. A disciplined partner is looked upon as someone who values planning, persistence, and responsibility to sustain a fulfilling partnership. Besides, discipline denotes readiness to invest energy and time into the relationship. Often, women relate to this attribute as one characterizing maturity and seriousness; therefore, it contributes to their feeling of mutual respect and cooperation. For Doctor Aysun, showing a disciplined attitude means showing that he will make sure to

commit to the goals and plans both partners have. Another principal component of rationality is explained as intelligence, which features dominantly in the mate's selection for women. For women, high intelligence ranks among the desirable traits for a partner due to their perceived ability to offer stability and problem-solving skills.[260] Intelligence is not only something to be admired but also considered a very practical asset in treading the maze of situations that vary between professional challenges, family dynamics, and personal growth. Lawyer Esma thinks that her husband is letting her do whatever she wants, yet controlling her without interference thanks to his intelligence, and this comforts her.

> Logic is important in the following way; my mate should appeal to me within the framework of logic because I am a person in love with intelligence. If he is not intelligent, he bores me… A woman on a talk show once said that "he should have chocolate skin and appeal to both my heart and eyes." My husband is like that. (Esma, 31)

Rationality is a personality trait that embodies a great degree of the most desirable mate characteristics: logical, disciplinary, intelligent, and able to offer stability, problem-solving, and long-term goals toward a healthy, long-standing partnership. Valuing rationality, many women seek to include mutual respect and shared values in a relationship rather than passion alone. This preference underlines the salience of rational traits in shaping modern romantic dynamics, hence making them so highly relevant for intimate relationships.

4.2.2.6 Trustfulness

Trust plays a crucial role in marriage, serving as a foundation for commitment, stability, and overall relationship satisfaction. Research

260 David M. Buss and Michael Barnes, "Preferences in Human Mate Selection," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50, no. 3 (1986): 559–70, https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.50.3.559.

indicates that trust is a key factor in building and maintaining social structures, including marital relationships.[261] It directly and indirectly contributes to the development of committed relationships, positive emotional attachments, and a group orientation, all of which are characteristics of a stable social structure. Trust is conceptualized as having two components: trustfulness and trustworthiness.[262] While being trustful is important, trustworthiness is identified as the crucial factor in maintaining and enhancing cooperation within relationships. Experience with trustworthy partners tends to foster further cooperation, whereas overoptimistic or deceitful promises can lead to disappointment and distrust. Halime explains how her husband's trustworthiness never damaged but always strengthened in years they spent together.

> May Allah be pleased with him. I have never seen that -I mean intellectually, materially, spiritually, he said one thing, and one month, two months, one year, three years later, he did the opposite. Same, same. I have never experienced the opposite of anything. He said he was messy and he really is. He said the material things do not matter to him, and really do not. (Halime,45)

Trust and commitment are the key elements, besides having a mammoth impact on marital exchange processes, in the context of a marital relationship. Both these elements influence the cognitive orientation of marital partners and thereby affect the exchange relationship. It gives couples the confidence to invest for the future in their relationship-a fact

261 Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, "Trust and Commitment through Self-Verification," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (1999), https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/2695833.

262 Jan Tullberg, "Trust—The Importance of Trustfulness versus Trustworthiness," *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 37, no. 5 (2007): 2059–71, https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2007.10.004.

of utmost importance for marital stability and satisfaction.[263] Moreover, trust instills a sense of emotional safety and security in marriage. It allows the partners to be vulnerable with one another, share their feelings, and depend on each other for whatever the situation calls for. With trust, there is that feeling of security in a partner's commitment and loyalty, and that can bring deeper emotional intimacy.[264] Her husband took Doctor Aysun's attention with this feeling of safety.

> At that time, I had a sensitivity about trust issues. One day, I realized that Mahmut knew me very well; it was an anonymous moment. We were in a café as a crowded group. He said, "Oh, Aysun is allergic; she doesn't eat fish." Very ordinarily. It was the first time he caught my attention. Someone knows me by taking care of me. I felt safe and trusted him. I use the word confidence in the sense of being recognized and being wise. That was the first time I was interested in him. (Aysun, 34)

Trust is crucial in the negotiation of roles and responsibilities within marriage. For Lawyer Benan, making the living of the family is the husband's responsibility and the fact that he is fulfilling his duty properly has established her trust. While wealth can enhance trustworthiness, ostentatious or arrogant displays of wealth may have the opposite effect. Women are more likely to trust men who display wealth modestly and responsibly. Responsible financial behavior, such as budgeting, avoiding debt, and investing wisely, signals maturity and long-term thinking.[265] Signaling wealth for mate attraction is different from building long-term trustworthiness and this is the case in Benan's narrative.

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263 Robert Rowthorn, "Marriage and Trust: Some Lessons From Economics," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 23, no. 5 (1999): 661–69, https://doi.org/doi.org/10.1093/cje/23.5.661.

264 John G Holmes and John Karl Rempel, "Trust in Close Relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 5 (1989): 187–220, https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.49.1.95.

265 Jill M. Sundie et al., "Peacocks, Porsches, and Thorstein Veblen: Conspicuous Consumption as a Sexual Signaling System," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 100, no. 4 (2011): 664–80.

> He must be a person with a sense of responsibility. My family is financially well-off, but some observations in my hometown, I didn't want to marry the sons of wealthy families. The sons of well-off families seemed like parasites to me. I used to say I would tyrannize over someone who couldn't handle his own affairs. When I met Sait, I thought he was just a salaried employee. I was impressed when Sait told me we would rent a house. I said, "If you can afford the rent, I don't mind." At first, we talked about our expectations for marriage, but we didn't talk about material things. When he told me that he went to university in a small city like Yozgat, I liked that very much. He didn't say anything about his family's financial situation, I didn't know that we would have a house. (Benan, 24)

A trust breach in a relationship, such as infidelity, can be devastating. In most cases, breaches of trust result in hurt feelings, anger, and betrayal that can weaken the very foundation of the relationship. Rebuilding trust after an event of this nature requires much time, effort, and commitment on the part of both partners. Banu got dumped by her boyfriend after 3 years long relationship that directed her to search for a trustworthy man.

> When we got married, I wanted him to be financially independent and not depend on his father. And this impressed me. His rhetoric and persuade are excellent. He's smart and precise. He acted quickly. When we met, he stated he likes me very much, and he meant it. He expressed it simply, without ambiguity or assumptions. Few males exhibit this. Others may distract or confuse you. Before my husband, I had a 3-year boyfriend who proposed me. Then returned from military service and told his family about us after I accepted. He broke up with me because his family didn't want me. Naturally, I fell madly in love with him. He disappointed me greatly. After 5 months, my husband and I met. I told him truthfully. 'I went through this; it's nothing to do with you. No one is trustworthy for me right now.' (Banu, 36)

Trust is one of the foundations of a successful and enduring marriage. It fosters emotional security, easy communication, resolution of conflicts, and closeness, all of which reinforce both marital satisfaction and continuity. A breach of this trust, such as through marital infidelity, can thus be truly devastating. This makes the fostering of trust within the marriage even more imperative.

4.2.2.7 Familial Background

Familial background is a very decisive factor in the persistence of religious homogamy is the influence of familial resemblance and familial background that shapes partner preferences, marital satisfaction, and the transmission of religious values across generations. Familial resemblance describes cultural, religious, and social similarities between the families of the two individuals entering a marital union. This includes shared moral codes, manner of worship, and expectations about the role of family members, all of which impact mate choice and marital stability.[266] Lawyer Esma is one of the interviewees to underline the issue of family equity.

> I was so obsessed with family. I use to say that his family must be equal to us, not in a material sense but in a spiritual sense, in terms of good manners. However, I married into a family that was not like that at all. Of course, relatives are important, but his family is a very close one, raised in a very closed society, a very conservative society, a society that could not develop because it lived like a tribe. They did not have the opportunity to see and get to know different people or to visit different places. But, if the family is respectful, lovely and affectionate, you can overcome the differences. (Esma, 31)

Although religiosity is mentioned as the most important criterion to provide a conjugal life, the familial equity is still considered as a must in terms of good morals. In Esma's example, she did not get what she

266 Kalmijn, "Shifting Boundaries: Trends in Religious and Educational Homogamy."

expects in terms of family. However, drawing a line of respect, she overcome this lack. Nonetheless, familial resemblance in religious homogamy extends beyond mere ideological parallels. It also encompasses collective life experiences and communal networks. Religious communities frequently cultivate intimate connections, wherein families engage in shared environments, such as places of worship and faith-based organizations. Such encounters foster a sense of belonging and collective history that fortifies marital connections.[267] In addition to religiosity, the importance of cultural similarity is often emphasized. One such example is the reference to Albanian culture.

> The fact that he looks like my family was the most important thing I saw in my husband. It was important for me and my family that he was Albanian, yes. We talked about traditions and customs, which are very important. Even the taste of rice we eat at home is almost similar to each other my husband's family, and mine. When I visit my husband's family, I didn't feel like an alien. I had difficulties, of course. But still, there was not much difference. My husband's family was similar to mine that made me comfortable. (Güzide, 28)

This feeling of comfort turns into a determinant for marital satisfaction and happiness. Not only the spouse himself but the balance and equilibrium between the families turn into support mechanisms of the newly established family. Equilibrium is not merely in financial terms, but cultural terms, education level, and good manners are assistive features of a peaceful family of young couples. Melek agrees that upbringing and customs effects marriage directly in traditional families such as Turkish families.

> Families affect marriage a lot. In our Turkish culture it always does. We are not like people living abroad; family is still dominant

267 Christopher G Ellison, Nicholas H Wolfinger, and Aida Isela Ramos, "Attitudes Toward Marriage, Divorce, Cohabitation, and Casual Sex Among Working-Age Latinos Does Religion Matter?," *Journal of Family Issues* 34, no. 3 (2013): 295–322.

> here. For example, a friend of mine got married, his father-in-law decided even where they went for honeymoon, he didn't give permission for where she wanted. Since families are dominant, I think it is important for them to be in harmony. (Melek, 45)

Nazife also emphasizes the cultural equity of the families. Her family was migrated to Germany from eastern Anatolia when she was a baby and her husband's family also have a rural background who increased their social capital through education of the younger generations. If one of the families would be lower, or higher, she thinks they would be unable to get on well. This is a criticism of hypergamy or hypogamy in a way.

> It is important that families are sharing a common culture. I think it is important that families come from close cultures. My husband also has a rural background, and those who have studied are respected. For example, it would not be easy for someone from a palace family in Istanbul, from a family with seven generations of Istanbulites, to get along with my family. Or, such an illiterate family would not get along with my family. My mother is not even a primary school graduate, but she is a wise woman. My father is a modern, self-developed, intellectual person according to his own conditions. (Nazife, 45)

For Latife, the family is crucial not only because providing familial resemblance but because of the genetics and passing down of morals from generation to generation.

> I don't think wealth, fame, or reputation. The important thing is that his pure lineage. We need to be very careful about that. Bad things, bad morals, God forbid, are passed down from our genetic ancestors. That's why it's important to investigate one's lineage. Our Prophet (pbuh) also says, look at his lineage, look at his progeny, that is one of the conditions. Poverty and wealth are not important. What is important is that his lineage is good, clean, and moral. For this, we need to research and investigate the candidate. (Latife, 54)

Empirical studies have further demonstrated the association between familial resemblance and marital success in religious homogamy. It is found that marriages where both partners share similar religious upbringings exhibit lower divorce rates and higher relational satisfaction compared to interfaith unions. This effect is often attributed to the reinforcement of shared goals and moral guidance within the family structure.[268] For Latife, although family upbringing is crucial and well researched, still marital breakdowns may occur, that she calls misfortunes.

> It is not just about prayers. Prayers may be very good, but morals… We have to be very careful about them, but no matter how careful we are, whatever Allah has written happens, it doesn't happen by searching too much. Sometimes, there can be misfortunes. God forbid. Family upbringing is very important. As I said, the mother is very important. The mother raises the child, whether it's a boy or a girl. (Latife, 54)

For Fahriye, these misfortunes are the traps of fate that are hard to escape. She is a member of an established family, and her daughter was married to a very well-known, conservative family, too. However, after marriage, the son-in-law began to live a non-religious life, drinking alcohol and meeting other women. That's why the marriage broke ends by breaking her heart badly. Although the familial background is vital in decision making, it is not always enough, for her.

> You cannot escape fate. Very good families and very good parents are not enough. We have seen the children of the people we mediated for in very different situations. The human being is really an unknown creature. Neither the family nor the individual is a reference on their own. It is a whole. You will evaluate the young person separately and the family separately, but you will make your choice within the integrity of these. Then, you will do

268 Evelyn L. Lehrer and Carmel U. Chiswick, "Religion as a Determinant of Marital Stability," *Demography* 30 (1993): 385–404.

> your research and investigation. But of course, it is fate... (Fahriye, 60)

Performative family theory underscores the continual enactment and reinforcement of family roles and identities through repetitive actions, rituals, and societal expectations. The wear-out effect may arise when frequent performances, rather than enhancing stability, result in emotional tiredness, disengagement, or resistance in family life. In conservative families, the continual performance of traditional gender roles may result in emotional fatigue or discontent, particularly when individual ambitions are stifled. This reflects the wear-out effect, when excessive repetition reduces the significance or effectiveness of a position. The temptation to marry within particular cultural or religious confines, as shown in homogamy, can lead to a wear-out effect when individuals perceive their choices as restricted or their expectations as inflexible, diminishing the perceived value or authenticity of the marriage union. Repeating involvement in family rituals, such as huge gatherings and religious rites, without personal emotional investment may result in emotional tiredness and disengagement, akin to how people become disinterested in repeating ads.

If familial values and roles are perpetuated unaltered between generations, younger members may exhibit skepticism or resistance towards these norms, underscoring the conflict between tradition and individual autonomy. What Nihal experiences can be explained by wear out effects. She was raised in a huge family. She had a hafiz grandfather who gathers his grandchildren in family events, reads Qur'an and prays together. The whole education was religious one. Her father is one of the most prominent religious publishers for years who had a very intellectual environment which turned into a reluctance for her, in time.

> I wanted an anti-intellectual man. I grew up in a very intellectual environment. My father was one of the founders of a publishing house, and his friends were the biggest intellectuals of the time. Our life was always in this environment, men who read and studied science and literature. I didn't want a man like that who is

> well-educated and a highbrow... I had an uncle, a merchantman. His relationship with his children and his wife was my ideal. This is exactly my relationship with my husband. He is a prototype of my merchant uncle. He has no interest in reading and writing, thinking... You know, he is the average Muslim Turkish man with the mindset of what we call 'a merchant'. (Nihal, 35)

Nihal is the only interviewee who rejected the way her family lived and desired an alternative life style. Except her, many of the interviewees mentioned the importance of familial background.

4.2.3 In Brief: The Way to Marriage

In conclusion, various theories influence mate choosing; nevertheless, this research concentrates on the sociocultural aspect. The desired and approved characteristics in men are being hard-working, intelligent, not spending much time outside the home and being responsible at home, earning his own money, being generous, having strong family ties, knowing what he wants, giving confidence to his wife, and being understanding. The concept of *kefaet* encompasses religious homogamy, religiosity, moral integrity, physical attractiveness, prosperity, and various other factors. The primary criterion becomes equity, although religion is essential; without it, families either fail to establish or dissolve. Familial similarity and background are crucial in the practice and continuation of religious homogamy. Shared beliefs, cultural capital, and social connections enhance marital stability and the transmission of religious traditions through generations. Although concerns emphasize possible exclusivity, the overall influence of familial resemblance in religious homogamy is substantial in altering family dynamics and partner choosing procedures.

Sociocultural factors affecting mate selection, especially the notion of homogamy, are intricately linked to the expression of social and cultural identities. Family formation, analyzed through the framework of performative family theory, transcends individual aspirations and is a

social performance that manifests and reinforces cultural norms, social roles, and collective identities. The mate selection process is a performative act influenced by sociocultural norms and practices, which develops and sustains social institutions including class, ethnicity, and religion. Analyzing mate selection via the perspectives of homogamy and performative theory reveals that family life is not merely experienced but enacted, consistently influencing and being influenced by societal cultural scripts.

4.3 Marriage Technologies

Marriage, as a universal institution, is profoundly rooted in cultural traditions and behaviors, influenced by historical, social, and technical factors. "Marriage technologies" denotes the instruments, frameworks, and methodologies employed to establish, formalize, and sustain marital relationships. These technologies encompass old matchmaking methods and dowry systems as well as contemporary dating applications and marital counseling services. The variety of marriage technology among cultures underscores the interaction between tradition and innovation, but conservative viewpoints frequently oppose technological changes to maintain established standards.

Conventional societies frequently depend on community-oriented technologies, such as arranged marriages orchestrated by family elders, religious authorities, or professional matchmakers. Conversely, Western cultures have largely adopted individual autonomy in the decision-making process around marriage. Technologies like online dating platforms and relationship applications illustrate this transition, allowing individuals to seek partners according to personal interests instead of parental influence. These instruments embody overarching cultural values of autonomy, self-articulation, and romantic congruence. Hybrid models exist, integrating classic and contemporary methods.

Conservative viewpoints on marriage technologies frequently arise from a commitment to maintaining conventional values and societal frameworks. These viewpoints generally underscore the sacredness of

marriage, the significance of familial and social engagement, and compliance with religious or cultural standards. Nevertheless, conservative perspectives on marriage technology are not uniform. In certain instances, conservatives adjust to technology advancements while preserving fundamental principles. Premarital relationships, as a type of social connection that frequently precedes love engagements, possess varying significances and degrees of acceptability throughout cultures. Some communities regard it as a natural and vital aspect of courting, whereas others perceive it with skepticism, especially in conservative contexts that emphasize stringent moral rules and familial honor.

In this research, marriage technologies are assessed as performative activities that reflect and perpetuate societal narratives of love, commitment, and family, serving as instruments for initiating and formalizing partnerships.

4.3.1 Arranged Marriages and Matchmaking

Arranged marriage is a type of marriage in which individuals' marriage decisions are made by family elders or intermediaries and the parties usually have limited interaction before marriage. This form of marriage, which is common in traditional societies, has been shaped by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social structures. Arranged marriage is a type of marriage in which family elders or community leaders are decisive in the decision-making process rather than individuals playing an active role in the selection of a spouse. In this model, although individuals have the opportunity to get to know each other before marriage, the marriage decision is largely made by families.

Arranged marriages have historically played an important role in Turkish culture. This type of marriage, which has been widespread especially in rural areas since the Ottoman period, was aimed at choosing a reliable spouse and protecting social status in a society with strong

family ties.[269] Traditionally, family elders evaluated suitable spouses for the individuals to be married and marriage negotiations were initiated. This form of marriage, which has held an important place in Turkish culture from the Ottoman Empire to the present day, has evolved in parallel with historical and sociocultural changes. Arranged marriages were based on social class, economic status and family harmony. The pre-marital meeting and decision-making processes of men and women were quite limited. Marriage decisions were usually made by the elders of the family, and the bride and groom rarely met before marriage.

Modernization and the prominence of individual rights transformed arranged marriages. Umut Sarı bases romantic love on the novels of the Tanzimat period. Modernization reforms, the rise of women's social status, the reduction of the arranged marriage, and criticism of the excessive westernization of upper-class men have all been the subject of these novels. In essence, the idea that comes to the fore here is not the criticism of arranged marriage, but the idea of freedom. There is an effort by the Young Ottomans to harmonize individual freedoms and the laws of nature with Islamic law in line with the post-enlightenment liberalization. Upper class intellectuals, autocracy, patriarchy, arranged marriage, backward political practices are all lumped together and amour and liberte is positioned against them.[270]

With the proclamation of the Republic, modernization and individual rights came to the fore. Increased educational opportunities for women and reforms towards women's rights led to changes in the understanding of marriage. However, arranged marriages continued in rural areas, and this tradition was partially stretched in the processes of urbanization and modernization.[271] Today, arranged marriages are not as common as in the past, but they are still important, especially in communities that

269 Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, "Introduction," in *Sex Roles, Family & Community in Turkey*, ed. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı and Diane Sunar (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 1982), 1–33.

270 Umut Sarı, "Men Who Desire to Conquer: Romantic Love and Masculinity Among Some Young Professionals" (2004).

271 Kağıtçıbaşı, "Introduction."

adhere to traditional values. With modernization and individualization, arranged marriages have been replaced by “blind date” or “semi-arranged” models. In the dating processes that start with the suggestions of families, the decision-making authority of individuals is more prominent. In particular, urbanization and increased levels of education have enabled young individuals to have more say in the selection of a spouse.[272] This shift towards planned marriage is also seen in women's narratives. Classic arranged marriage functions as a familial initiative, disregarding the preferences of the individuals involved, to the extent that partners may marry without prior acquaintance. The concept of arranged marriage has evolved today. For the religious middle-upper class urban women referenced, it is more precise to characterize this approach as the ‘presentation method’. The mediator presents a candidate. Young individuals receive information about the candidate and their family via an intermediary, securing their consent before the meeting occurs. The individuals' consent to meet is paramount. Numerous narratives endorse this approach to connection. In the older generation, it is more prevalent for the male to meet the woman prior, to approach her without her prior knowledge, or to send his family to her home for an arranged marriage. Latife’s marriage is an example of arranged marriage. Her husband fell in love with Latife when he saw her on the street, but she was unaware of this. Later, a family friend was sent as a mediator and asks for the girl’s hand in marriage.

> I went out with my mom and my spouse saw me there. My family wouldn't let me go out alone. My mother and brothers used to chaperon me. There was a store downstairs he went there and introduced himself, asking, "A girl came in here with her mother; who is she?" Uncle İbrahim asked him to introduce himself and then provided the address of my father's shop. He visited my dad. Then sent several intermediaries. It happened that way. His

272 Serap Kavas and Arland Thornton, “Adjustment and Hybridity in Turkish Family Change: Perspectives From Developmental Idealism,” *Journal of Family History* 38, no. 2 (2013): 223–41, https://doi.org/10.1177/0363199013482263.

> family came from Konya. After that, my father fought to keep me from marrying. My father thought I was too young to marry. My father stated my husband is a judge who could be assigned to other cities. 'I have one daughter and can't stand leaving her.' He said. My husband was a judge then. His job was established. He was twenty-five, I was sixteen. If I didn't want the marriage, it wouldn't have happened. Unless my family wanted it, it wouldn't have happened. We got engaged. My father consented, but then he broke off the engagement. He affianced us and broke it himself five or six times throughout our two years of engagement. He said I can't leave you. For example, he would come crying. He hugged me "I can't give you up, daughter. What say you?" I'd say, okay. Eventually, it happened that way. My father did it unwillingly. It was meant to be. I never stated I wanted him. (Latife, 54)

Personal initiative is seen to be very limited in Latife's story. In Neva's narrative, the families know each other and in the process the couple is given the opportunity to meet each other in public and within legitimate boundaries.

> Dad was friends with my father-in-law. We used to visit each other. They considered me a bride, but they wanted me to finish high school. In response to another inquiry about me, they asked my mother-in-law, a relative, "Mr. Saim had a daughter and could you give me his phone number; we think of her for our son". The process accelerated, and they asked for my hand in high school. After much consideration, my father asked me, and he would refuse if I didn't want. I did not say "No". I said, "Whatever you say, Dad". We were engaged for two years. My husband joined the army after two years of getting to know each other. I graduated high school. We married two years later when I graduated from high school and turned eighteen. The marriage age was younger then; now it's much older. I already knew him. We spotted each other from afar at their residence. Maybe I had a crush on him. I married a man seven years older. He was employed then. His

> degree is in mechanical engineering from Technical University. A ship employed him for a year. He was the ship's second engineer when I attended Moda Girls' Vocational High. All my friends had boyfriends. Girls used to bunk off during lunch breaks, which were prohibited. Their boyfriends ate and smoked with them. My friend whose boyfriend drove her from Kartal in a minibus will always be remembered. A minibus driver—how could he be a boyfriend? He was transporting her for free. Together, they watched movies after school. It was awkward for me. Very strange. You're in high school, and your family doesn't know. My pals were startled when I got engaged as a sophomore in high school. He would wait in the corner of the bank across my school on Fridays. We walked home together after school. He was a white-clad sailor in the army, dressed in military costume. "Who is this sailor waiting for?" They noticed him and us. They said, “You are such a dark horse!” I'll never forget. I was engaged properly, not hanging around like them. They were surprised that I suddenly got engaged so casually. (Neva, 60)

For Neva, flirting before marriage should be appropriate to norms and having a boyfriend for a girl is illicit. These performative acts associated with flirting are often constrained by rigid norms that dictate appropriate gender behavior. A girl’s flirtation is viewed as a challenge to modesty, while a man’s flirtation might be seen as a violation of social decorum. In such contexts, the act of flirting can carry significant social and moral consequences, as it disrupts the performative scripts that uphold traditional values. She is so prouf of herself to remain in the legitimate limits.

The pre-marital relationship also seems to a delicate issue for believers. Researchers have discovered that persons who regard religion as significant and engage actively in religious practices are more inclined to postpone their first sexual encounter, occasionally until marriage.[273]

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273 Aphichat Chamratrithirong et al., “Spirituality within the Family and the Prevention of Health Risk Behavior among Adolescents in Bangkok, Thailand,” *Social Science &*

Most major faiths oppose premarital sexual activity, however certain religions seem more efficacious than others in mitigating this tendency. Certain cross-national research indicate that Muslims exhibit more restrictive attitudes toward sexuality compared to the majority of other religious groups.[274]

In Turkish culture, pre-marital female virginity is regarded as a significant social norm associated with the notion of sexual purity, reflecting the honor of the woman, her family, community, and ultimately, the state. In many regions of Turkey, a woman is anticipated to maintain her virginity until marriage. A lady who undermines her reputation for virginity jeopardizes her opportunities for marriage. Research on Turkish university students underscores the impact of conservative upbringing on attitudes regarding sexuality. Women from conservative backgrounds demonstrated a greater commitment to abstinence and traditional gender norms than their more secular counterparts. women internalize and accept these norms, viewing sexual restriction prior to marriage as a virtue that preserves personal dignity and familial honor.[275] Upon analyzing gender disparities regarding sexual experience,

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Medicine 71, no. 10 (November 1, 2010): 1855–63, https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SOCSCIMED.2010.08.020; Albeny Joslyn Panting and Teresa Yong Sui Mien, "Religiosity and Risky Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents in Sarawak, Malaysia," *Global Journal of Health Science* 12, no. 13 (October 30, 2020): 49, https://doi.org/10.5539/GJHS.V12N13P49; David W. Holder et al., "The Association between Adolescent Spirituality and Voluntary Sexual Activity," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 26, no. 4 (April 1, 2000): 295–302, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1054-139X(99)00092-0; Sharon Scales Rostosky et al., "The Impact of Religiosity on Adolescent Sexual Behavior: A Review of the Evidence," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 19, no. 6 (November 2004): 677–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558403260019.

274 Amy Adamczyk and Brittany E. Hayes, "Religion and Sexual Behaviors: Understanding the Influence of Islamic Cultures and Religious Affiliation for Explaining Sex Outside of Marriage," *American Sociological Review* 77, no. 5 (October 30, 2012): 723–46, https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412458672/ASSET/IMAGES/LARGE/10.1177_0003122412458672-FIG3.JPEG.

275 Duysal Askun and Bilge Ataca, "Sexuality Related Attitudes and Behaviors of Turkish University Students," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 36, no. 5 (October 13, 2007): 741–52, https://doi.org/10.1007/S10508-007-9186-Z/METRICS.

it was determined that male university students engaged in more sexual encounters and initiated sexual intercourse at a younger age compared to their female counterparts. This finding aligns with existing literature highlighting the persistence of a double standard in sexuality, attributed to the fact that in our country, men are socialized with greater sexual freedom, social control over sexual behaviors predominantly targets women, premarital sexual relations for women are stigmatized, and there is an expectation of virginity at marriage.[276]

The pre-marriage process is legitimized by Turkish society through the betrothal (*söz*) and engagement (*nişan*) ceremonies. These periods are also periods of transition and adaptation for couples. It is during these periods that the problems that may arise in marriage are understood and evaluated to see if they can be overcome. This is a period when the decision to marry is tested rather than the spouses getting to know each other, and its duration varies according to the situation of the individuals. It is seen that Neva disapproved of relationships outside the boundaries of legitimacy and kept herself away from them. Later, when she became engaged through the families, it is also present in her narrative that she enjoyed this legitimate space and was proud of her fiancé. This supports the research on celibacy, chastity, and legitimate dating in the pre-marital period.

Neva was fortunate to have had the opportunity to get to know her husband in a family environment. Fahriye did not have such an opportunity. The imam of the neighborhood sent her mother as a mediator, for a blind date. She still tells with tears in her eyes how her mother-in-law saw her and liked her and how she first 'fell in love' with her. Afterwards, she says, she watched the street and looked at all the passing motorcycles in order to see his suitor. The fact that the families liked each other seems to be a good reference for the 8 years she will spend in her mother-in-law's house.

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276 Melisa Ebeoğlu and Eda Karacan, "Cinsellikle İlgili Konularda İletişim Ile Evlilik Öncesi Cinselliğe Yönelik Tutum: Üniversite Sınıf Düzeyinin ve Cinsiyetin Rolü," *Ege Eğitim Dergisi* 20, no. 1 (2019): 1–19, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.12984/egeefd.442010.

> Imam sent mother to matchmaker. My father told my mother. As a Muslim, I say "Yes, mom, let's see him" when the imam proposes. After proposal, he drew my interest. I wanted to look from window to see him, but I didn't know who he was. He had a motorcycle. People called him "Motorcycle imam". I saw him pass by on a motorcycle but didn't see him clearly. My mother-in-law and husband's aunt came to see me. I wore a long dress. Şule Yüksel Şenler headscarf models were trendy. I cut my scarf ass a circle and tie it around my shoulders, according to the Quranic verse. Scarves were rick-rack-edged. My blue outfit was exquisite. I wore a headscarf and beautiful heels. My in-laws visited. My mother-in-law was cardiac. It was difficult for her to come. She came and sat down. Old women have different customs. I was a child and naive. 'My daughter,' she said, "Let me see how beautiful your headscarf is; let me take a look at the model." When I removed my scarf, my hair tumbled out. I had a waist long black hair. My mother-in-law only said "I'm in love, I'm in love". Went home and say, "I'm in love, no one else but it should be her". She characterized my wrists and face that way. My mother-in-law loved me first. She said that way. May God forgive her. Thus, she removed my hijab while inspecting my headscarf. She truly liked me. Wedding comes next. (Fahriye, 59)

Despite this experience, Fahriye says that she lives a happy life and that this is the marriage that is compatible with Islam. Families meet, young people meet properly and decide accordingly. In other types of love marriages, she says, people make decisions under the influence of their desires and it will not last long, whereas arranged marriages have a more deep-rooted foundation.

> I think arranged marriage is more appropriate. According to Islam, the way is arranged marriage, but not by eviscerating Islamic methods. After families get to know each other, they should give young people the opportunity to meet. They shold meet under legitimate conditions and make their own decisions.

> Otherwise, when they go out, they look *nefsani*[277]. They think that their desires are love, and when desires pass away, if there is no value underneath, those marriages don't work. That's why I see arranged marriages as more solid. My children also had arranged marriages. (Fahriye, 59)

With modernization and individualization, arranged weddings have been supplanted by "blind date" or "semi-arranged" models. Although Nazife marries with her dentist, by knowing him in person, she approves semi-arranged model. She mentions the risks of falling in love which has biologic effects on people to prevent healthy thinking.

> It's right to meet with references, like a blind date. That's the right way for me. But God really matched us with each other. Both he and I could have experienced great disappointments; after all, he is an average Joe Schmoe. God has made us equal. My father has a saying that, 'Those who meet on the street, break down on the street.' It is true. It is very unlikely that relationships built in love are healthy. Because where there is love, you cannot talk about judgment. Love is a very bad thing. It's a real pysical chemistry. The brain chemistry is changing. I don't know what hormone has skyrocketed. It's not a healthy ground. (Nazife, 45)

Belonging to a younger generation, 34-year-old Sümeyra is an example of semi-arranged relationship, mediated by her friends. Sümeyra mentions the difference between her husband's rational choice in contrast to her love. She claims that under different circumstances, their relationship might end up otherwise.

> Mine was not a love marriage. Our mutual friends were very close, like brothers. They were seeking for a girlfriend for my husband and I had just broken up. I was out of my mind. 'This girl needs to be married today.' They thought. It was a modern arranged marriage, unlike my parents. I think couples should meet in their

277 *Nefsani*: Related to bodily desires.

> own space. For example, at campus, we should see each other with boys and girls. If my spouse had seen me in my environment, he wouldn't have loved me. Because we may be too different. Maybe he would have loved anyway. However, he always said, I didn't love you when I married you. After our wedding, he stated, I realized I loved you. (Sümeyra, 34)

Marriage technologies, intricately embedded in cultural contexts, illustrate the varied methods through which civilizations understand and engage in marital engagements. Conservative viewpoints on marriage technology frequently arise from an intention to maintain conventional values and societal frameworks that underscore the sacredness of marriage, the significance of familial and social engagement, and compliance with religious or cultural conventions. Performative theory elucidates the adaptability and fluidity of these behaviors. Recognizing marital technologies as performative activities enhances our comprehension of the continual negotiation of individual and collective identities within the institution of marriage.

While arranged weddings are less prevalent today than in previous eras, they continue to hold significance, particularly in groups that uphold traditional values. In acquaintance processes initiated by familial ideas, the decision-making authority of individuals is more pronounced. In all examples of Latife, Fahriye and Neva, it is observed that they have consent for their marriage. Although they did not initiate the marriage process, it is observed that their views are in line with those of their families. Furthermore, premarital dating and meeting customs have transformed into a more adaptable and informal approach throughout time.

4.3.2 Romantic Love Marriages

All communities possess sexual norms that endorse certain activities while disapproving or denouncing others. Individuals within a society acquire these norms via socialization. In recent decades, sexual standards in Western countries have been associated with concepts of

romantic love and familial bonds. Such norms, however, exhibit considerable variation across other cultures.[278] Love marriage is defined as the marriage of individuals on the basis of mutual love, interest and romantic feelings. In such marriages, emotional bonding and personal happiness are at the forefront. Love marriages have increased with the processes of modernization and individualization. Sare's story is remarkable in that she married someone she mediated for. Since she was with someone else, she tried to suggest her friend for her husband and have him meet her, but then they got married because her husband fell in love with her.

> My sister-in-law was my friend. She directly told me to marry her brother. I was seeing someone at the time. I said, I wasn't thinking about getting married and I can arrange a girl for him. I tried to meet my husband with a girl! Omer met with that girl but he also saw me. He rejected her and didn't let go of me after that. He made a fuss about it. He called, asked, sent news. I broke up with the person I was seeing. It happened at a time like that. I guess God planned it. Actually, it wasn't a very serious love marriage. We met for about 3-4 months. But we got married by meeting ourselves and falling in love. (Sare, 45)

The increase in the level of education and the expansion of individual rights have led to the spread of love marriages.[279] The increase in the role of women in education and working life has supported the spread of love marriages. In the study, in the older age groups, there are no narratives in which two people directly know and love each other, whereas these narratives increase as the age gets younger. The biggest factor here is school. Nihal and Selma, one of the few examples of spontaneous acquaintance and marriage, married their high school sweetheart. Nihal claimed they had a passionate love that overcome all the obstacles, such as family inequity. Married after 4-5 years of dating. Likewise, Selma

278 Giddens, *Sociology*, 438.

279 Kavas and Thornton, "Adjustment and Hybridity in Turkish Family Change: Perspectives From Developmental Idealism."

married to her primary school mate and struggled with their family's attitudes.

> After finishing high school, I went to a cram school to prepare for university exams but did not go to university. I started working at my brother's workplace until I got married at the age of 22. My husband was my primary school friend. He had sent me a request on Facebook. We liked each other and started seeing each in friends' meetings. My brother is an extremely oppressive, jealous person who doesn't let me go anywhere. We were meeting secretly, one day he pressured the girl working with us and learn everything about us. He said you must think seriously, let's name it. My husband was a student at university and his family didn't accept it when I told him. I told my brother we broke up and continued to meet secretly for another year. Then I had a suitor. When my hubby learnt and he insisted on his family. He got sick and had stomach problems, then his family had to accept it. The women came to see me. We are Albanians, so are they. They like us very much. We got married within a year. (Selma, 32)

Cultural norms and traditional values still affect the acceptance of this form of marriage in society. Selma's example shows that families do not approve of long-term courtships. Sare's quick marriage within 4-5 months is also an indication of this attitude. Although the meeting took place on the couple's own initiative, the rest of the process is no different from an arranged marriage. Sex before marriage is not welcomed and the families' approval is definitely sought. Despite her family's serious objections, Nihal did not marry until she received their permission. During this period, her husband's family visited her family many times and asked for permission. Therefore, although times have changed and the educational factor has changed the ways of meeting, it is seen that religious conservative values are still an important factor in the relationship.

4.3.3 Premarital Relationship and Flirting

Flirting can be regarded as a performative act that both mirrors and influences culture perceptions of gender, romance, and morality. From a religio-conservative perspective, flirting may entail considerable social and moral repercussions, as it undermines the performative scripts that sustain traditional norms. Certain boundaries are delineated in accordance with religious regulations. As a general trend, the women do not want to wait too long after they decided to get married. The lengthening of the process of flirting or engagement was not welcomed. It is an era in which the boundaries should be protected deliberately. Sevde and her husband were classmates from the high school, and they flirted for 8 years.

> One needs a set of boundaries. Nonetheless, it is hard to realize when you have a boyfriend. Limits are hard when you are with him. We should not see each other that frequently. Going out, hanging out together, going to the cinema, holding hands occasionally… Still, my family was always informed about our meetings. I have a relaxed family, that's why we see each other so much. (Sevde, 23)

She regrets that she met with her boyfriend frequently, this act contradicts with her the truth she learnt. Sevde also wanted to obey the religious rules in their premarital process. In order to respect these rules, they refrained from meeting too much.

> My husband was brother of my friend's husband and we were introduced to each other by their mediation. We paid attention to certain criteria and did not meet too much. We wanted to stick to the religious criteria. Because when we see each other too much, or hanging out together too much, we might crush some religious principles unavoidably. Hence, we wanted to respect these rules. (Sena, 28)

Another factor that will make it easier to stay within the boundaries of legitimacy can be considered as not prolonging the marriage period and

getting married quickly after meeting. 36 year-old-Sümeyra says, 'Wedding, engagement, all within nine months. It all happened within nine months.' Similarly, Aysun claims that all ceremonies happened one month apart. Nihal's husband who is her high school sweetheart who moved to Ankara after graduation. They met and spent time rarely before marriage. She claims that she had hardship to navigate societal expectations while pursuing personal desires.

> We were taught to suppress our feelings. Getting married at twenty-one, falling in love is a result of this... In middle school, in primary school, flirting with the opposite sex is not a terrible thing, but we were taught as if it is such a terrible thing that should not be done. If I had been more open to it in high school and college, I might not have married the first guy who showed interest in me. Perhaps I would have become more self-aware then. We spend time together, yet believing it's sinful. When others do it, I criticize, but I do it too. However, I already put so much negative pressure on myself that, I did this, I did wrong... let this become a legitimate relationship as quickly as possible. (Nihal, 35)

In general, it is seen that these women spend very limited time alone with their husbands before marriage. When they do, care is taken to make sure that their families are informed and that it is within legitimate limits and visible in public areas. In the new generation, as in Sevde's example, these practices have been relaxed, the time spent together has increased, and physical contact such as holding hands has been mentioned, albeit hesitantly. Still, it is seen from the women's statements that the time spent together should remain within legitimate limits. We can say that this attitude derives its source from the realm of necessities. However, the flexible part is the differences in practices. Among them, only Nihal stands out by criticizing these attitudes. From the perspective of performative theory, flirting is a dynamic act that both promotes and contests cultural norms, emphasizing the persistent tension between societal expectations and individual autonomy.

4.3.4 Decision Making

One's greatest freedom is to be the decision-maker in one's own life. All the women interviewed mentioned that they were they were the primary decision-makers about their marriage. The families are based on affinity, and the relationships of the members of families are carried out worthily due to this affinity. In this sense, support, love, peace, and counseling are the principles that interviewees seek from their families, which add value to their affinity. Moreover, in the case of marriage, the importance of the consent of families comes to the fore as a pattern. Albanian migrant Güzide expresses this importance.

> My family is essential to me. I grew up with them, my parents are my role models. I am following their way... My family suggested meeting my hubby. His aunt has been our neighbor for 40 years; therefore, I was blessed that my family had no problems, thanks to God. Their encouragement gave me strength, yet I chose to marry myself. Their perspective, seniority, experiences, and motherhood are important to me; thus, I would not marry without their agreement. If they said no, I would reconsider and listen. I liked her husband's conversation with my brothers; they were similar. (Güzide, 28)

Banu, on the other hand, experienced a heart broken relationship with her boyfriend and she was left by him. Then she got a proposal from a man who is twenty years older than her, divorced and had a son. Moreover, due to international suit for divorce, she had to wait 3.5 years after engagement in her age of 22, which put too much social pressure on her because they live in a small district of Bursa. She claimed that her families' support was momentous and without it she could not maintain her relationship.

> 'If he gives confidence, if you believe that he makes you happy, it is your life', said my mother. 'If you are asking about the child, it is not a bother for me.' Interestingly, my father did not know anything about the issue, and when I told him, he said exactly the

> same things that my mother said. Their consent was vital for me… I would break up without their support… (Banu, 36)

Benan, met with her husband through mediation of their friends and when they made their decision, they sought the consent of their parents.

> My husband and I, made a decision to marry together. Then, we received approval of the families. My father spoke with Sait and realized he was a responsible man, and he consented. In the beginning, my mother did not want me to marry because she thought that I was young. However, my father convinced her. He said: 'These things have a proper time, and the groom looks like a benevolent man.' Then, the families became acquainted with each other. (Benan, 24)

It could be said that the consent of parents to their children's marriage is the basic step towards establishing a new family. Each interviewee asserted that they made their own decisions to choose their groom, without any kind of interference or pressure from the families and presented their decision to their parents. Additionally, the marriage would not be realized without parents' consent, especially fathers.

4.3.5 In Brief: Marriage Technologies

This part has shown that fluid constructions molded by historical, social, and cultural settings define arranged and romantic love marriages rather than rigid, oppositional categories. The lines separating romantic love weddings from arranged marriages, which stressed individual choice and emotional connection, have always been flexible even although family involvement and group decision-making were usually valued in both. The interaction among family expectations, personal aspirations, and society standards has always changed the starting point and maintenance of a marriage.

One important conclusion is that, regardless of the kind of marriage, conservative groups have generally disapproved of long-term premarital relationships and intensive flirting. This shows a larger concern with

preserving moral discipline, societal repute, and family dignity. While prior generations married around the age of 18 and engaged in their mid-teens, today's changing economic and educational systems have changed marriage times; nonetheless, the basic requirement for family acceptance still defines partner choice. Reiterating the continuing importance of family power in marriage, none of the ladies under interview would wed without the approval of their families. Still, all they made the final decision to marry.

Whether through planned introductions, romantic courtships, or negotiating processes, the technologies of marriage ultimately mirror the dynamic ways in which people and families negotiate modernity and tradition. These changing approaches show how marriage is not only a personal matter but also a profoundly ingrained social institution where personal goals and communal values still interact.

4.4 Flexibility in Family Life: Embracing Change and Difference

Families are dynamic structures that continuously adjust to social, cultural, and individual transformations. While traditional perspectives frequently define families as inflexible units ruled by unchanging norms, a deeper analysis reveals that they are naturally changeable. This flexibility occurs as family members navigate differences in values, behaviors, and expectations, generating places for adaptation and growth. By embracing change and diversity, families not only preserve their fundamental character but also adapt to evolving circumstances. This study examines the role of flexibility as a vital component in family life, influencing its dynamics and promoting resilience in a constantly evolving environment.

For this reason, we will first address the differences encountered, the initial confrontation and this state of unfamiliarity in relation to the identification of differences. Differences can be cultural, socio-economic and material, but it will also be shown how many issues such as manners, upbringing, domestic hygiene, religious practices, domestic responsibility, etc. can performatively produce differences. Although

similarities are taken into consideration when becoming a family, differences between families require a process of adaptation and this process can be quite challenging for newlywed. Being an Albanian migrant, Güzide decides to marry her husband because of his similarity and equity to her family. Still, she claims that the early days of marriage was not easy for her.

> It was hard, yes. I would say the first 6 months or 1 year was very difficult for me. It was difficult to meet new people, to start a new family, to get to know my husband's family, to be alone with my husband in a new house, getting used to his habits. (Güzide, 28)

Lawyer Esma on the other hand, is a daughter of a high rank state official, married to a rural family less educated than hers. She had two wedding parties one is in her hometown, in a fancy restaurant by the lake and the other one was in her husband's hometown.

> We had another wedding party in my husband's hometown after our wedding here. It was a doorstep wedding. An old-fashioned one, on the road and no one was dressed up at all, and we were not used to it. There were no proper adornments, nothing! The next day, my friend said: 'Your parents didn't say a single negative thing! They just said, 'What a beautiful wedding, isn't it?' They are both very happy. If it was me, my mother would say, 'I don't find this wedding worthy of my daughter. I don't marry you off by this wedding!'…My parents demanded nothing. My husband's family asked many time sif anything needed, my father said, no need. If they can buy a sofa, let them buy a sofa, I will buy the bed anyway, he said. You will take care of the rest yourselves. (Esma, 31)

In Esma's case, her family showed tolerance to their differences and believed in the good intentions of the family. Yet, not all examples are positive. Banu married to a 20 years old man after his divorce from his wife. Although he is very wealthy, for Banu, his family lacks manners and not equivalent to her family.

> There is no cultural and manners inequivalence, unfortunately. For instance, they came to requested my hand. He has five siblings but only his parents came, without a gift. "Are you a widow, they didn't bring you such a bundle[280]!" asked my friend when they left. Such things never bother me. However, my mother was unhappy. My mother-in-law has two daughters and two daughters-in-law, didn't anyone warn her or remind her! She knows everything. Customs are necessary and we live accordingly. Giving gifts, even modest ones, is sunnah. It shows they value me. My husband is clueless about rituals but he needn't know. Some men are unaware of these matters. Her mother should make preparations. (Banu, 36)

As the traditions are not followed properly, Banu felt worthless and her family get upset. This situation occurs from the mannerlessness of her mother-in-law and sister-in-laws. Although Banu exempts her husband from this negativity, it is seen that the family also plays a role in the bonds women establish with their husbands. In this process, differences not only in the approach to traditions, but also in child-rearing are noticeable and problematic.

> I feel more trust than love. Trust was what I was hoping for. Of course, it's not enough. Families also got involved at some point. For example, my in-laws are from the Black Sea region, but they are different. I never got used to them. My first house was just two streets away from theirs. Once his family had a fight, his mother argued with his aunt. And here my mother-in-law boasts that she raised her children behind the curtains. In other words, she did not visit anyone and did not interfere with anyone. She always

280 Bridal Bundle (Gelin bohçası): The bridal bundle is the custom of preparing and presenting gifts to the bride by the male party. The gifts received by the groom and his family are presented to the bride in decorated boxes, bundles or suitcases. While the bride's bundle is being prepared, both the needs of the couples to be married are met and the families get together. In addition, the bridal bundle and the groom's bundle are also very important to meet the basic needs of the bride and groom.

> treated them as protective and felt like the other people were always a threat... Wrapping them in cotton wool, but also seeing the other side as a threat. Think about this family structure; there are so many ridiculous things about it. It was very difficult for those people to accept me. (Sümeyra, 36)

In terms of child-rearing and upbringing, Doctor Aysun also complains about the differences. In her family, she did not feel so valuable whereas, her husband is deemed worthy of everything, including material issues. This attitude also covers his flaws in the eyes of his parents.

> In terms of upbringing, his parents are slaves to their children. But we never have such a thing. I can't go to my father and say, sell this house and buy that one. He would just say, 'what's it to you'. But Mahmut and his brother have received everything from their parents, socially and economically. This is a culture shock and a trauma for me. Mahmut's mother triggers my childhood trauma. There is an incredible distance between us for this. She doesn't want me, I'm such a bad daughter-in-law. I feel the potential to crush her. In our family, it is a shame to praise your child, children are always vilified. Mahmut came for breakfast on the Eid, he smoked at our house and everyone knows that he smokes. But my father-in-law, is able to say with great pride, 'All over Ordu, everyone wishes their children were like my children. My sons don't drink alcohol, don't smoke, don't gamble, nothing.' My mother looked at me, I mean half an hour ago he smoked a cigarette on our balcony. (Aysun, 34)

Although the mother-in-law seems to be the most influential factor in the relationship with the other family, the narratives reveal that in-laws are also influential.

> My sister-in-law is single and a bit jealous. She had a very close relationship with Mehmet. He used to take her to the movies, go for walks together. She treats me as if I have taken away her best friend. She still says hello to me only when I go to their house,

> that's it, she doesn't have any other conversation with me. (Sümeyra, 36)

Sare also had problems with her sister-in-laws and find their behaviors odd.

> My father does not go to my brother's house without knocking on the door even we live next to each other. This is how we grew up. I got married and came back from honeymoon. I saw, my mother-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, they all stayed in my house. They have keys. I lived in the same garden with my in-laws for two years, in separate apartments, like a housing complex. A year after I got married, one of my sisters-in-law got married. A year later the other one got married. They both moved close to my place. I become too tired of their visits! Every weekend they would come to my home to stay overnight. They stayed in my home when I was away, using my house as their own. At first, I thought this must be what marriage is like. Then one day I said to my husband, 'Let's either change the key to this door or I'll go and you can continue living with your family. I have no problem with your family. But there is no point in living like a colony in a 100-meter square house.' Fortunately, he understood. But I have never once said a bad word to my mother-in-law. Or I have never once said a bad word to my father-in-law. (Sare, 45)

The differences may cause from different reasons. It is seen that many factors such as child-rearing methods, etiquette, hometown, money spending habits are mentioned as differences. However, the issue of cleaning and tidiness stand out as a rigid problem for the interviewees. For that reason, it is evaluated under a specific heading.

4.4.1 Tidy Spaces, Messy Relationships: Flexibility in Cleanliness

Standards of hygiene and cleanliness are influenced by cultural variances, familial customs, and personal practices. In the context of marriage, when a woman joins a new household as a bride, these ideals

frequently engender tension, shame, or exclusion. Hygiene has traditionally been linked to femininity. Consequently, cleanliness standards are crucial in assessing a woman as a "good bride," "good wife," and "good woman."

The bride's varying cleanliness habits may strengthen the idea of her overall inadequacy. Criticism regarding hygiene may be perceived as her inadequacy in performing home responsibilities, hence not conforming to societal standards of femininity. This process intensifies the pressure on women to achieve perfection. Adjusting to the new household's regulations may compel the bride to stifle her personal idiosyncrasies and embody the archetype of the "ideal bride." Aysel lived this inadequacy not in terms of tidiness, but in cooking.

> I told my husband I couldn't cook or crack an egg before we were married, and he said, God bless him, 'I'm not marrying a cook'. My sole regret after getting married was not serving my guests enough. I always said I'm a poor cook. There is a saying, don't be modest—they'll step on you. It happened to me with cooking. I was guided by everyone, I realized I was too modest. Though I can't cook, my faith makes me sensitive to cleanliness and tidiness. I didn't do it at home because there wasn't time at my father's place, but I didn't have any problems because I prefer order at home. I had trouble cooking; therefore, I advise young people to learn. (Aysel, 60)

As a religious official, Aysel supports her narrative with a hadith and mentions how important for a lady to fulfill her duties at home properly.

> During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, captives were used as servants in homes. Hazrat Fatima once says, "O Messenger of Allah, I am responsible for my children and the house. My hands hurt from grinding the wheat. If only one captive was given to me, I would be at peace." The sun of the two worlds, shakes his head left and right… "Let me teach you a dhikr so that you have time." Thirty-three *Subhanallah*, thirty-three *Alhamdulillah*, thirty-three *Allahuekber* after each prayer. All your household duties go on the

> right side of your deeds book. It's all worship. After some time, our Prophet (pbuh) comes to visit Hazrat Fatima. He says, "Hey, Fatma, what are you doing?" She replied, "I'm not doing anything, Daddy. The child woke up, and I calmed him down at my feet. I sew up the torn pieces of Ali, and I recite dhikr so that my tongue does not remain idle." He says, "O Fatima, the community of the sky has come down to earth." He entered the house, passing by a jam. Angels of mercy came for something else. The guardian angels came for something else; angels have taken over this place. I always tell the ladies to keep dhikr on their tongues except for the restroom. Work with your body while saying dhikr with your tongue. Do your ironing, dusting, whatever you do, and do not see the work of your house as cruelty. Do not find your spouse's work as humiliating or cruel. This is the secret of happiness. (Aysel, 60)

Hygiene is dictated by societal standards, and individual or cultural variations are frequently seen unfavorably. Family members, including a daughter-in-law, may regard their own hygiene and cleaning practices as "appropriate" and "standard," while considering the mother-in-law's practices as inadequate or erroneous. These disparities may be characterized as the mother-in-law's incivility or ignorance. Hygiene norms, although intended to unify a home, may also serve as a source of division.

> My mother-in-law is not a supermom. She doesn't know how to serve; she was never that type of woman and doesn't worry about it anyway; she is very relaxed. My mother is on the other hand very meticulous. When you go to my home, you feel such sweet smells. There is a difference between my mom and mother-in-law from the concept of cleanliness to everything. My mother-in-law says she wasn't like that before, but I think she always was. A person cannot change in that manner. She is mother-in-law, after all I can't live with her. It's very difficult. For example, she chews her gum and leaves it there. I think very few people can tolerate

> this. There are things I can tolerate about her, but even my husband can't tolerate some of her habits. (Sümeyra, 36)

Implementing common cleanliness standards can enhance familial cohesion. Nonetheless, when this process lacks a foundation of mutual respect and negotiation, it frequently results in conflict and exclusion. Criticism of cleanliness practices may render the bride feeling estranged and as if she does not genuinely belong in the household. This estrangement can adversely affect individual well-being and family relationships over time. Sare mentions how she felt the difference.

> My mom was very meticulous. We grew up like that. When I first got married, every morning, I make the cushions and curtains. If there was garbage on the floor, I would get up and take that garbage and throw it away, I was like that. Now I've probably stopped. I was obsessively meticulous. I used to get up every morning and sweep the house. Why would you sweep the house every morning? I had that kind of meticulousness. On the contrary, my in-laws are very dirty. God tests people with their weaknesses. I've been tested a lot with their shit. I've been tested a lot. I've cleaned up their shit, as they say. When the house is crowded, it stinks a lot more. (Sare, 45)

Banu also claims that her mother-in-law, apart from her cultural inequality from her own parents, is also a dirty woman, who does not even prepare her home for Eids.

> My mother-in-law cannot do it because of her age, the house is big and she is a very dirty woman in general. We don't get along at all. I was so surprised on the first eid. Everyone in our house dresses beautifully. Even my 85-year-old granny dresses and ties her new prayer shawl. Though she doesn't wear shoes, she wears slippers. It is about caring. I was a newlywed bride in Kayseri, so I wore new clothes every Eid and had a morning prayer. Everyone was celebrating Eid in front of the mosque after the prayer. We entered the house, there were no desserts, candies or Eid

> chocolates, and my mother-in-law wore her everyday attire. She lay on her living room couch. What will I do, I asked my husband? "We must celebrate Eid and visit your relatives." Our Eid celebration is over, he added. I taught him that too. We visited his relatives one by one over several years. He learned. I bought modest gifts for everyone during Eid. Arrangements are made beforehand. I always buy. I buy rosary boxes, towels, scarves, and dessert or dumplings if I can't. One day, an elderly relative told me, "God bless you; we couldn't see Safa before you, but after he married you, we see you during the holidays and you come to visit, thank you very much." I was thrilled to be noticed. Beforehand, my husband used to go Kayseri, visited his family for an hour, and returned. My mother-in-law never remarked, "God bless you, my daughter, thanks to you, he is staying here, and we see our son on Eid." (Banu, 36)

To conclude, hygiene and cleanliness regulations beyond basic physical requirements, serving as instruments of social and cultural regulation. The manner in which women conform to the regulations of their marital families frequently serves as a context in which their identities and abilities are scrutinized. In the absence of mutual understanding and negotiation, hygiene can become a mechanism for having good manners and its lack causes humiliation and exclusion. Framing hygiene as a performative practice unveils potential for women to reinterpret these standards and articulate their identities within this framework.

4.4.2 Flexibility in Shared Household Duties

After marriage women obtain certain roles, such as being daughter-in-law and wife. These roles also impose certain responsibilities on women, and it is stated that women face a serious burden, especially in terms of the domestic division of labor. Household responsibilities have historically been influenced by conventional gender roles, frequently resulting in an unequal distribution of domestic labor, with women

bearing the majority of the burden. Such roles bring with them burdens that woman learn in the process and are expected to take on. Doctor Aysun expresses this in the following words.

> There is such a thing as our unsafe safe spaces. You choose what is familiar. Taking an oral exam is a feeling I am familiar with. Preparing for an exam, studying for a course, these are tortures that I know, that I am accustomed to. These are the things I have spent my life doing. But, motherhood, being a wife, running a household, these are new things. (Aysun, 34)

A hierarchy of decision-making obligations is often acknowledged by families and communities, designating specific decision-making domains to men as heads of households and others to women in their roles as mothers, spouses, and daughters. Despite the expansion of women's decision-making capacity through waged employment, there remain domains of "non-decision making," such as the domestic division of labor, that disadvantage women. Non-decision-making regions are ones that are neither discussed nor contested. They embody cultural norms and values that are often assumed.[281] The fact that the burdens they take on with these new roles are invisible and unappreciated can become another source of frustration. Aysun explains how his husband refrains from sharing responsibility at home.

> When we first got married, Mahmut had a red line, a kind of complex. 'I'll never go into the kitchen, it's not my job.' He had this kind of attitude, although he lived in a bachelor's house, not in the dormitory or his own house. Let me tell you something funny. We were newly married when I started working at Şişli Etfal. We talked to nurses every night. The nurse ladies have seen much over time. For example, a sick man and his wife there, wife supports him with patience. On the other side, there is a sick woman, and her husband. Over the years, the man is gone,

281 Selin Akyüz et al., "Married to Anatolian Tigers Business Maculinities, Relationalities and Limits to Empowerment," *Turkish Studies* 20, no. 2 (2018): 297–310.

> abandoned her. That's why all the female nurses there had an aggressive attitude towards men and marriage. I said, 'If something like this happened to me, I think Mahmut would give me his kidney'. The nurse said, 'He will give you shit; he will leave you after a year. And you don't even have children.' (Aysun, 34)

Unpaid labor performed by women at home encompasses a wide range of activities that sustain households and families, yet these tasks are often overlooked in economic and social frameworks. While essential to the functioning of families and society at large, unpaid domestic work is frequently undervalued and excluded from formal economic systems. Sümeyra is a working mom and a PhD student explains her responsibilities at home comparing to her husband.

> My home duties are infinite. In the morning, my youngest approaches me from bed. I change his full diaper. He says he is hungry. I cook cheese omelets for him. If he doesn't like it, I make a sausage omelet. I fry merely sausage if he doesn't like that. Sometimes he doesn't want eggs. Somehow, I feed him. He eats less at other meals because he only eats in the morning. I always worry about his breakfast. My husband isn't really concerned about his nutrition. He likes strawberry milk and my husband knows he'll drink it and gives him. I also don't want my kids to eat too much packaging. I always carry these anxieties. I require them to consume some vegetables if they only eat meat. I feel burdened by anxiety even if you don't feed them these things. This is our argument. I have outbursts sometimes, but it doesn't matter. He stays the same. He and his companion will discuss the match. My spouse loves and cares about me, but like every male, the codes make him a man. Only five days since our wedding, he cooked omelet and once lentil soup. (Sümeyra, 36)

As it can be seen in Sümeyra's narrative, beyond the realm of physical responsibilities, women frequently carry the substantial burden of overseeing the mental aspects of household management. This encompasses the strategic formulation, systematic arrangement, and

retention of responsibilities, including healthy nutrition, the orchestration of appointments, the administration of familial financial matters, and the fulfillment of children's educational requirements. This unseen dimension of work introduces a significant emotional burden and frequently remains unrecognized. Nazife makes a deep analysis on sharing the burden at home. She claims that this burden upsets woman and turns her into a concubine instead of a sultan. Working like a slave is shedding female identity for her, and some responsibilities should be passed to the man who otherwise alienates from home.

> I let myself to be used a lot. I love to fix or discover something. This is related to my child part. Because I listen to my parents' voices. 'You should do it, you have to, your husband is working very hard.' 'Why should I do it!', I said! But it took me 20 years to say that. Is it wrong to take responsibility? It is debatable. But after a while I realized I am tired. The issue here is that my female identity is shaded. I don't want to be that strong either. For example, I am sitting right now, listening children with one ear and wondering, what are they doing? I cooked dinner, check. My son is in my mind. Because he is at school right now. I wonder if his stomach hurts? I always carry these worries, because I burdened so much responsibility. When my husband is at work, do all these voices go on in his head? Maybe it's motherhood. I don't want to belittle this. I don't want to make it seem bad, but it's unnecessary fatigue. Instead of stealing so many roles from my husband, I would focus more on myself. If a woman builds herself by preserving her personality, she will be different in her husband's eyes. She'll be a lady sultan then. I've become a concubine right now. When you don't leave space for this man, where in the house can he feel himself? These men are hosted like kings and sultans in their workplaces. Because the man is always doing something. He needs to feel useful in this house. While I provide him with that comfort, this is missed. You are preventing him from sharing with the house. (Nazife, 45)

This unpaid labor transcends the confines of lower-class women; it is a pervasive issue that impacts women across all social and economic strata. However, the manifestations and experiences of this phenomenon can vary considerably based on socio-economic status, cultural context, and geographical circumstances. Women of the upper class may encounter the phenomenon of unpaid labor in a distinct manner, as their financial resources often afford them the opportunity to delegate responsibilities, including the employment of domestic workers or the utilization of premium childcare services. Nevertheless, these women remain bound by societal norms concerning caregiving and the administration of household responsibilities. Individuals might experience an obligation to supervise and direct the efforts of their peers, alongside fulfilling particular "symbolic" roles—such as culinary duties or caregiving—to represent societal expectations of femininity or motherhood. Selma also underscores this view and explains her mediator role at home by referring to emotional and mental load she has.

> My responsibility, if you ask my husband, is nothing! I take care of the children. Since I have a boarding woman at home, I am not much involved in housework. In fact, I am responsible for everything in the house. When we have a problem, as long as everyone takes it easy and doesn't over-analyze an incident, no need to exaggerate it. Let's say we argued about something, one day you don't talk, you are angry, the second day you start talking on your own. Actually, it is necessary to have a conversation on that subject. You did something to me, and I don't like it, I need to point it out and you need to point out what you don't like. Covering it up can lead to bigger problems in the future. It is very lovely to do activities for children in the family. Even drinking coffee is an activity for them. Yesterday my son wanted to have tea with me. It is important to spend time. It is the same in normal human relationships. (Selma, 32)

The invisibility or disregard of these efforts also places an emotional burden on women's shoulders that hurts them. Women's adoption of

these roles also affects their relationship with their husbands. In Sümeyra's example, this situation leads to anger, while Banu says that it robotizes her, and she feels that she is positioned as an employee in the eyes of her husband.

> For a woman to be told not to interfere with this, with that... At that time, I sometimes felt like a robot. I mean, you take care of the children, you entertain my guests, you cook! Now I do the cooking. My cook left 2-3 years ago. I don't want them. Dealing with two women employers is very difficult for me. I control them every day, they keep chatting. Instead of following them to see if they are working or not, I said I'll cook my own food. But this time something happens, of course, when there is no common sharing, sometimes he acts like I'm his employee. Sometimes he calls me 'You'. (Banu, 36)[282]

Nihal claims that his husband, not like his boss in case of Banu, but like his child and this feeling of responsibility is shaped by society and criticizes this view.

> Of course, the woman should take care of the house, and the man should be like a child and even take care of him. And the man should go out to earn a living. This is what society expects. You should manage as a woman under all circumstances. If necessary, you will vomit blood and say you drank cranberry juice. You will present him to society as a third child. (Nihal, 35)

This dynamic interaction underscores the evolution of domestic life as a collaborative and performative endeavor, grounded in both continuity

282 'Şimdi bir kadın için ona karışma, buna karışma. O zaman kendini bazen robot gibi görüyordum. Yani, sen şunu şunu yap, çocuklarla ilgilen, benim misafirlerimi ağırla, işte yemek yap, şimdi yemekleri ben yapıyorum. Aşçım 2-3 sene önce ayrıldı. İstemiyorum ben. 2 kadınla birlikte uğraşmak bana çok zor geliyor. Her gün onlara bakıyorsun, lak lak. Bakıyorsun iş yapıyor mu yapmıyor mu, takip etmektense, dedim kendi yemeği mi kendim yapayım. Ama bu sefer şey oluyor tabi, ortak paylaşım olmayınca bazen elemanıymışım gibi davranıyor. Bazen bana 'siz' diyor mesela.'

and transformation. It is easier for the younger generation to make these criticisms and they are more comfortable demanding a more egalitarian domestic system. They are very aware of the deterministic aspect of society and can be said to cope with it more easily. Lawyer Benan had hardships in the early months of her marriage.

> We went to Phuket for our honeymoon. We flew a long time. Before we got married, we would sit in a cafe, for example, I would pay for dessert, and he would pay for the snack. We used to do it together. I buy the coffee, for example, that's a rule. I have an app on my phone, no matter which country we are in, I buy it. On our honeymoon, I had some money aside, but I put the financial responsibility on Sait. I wanted it that way. I felt bad in financial issues. On the honeymoon, we often argued, and it was very difficult. Since we had the opportunity to get to know each other for the first time there, we crossed a huge threshold. When we came back, I came to that house for the first time, lay on the bed, and wondered why I was here. For a week or two, maybe a month, I went through a short questioning process within myself. Our process of accepting each other took three months. After three months, we fully accepted each other materially and spiritually. (Benan, 24)

She claims that after three months, they were able to manage the unwritten rules of their home in terms of responsibilities.

> These have become like unwritten rules. We have each other's private spaces at home. We do most of the other things together. When I leave the house, I ask him to empty the dishwasher and he says okay. If I'm making pastries, he helps to set the table. Even though I am not working now, we are on somewhat equal footing. In case we help each other, we save time. Sometimes we go into the kitchen together and he enjoys it too. I iron the shirts and sometimes when we have a lot of shirts, he irons the shirt he will wear. Everything that makes us get along is both a rule and not a rule. What one doesn't do, the other does. I pay the internet bill. It

> used to be in my name. He pays all the rest of the bills and fees. He does the grocery shopping. He also likes going to the grocery store. He shops rationally. One day we went to market together to buy tomato paste. There was glass jar and tin. There is a difference in packaging and price. I wanted to choose the glass jar because it was beautiful, and he wanted to choose the tin because it was cheaper. Every evening on the way, he asks me if we need something. I never order the water, it's always his responsibility. I like it when he does it. (Benan, 24)

Benan is 24 years old, and unlike the narratives of older women, she explains what needs to be done not in terms of societal shaping, burdens, and troubles, but 'because I like it that way'. The division of domestic labor is much more egalitarian, and this makes her feel relieved and happy. She feels that her husband makes more rational decisions and thinks that this is good for both. Therefore, she prefers to leave the responsibility for economic matters to her husband. As it is seen, these roles are anything but fixed; they inhabit a domain characterized by flexibility, where negotiation, adaptation, and resistance unfold. Women, specifically, traverse this intricate landscape through performative actions, deliberately embodying or contesting societal norms surrounding domesticity.

> When I was a bachelor, I wouldn't stay at home. I used to do about 4 programs a day. Now, I left all of them. I still go to sports occasionally. But when I got married, all of a sudden, I started to feel indecisive, I started to feel the pressure of being the woman of the house. No one has such a demand or expectation. My mother-in-law was very ignorant, she doesn't know how to read or write, she got married very young, she came into a house with seven children, she had to take care of each of them, it really is a difficult life. The poor woman rarely talks. Once she asked me, 'Does my son help you?', I said, 'He does mom, sometimes.' She said, 'Hey, you tell him, he doesn't know but if you tell him, he will.'

> I mean, the poor woman says this, okay, it's over for me. There is no traditional dominant family culture right now. (Esma, 31)

As seen in Esma's narrative, these performances are not merely indicative of individual decisions; they are profoundly connected to cultural norms, familial interactions, and evolving power dynamics. By adopting a flexible approach to household duties, families cultivate environments for shared responsibilities, enabling individuals to reconfigure their roles while navigating the interplay between tradition and modernity. As age increases, the emphasis on traditional roles increases. Melek, a 45-year-old housewife, is a good example in this regard.

> My husband went shopping right now, I don't do it. He is the man. I say if the fireplace is going to be lit, the man will light it, but I will cook the food. Feminine and masculine tasks should definitely not mix, but now I look at it - we shouldn't take on too much. Because men should also be given some responsibility. I am very comfortable now because there is a worker at home, but 5 years ago, I was fed up. I have already done everything for 15 years. I have stopped now, but when we look back, I used to do everything myself, cooking and everything. (Melek, 45)

The most extreme example of traditional roles is Fahriye, who after getting married had to look after her bedridden mother-in-law and all her husband's younger siblings, and who never left the house for 8 years. Her family seldom made the effort to visit her at her mother-in-law's home. Still, she remembers this situation with great nostalgia and says that these were the best days of her life.

> When I got married, my sister-in-law had gotten married, there were twenty days between us. Their mother was bedridden. I got married. My husband was the oldest. My sister-in-law and my brother-in-law were in primary school, and my elder brother-in-law is in middle school. My sister-in-law was newly married. My husband was working. I took care of my mother-in-law; I became

> the mother of my sister-in-law and my sister-in-law. I was also young, but we grew up together. With love, affection. I sent them to school in the morning. I would tidy up the home and cook whatever God gave me; I would not eat a bite of food before they came. Their mothers were already sick, what were the children doing outside? I would definitely prepare five o'clock tea. Today, they all say, 'Aunt, happiness is what we experienced with you.' Thank God, no matter how much I thank God, it is not enough. I have always said that. What keeps me on my feet the most is doing what I do for the sake of God, I think I receive rewards for that. The reward of the service I do to the sick, for those children, caressing the head of an orphan. Since I got married, I always looked at it that way. I never lived for my own comfort, for my ego, or I didn't say I was young, and I wanted to get out. For example, I never left the home for eight years. I never left. (Fahriye, 59)

These examples embrace the idea of acceptance and doing it for the sake of Allah. Fahriye's example, like many others, shows that the domestic sphere meant by 'the woman's responsibility at home' goes far beyond being a domain exclusive to husband and wife. Her husband's family, her husband's extended family, relatives, and all duties towards them are also considered within the scope of the woman's domestic duties. The most extreme example of these duties is the mother-in-law coming to see the girl and falling 'in love' with her who taking care of her mother-in-law, for years and acting as a 'mother' to her children in days to come. However, there is also another approach that argues that the division of labor at home is not fair and that men should be shown mercy. A fair and compassionate division of labor will be shaped according to capacity and skills, and demanding more will disturb the peace in the family, religious officer Aysel thinks.

> It is necessary to show mercy. Of course, there is a long workload and tempo. We are (as women) at home in a more comfortable environment. As soon as he enters home, his wife says, "Come on, help me". *Bismillah*. Even in traffic, people get tired, right? My

> husband works in Bahçelievler; he takes two hours to come home from Bahçeşehir. Coming home from work takes exactly two hours. For me to say "help me" to him is the greatest cruelty. If my partner does not have the capacity to cook together in kitchen, I do not expect him. If my spouse has talent in the kitchen, I would tell him to cook together, but he does not have the talent. In that case, would it not be inappropriate for me to disturb the peace of my home by saying let's cook together? (Aysel, 60)

In a similar vein, trying to change one's spouse is also considered a problem by Fahriye. She offers accept taking the burden for the sake of God.

> If it's not in a person's core, if it doesn't come from within, you shouldn't try to make it happen. Some say, 'I'll change it, I'll make it happen'. No way. You'll only wear yourself out. Either you'll take on the task of doing it for the sake of Allah and the reward will be yours, or you'll struggle throughout your life, in other words you'll grapple. (Fahriye, 59)

The concept of flexibility in shared household duties encompasses the capacity of family members to adjust, engage in negotiation, and collaboratively distribute responsibilities associated with the management of the home, including tasks such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and maintenance. In contrast to conventional frameworks that impose strict divisions of labor according to gender or age, a more adaptable approach facilitates the allocation of responsibilities according to personal inclinations, competencies, and situational contexts. The capacity for adaptability holds significant relevance in contemporary familial structures, where varied work schedules, evolving gender roles, and diverse lifestyles confront conventional norms. From the data it is observed that different performative actions are encountered in the division of labor. For Benan, who has just started her family, egalitarian division of labor is an ordinary and natural process, and she is more comfortable asking for help. Sharing household duties requires ongoing negotiation and adaptation. However cultural

norms are still barriers to flexibility. Deeply entrenched traditional gender roles are, making it difficult to redistribute domestic work. Generational differences also have a role, older family members, as seen in case of Aysel, resist change and expect younger members to conform to established norms. Not sharing responsibilities may lead one person feels overburdened by household tasks in case of Sümeyra who felt burnout. Or feeling like an employee or a robot in home, like in the example of Banu. Moreover, flexibility is crucial for involving all family members in household duties equips them with essential skills for independence, as mentioned by Nazife. By negotiating and sharing responsibilities, families can better adjust diverse needs, support mutual respect, and challenge traditional norms. This approach not only lightens the load for individuals but also creates a collaborative environment where all members contribute to the household's well-being.

4.4.3 Religious Flexibilities: Negotiating Faith in the Realm of Family Life

Religion frequently acts as a fundamental basis for identity and values, influencing both personal and collective conduct. In the context of familial life, religious beliefs and rituals frequently constitute an essential component of the fundamental necessities—those indispensable core tenets that impart organization and significance to life. Nonetheless, upon entering matrimony, the reality of one's partner's religious observances or anticipations may not fully correspond with one's personal beliefs. In this context, women frequently engage in the negotiation of their beliefs, navigating compromises within what may be described as the realm of religious flexibility.

The realm of necessities in religion pertains to the fundamental principles that identify an individual's faith, encompassing core beliefs, mandatory practices (such as prayer and fasting), and ethical directives. The intricacies of these elements are profoundly interwoven within personal and cultural identities, forming a fundamental basis for decision-making in familial contexts, such as the selection of a spouse. A considerable number of women embark on the journey of marriage with

the anticipation that their partner will not only share but also support, or at the very least, respect these fundamental religious values. In the realm of flexibilities, nonetheless, the practical realities frequently diverge from the idealized expectations. A partner might not engage in religious practices with the expected intensity, or their understanding of religious doctrines could differ considerably. The discrepancies present can generate a certain strain, compelling individuals—frequently women—to align their anticipations with the actual circumstances of their matrimonial union, as mentioned by Latife.

> My husband knows how to read the Quran, but he does not read it. Because he makes me read all his parts, in other words, he reads once in a blue moon! He tells me that this part will be read, that part will be read. And he says it timidly. Sometimes I get angry. I say, 'Read it yourself; I have so many parts to read. I can't stand it again.' What he offers is reading Quran! I read it because it is irreversible. I would like this very much; I always aspired to it; I mean, if only I had a man who read the Quran. (Latife, 54)

For Latife, who grew up in a religious family, being married to a man who does not read the Koran regularly is an unpleasant situation. Religious flexibilities arise as a domain in which women modify their religious aspirations while retaining their fundamental principles. These concessions do not entail abandoning one's faith but rather seek to reconcile personal beliefs with the collective dynamics of family life. Another implementation that is unusual for Latife is the lack of consultation at home. In fact, it's a strike against the egalitarian family structure and prevents women from having a say in the home. However, Latife interprets this as a violation of the Sunnah, as it is contrary to the religious realm and ways and manners she learned from her father.

> Unfortunately, my husband does not consult, but my father did. This is how we saw it. He would gather us all together and ask for our opinions. He would consult. The consultation is sunnah. I also believe that it should be like that, but unfortunately, my husband

> does not have that. So, he does something, and then we hear about it. (Latife, 54)

Although religious flexibilities might promote cooperation and harmony, they often present challenges. Women may experience isolation in their compromises, especially if their community or extended family maintains inflexible perspectives on religious rituals. This seclusion may result in internal discord, as women endeavor to reconcile their faith with the realities of their marital dynamics. The disproportionate allocation of compromise might intensify gender disparities, imposing an excessive weight on women to uphold both religious and marital harmony. Halime is an example whose husband was stricter in religious issues that comes to the fore in case of wedding ceremony. The families and Halime desired a party whereas the groom insisted on a religious *mevlid*[283] ceremony, instead of dancing and sit in a gender segregated way in ceremony.

> I had a hard times. My husband's and my family wanted a wedding party. I also want it, but my husband doesn't. He's the only one who doesn't want it. We got engaged. We have a custom. Ladies, will go to my aunt's house across the street and have fun there. We'll dance and stuff. My husband said, 'If the men never come in, it's okay'. I was going to my relatives' wedding parties, and we dance there when I was single. My husband said, 'No, I don't want it!' That's how our engagement happened. Then the wedding time come, my husband insisted it to be with *mevlid*. My husband's family says, 'You're our last child, we want a Black Sea region

283 Mevlid: Derived from the Arabic word "velâdet" meaning "to be born", "time of birth" or "place of birth", "mawlid" has become a common name given to works in this genre over time. In Islamic literature, mawlid is the name given to the celebration ceremonies held on the birthday of Prophet Muhammad and to the literary texts in verse form that are written and composed to be read at these ceremonies. Mawlīd is also an independent literary genre in Islamic literature. "Mevlid", which entered Turkish from Arabic, is also used in the sense of 'the Prophet's birthday'. It is also recited on special occasions such as circumcision ceremonies, pilgrimages, soldiers' farewells, the 40th day of a death, weddings and holy nights.

> dance group in the wedding, let it be a wedding party we want!' My uncle says, 'We were dreaming of your wedding, we were going to dance, where did these ideas come from?!' It was the first *mevlid*, for both parties. 10 siblings, all married. We're the only couple who married with *mevlid*. My husband is a graduate of an imam hatip school and loves to read. In our wedding party, salon was decorated as gender segregated. I say now, 'Why can the women see you and the men cannot see me? I would never have accepted you if it was happening now.' 'That is why I did not marry you now, I marry you then', says my husband. I would regret it now if it did not happen that way. Now, I don't. It's a good thing it turned out that way. But I was very upset at the time. Not because I wanted to dance myself, but because I upset my family. When my uncle said, "I'm was going to dance with you." My uncles were very spiritual people, but I don't know, that was the case back then. There was no such sensitivity. We would dance at our relatives' weddings. (Halime, 45)

A prevalent challenge occurs when a husband's lifestyle or degree of religious devotion markedly contrasts with that of the wife or her family. For instance, if the husband favors a strict commentary of religion, the wife and her family may experience pressure to modify their practices or expectations to conform to his inclinations. A spouse's more liberal views on gender roles or mixed-gender socializing might require the wife to navigate new boundaries, even if they conflict with her upbringing. In Halime's case, this difference in socialization customs was manifested in also the matter of handshaking, after wedding ceremonies.

> They reacted the most to my husband's demand, 'You can't hold hands, you can't shake hands with your aunt's or uncle's son.' I say, 'I grew up with them. I slept in the same bed with them.' Our house has a stove. They say the children will sleep in the warm room. They open the beds and we sleep. My uncle's son got very upset to his reaction. But later he learned. Everyone learned. Think of it like being the first child, you learn at the first child. For

> example, my uncle's daughter used to greet him forcefully shaking his hands. But she got married too. She didn't do it after she got married either. So, it was over and done with. (Halime, 45)

These sacrifices, although frequently presented as gestures of respect or affection, can engender tension and a sense of loss, since they may necessitate the wife and her family to forfeit valued elements of their religious or cultural identity. This process may induce a sense of estrangement for some individuals as they endeavor to align their modified lifestyle with their foundational values. Similar to Halime, gender segregation in private areas and not wearing hijab becomes an issue for Melek in the early days of her marriage.

> I cannot uncover my head in front of my father-in-law. Why? Actually, it is not forbidden by religion, it seems ridiculous to me. But my mother-in-law and sister-in-law are veiled even inside the house. These things seemed extreme to me. I said, “You can't forbid me what Allah allows.” We got married, I was dressed very openly and comfortably at home. “Are you going to walk around like this?” he said to me. I said, “This is my house. I'm not going to walk around closed like your sister, I can't!” Because that's how he lived. We never had anything like that. We sit together as a family, boys and girls, cousins, etc., we eat and drink together. Even at my mother-in-law's house, my parents don't sit at the same table. I find them bigots, they don't even do the things that Allah allows. Of course, I'm not immodest, I'm not going to appear in front of my father-in-law in a low-cut dress, but at least I can uncover my hair. But out of respect, I wear headscarf because they are used to it. They didn't let my sister-in-law go to school, but my husband even went abroad, studied in America. These things make no sense to me. My brother and I were both comfortable, but my brother neither went out with a girl, nor did anything wrong, nor went to a bar, nor did I when I was uncovered. (Melek, 45)

The obligation to conform to a husband's desires or way of life can impose an emotional and spiritual burden on women. They may feel shame for surrendering elements of their faith or resentment for being forced to adapt while their husband stays inflexible. Banu, who makes tazhib[284] for five years, had a conflict with her husband about attendance of a male instructor to the classes and had a dilemma about accepting her husband's attitude.

> I was very lucky to took private lessons at Ms. Nurdan's house, one of the doyens of illumination art, for 5 years. Her house was walking distance of my house. One of the reasons I left lessons was because Ms. Nurdan had a partner, Mr. Nedim, who used to attend the lessons. I didn't know she was working with a male partner. I went and saw it, but I didn't tell my husband about it for 4 years. I kept it a secret. When I told him one day, he got very angry, and prevent me from going. He says it's not permissible. He also has women in his work environment, but he says this is his job. He said, 'You cheated on me, you betrayed me.' He spoke very harshly about this. He said, 'You can't go, if you walk out the door, you can't come back to this house.' Should I have kept my eyes closed there or not? My husband is very clear and precise. I was very upset and took a year off. I was devastated. Life has become poison for me. Because the only thing that motivates me is *tazhib*. It relaxes me, and calms me down. Then I found another instructor Ms. Nurdan gave permission to, Sude. We are going there now. I have just found a way for myself. If I had gone to Mr. Nedim's house alone, if he had taken private lessons from him, I would understand his reaction. I don't approve it either. But there are no men among Ms. Nurdan' students, we are all ladies. He

284 Tazhib: Tazhib, is the art of embellishment and adornment. It is a complex and enchanting facet of Islamic art that has captivated art enthusiasts and collectors for ages. Tazhib, derived from the Arabic term "zahab," or 'gold,' largely entails the application of gold leaf in elaborate patterns to embellish literary work, especially the Qur'an, alongside manuscripts, architectural features, and artistic artifacts.

> never listened to me. But then he proudly told everyone about my work, that I am Ms. Nurdan's student. It was a bad contradiction for me. Yes, when he is showing off, it is nice, but when it comes to attending classes, 'No!' (Banu, 36)

The performative aspect of these compromises introduces an extra element of intricacy. Women frequently assume roles that may contradict their personal convictions—such as adopting a more religious persona to align with their husband's inclinations or concealing their unease to preserve familial harmony. This performativity may engender a disjunction between their public and private identities, thereby exacerbating their emotional well-being.

Husbands often hold greater power in these negotiations due to patriarchal structures that grant men more authority in family and marital decision-making. This imbalance can leave women and their families with little choice but to adapt, further reinforcing gendered expectations around compromise and sacrifice. However, these challenges also underscore the resilience and adaptability of women and their families. Despite the difficulties, they find ways to preserve their core values within the realm of necessities while accommodating the realities of their new family dynamics. This delicate balance highlights the dynamic nature of religion, which, while rooted in tradition, evolves through negotiation, and lived experience.

> I was going to England to visit my friend. He consented. But then he's read all the books. He says, 'It's not permissible for a woman to go there in this way,' so what can I say? He didn't allow, then I didn't go. He usually bases it on religion. He is a little more knowledgeable than me because he reads a lot. (Sena, 28)

The relationship of knowledge and authority between spouses can lead to a significant power imbalance, especially in religious matters. The man can reinforce his authority over the woman's ignorance by appearing to be the one who reads, research or has more religious knowledge. In this case, he gains the power to direct the woman's behavior and beliefs by seeing himself as the final say on "what is right" in religious matters. Such

a dynamic can prevent the woman from developing her own religious perception and internalizing her faith, turning it into a tool of religious oppression. In addition, this superiority of the man can weaken the woman's ability to think critically and her right to make her own decisions, pushing her into a passive position. Such a relationship model can turn the woman into a subject who submits to authority by ignoring the spiritual and individual dimensions of religion and eliminate the possibility of establishing an egalitarian relationship.

Although religious flexibilities frequently necessitate those women and their families engage in compromises to preserve harmony, they simultaneously reveal the disproportionate burdens imposed on women within familial frameworks. The compromises, influenced by the husband's inclinations or way of life, compel women to traverse the intricate landscapes of faith, identity, and power relations. While these negotiations may test relationships and faith practices, they simultaneously illuminate the capacity of religious and cultural values to adapt amidst evolving family dynamics. It is imperative to acknowledge and confront the emotional and spiritual ramifications of these challenges in order to cultivate more equitable and nurturing family environments.

4.4.4 Flexibility in Employment and Volunteer Work

The notion of flexibility in employment pertains to the capacity to adjust one's professional endeavors in response to personal, familial, and societal contexts. Within the framework of women's experiences, particularly in conservative environments, flexibility may encompass the negotiation of roles, responsibilities, and boundaries amid a male-dominated cultural landscape. Fieldwork conducted with both working women and housewives reveals that the concept of flexibility is interpreted in diverse ways, influenced by individual agency, societal norms, and family dynamics, especially in the context of negotiating household and religious responsibilities. In this context, flexibility transcends the simplistic notion of adjustable working hours or remote work options; it encompasses a more profound capacity to make

informed choices concerning one's involvement in paid employment, volunteer activities, or domestic obligations. This section delves into the intricate methods by which women maneuver through these decisions, the limitations they encounter, and the deliberations they engage in to establish their presence in both public and private domains.

A notable distinction observed in the fieldwork pertains to the differing choices made by women concerning their employment opportunities. A number of women, driven by their personal career ambitions, opted to pursue employment beyond the domestic sphere. For them, employment transcends mere financial necessity; it serves as a conduit for self-expression and personal fulfillment. Nevertheless, these choices are frequently influenced by the limitations imposed by societal norms and familial responsibilities. In numerous cases, these women are required to engage in negotiations with their husbands or other family members to attain the autonomy necessary for advancing their careers.

In Turkey, women's employment, that is, women's employment as employers, wage earners or salaried workers, self-employed or unpaid family workers, is extremely low. In 2016, only 28 out of 100 women of working age were employed. This is now a well-known fact. Turkey has the lowest female employment rate among OECD countries. According to UN statistics, we are the 23rd country from the bottom in a ranking of 196 countries. It is also among the lowest among countries with similar development levels to Turkey.[285]

The prevailing tendency globally indicates that women's employment rises with industrialization and declines during crises, resulting in women being sent home. In Turkey, conversely, urbanization leads to women's withdrawal from the labor market, relegating them to unpaid roles across nearly all sectors of agriculture, while simultaneously rendering them unemployed as the agricultural economy contracts. Alternatively, they operate without registration in the service sector. In contrast to global trends, women join the labor market during periods of

285 Şemsa Özar, "40 Yıl Önce 40 Yıl Sonra Türkiye'de Kadın Emeği," in *Emek, Beden, Aile Türkiye'de Kadınlık Halleri*, ed. Taylan Acar and Şemsa Özar (İstanbul: Metis, 2021).

crisis and high inflation and withdraw when conditions improve. Women struggle to secure desired employment due to their preference for insured and short-term positions. Marriage and parenthood are two reasons for withdrawal. The income of a married woman with children must encompass the expenses of childcare, daycare, and a domestic assistant. Otherwise, she will be unable to perform her duties. The quintessential woman in Turkey is one who adeptly balances professional and familial responsibilities. Consequently, our cultural codes impede commercial activities. It is customary for a married lady to resign from her employment.[286] Güzide is one of these women who left job after marriage.

> My husband doesn't want me to work. He sees it as purely materialistic and thinks we don't need money; I don't need to go to work. But I don't think so. I worked for 6-7 months in a hospital; it was something like an internship. When I was going to get tenure, my husband said, no, he didn't want it. So, I quit and a month later got married. I had this regret. I want to take care of my child myself. Of course, I don't want to entrust it to a nanny, so I said okay to that. I said it could happen, I could leave, but I could have gone to work until the child was born. (Güzide, 28)

For some women, the option to engage in employment beyond the confines of their residence is not as easily accessible. The constraints imposed by societal norms, individual convictions, and familial expectations, especially from husbands, significantly hinder their capacity to participate in the workforce. The women in question, while possessing a keen interest in professional endeavors, frequently encounter limitations imposed by societal norms that elevate domestic responsibilities above their career ambitions.

The patriarchal bargain, a term established by Deniz Kandiyoti, serves as a significant framework for comprehending how women

286 Havva Çaha, E. Sare Aydın, and Ömer Çaha, *Değişen Türkiye'de Kadına* (KADEM, 2014), 118.

maneuver and negotiate their positions within patriarchal systems. Kandiyoti characterizes the patriarchal bargain as the tactics women utilize to enhance their security and autonomy within the limitations of a male-dominated society. These deals are heterogeneous; they differ between cultures, classes, and historical settings, yet all entail women making strategic sacrifices to endure and flourish within patriarchal frameworks.

The patriarchal bargain serves as a valuable framework for examining how women navigate their career, volunteerism, and domestic responsibilities, asserting agency within structures that frequently constrain their autonomy. Kandiyoti contends that patriarchal systems are not uniform; they manifest in many forms throughout different societies. In certain circumstances, patriarchy is defined by traditional patriarchy, wherein women's lives are strictly regulated by male family members. Patriarchy can manifest in a more nuanced manner, wherein women possess a certain level of liberty yet remain embedded within a framework that favors male dominance. In these institutions, women participate in patriarchal bargains—strategic choices and concessions that enable them to obtain a degree of power, security, or autonomy.[287] These deals do not inherently promote liberation from a feminist perspective; they frequently entail the reinforcement of conventional gender roles or the acceptance of specific constraints in return for security, money, or social validation. For women who decide to work, the patriarchal bargain often involves negotiating with their husbands or male family members to gain permission to work. Selma set an example for bargaining with patriarchy to overcome the sets of her husband and mother. She had to prove herself to have consent and support of her husband. Still, if she must make a choice between her family harmony and working, she does not hesitate to leave her job.

> I had a tailor and a workshop. My fabrics, everything is there. I take orders over the Internet; I send the measurements to my

287 Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender and Society* 2, no. 3 (1988): 274–90.

> tailor; I do the shooting at home for social media and ship them. My husband didn't want it any other way. My mom didn't want it at first, either. She said, 'Your husband will be jealous of you, don't be interested in these things'. My husband didn't seem to mind at first. He thought, 'What Selma could do online?!' and made no account of my job. But he doesn't say this anymore. He supported me a lot after my mother passed away. He wanted me to be distracted. I don't need money; I do it as a hobby, but it's nice to earn one's own money and not ask your spouse when you need something. We like people's feedback and the fact that we keep in touch with them. My children also like it when I work. I wish I had a better job; I would like it very much, even when dealing with my children. If they told me not to do it, I would still say I would do it. But if our family have big problems, I quit. (Selma, 32)

Women who opt to be housewives frequently engage in a patriarchal bargain that entails adopting the role of the "ideal wife" or "dedicated mother" in return for economic stability and societal validation. By executing this position with diligence, women may acquire power within the household or earn the respect of their communities. The efforts of Nazife, a university graduate housewife, to legitimize her non-working life and to free herself from the realm of responsibility towards men, her efforts to internalize 'proper femininity' can be explained as an example of this situation.

> When you graduate from university, there are so many strange visions and duties that society, your family and even you impose on you. But you can't overlap that with being a housewife, because the reason for studying is to not fit into your mother's mold. My mother didn't even complete primary school. She is 84 years old, so she couldn't study under the conditions of that day. The women of my family were not educated, none of my aunts were educated. I have a prejudice that an uneducated woman is ignorant. So what are you going to do to overcome this? You have to be educated, there is no other way. Oh, I enjoyed studying, being a student was

> satisfying for me, and it still is. But then you become a housewife and you are in the same position as your mother. Was your mother in a bad position, no, but that profile you created in your mind, a bad profile. And it is really very difficult to break it down. In fact, it is such a sacred and precious duty, but we have simplified it so much that we have reduced it to being a housewife! This is something that this age has brought, taking women out of the house. You are already putting dynamite in the family, in the foundation of the house. No matter how much you say you hug your child, when you hug your child, you are worried, 'I was going to work and have a career.' What will happen if you have a career, you will retire and quit! You will come back to your home - if it hasn't been destroyed, by the way - and your children are the only thing you have left in your life. But we underestimated it so much that it took me a long time to accept it. I still can't internalize that I am a housewife. I used to say this; 'I'm a housewife but I'm a university graduate', I felt the need to explain it. Now, I don't, I've given up. (Nazife, 45)

Nonetheless, this agreement entails conceding restrictions on their autonomy and prospects for personal development beyond the household. Some women may rationalize their choice to remain at home by highlighting the significance of their contribution to familial cohesion or child-rearing such as Nazife. This constitutes a patriarchal bargain: they trade personal autonomy in favor of the security and stability afforded by compliance to societal norms, as in the case of Halime.

> I didn't feel the need... There were times when I wanted to start a business in partnership with someone. My network, my knowledge, my finances were suitable for a partnership. It didn't work out; why didn't it work out? Because my husband didn't want it when I wanted to... He thinks, 'What's the point?' When I wanted to, he didn't. There are kids, their school and stuff. And when he wanted me to, I became like, 'Oh, never mind, I'm like this.' God bless my husband. From the first day I got married, he

> told me to take university exams and study wherever I wanted. If I had gone to a university, I would have wanted medicine, a laboratory, wherever. I used to love it. You know how some people are, I admire them... They say they want to be a dentist and try for 5 years or 10 years. I would try too; I had the capacity. I loved studying. My husband always told me to go to university. I said 'I have a small child now, this, that...' He told me to take the university exam again and again. This year, he says, 'You can take it again'. I say, 'No, more. I will raise my children to be believers and spiritual people, respecting to our values, servants of Allah, and good sons and daughters. That's enough for me. (Halime, 45)

For numerous women, the choice to engage in employment out of home is often a complex matter. The formation of such perspectives is frequently influenced by a multifaceted interaction of individual ambitions, economic requirements, family obligations, and cultural standards. This study involved interviewing women who had made a variety of choices: some opted to pursue careers, others decided to remain housewives, and still others struck a balance by participating in volunteer work. Every one of these selections embodies a distinct understanding of adaptability. Meral is a housewife, critical of her future.

> I considered to work; I even worked in the accounting department at my grandfather's company for 6 months. I was single then. My husband didn't want it at first, but now life seems so empty to me, traveling and chatting with friends. Now, it makes more sense for me to be busy with social responsibility projects. Making money is not the goal, okay? But it is also a good thing that, as a woman, one has economic freedom after a certain period. I'm now grasping this. I have no problem financially. Thank God, I don't call it a financial problem, but I think it adds something different to a person. Should I say it adds self-confidence? I think it's empowering. So, for example, I don't work now, but I want to take up a hobby. But after the age of 50, when my children grow up, I know that I will get bored, and then instead of starting something

> new, I can continue in a hobbyist way now and continue like this in the future. I did this both to relax myself mentally, and it wouldn't be bad if it was something that would also bring financial benefits. So, it's a beautiful thing. I appreciate mothers who can do this, continue to work with their children, and do not have to work. You must be stable. I don't have that much determination. Of course, I don't mean to make money. But right now, I have a child-centered life. (Meral, 36)

As Meral mentions, for women engaged in the workforce, flexibility frequently signifies the capacity to harmonize career obligations with household responsibilities. A significant number of women I engaged with highlighted the necessity of work environments that support their requirements for flexible hours or remote arrangements, enabling them to balance their responsibilities as caregivers alongside their professional aspirations. Nevertheless, in these instances, the responsibility of negotiation frequently rests upon the woman, who is compelled to champion her own interests in both her professional environment and domestic sphere. Meral's concerns are also remarked by Designer Sena whose husband does not want her to work, but respect her decision to work.

> Women should definitely work. If she doesn't work, she shouldn't stay at home. She should be busy with something, something that will fill her life, give her something culturally or religiously. Religious one is the best. She should definitely do something, because a woman who stays at home is really interested in empty work. I think she fills her life with an abyss and then reflects this to her husband. My husband supports women's work; I mean, he supports it out of love. Otherwise, his dream for me is being a housewife at home. He dreamed of a housewife who was more interested in religious issues and would have 3-4 children. But he has to leave his dreams aside a little bit. I work; this is my dream. My husband had a different opinion, but he respects me. I mean, after all, we are working here as ladies. I don't know if I was in an

> environment with men; maybe I would understand, but he wouldn't want it. But we don't work with men. You know, lady to lady, from home to work. He trusted me when he saw what I was doing. Otherwise, I can imagine what men want. Let me have 3-4 more children; let me be a lady who runs the house. (Sena, 28)

Housewives, conversely, frequently reconceptualize flexibility by emphasizing their capacity to engage in societal contributions via volunteer endeavors. A significant number of the women I interviewed had dedicated their lives to charitable endeavors, deriving a profound sense of fulfillment from their service to the community. For them, flexibility signified the autonomy to determine the manner and timing of their participation in these endeavors, frequently aligned with the commitments of their families. Sare is a heroine of volunteer work with a single soc. Raised in a wealthy environment since her childhood, Sare's entire social circle consists of wealthy women. Over time, she decided to mobilize this circle for charity and devoted her entire life to this cause. While doing this, she also has a social media account that she uses to announce the houses she visits and the countries in need of help.

> I do charity work. It really tires my mind and body, but I am very happy. I received many offers from associations, I did not accept them, I wanted to give my account to God and not to anyone. We have a lot of families to support as a few friends. I have been doing this for 20 years. God bless them, because my friends know that I am doing this job, they gave me. I collect everything, alms, supplies, second-hand goods. There is a small charity house donated by a friend, we take those goods there, we sort them. Sometimes people in need even come, they pick and choose whatever they need. For example, a family is moving. I call my friends right away. God bless them, we collect money right away, we move that family. It is a very tiring job. I do not have a regular routine. I receive messages at least 5 messages a day. There are people whose bills I pay all the time. We can't really get into rent support, it's costly but we pay their bills. We provide them with

> supplies. But these always happen spontaneously. There is no one who constantly gives me money. There is no one who gives me a routine every month. For example, I call Mine, I say, 'Mine, I'm really in a tight spot' and she sends it. That's how we get around, I mean, these are the bigwigs anyway. It works with them. It doesn't work any other way. My own means are not enough for this many families. I do the best I can, though. When they know that I've been doing this for years and dealing with this, those who will give call me and those who will take call me. Thank God. We also experience such abuses. We need to do good research. I don't have day and night. For example, they call me at night, saying 'I come back from work in the evening, I'm going to give you something, can you take it?' For example, we collect things door to door. My husband has a minibus. I have him carry the big things. He, God bless him, goes with the children. Sometimes when I go to families I don't know, I don't want to go alone. I can't even go into people's homes anymore. I mean, during this pandemic. And there are also really troubled people like that. I am afraid to go into their homes. I've never worked, but if I did, I'd probably have less hours. (Sare, 45)

Nevertheless, within this realm, their decisions were not wholly autonomous; they were compelled to engage in negotiations with their spouses and other relatives to obtain the necessary time and space for their volunteer endeavors. Although flexibility suggests a certain level of independence, the truth for numerous women is that their options are limited by a multitude of influences. A notable limitation arises from the influence exerted by husbands or male relatives, who frequently possess substantial authority over a woman's ability to pursue employment outside the domestic sphere or participate in volunteer endeavors. In certain instances, women may find themselves prohibited from engaging in employment by their spouses, influenced by cultural traditions, religious convictions, or apprehensions regarding the family's standing in society. In various instances, women are allowed to engage in work or volunteer activities, albeit under specific stipulations, such as the

necessity of maintaining their domestic obligations, as in case of Neva. While Neva's son was attending a boarding imam-hatip school, she saw that the school needed support. The parents came together and formed the school family association to help students that come from Anatolia. Since there were also men in this group, they separated from them and started to support the school by forming the school mothers' association, in which Neva served for twenty-five years. After leaving there, she continued her work with the same group of parents under the roof of an association. Neva, who made many bargaining agreements with her husband during this period, also has a witty story.

> My husband didn't want me to work. He even said, 'Don't go there during the pandemic; you will get sick.' But then he got sick himself and infected me. Now he can't say anything. I said, 'You talked big; see, you infected me.' Now, he says, 'You should try to get prayers'. I work here at an aid NGO, so he doesn't mind me working here anymore. But still, if I talk to men, for example, if a man calls, he pays attention to who he is; he doesn't want me to talk. For example, there was a course where Uyghur Turkish children stay. We brought aid there; Arif Hodja was taking care of it. One day a man called, Arif Hodja was writing on the phone. 'Who is Arif Hodja?' He asked me right away. I didn't do anything to make him angry. Then I saved him as 'Arife!'[288] What can I do? I told him, though, that this is the hodja from the Uyghur Turks, and he's taking care of them. Men get angry easily about some things, and we shouldn't make them angry. But of course, we must pay attention, as women, to Allah's Sharia, the things that Allah has put in place. We need to be austere. Anyway, when I go there, we go with a few friends and there is our driver, too. I mean, I try to be careful, I am already responsible to Allah in the sight of Allah. Of course, men are a bit sensitive about this. The men of our time were even more sensitive. (Neva, 60)

288 Arif is a male name and Arife is a female name.

Neva's maneuver is an excellent usage of subtle strategy. The notion of subtle strategies pertains to the indirect, frequently overlooked methods by which individuals, especially those in disadvantaged or subordinate roles, maneuver and oppose repressive structures or limitations. These strategies are subtle and non-confrontational, employing adaptable, innovative, and occasionally secretive techniques to assert agency through 'everyday resistance' within restrictive frameworks.[289] Within gender studies, women often utilize nuanced techniques to navigate patriarchal systems, contest norms, and establish autonomy without overtly challenging or disrupting existing power dynamics. Subtle strategies are significant because they allow women to navigate oppressive systems in ways that minimize risk and maximize personal agency. While these strategies may not dismantle patriarchal structures, they create spaces for resistance and empowerment within those structures. They also highlight the creativity and resilience of women, who find ways to assert their autonomy and pursue their goals despite systemic constraints.[290]

These limitations require ongoing deliberation. Women aspiring to engage in work or volunteer activities frequently find themselves negotiating nuanced dialogues with their husbands, striving to harmonize their personal aspirations with the societal expectations imposed upon them. For certain individuals, this negotiation constitutes a quotidian reality, as they endeavor to carve out brief intervals of personal time amidst their domestic responsibilities. Mother of four, Latife's husband was a member of parliament for a while and she herself has been actively involved in politics and civil society activities for a long time.

> If I want to work, my husband doesn't oppose. I have duties in foundations and the party. He has never restricted me in that regard. He has always said, run and do, and supported me. I also

289 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak : Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1985).

290 Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy."

> earned money, but I never felt responsible for the family. He never made me feel that way. May God bless him. When I was in Ankara, I was the head of the women's branch of the party headquarters. That, that job was a great task, very heavy job. My son was very young, I used to diaper him, I always took him with me like that. Of course, we were working very hard at that time. For example, I went to almost every city in Turkey. We did organization work, then I took a job in the foundation. (Latife, 54)

For working women, flexibility frequently signifies the capacity to reconcile professional obligations with household responsibilities. Numerous women I interviewed, underscored the significance of organizations that provide flexible hours or remote work options, enabling them to fulfill their caregiving responsibilities while advancing their careers. Nevertheless, in these instances, the responsibility of negotiation frequently rests with the woman, who must assert her interests in both her professional and domestic environments. The flexibility in employment, as observed in the women I interviewed, is a complex notion that includes not only the option to select between work and home but also the ability to negotiate these decisions within the limitations of their social and familial environments. In the domain of essentials, women's roles are frequently delineated by societal, cultural, and familial expectations that underscore their duties as caregivers, homemakers, and nurturers. These expectations are profoundly entrenched and frequently regarded as immutable or non-negotiable, influencing women's perceptions of their responsibilities and identities. Nonetheless, living the life and performing roles, these inflexible expectations often clash with the intricacies of reality, where financial constraints, individual aspirations, and evolving situations necessitate a degree of flexibility. The disparity between anticipated outcomes and actual circumstances fosters an environment of adaptability, compelling women to engage in negotiation, reinterpretation, and evolution of their roles to align with the exigencies of their everyday existence. This evolution illustrates the dynamic nature of women's roles, as they maneuver between the idealized expectations of necessity and the

pragmatic realities of existence, ultimately reshaping the definitions of wife, mother, and individual in an ever-evolving society. Doctor Aysun and her husband Mahmut stand out as a good example of changing expectations about motherhood.

> It is difficult for women to work. My husband's opinion about women working has changed a lot. When I first got pregnant, I was saying I'll take a year's unpaid leave, I'll raise my child comfortably, I'll be a perfect mother, etc. My husband kept saying, at that time, after all, it's four months, everyone takes four months. He was of the mindset that those four months are enough, the state has set it like this, you will continue to work. When the child was born, their thoughts changed completely...I was the opposite. I looked forward to the end of those four months with the first child, because I couldn't stand it anymore, I couldn't adapt to it at home, that sleeplessness, that tiredness. And he was an allergic baby. I couldn't eat whatever I wanted. I longed to see the street, I was very attached to the humans, and you know, my fourth month was over, and the day my maternity leave ended, even though I was still breastfeeding, I went to work bursting with happiness. Mahmut, on the contrary, said 'Please don't work, you should have extended it to a year, you should have taken unpaid leave, it would be a pity for the child' and so on. (Aysun, 34)

For numerous women, engaging in volunteer work serves as a balanced alternative to both paid employment and complete domesticity. This enables individuals to participate in significant pursuits beyond the domestic sphere, all the while conforming to societal norms regarding their fundamental responsibilities as caregivers. Engagement in volunteer work is frequently regarded as more socially commendable than participation in paid employment, especially within conservative communities, as it is perceived as a continuation of women's nurturing responsibilities. It is noteworthy that a significant number of the women I interviewed perceived volunteer work as a means of empowerment. It afforded them a profound sense of purpose, a means to engage

meaningfully with their communities, and a chance to cultivate skills and establish networks beyond the domestic sphere.

The notion of flexibility in employment, as articulated by the women I interviewed, presents a complex landscape that includes not merely the option to alternate between professional and domestic spheres but also the skill to navigate these decisions amid the limitations imposed by their social and familial environments. For certain women, the concept of flexibility encompasses the pursuit of a career alongside the management of domestic responsibilities; for others, it signifies the quest for fulfillment through volunteer endeavors; and for yet others, it entails the acceptance of constraints imposed by their families and societal expectations. In every instance, it is essential to recognize that flexibility is not inherently available; rather, it is a dynamic that requires ongoing negotiation, frequently accompanied by significant personal sacrifice.

4.4.5 Economic Flexibility in Family Life: Negotiating Financial Roles

The notion of financial flexibility represents a vital, albeit frequently neglected, dimension of women's experiences, especially when examined through the lens of marital and familial interactions. Women approach marriage with a framework of beliefs and expectations regarding their roles and responsibilities, influenced by societal conventions, cultural principles, and individual experiences. The expectations in question frequently find their foundation in the "realm of necessities"—a domain wherein concepts surrounding gender roles, financial obligations, and spousal responsibilities are articulated. Nevertheless, post-marriage, women enter a distinct phase, characterized by a "realm of flexibilities," wherein prior expectations undergo scrutiny, modification, and redefinition considering the actualities of married existence, especially influenced by the perspectives and actions of their partners. This transition requires women to engage in continuous adaptation, negotiation, and strategic decision-making regarding household budget management. This part, examines the ways in which women maneuver through this transition, employing performative actions to adjust to and negotiate financial management within the household, thereby influencing the economic and emotional dynamics of family life.

Prior to entering into matrimony, women frequently cultivate a framework of convictions regarding their roles and the anticipations they hold for their prospective partners. The formation of these beliefs is influenced by an intricate interplay of cultural norms, familial influences, and individual aspirations. In many societies, women are conditioned to perceive themselves primarily as nurturers and domestic managers, tasked with overseeing the household and safeguarding the welfare of the family unit. Concurrently, there exists an expectation that their partners will assume the role of the principal earners, thereby ensuring financial stability and security. The aforementioned expectations establish the groundwork for a domain of essentials, a theoretical framework wherein the roles and responsibilities of women are articulated in optimal terms. Such convictions tend to be inflexible and deeply entrenched in conventional gender roles, allowing scant opportunity for divergence as discussed in earlier chapter. Nevertheless, the actual experience of married life frequently confronts these ideals, compelling women to adjust and navigate in manners that embody the intricacies of their altered situations. For the scope of this study, many women think that providing for the family is the man's job, whether they have their own income or not. Some legitimize their view based on religious orders. Fahriye's expressions summarizes this view.

> Maintenance of the home is the man's duty, Allah also commands it in the Quran, that is, the woman has no obligation. The man is responsible for providing for the family. Even if the woman works, what she earns belongs to her. Even the inheritance that comes to the woman, the man does not have the authority to take it. He cannot take it, that is how it is in religion. If the woman gives it voluntarily, it is of her own free will. But the man has no right to ask from the woman. But the woman has the right to ask from man. That is how Allah has set up the system that way. (Fahriye, 59)

Latife also supports this view and claims that her son-in-law's attitude in this respect was determining in her daughter's marriage.

> My daughter was a student when she was getting married. At their first meeting, my son-in-law said to her, 'I will always support you studying, I want you to study but I don't expect anything from you financially. I will take care of you.' We liked that statement very much. Frankly, I am against women taking on such an obligation. Don't misunderstand this statement, it does not mean that women should not work or be active, they have no financial obligations. (Latife, 54)

While Latife bases this responsibility on religion, Güzide explains it based on biological differences.

> In terms of gender equality, I think men should be a little ahead in terms of materiality. Because men are the ones who provide financial support. I think that providing for the household is the man's duty. For example, I think of the contradiction. When I think of men sitting at home and women working, the physical conditions of women do not allow this anyway. That's why I think like this. I mean, let me put it this way, even when I'm at home, my husband leaves at 06.30 and when I get up at that time, I have to go to bed at 21.00 in the evening, for example. I really can't stand it. My body doesn't allow it. But when I look at my husband, he can stand it until midnight. His strength and power are really more than mine. I can see it. (Güzide, 28)

After marriage, women find themselves navigating a landscape of adaptability, wherein their prior anticipations are scrutinized considering the tangible circumstances of their transformed existence. Financial management is no longer a theoretical expectation, but a practical reality shaped by their spouse's financial attitudes and the overall economic conditions of the household. In this realm, women's financial roles are not static but evolve through a continuous process of negotiation and adaptation. This domain is marked by a vibrant interaction between the preceding ideals of the realm of necessities and the attitudes, behaviors, and financial practices exhibited by their partners. Within this domain, adaptability emerges as an essential

competency for enduring success. Women are compelled to navigate the financial dynamics of their households, frequently assuming new responsibilities or reinterpreting their current roles. The process of adaptation presents considerable challenges, necessitating negotiations with partners, confronting established gender norms, and seeking equilibrium amidst conflicting obligations. These actions illustrate a dynamic process, wherein women actively construct their roles and responsibilities through their everyday practices and choices. Lawyer Benan is a new graduate who is not working. She admires her husband's rationality whom she has been married for a year.

> We just settled down. I don't have any information about my expenses or my husband's salary. He knows his calculations. When I say something, he gives me time to do it. He can say 'We can do it in three months', or 'We can't do it at all'. At first, I didn't include him in some of the expenses at home. I have an income from my father. In the first months, if I wanted to buy bananas, I would buy them right away, if something was neeeded, I would take care of it right away. I didn't include him in material things much. Then I realized that was wrong. Then I stopped. I didn't even get five liras for the first three months. I couldn't ask for it, then I was able to ask for it gradually, and I was able to include him in it. I think our marriage settled when I included it in this. (Benan, 24)

However, it cannot be said that all women are equally comfortable accepting money from their husbands. Sümeyra feels bad and indebted to her husband because she does not work.

> After all, he always worked. I never had a proper income. I was a burden to him during my PhD in France. I always felt like a parasite. For example, some women don't feel parasitic, you know. They accept it very easily. She says 'He is my husband. I gave birth to three children for him, so of course, he will take care of me!' I say how complacent you are. I actually want that mentality. I've never been like this in my life, that he earned it, and

> I'm enjoying it. I always felt like a parasite. I couldn't even find a scholarship. People find scholarships to go abroad. And it was all on him. Once, I missed my flight to France, and he bought me an extra plane ticket. Thank God our economic situation is good. He earns well. (Sümeyra, 36)

Women exhibit financial flexibility primarily through budget management, an essential component of family administration. Budget management transcends a basic practical chore; it embodies a performative action that signifies women's agency, ingenuity, and adaptability. Women navigate the financial limitations of their family, frequently discovering inventive methods to sustain their livelihoods or supporting their husbands. Latife claims that this support is a must to protect marriage.

> My husband lost a lot financially. I never once talked about them. I always supported him. We will overcome this together, don't worry, these things are not important, the important thing is that you are with us. I have always supported him in this way. I mean, he is very important. You know, we should always support each other in good times and bad times, especially women. Women make a great sacrifice for the marriage to work. (Latife, 54)

Financial losses seem to be one of the most difficult challenges for women in marriage. Beyza has been a corporate executive for many years. She also expressed that she had a very difficult time accepting a financial loss that her husband had suffered.

> We were living in a luxury complex in Acıbadem and I really loved my house. My husband could not pay a big debt at that time, and we had to sell our house. We bought a house again and moved, we were not tenants, but we moved to Kozyatağı and this was one of the biggest difficulties I had. (Beyza, 34)

These actions transcend mere numerical considerations; they pertain to formulating strategic judgments that embody the family's values, requirements, and objectives. In this capacity, women fulfill their

responsibilities as financial managers, caregivers, and negotiators, influencing the economic and emotional dynamics of their households. For Sena, not explaining her income is one way.

> Many men have this thing, when a woman earns her own money, many men may not like it. When she has a salary and self-confidence. It is incredibly important for a woman to earn her own money. Even if she earns pocket money, it's her own money. Apart from the man. The man doesn't even need to know most things. I think he shouldn't know many things. I don't see why he should. (Sena, 28)

Simultaneously, budget management frequently necessitates communication between spouses, especially when financial decisions affect the entire family. These conversations include diplomacy, perseverance, and occasionally concession, as women maneuver through the power dynamics of their marriages while championing their families' interests. Selma finds a way to manage her spending.

> My husband makes trouble about money. I live accordingly. Now, we know more or less. My husband gives me money weekly. I also have a credit card. If I want to go on vacation, we went to Antalya last month. If I want to go this month, my husband will immediately say no. A few months have to pass. (Selma, 34)

The realm of flexibility is profoundly shaped by the attitudes and behaviors of partners. An encouraging and cooperative partner might enable a woman to assume new tasks and responsibilities, promoting a sense of collaboration and joint decision-making. A husband who appreciates his wife's perspective on financial issues may be more inclined to modify his expenditure patterns or endorse her endeavors to augment the family income. A partner who strictly follows traditional gender norms may restrict a woman's capacity to exert flexibility in financial management.

> I think everyone's responsibility is very different. I have no say in anything economic. I don't even have an opinion. I'm talking about

> investment. For example, Mahmut bought a car and sold it. I find out later, 'I told you so, didn't I tell you so? To be honest, I'm not very interested either. I think I don't give the excitement. For example, he says, 'I bought a beautiful plot of land and it's a bargain!' Since he doesn't get a response from me, he doesn't tell me anymore, he tells his mother or father. His father says, 'Well done, son, blah blah blah, or how much is a meter?' etc. I don't have a lot of money anyway. He has money, I don't have money. It's not a matter of inequality between men and women, it's a matter of title. He is a specialist physician, I am not. I told the chief physician, 'I couldn't find any motivation to become a specialist. But if they had told me that there is twice the salary difference between us, this could be motivation for me!' So, we have a net double difference. (Aysun, 34)

In these instances, women may need to utilize discreet tactics to demonstrate their autonomy. These techniques illustrate the performative aspect of women's behaviors as they maneuver within the limitations of their marriages while endeavoring to fulfill their families' requirements.

> I didn't have a criterion to marry someone who rich. My husband went bankrupt while we were engaged. I was going to furnish the house. I could have bought everything myself. I didn't want to offend him and waited for him to buy what he could afford with his own means, so I didn't. But it's exhausting to see missing things. How do I overcome? My father was compensating it. Thank God I didn't see what was missing. But if I had lived only on my fiance's money during those times, I would have had a lot of difficulty. That's why equivalence is important. When two hearts meet, the haystack doesn't last. Beymen, Network, Ipekyol. Those are my favorite brands. But I also shop from local bazaars. This is one of the things my husband and I disagree on, shopping. He says you have too many clothes, you buy too much. I never tell my husband the prices of the clothes I buy. He would raise hell,

> saying, “How can you pay so much for this?” This attitude of mine stems from what, from the support of my family. And then there's the habit, I guess it's very difficult to give up that habit. I don't know what would have happened if I had gotten used to living only on my husband's money. My father never withdrew his support from us. He paid for everything. When the children went to kindergarten, we couldn't afford it. My father was paid and send them. God bless him. (Sare, 45)

Financial flexibility is a dynamic and performative process that embodies women's agency, adaptability, and resilience. By means of budget management and various financial practices, women fulfill their responsibilities as caregivers, managers, and negotiators, influencing the economic and emotional dynamics of their families.

In many cultural contexts, women frequently rely financially on their spouses. This dependency stems from structural causes including restricted access to education, career prospects, and financial resources. Women lacking independent income are positioned vulnerably, with their financial security dependent on their husbands. This establishes a power disparity in the partnership, when the spouse, as the principal or exclusive provider, wields considerable authority over domestic decisions, particularly financial issues. Newlywed Sevde claims that she was not as comfortable as his father’s house, although she is still working in her father’s company and has an income.

> There's not a huge gap between when I was single and now. But there is still a little bit. I mean, you don't have the comfort of your father's house. I was spending more comfortably, I wasn't doing the shopping for the house, I could spend where I wanted, how I wanted. But of course, it's not like that when you get married. You're a little bit more forward thinking. (Sevde, 24)

This relationship is frequently bolstered by cultural and societal standards that designate males as the "providers" and women as the "caregivers." Consequently, women may experience pressure to comply with their husbands to preserve domestic peace or to safeguard their

own and their children's welfare. This compliance is not inherently voluntary but frequently constitutes a pragmatic reaction to the absence of alternatives. A woman lacking independent income may perceive herself as compelled to acquiesce to her husband's judgments, despite personal dissent, as contesting him could jeopardize her financial security or incite discord. PhD student Sümeyra is working in an NGO with a very low salary, feels the pressure of using her husband's money.

> I also tell my husband that I don't work, after all, I can't open my mouth with my salary. I have two thousand and four hundred liras. I can't afford to pay all my expenses. My husband says you do everything with that salary, Sümeyra. Yes, you can do things with what you earn. For example, I have a car now. A friend of mine and I started using cars at the same time. She is now going out of the city by car. And I can only drive the car in this neighborhood. Because I'm incredibly afraid I'll hit somewhere. I always think that this is his car. On the other hand, my friend bought her own car. She bought it herself and paid for it herself. She's very comfortable, but I'm shaking because I'm afraid of hitting somewhere. (Sümeyra, 36)

This process underscores the significance of spousal views and the wider societal backdrop in influencing women's experiences. Although women exhibit significant adaptability and ingenuity in addressing financial obstacles, their capacity to do so is frequently limited by the power dynamics within their marriages and the cultural conventions that delineate their positions. In our pursuit of enhanced gender equality, it is imperative to acknowledge and endorse women's roles in household finances, promoting a more just and cooperative family dynamic. Recognizing financial flexibility as a performative process enhances our comprehension of the intricacies in women's life and facilitates the creation of a society that fully values and supports their agency and contributions.

4.4.6 In Brief: Flexibility in Family Life

Family life is inherently dynamic, influenced by evolving circumstances, relational expectations, and structural limitations. This research illustrates how women adeptly maneuver through a multitude of challenges—be it in the areas of employment, domestic responsibilities, religious obligations, or financial duties—by employing a range of mechanisms that facilitate their resilience, adaptability and flexibility. The mechanisms that foster the flexibility are intricately woven into two distinct conceptual realms: the realm of necessities, wherein core values and ethical principles underpin resilience, and the realm of futures, where aspirations for the future cultivate hope and drive motivation.

4.5 The Power of Flexibility: Overcoming Family Challenges

This section delves into key strategies and motives including patience, gratitude, tolerance, adjusting expectations, and social support, demonstrating their roles as coping mechanisms for women navigating familial life. There are many different ways to cope with hardships yet for the scope of this thesis, they are analyzed in two subtitles focusing on patience, gratitude and tolerance; and compatibility.

4.5.1 Patience, Gratitude, and Tolerance

Patience (*sabr*), which means “to prevent, to confine; to be strong and resistant” in Islamic context, denotes “resistance in the face of sorrow, troubles and calamities; the fortitude shown to turn negativities into positives” morally. Contrary to it are punishment, anxiety, worry, and complaint. Saba Mahmood analyzes patience (*sabr*) in the context of women's piety, self-discipline, and moral agency. In this view, patience is a moral virtue that needs training and effort to align emotions, desires, and acts with Islamic ethics. Islamic women learn *sabr* to improve morality, strength, and God-connection. She saw ladies practicing patience via prayer, recitation, self-reflection, and daily interactions in mosque lessons. This disciplined patience was about cultivating virtues

that enhanced faith and resilience, not capitulation to injustice. *Sabr* is crucial for mosque women to navigate gendered expectations. Many considered patience in marriage, family, and personal challenges as a test of faith, an opportunity to grow spiritually rather than just survive. Mahmood claims this does not deprive these women of agency. Instead, they reframe agency within Islamic ethics, which values perseverance and self-control. Mahmood's work questions the idea that agency is always resistance. She challenges feminist theories that regard agency as oppositional and proposes that moral self-discipline, including patience, can develop ethical self-hood. Sabr helps women in the movement become pious subjects rather than passive victims of oppression.[291] Religious officer Aysel's attitude towards patience is similar to Mahmood's. Aysel talks about patience and annoying the other person. This approach is both an agency and a resistance. She emphasizes that only when one is patient with every evil done the house will be as warm as a prophet's house.

> We should overcome the problems with patience, tolerance, and being the right model. The behavior that disturbs most people is always receiving goodness from the person even though they do evil. You throw stones, and bread comes; you throw stones, and bread comes. Why does she keep throwing bread at me? I wish she would throw stones at me, too. He can intimidate her, but with patience, we can return our home to the warmth of the Prophet's house. Well, at this point, my husband is patient with my deficiencies. In the absence of that, I say it in the name of religion: I will be patient. At that point of beauty, I am grateful for the beauty I see in him. Well, he sees beauty in me and thanks me. She wins in any case; we both win by being patient and being thankful. (Aysel, 60)

291 Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

Patience is often regarded as a primary strategy for managing challenges in familial relationships. In Islamic traditions, patience is regarded as a fundamental moral and religious virtue, frequently associated with heavenly recompense and resilience in the face of adversity. Women, particularly in traditional family environments, internalize patience to maintain unity and endure difficulties, whether financial hardships, marital disputes, or cultural pressures. Fahriye underscores the role of women to protect the family.

> You really need patience and tolerance to be a family. So, the mother is very important in this. I think the woman is very important for the family to have a solid foundation. Women have a great duty. For example, fathers can neglect many things. The mother can camouflage it by protecting her children or by protecting the family roof and integrity against the outside world. (Fahriye, 59)

So, patience should be perceived not as passive submission, but as an active and deliberate tool for preserving stability during the negotiation of problems. Fahriye rules an NGO that is focused to cultural and artistic activities. She claims women need patience and art teaches them how to be patient. That's why she got into this NGO.

> People, especially women, have a very busy and difficult life. Being a woman brings intensity and difficulty in itself. I have seen that women can endure these difficulties much more easily if they can therapy themselves in other areas. I have personally experienced it myself. I have witnessed that dealing with art has changed my perspective, opened different perspectives on life, opened different windows for me, I have become a more tolerant and more patient person. Dealing with art also teaches patience. Especially illumination and calligraphy, these also teach patience. Since I have experienced these in my own soul during this process, I have learned that art is the sine qua non for women, and I wanted women to engage in such an art. (Fahriye, 59)

Fahriye's effort to teach women to be patient show that patience is not an innate or passive value but it is learnt. In Sena's example, patience appears as a form of agency that is also learned performatively.

> If your parents treat you unfairly, there is nothing you can say. You have to respect it. Well, you were right, when you apologize, it becomes clear in time what you did, that you were treated unfairly. I think a little more patience is needed in such things. I could not be patient at first, but I will say that I learned. I think it does not proper for a child, even if his mother has done something unfair, speaking aggressively towards his mother. In other words, you can say that 'I am upset, you have done something unfair like this'. If they still do not understand, you will remain silent, there is nothing to do. Because they are your parents. (Sena, 28)

Halime also explains how her patience is a way of resisting by hoping the reward from God.

> When we argue, I shut up. I shut up, not because I'm stupid, but for God's sake... Sometimes sacrifices are necessary. I have been very patient, I have kept silent, but not crushed. I always defend myself. 'I am not your sister, I am not your mother, I don't listen to you. I am not your brother. I am not your nephew. And I am not subject to you. This is my truth. I'll tell you. I'll tell you. And he says, 'You wouldn't be comfortable if you didn't.' You know, we have a conversation like that. (Halime, 45)

Tolerance is essential for maintaining relationships despite unfulfilled expectations. Women often depend on forbearance to address generational issues, marital disputes, or variations in religious views among their families. Through the application of tolerance and patience, women demonstrate emotional adaptation, mitigating conflict in familial relationships while preserving their fundamental principles. This disposition is also connected to the domain of fantasies. Through endurance in the face of contemporary challenges, women have forged a path toward a peaceful future.

4.5.2 *Compatibility*

Marriage, being a multifaceted and dynamic partnership, necessitates individuals to address several issues, including divergent expectations and ideals, as well as altering roles and duties. In this setting, compatibility is a crucial element in promoting harmony, resilience, and enduring satisfaction. Compatibility denotes the congruence of ideals, objectives, and personalities between partners, and it is crucial in surmounting challenges within the context of flexibility. This section examines the significance of compatibility in marriage, emphasizing its function in enhancing communication, resolving problems, and maintaining emotional connection, via the lens of performative theory. Compatibility is frequently regarded as a crucial determinant of marriage success. Studies in psychology and family dynamics continually emphasize the significance of compatibility in promoting favorable results, including increased satisfaction, reduced conflict rates, and enhanced emotional connection. Compatibility in marriage is often linked to personality traits, shared beliefs, and aligned life goals.[292] Although it is frequently viewed as a prerequisite for successful marriage, this research posits that it is a dynamic process—one that is continually shaped and negotiated throughout the course of the relationship. Compatibility is not a static attribute possessed or absent in couples; it is an ongoing process manifested through interaction, negotiation, and adaptation. In this context, spouses "perform compatibility" by participating in rituals, routines, and communicative practices that solidify their collective identity as a couple. For instance, a couple may start with divergent financial management styles but progressively cultivate a unified strategy through continuous dialogue and modifications. Likewise, religious or cultural expectations may demand renegotiation over time, compelling both partners to

292 Ted L. Huston and Renate M. Houts, "The Psychological Infrastructure of Courtship and Marriage: The Role of Personality and Compatibility in Romantic Relationships," in *The Developmental Course of Marital Dysfunction*, ed. T. N. Bradbury (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 114–51, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511527814.006.

demonstrate flexibility and alignment with each other's values. For Nihal, performing compatibility is like tango.

> I can't talk about success in marriage because success is the result of something. But marriage is not a result, it is a living organism. The year I was married twelve years ago is very different from the year I am married now. Every year is different, the relationship transforms as you change. Marriage is mutual; it's a tango. If you are out of sync, if you can't make that movement together, you fall down. Then you get up and start again, you try to make that move. If you are in sync, it flows harmoniously, but if not, you fall. At some point you say you don't want to do this anymore; you don't want to do it. You don't fit me, you can't keep up with my rhythm, you can't take me with you. We can't move forward. (Nihal, 35)

Compatibility also has different branches. Emotional compatibility denotes the capacity of spouses to comprehend, react to, and manage each other's emotions in a manner that maintains marital harmony. It is a crucial determinant of marital pleasure and resilience, influencing how partners manage stress, resolve disagreements, and provide mutual support during life transitions. Emotional compatibility is fundamentally anchored in empathy, communication, and emotional intelligence. For Aysun, this is the ideal family she has in mind, yet she lacks it.

> I would love to have an ideal family. I think the ideal is that I don't want to tell your wife about something, your wife wants to tell you, I respect and value her opinion. And for her to value your opinion. This is also about trust. For example, to be able to say, “I'll give this job to this person, this person will take care of it”. That defines the ideal marriage for me. To be able to do things together, to be able to watch the same news and make similar comments, would satisfy me. But in my own marriage, there is no such thing. In our ten years of friendship, our communication has never changed. I mean, we haven't looked at anything from the same place. We have nothing in common. Even the way we evaluate something has always been different. But it was funny at

> the time. You know, it was a funny thing, of course, bickering like elementary school children, it was a funny thing. After we got married, we realized it wasn't funny. (Aysun, 34)

On the other hand, what makes Aysun live her life, give her resilience and flexibility is behavioral compatibility which denotes the extent to which spouses synchronize their daily habits, routines, and decision-making methodologies. Behavioral compatibility is pragmatic and demonstrative—it is manifested through common habits, lifestyle decisions, and adaptive bargaining over time. This facet of compatibility is essential for maintaining marital peace, especially in terms of flexibility, as spouses consistently adapt to changing circumstances. Behavioral compatibility in marriage entails the alignment of daily activities, obligations, and expectations. Couples do not merely "possess" behavioral compatibility; they cultivate it through iterative behaviors, modifications, and negotiations. Over time, actions become normalized through habitual practices, converting personal preferences into collective routines that enhance the overall stability of the partnership. Aysun explains that this behavioral compatibility makes them a good team.

> I think it's important to be a team. We are a team with Mahmut. Especially after the birth of my son. We can move quickly, for example. We are able to live together. It's also a little bit related to us. When we got married, Ahmet had a lot of seizures. I had a lot of shifts. I mean, we adapted to each other for three years, while maybe other parents would adapt to each other in a year. He didn't even sleep next to me for a long time before his shift. I would turn a lot in bed, for example, he would wake up and say that he would be on duty the next day and sleep in the living room. You know, it took a process to adapt even to this, so we decided to not to sleep together. (Aysun, 34)

Lawyer Benan also mentions that being a fellow traveler in the path of marriage is crucial and she realized it after marriage.

> We love traveling together. When I wanted to go somewhere, there were always obstacles. I always tried to do things on my own. Sait and I are very similar in that way. The things we want to do and like to do overlap. That's why we are good companions for each other. We realized this after we got married. (Benan, 24)

Not always the expectations overlap but some time needed to become compatible as in case of Halime, who learns to make her husband happy.

> I actually learned how happy my husband is. When my sister calls and says, “Sister, come to our house”, my husband says, “Oh, you come, you come!” My husband wants them to always be with us, to always come here, to always be together. I never wanted this when I first got married. My husband wants them to come to us because he grew up in a large family. I see his happiness. After a while I want to add happiness to his happiness. Because he's happy like that. For example, when we sit down for coffee, after a little chat, he says, “Now if only my sister were here” or something like that. That's how he gets happy. I'm actually used to living like that. (Halime, 45)

For Lawyer Esma is an active person with a busy schedule. Her husband’s compatibility makes her comfortable and eventually changed her to be a peaceful people.

> My husband is very compatible. I ask him if he wants to go for a walk, he says let's go for a walk, I ask him if he wants to stay at home, he stays at home. Let's go to the beach on the weekend, he says yes. We are exactly the same in those points, he is not lazy but an active person. You know, after all, I couldn't change those things of my husband, it wasn't possible. What happened was that I became calmer. In such an active situation, I preferred a calmer life now. (Esma, 28)

From a performative standpoint, bargaining serves as a fundamental method for constructing compatibility rather than only uncovering it. Arlie Hochschild's notion of the "economy of gratitude" underscores how

couples convey appreciation and modify expectations to preserve harmony. Minor gestures of reciprocity—such as modifying schedules to bolster a spouse's work or reaching compromises on domestic responsibilities—enhance the manifestation of compatibility in daily life.[293]

Individuals may enter marriage with established emotional expectations influenced by cultural, religious, or familial factors. Nevertheless, in the domain of adaptability, they must modify these anticipations in accordance with their spouse's emotional inclinations and the reality of matrimony. Women frequently engage in emotional work, regulating both their own and their partner's emotions to maintain marital harmony. This emotional labor involves not merely submission but the strategic equilibrium of emotions to preserve stability and connection. Couples cultivate and maintain emotional and behavioral harmony over time through emotional intelligence, attentiveness, and relational rituals. Overall, it is observed that compatibility is an adaptive and performative process rather than a permanent or fundamental trait. By employing emotional awareness, strategic negotiation, and flexible behaviors, partners consciously cultivate and sustain their relational equilibrium. Through the lens of performative theory, compatibility emerges as a dynamic construct, perpetually manifested through collective practices, reciprocal modifications, and attentive exchanges. This viewpoint emphasizes that marital success is not merely a function of inherent compatibility, but rather underscores the proactive role of spouses in shaping and maintaining compatibility throughout their relationship.

4.5.3 In Brief: Overcoming Family Challenges

This part has revealed that family life's flexibility is not only adaptability but also a performative process molded by minute tactics. Particularly women

293 Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (Avon Books, 1990), 85, https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Second_Shift.html?hl=tr&id=BuTSbIZV_kcC.

negotiate hygiene, domestic chores, religious practices, job, and money management without publicly defying accepted wisdom. While religious rituals and financial decisions represent silent adaptations to realistic limits, hygiene and shared obligations are changed by tacit discussions. Women's participation in voluntary work and employment similarly follows a deliberate route of measured flexibility, matching family obligations with personal objectives. These ultimately maintain tradition by making it flexible. Families stay stable while reacting to changing reality by means of continuous, sometimes silent strategies.

4.6 Synthesis of Findings

The realm of possibilities in family life refers to the flexibility and adaptability of familial roles, structures, and practices. Unlike the realm of necessities, which grounds the family in fundamental values and traditions, the realm of possibilities is characterized by its openness to negotiation, reinterpretation, and transformation. By challenging and redefining traditional norms, the family not only accommodates change but also participates in broader societal transformations. The encounter of two families and two individuals to establish a new family is a quintessential example of the realm of flexibilities. This process, inherently performative, involves negotiating, adapting, and enacting roles to create a shared identity. Whether harmonious or conflicted, these encounters reveal the dynamic interplay between agency and structure in family formation, showcasing how new families emerge as fluid, negotiated spaces within broader cultural and social frameworks. The next chapter will address the future direction of the family.

This chapter has demonstrated that family life in a conservative society is not governed by rigid structures but shaped through a continuous process of negotiation and adaptation. The realm of flexibilities provides a framework to understand how individuals—particularly women—navigate changing circumstances while maintaining a sense of continuity within familial and societal expectations.

The road to marriage itself is flexible and formed by changing standards for a partner. Families have a major influence, but personal preferences are more often satisfied under a disciplined negotiation process. Likewise, marriage technologies—romantic or arranged—do not exist as clear binaries but change in context. Premarital interactions and decision-making processes—including flirting—are likewise under negotiation, with limits set by both personal agency and society ideals.

Families face several difficulties once they are married, from emotional and financial ones to housework. Particularly women depend on religious discourse to define their boundaries of flexibility and use faith-based justification or negotiation of their responsibilities. More significantly, they use understated techniques—unspoken, slow, and theatrical actions—that let them adjust without outright challenging prevailing standards. In this sense, flexibility is an active, continuous performance ingrained in daily life rather than only a reactive changeover.

Overcoming challenges in family life supports the performative character of flexibility even more. Not just personal qualities, patience, tolerance, and thanks are strategic instruments that help women to keep harmony while gently changing their surroundings. By means of these systems, flexibility becomes a lived experience—one that develops via daily contacts, practice, and negotiations.

In the end, the realm of flexibilities guarantees its durability by means of adaptation rather than contradiction. It shows that family life is dynamically created through performative acts that balance structure and agency, therefore allowing continuity among change.

5

Family as a Realm of Futures

> *I want them to pray. I want them to value all the things we value morally. Besides, I don't like such frivolous children. I want them to be serious.*
>
> – (Halime, 45)

The family, as a social institution, transcends its immediate experiences into the realms of projections, ideals, and anticipations where the past and present converge to shape the future. The final chapter of the thesis examines the realm of futures, encompassing expectations, aspirations, and envisioned constructs of familial continuation. This chapter specifically examines how families conceptualize their continuity, frequently from the perspectives of generational succession, child-rearing, and the transmission of values, traditions, and identities. In contrast to the realm of necessities, which pertains to the essential frameworks of familial existence, and the realm of possibilities, where negotiations and adjustments occur, the realm of futures is influenced by ideals, desires, and perhaps elusive aspirations regarding the future of the family unit. This realm delves into the

imaginative and projective dimensions of family, where the creation of new generations and the envisioning of future possibilities become central to understanding family dynamics.

Children learn specific behavioral patterns from their parents and close family members through observation and imitation. The family teaches children basic rules and values that guide them through the initial socialization process. Family values form the foundations of the fundamental belief and behavior system that a person will have throughout their life. It is important to keep in mind that belonging to one's family group differs greatly from belonging to many other groups. Psychologically, family membership cannot be undone. This implies that belonging to one's family is always a part of one's identity, even if one chooses to distance oneself from it.[1]

In the scope of this research, aspirations and ideals are defined as the imaginative constructs that families use to envision their future. These constructs are not static; they evolve as families grow, change, and adapt to new circumstances. Ideals can be seen in the stories families tell about their future, the expectations they place on new generations, and the dreams they harbor for their descendants. From this point of view, futures are more than just personal psychological constructions; they function within a broader social and cultural matrix. Therefore, family life is not merely a reproduction of existing social structures but also an imaginative project where individuals construct future narratives. These narratives influence decisions regarding marriage, reproduction, and child-rearing, often blending collective expectations with personal aspirations. Serving as a conceptual instrument, ideals provide a distinctive perspective for analyzing the future-oriented dimensions of familial existence. These phenomena transcend mere individual daydreams; they represent collective constructs arising from the intricate interplay of personal aspirations, cultural conventions, and societal expectations. In this regard, phantasies embody both individual

1 Scabini and Manzi, “Family Processes and Identity,” 571.

and collective dimensions, mirroring the complexities and synergies inherent within the familial structure.

This study conceptualizes the realm of futures as a performative space wherein women, specifically, express their anticipations and aspirations regarding the future of their families. This conceptualization resonates with Butler's theory of performativity, positing that social structures, such as family, are perpetually enacted and redefined through repetitive practices. In the narratives gathered during fieldwork, women articulated their familial aspirations through diverse expressions such as aspirations for their children's futures and envisioned intergenerational connections. These ideals transcend individual projections, being intricately molded by cultural, religious, and economic contexts, thereby mirroring both limitations and potentialities.

5.1 The Realm of Futures in Family Studies

The concept of "realm of futures" is grounded in several sociological and family studies theories that emphasize the temporal and aspirational dimensions of family life. The family development perspective, founded in the 1930s and rapidly evolving from the 1950s onward, seeks to explain family development—not change, which can occur sporadically, but development: a consistent, underlying process of differentiation and transformation.[2] Talcott Parsons' nuclear family model inspired functionalist and universalistic family life and development theories during that time. Evelyn Duvall, one of the first developmental theorists, emphasizes that families usually go through stages in order, with each stage bringing unique obstacles and duties to master for healthy growth. This theory holds that families go through predictable stages with specified duties to accomplish, and adapting to each stage fosters healthy

2 Paul Mattessich and Reuben Hill, "Life Cycle and Family Development," in *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, ed. Marvin B. Sussman and Suzanne K. Steinnmetz (Springer US, 1987), 437–69, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-7151-3.

family growth.[3] This idea helps explain family development and challenges at different stages.[4] The stages vary by theorist, but they usually include the single young adult stage, which emphasizes identity and autonomy. Marriage stage stresses being a pair and committing to a relationship. Childbearing and parenting stage include adjusting to new responsibilities, raising children, and balancing partner relationships. Then come families with teenagers stage, children, and midlife, when children leave for school, work, or marriage. Lastly comes retirement and aging stage. Each stage provides unique challenges that families must overcome for optimal growth. Related to developmental family theory, the family life cycle theory emphasizes stage transitions as crucial for growth or strain. The concept currently includes cultural diversity and unique family arrangements including multigenerational households and adoption families.[5] In contrast to Duvall's specific developmental stages, the family life cycle theory includes a wider variety of family transitions and focuses on how families adapt to changing roles and societal expectations over time, namely, beginning families (single life, marriage), childbearing families, families with young children, adolescents, or adult children, middle-aged families (empty nest), families in later life (aging, retirement).[6] This model often focuses on the transitions families experience as they move from one phase to another, rather than just the stages themselves. It also considers external factors

3 Alexa Smith-Osborne, "Life Span and Resiliency Theory: A Critical Review," *Advances in Social Work* 8, no. 1 (April 30, 2007): 152–68, https://doi.org/10.18060/138.

4 Diana Lang, "Family Development Theory," in *Parenting and Family Diversity Issues* (Iowa State University Digital Press, 2020), https://doi.org/10.31274/ISUDP.8.

5 Evelyn Ruth Millis Duvall, *Family Development*, 2nd ed. (Lippincott, 1957), https://www.amazon.com/Family-development-Evelyn-Millis-Duvall/dp/B0007DNXWC.

6 Monica McGoldrick, Nydia Garcia-Preto, and Betty Carter, "The Life Cycle in Its Changing Context Individual, Family and Social Perspectives," in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle Individual, Family, Social Perspectives*, ed. Monica McGoldrick, Nydia Garcia-Preto, and Betty Carter, 4th ed. (Essex: Pearson, 2014), 1–21, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312972572_The_family_life_cycle_An_overview.

like societal changes, economic pressures, and cultural norms that influence these transitions.

Life course theory also grew out of static human development models. This theoretical perspective dominates research on how historical events, personal choices, and social relationships impact human development. It emphasizes timing, context, and process, providing a deeper understanding of human existence than earlier models. It stresses lifespan development, viewing human growth and aging as lifelong processes. People shape their lives through decisions and actions within historical and social settings. This theory holds that historical settings and places shape people's lives. Timing determines how life events and transitions affect development. Interconnected relationships shape lives, revealing social and historical impacts. This perspective illuminates human development throughout life by studying how individual lives and broader societal organizations interact.[7]

This research proposes a family structure comprising three interconnected realms—the realm of necessity, realm of flexibilities, and realm of futures—providing a perspective that departs from conventional, static theories of family dynamics. A more fluid and complex view of family life is intended to be shown by emphasizing how different domains are dynamic and able to influence one another rather than being hierarchical, chronological, or stable.

Conventional developmental family theories perceive family life as progressing in a linear or sequential fashion, with each stage representing a phase of growth, adaptation, and transformation. In these frameworks, future-oriented thinking is frequently perceived as an individual or societal vision that arises organically after specific phases are attained. Conversely, the realm of futures does not adhere to this linearity. It coincides with the realm of necessities and the realm of flexibilities, establishing a dynamic, fluid model in which the family does

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7 Glen H. Elder Jr, Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson, and Robert Crosnoe, "The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory," in *Handbook of the Life Course*, ed. Jeylan T. Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan, Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2003), 3–19, https://doi.org/10.1007/B100507.

not progress through fixed stages but always interacts with desires and forecasts of the future. This renders a far more adaptable and cohesive understanding of the family's future orientation.

The approach discussed within the scope of this study, to harmonize structural realms with individual roles with a perspective that aims to overcome the impasses of these developmental theories. It should be remarked that these roles, which are harmonized with the stages of the family, do not reflect an ideal that can be valid for all family types and social structures, and are defined within the scope of this study because they reflect the family life of a sample of middle-upper class conservative urban women living in Turkey in the 2000s.

The three-tiered structure of the family (necessities, flexibilities, and futures) facilitates the fulfillment of societal paternalistic standards while maintaining adaptability. The realm of futures is essential for maintaining conservatism throughout generations, as it integrates future projections that both uphold and reinterpret family traditions. The realm of necessities addresses practical family needs, the realm of flexibilities facilitates negotiation and adaptation, and the realm of futures links these practical elements to the family's overarching vision for the future. This perspective enables the family to be pertinent and resilient amid societal changes, since it consistently evolves in response to altering settings while preserving fundamental values. The realm of futures serves as a foundation of continuity, guaranteeing that the family remains rooted in its cultural and ethical framework while adapting to new conditions.

The realm of futures is essential in this framework since it grounds the family's long-term outlook. It transcends simply survival or adaptation in the moment; it concerns how the family collectively envisions its legacy and the future of its ideals. This vision connects to the sociological analysis by highlighting ambitions, projections, and the intergenerational transfer of values that influence the family's future, establishing a basis for its continuity and resilience. The realm of futures bridges ideals and realities, necessities and flexibilities, and allows for a multi-dimensional understanding of family life. It connects what families

must do, what they can do, and what they aspire to do. In this way, it can help explain the endurance of conservative family structures: even as society changes, the family's future-oriented aspirations ensure that these structures continue to function and adapt over time.

This chapter aims to elucidate the ways in which women formulate and navigate their familial aspirations, thereby uncovering the intricate relationship between imaginative thought and societal constructs. This analysis delves into the ways in which these projections shape daily choices, bolster familial identities, and occasionally create friction when anticipated outcomes are not fulfilled. Ultimately, the realm of futures functions as an essential aspect in comprehending the enactment of familial existence, connecting historical customs with imagined futures.

5.2 Ideal Visions: Future in the Making

Families function as essential conduits for the transfer of ideological viewpoints through generations, given their pivotal role in socialization, identity development, and the reinforcement of values. This transmission is not simply a passive inheritance; rather, it represents an active and dynamic process in which ideologies are perpetually reinterpreted, negotiated, and reaffirmed within the familial framework. In the realm of religio-conservatism, families emerge as the pivotal locus where beliefs, practices, and moral frameworks are intricately formed, maintained, and transmitted across generations. Families operate as compact representations of larger cultural and ideological frameworks, influencing individuals' perspectives from a young age. Parents, serving as the foremost socializing agents, impart religious and conservative values through their daily practices, rituals, and narratives that emphasize morality, duty, and tradition.

While some families successfully pass on their ideological convictions to future generations, societal developments, historical events, and personal experiences can cause these beliefs to evolve or shift over time. The cumulative impact of familial ideology transmission can have serious

societal and political consequences. Families' ideological inclinations help shape social norms, public opinion, and political landscapes. The prevalence of specific ideologies within families can have an impact on voting patterns, policy preferences, and the general ideological atmosphere of a society. As families play an important role in the formation and continued development of individual ideologies, this relationship is modified by socialization, cultural identity, personal experiences, and societal changes, resulting in an ongoing interaction between individual beliefs and familial influences.

5.2.1 Religious Ideals

The family is the place where intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and practices takes place and thus is of crucial importance for the persistence and continuation of religious traditions and communities.[8] In the context of religious values, ideals significantly influence the projection of ideals and ambitions onto young children via religious instruction. Within the realm of futures, the family serves as a locus for the realization of future-oriented goals, especially in nurturing children to embody religious and ethical principles. This process is not only passive transmission but an active performance, constantly influenced by rituals, narratives, and physical practices. Performativity posits that identities, especially religious identities, are not static essences but are formed via repeated verbal expressions, physical actions, and symbolic performances. In the realm of futures, instilling religious ideals in children becomes a forward-looking performative act, guaranteeing the continuation of faith and tradition beyond the present generation. Latife claims that raising children with love of God and prophet is the first priority and she felt satisfied when she is appreciated for raising such children, mirroring her own aspirations and principles.

8 Paul Vermeer, "Religion and Family Life: An Overview of Current Research and Suggestions for Future Research," *Religion* 5, no. 2 (2014): 402, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel5020402.

> First of all, I tried to instill in my children the fear of Allah and the love of the Prophet. I don't think I have succeeded much; I have a lot of shortcomings in this regard. But still, Alhamdulillah, when they go somewhere, I get very nice remarks and comments from people who see my children for the first time, and that makes me happy. (Latife, 54)

Neva is also sensitive about raising her children with love of God together with love of nation. For her, obtaining national values is a part of piety.

> I always wanted them to have religious and national values and be a successful person. Okay, let them finish good schools for this world, attain prestigious ranks, and have a profession. But they should not lose anything from their religious and national values, they should keep them at the forefront. It is said that someone who has become a professor but has not become a man because he does not care about his parents. If he doesn't care about his religion, if he doesn't care about his flag, it doesn't matter to me even if he reaches a very high rank. What matters first are religious and national values. (Neva, 60)

Neva is working as a head of an educational NGO and she expresses how this endeavor turns into her pursuit of life. There is a belief that if people are raised with religious and national values, they will have strong family ties and not get divorced. There is also a secondary meaning that the people who divorce are lacking moral values, hence raising generations that lack values. There is a prejudice towards divorced parents, together with pity and worry about a society of divorced parents' children.

> Think about those children of divorced parents. Even I was so affected by an incident. That child wants to be with his mother and father, and wants to see both of them, together. I'm thinking about myself now. Can I make a choice between your mom and dad? I can't... Some people use such children, that's even more difficult. So, I don't know what the future society of these individuals, the children of these divorced parernts, will be like. I'm a little scared.

> Raising children is very important. That's why, in the work of this association, we try to make sure that young people from religious vocational schools grow up well and get to a good place. It is also important that people with national and spiritual values are raised well. (Neva, 60)

Instilling religious ideals in children is a performative act, as it incorporates rituals that integrate these values into their daily lives. These rituals are not merely symbolic; they actually influence the child's identity and sense of belonging. The family instills their vision of an ideal future in the child by imparting religious values. The child functions as a conduit between the past and the future, perpetuating the family's religious traditions and guaranteeing their continuity. The child becomes the focal point of the family's aspirations—a yearning for ethical integrity, spiritual satisfaction, or cultural continuity. This yearning frequently stems from the family's unsolved fears and ambitions. Sare explains how prayer turn into a red line in their home. Being a good person comes before having a good career, as Neva also mentions.

> Prayer is the red line in our house. My husband Selim does not get angry easily. He has a calm nature. Even his calmness annoys you, I'm more tense than him. But the issue of prayer is vital for us. We had a teacher for the Quran. Selim always reminds prayers to sons. Now, they both pray. Bilal can sometimes fail, but Yunus is very good. First, we started with the obligatory prayers, *fardhs*. We started with two times a day. Then three times, four times, five times, then all the *fardh* prayers now also include the *sunnah* prayers. Somehow, he slowly arranged his prayers. We had a guest once. “Did you pray, Yunus?” I asked my son. The guest was shocked. “Are you praying?” he said. I said, “You should be surprised at those who don't pray; why are you surprised at those who do?” People are surprised that young people praying. This is a very bad thing, unfortunately. Decency comes first. Respect. They should be respectful to their elders. Let them be human. Let them appreciate what they have. The value of what you have, the

> value of people, that is, the value of friendships. For me, this is important. They have been very successful, and they became a doctor, but an immoral doctor. God forbid. (Sare, 45)

As an active beneficent, Sare is in contact with needy people and cares about raising decent children despite her prosperity.

> What they see from their parents influences them. Moral values are very important. When I go to meetings at school, I ask how the children are doing before asking about their grades. The teachers are even surprised as parents don't ask such a thing or don't care. Yunus is currently studying at my father's school. I always tell him, “Son, be a normal student. Don't make anyone feel that this is your grandfather's school.” Thank God we haven't had any problems for four years. My child may get low grades in his classes. But he can't misbehave with a teacher. This is a red line for me. I am very worried about this. Sometimes I chat with my friends. My children are also there. If they talk like they are talking to their friends, I make eye contact to warn them. I don't offend children in public, but at home, there are times when I get angry. If children are in a social life, decency is the most important thing, especially in their friendships. I have also seen poverty, and I have shown it to them. I didn't put everything in front of them. I said no, we have this much money this month, even though I'm very reckless about that. But I did it for them to learn; I didn't do it out of poverty. Because they don't appreciate anything, they are insatiable. (Sare, 45)

Religious practices, such as prayer, rituals, and moral lessons function not merely as directives but as performances that influence the child's identity and sense of belonging. Through the instruction of religious values, parents and communities implement and strengthen cultural and social norms, integrating them into the child's perspective. Saide summarizes her will about future very briefly.

> What I want for my children? Wearing hijab, being very polite, very elegant, has a profession, with all religious and national values... It's not that she should know many foreign languages, work in many places, or, practice this profession, but she should be very ladylike, very elegant, and kind. Oh, she shouldn't be like a sheep; she should be able to do what she deserves. I wanted them to be interested in politics, but only one of my daughters was interested. (Saide, 60)

Furthermore, the recurrence of religious practices and narratives facilitates the creation of a collective reality for the kid, imbued with significance and purpose stemming from the family's or community's fantasies. That's why family is more important than the educational institutions up to a certain age.

> The 0-12 years period is such an important period. That's why academic education is not very important to me. My first priority is for the child to have good morals to have a good circle of friends. It is crucial to instill the love of the Prophet and Allah. People who are like this are already good people, and they don't have evil thoughts. In the future, an academic career is also something related to their nature, *fitrat*. No matter how hard I try, I can bring that child only up to a certain point. (Meral, 36)

Neva also points out the importance of family during early education. Parents and religious leaders function as exemplars, personifying the principles they aspire to impart. Their conduct, language, and attitudes exemplify examples for the kid, emphasizing the performance aspect of religious parenting. The youngster, in this scenario, assumes a pivotal role in the family's ideal. The child is frequently regarded as the manifestation of the family's aspirations and values.

> I think families give their children their first education in the family. Schools are important to some extent, but family is crucial. The family must constantly follow the child, support him, and teach him something because you can teach children something

> only up to a certain age, then it is difficult to turn him around. The family can't do anything either. If he says 'I am like this', what will you be able to do? But as they say, a tree bends when it is young, and you must cultivate that tree well while it is still alive. (Neva, 60)

The same proverb is cited by Latife who feels very sad about her relatives that do not wear hijab because of their parents' attitudes.

> I have two nieces; I feel very sad. I was wet-nurse of my sister-in-law's daughter; she is the same. I always pray to God to give them the love of hijab. But who did wrong is their mothers who never guided their children! I mean, at least they should warn their children. Now they can't make them wear hijab. Of course, they can't, the time has passed. There is an appropriate age for everything. It is not for nothing that they say that a tree bends when it is young. (Latife, 54)

Religious ideals frequently obscure the intrinsic void or ambiguity of existence by offering a feeling of purpose, structure, and continuity. By instilling religious beliefs in children, families construct a narrative that addresses this hole and provides a meaningful framework for comprehending the world. Doctor Aysun is aware of the risks of raising a child like a project to satisfy her lacks; still underscores the importance of raising a Muslim individual who should have a meaning in their lives.

> I want to be relieved from the idea of making them do things that neither of us can live, from the idea of a project child. That's my note to myself. We dream a lot with Mahmut. Children must get art or music education. Mahmut says something new every day. I wanted her to play the violin, and she should do this, she should do that. We always insist on making the children do what we can't do. Secondly, I want them to be good, moral, and naive people. What I mean by naive is not fragile. I want them to be children who like to help, who know how to help, who are not selfish, and I want them to be Muslims. And by Muslim, I mean religious. I

> want them to fulfill their prayers, and I want them to have a concern for Allah, a reason for creation, a feeling. I really want them to have that feeling. (Aysun, 34)

Moreover, the realms of necessities and futures are intricately linked, particularly with value transmission. The realm of necessities encompasses the essential moral, theological, and ethical frameworks that govern family life, whereas the realm of futures signifies the projection of these values into the future, frequently manifested through idealized concepts of family continuation and social impact.

Values that arise in the realm of necessities—such as religious convictions, ethical standards, and cultural conventions—constitute the foundation upon which families construct their hopes in the realm of futures. Families do not only adhere to established norms; they actively conceive, strategize, and influence the transmission of these values to subsequent generations.

> I think a firm foundation is crucial. I owe my parents my religious basis, fear, and love of Allah. When considering every need, I consider Allah's instructions. I try to instill that sensibility in my kids. Despite growing up freely, I never did anything wrong. I could have done wrong, met men, or gone out without anyone knowing. No, I did not. Why? I can hide it from my mother, but not from God—it's a sin. I will suffer if I do it. I teach my kids that now. My parents gave me this foundation; they let me go. I think my kids have a solid foundation. God willing, they won't do wrong. They should be example Muslims. People should say, "He is a very decent person, such a good person, such a good role model," while mentioning their names. They shouldn't be misspoken. I want exceptional, clever, good Muslims. Nothing inappropriate should happen. (Melek, 45)

The societal aspect of religious ideals presents numerous advantages, although it also leads to significant difficulties and challenges. The focus on cultivating a devout generation may occasionally restrict the child's capacity to investigate diverse perspectives and establish their own

identity. This contradiction embodies a larger struggle between societal expectations and personal autonomy. Despite being referenced by only a single interviewee, this approach worth to quote.

> I aim for my children to be self-sufficient, self-respecting individuals who are capable of their own happiness and self-awareness. This is my main goal. Their own happiness comes first. I mean, there is no such thing as being good for society, for the family, for the nation. In my understanding, a person should be happy first so that she will be happy in her surroundings, or her own things will be different so that she can benefit her surroundings; that's how I look at it, and that's how I try to raise them. (Nihal, 35)

Instilling religious ideals performatively within the realm of futures is a multifaceted and evolving process. It entails the proactive formation of identity, reality, and social unity via rituals, narratives, and exemplification. Simultaneously, it embodies the family's ambitions, concerns, and goals, imposing these upon the kid as a vessel of values and a conduit of tradition. This process underscores the interaction between personal agency and collective imagination, providing fertile terrain for further investigation in psychoanalysis, cultural studies, and sociology. The performative aspect of family life ensures that values are not merely inherited but actively embodied and enacted. In this sense, the realm of necessities provides the moral scripts that structure everyday life. The realm of futures expands these scripts into imagined futures, where values are not only preserved but also strengthened and idealized. The realm of necessities and the realm of futures are not separate but mutually reinforcing. The former provides the groundwork of values, while the latter ensures their continuity and adaptation into the future. This relationship is crucial in religious-conservative families, where the act of projecting values onto future generations transforms familial identity into a long-term ideological project.

5.2.2 Religious Upbringing as a Familial Project

The realm of futures in family life extends beyond individual aspirations and personal imaginings; it encompasses broader societal visions that are deeply intertwined with religious and ideological continuity. Within religious-conservative contexts, one of the most significant aspirations projected by families is the ideal of raising a pious generation. It reflects a collective phantasy—a shared vision of an ideal future where the younger generation embodies piety, morality, and social responsibility. This endeavor is not merely about personal or familial fulfillment but is often conceptualized as an investment in the moral and social fabric of the community. This societal dimension of religious phantasies is rooted in the belief that raising a pious generation is an investment in the future, one that benefits not only the family but also the broader community. Rooted in a sense of duty, religious upbringing serves as a performative act that transforms child-rearing into a project of familial citizenship, ensuring the transmission of values across generations while also fulfilling perceived societal responsibilities.

> When you raise your child, you are raising an individual and a member of society. You are also raising a good mother and a good wife and daughter-in-law. You are raising a mother-in-law; we have a myriad of roles. (Aysel, 60)

In addition to familial roles as Aysel mentions, the expectation of cultivating a moral generation encompasses a societal aspect, wherein the upbringing of religiously observant generation is regarded as a ethical duty to the community as a whole. Families in religious-conservative environments frequently view their children as both carriers of familial legacy and as contributors to the moral and ethical framework of society. This sense of duty converts religious upbringing into a communal investment: guaranteeing that future generations maintain and perpetuate religious standards that bolster social cohesiveness.

This dynamic presents parents as moral architects of society, emphasizing that a well-raised, virtuous individual enhances the moral

fabric, social cohesion, and spiritual fortitude of the nation. Moral education is positioned as both a parental obligation and a societal imperative, with families serving as channels for the preservation of ideological and ethical ideals across time. Sümeyra is making her PhD on philosophy and working with children have that ideal to change the world in a good way.

> I work children's philosophy because of my societal concerns. For the first time, organizing seminars made me feel active and like I was erasing my mistakes. That is, if we can modify some things about children and make them think from the start, we will make children, boys, and girls want good for society and each other, and I assume they have compassion. We must lift that cover. The revealing of children's philosophy begins here. This makes you active too. First, they must follow their rights and laws, and the world is balanced. I think we should teach these ideals to kids early on. I strive to raise my child in this ideal, whether it's brotherhood or emotional peace of mind. They belong to this society. (Sümeyra, 36)

From a performative perspective, moral upbringing encompasses not only the instruction of doctrine but also ritualistic participation, behavioral modelling, and the establishment of emotional connections that correspond with religious principles. Prayer rituals, religious narratives, and communal interactions within faith-based organizations serve as tools for the development of religious identity as an integral aspect of the child's perspective. This performative dimension guarantees that religious values are not merely transmitted but actively practiced, rendering religiosity a tangible and bodily experience. All good morals are also related to gaining the consent of Allah. Women, not knowing what to come but hoping the reward from the God, educate their children piously and morally as a good individual to society.

> The most important thing in child raising is honesty, a child who will be integrated into society in an honest way. So, he should not be selfish. I made a lot of effort to raise an individual who is happy

> not because of his own ego but because he gives beauty to the environment. Of course, I do not know whether I was 100% successful. Another point is prayer. My children's prayer is very, very, very important. Gossip is forbidden, and prayer must be performed. I imbedded the issue of *haram*[9], such as looking at *haram*, eating *haram*, not taking the neighbor's fruit, not looking at *haram* bodies, that is, I mean, I worked through the issue of *haram* while raising my children. I also instilled the sin of gossip and the significance of prayer in my children. (Aysel, 60)

Families often feel a sense of obligation to raise children who will contribute positively to society. This obligation is rooted in the belief that religious values foster virtues such as honesty, compassion, and respect for others, which are essential for social cohesion. Sare mentions protecting each other's rights in a society.

> Do you know that our Prophet cursed the road blocker? That's why I'm so afraid of violating someone's rights and law. I teach my children the same way. My son never violated anyone's rights and laws. I mean, never. God forbid. (Sare, 45)

Saide is a woman who has spent years in active politics. In addition to her dentistry, she has an important role in the National Outlook Movement. She uses not only religious but also political arguments regarding the social role of children, and these two overlaps in raising the new generation.

> We did not come to this world just to be happy. If I think about myself all the time, then life will become unbearable at the slightest thing. But why did I come here? I came here to enjoin good and prevent evil; this is my first duty. Now, we are trying to

9 Haram: It means 'forbidden' in Arabic. In Islamic jurisprudence, *haram* is used to refer to any act that is forbidden by Allah and is one of the five Islamic commandments that define the morality of human action. Actions, such as cursing, fornication, murder, and disrespecting one's parents; policies, such as usury, interest; certain food and drinks, such as pork and alcohol and certain inaction, such as abandoning the salah without a valid reason can be regarded as examples of *haram* in Islam.

> spread this in the organizations. "I have a child; I can't come." But don't you want to develop and build a good world for your child? I mean, what will happen to your child in this world if things go like this? Look, we can't produce anything. What will happen to this child in this world anyway? But if you work to give that child a good world and a good future, for their sake, they will be blessed. And then you will think that if you work for your great ideal, Allah's reward is great. (Saide, 60)

The sociological aspect of religious aspirations emphasizes the interaction of family, society, and religion in influencing the future. By cultivating a virtuous generation, families meet their societal responsibilities, enhance the moral framework, and preserve the continuity of cultural and spiritual legacy. This process simultaneously mirrors wider society worries and desires, together with the performative aspects of religious upbringing. Religious phantasies often include the expectation that a pious generation should protect society from moral decay and social unrest. This hope reflects a broader societal anxiety about the future and a desire for stability and continuity. Religious upbringing is also a way of preserving and transmitting collective identity. By instilling religious values, families ensure that their cultural and spiritual heritage is carried forward, reinforcing a sense of belonging and continuity within the community.

5.2.3 In Brief: Ideal Visions

Religious values and upbringing operate as a family project in which value transfer is not a passive legacy but rather an active process of reinterpretation, negotiation, and reaffirmation. Religious identities within the family develop through performativity—repeated verbal utterances, physical actions, and symbolic rituals confirming faith and belonging—rather than they are fixed. Regarding futures, producing a pious generation becomes a forward-looking performative action guaranteeing the survival of moral and religious ideals over generations. Consolidating a feeling of belonging and supporting a common vision of

an ideal future depend much on rituals and prayers. In religious-conservative settings, this goal reflects a collective phoney whereby the younger generation is seen as embodying piety, morality, and social responsibility. Families actively construct the future by means of these processes, turning religious ideas into lived experiences transcending the present.

5.3 How to Transfer Values?

In religio-conservative communities, the transmission of values to children is a profoundly significant process, embodying both collective aspirations and performative actions. This process transcends the basic instruction of moral or religious concepts; it involves identity formation, the reinforcement of social standards, and the preservation of cultural and spiritual legacy. Parents perceive their children as custodians of religious and moral traditions, regarding this endeavor as both an obligation and a long-term society investment. This process is not automatic nor simple; it entails intentional actions of socialization, negotiation, and adaptation, mostly facilitated by family dynamics, educational institutions, neighborhood and friends. These channels function within the realm of futures, where ideals and aspirations are projected onto the younger generation, and as performative acts, where values are enacted and lived in quotidian behaviors. This section examines the interaction of these dynamics, assessing how the transfer of values operates as both a phantasy and a performative act in religiously conservative communities. It also analyzes how the realm of futures, although envisioning ideals identified through realm of necessities, eventually intersects with real-life flexibility and the transmission of values.

5.3.1 Familial Socialization: The Foundation of Value Transmission

The family serves as the first and most intimate space where children are introduced to on beliefs, political orientations, and value systems. Parents, particularly mothers in religio-conservative settings, assume

the role of moral architects, shaping their children's ethical and spiritual outlooks through daily rituals, discipline, and emotional bonding. This performative transmission operates in multiple ways. Children observe and internalize values through parental behavior, understanding that religiosity is not only preached but also performed in everyday life. This is the implicit way in which family members, especially parents, serve as role models. Halime says she began doing rituals even without being aware. Some things are never told to them in words but they internalized and lived the way their elders did. However lately, these unspoken attitudes turned into an issues to consider about.

> I have three children. Now I think, how we were educated, how will I educate my children? I have this uneasiness about new issues that come my way. We didn't see them through orders but through actions. My elders lived like that, and I learned. Because I don't remember ever walking around without my hijab. I was in the first grade of primary school and used to wear a hijab. Even though our hair was coming out of the side, we wore them. When I went to school, I uncovered it. But there were no such things back then. I mean, whether I came there with a hijab or not, such issues were not discussed. (Halime, 45)

Children often imitate the attitudes and behaviors of their parents, including their political and ideological stances. For Fahriye, as the child is a smart observant being, she is able to learn and analyze the family.

> Good morals and the right to servitude should be taught to children first. It is not easy to raise a child. First, the child observes the family. You don't need to say anything to your child. The child is really a very smart and observant being, he observes and synthesizes the family. He comes up with an idea and reflects it in his own life. If there are deficiencies in children, let's look at ourselves and see where we made a mistake and why this child is doing this. Parents do all kinds of crap and then expect the child to say religion, Islam, Quran. Then, children are reactive. The child

> of a religious family has become an atheist. Why does it happen? It doesn't happen out of the blue. We all have a share in this. Children's love for the homeland, the Qur'an, religion, Allah, and human rights are very important. Giving the values of human rights before teaching about prayer and ablution. The way you live, the messages you give them in their daily lives, and the things you say are all reflected in their souls. If you tell a lie here, go there and say, 'Allah does not command this, commands that!' How convincing will you be, and how much will you instill those values in that child? (Fahriye, 59)

The harmony of the deed with the words come to the fore as an important teaching mechanism. Selma, who began to wear hijab very lately also mentions that. Together with role modelling, families also use religious stories, parables, and personal anecdotes to convey moral lessons and inspire virtuous behavior. These narratives are performative in that they construct a shared reality and shape the child's understanding of their role in society. Not only oral but also symbolic communication, such as religious books, prayer mats, or modest clothing also reinforce ideological continuity.

> We used to go to Bodrum, and my son used to see me in a bikini. Now, it's not like that. If I did that, the kid would feel a discrepancy. It's like saying smoking is harmful but smoking in front of your child. Fortunately, we don't smoke. My husband is very interested in history. When the children go to bed, he spends some time with them and tells them stories. He makes fabulation of his grandfather without naming him. He says, 'This character migrated here, worked here, lived here, lived like this' etc. Then he says this character is his grandfather and asks the children to pray for him. He said, "Your freedom today is thanks to your grandfather; we are continuing the business he founded." My husband also tells them about the sultans and so on. The children know some things better than me. They know II. Abdülhamid. My husband is a spiritually strong character. He always tries to

> change your opinion by telling you his own opinion. On contrary, I think everyone can have any opinion. I will not try to change you. Still, I respect his opinion, and that's what he wants to convey to the children. (Selma, 32)

Together with role modelling and communication, embodied practices also have a powerful effect to convey values. Religious rituals, such daily prayers, fasting, and attending services, are performative actions that instill ideals into a child's daily existence. These rituals are not merely symbolic; they actually influence the child's identity and sense of belonging. Aysel explains how behaviors are more important than words and how she learnt supererogatory prayers from her grandmother.

> My parents are religious people who pray five times a day. During the forenoon prayer, my grandmother would say, 'The forenoon prayer is running, let me catch up!' This has stuck with me a lot. I pray the forenoon prayer and *tahajjud*[10] because I saw it from my grandmother. *Alhamdulillah*... It is not enough to show responsibility only at home. We need a very good follow-up outside because we can't raise a child in a bubble. In order to raise a true believer, we need a very good follow-up and a very good example. Words have a thirty per cent effect, behavior seventy per cent. As long as my words and behavior do not cover each other, one side is missing. As I said, if I hadn't seen my grandmother, seventy per cent of me would be empty. (Aysel, 60)

They think that she is an example for children not only with her good aspects but also with her shortcomings. Melek is someone who fulfills all the obligations of religion and is knowledgeable in religious terms. Nevertheless, she feels that she is lacking in terms of piety, and she thinks that this is reflected most in her headscarf. Instead of the wearing

10 Tahajjud: Tahajjud, or qiyām ul-layl, is a devotional practice conducted in the final third of the night, following the Isha prayer and preceding Fajr, facilitating a profound connection with Allah. Tahajjud, although not mandatory, possesses considerable importance.

headscarf, she sometimes uses berets and hats. She says that she is an example for her children in this respect.

> They can say that my hijab is not proper, I wear a hat in summer and a beret in winter, they can say that I wear tight clothes. Those are between me and Allah. Inshallah, He forgives me because it is my struggle with my own *nafs*, but I try not to do anything wrong in my own way. For example, I was against my daughter wearing a hijab at a young age. It was the beginning of summer, I said her to spend the summer, swim comfortably, and then wear hijab at the end of the summer. She rejected and said she wants to be like me. My middle daughter asks when she is going to wear a hijab as well. You know, they try to do what they see, but the older girl is now becoming like me. She wears berets and hats. She doesn't wear those shawls or headscarves, but in the end, it's better than nothing nowadays. (Melek, 40)

She believes that she provides a morally correct education, even if she thought she is not proper in appearance. She is also pleased with the education she provided when compares her daughter to her friends, because she believes that the children get proper foundation in terms of realm of necessities, and that this foundation will protect the children when they grow up and enter different environments.

> They're young girls full of life. I look at her peers; Their situation is really bad. But morally, she doesn't do anything wrong. Thanks to Allah, she tells and shares everything with me. She's of the same mindset as me, trying to be a decent person without being too obsessed with appearances. I hope we will be blessed to raise the others in the same way. We try to protect them as much as we can because times are difficult. We always try to choose and establish people like ourselves in terms of the place we live in and our environment, but they will necessarily begin to work. They will enter other environments, but I think they will have their foundations in place by then. (Melek, 40)

Within the family, parents project their hopes and fears onto their children, imagining them as bearers of religious and moral ideals. This projection is often rooted in a desire to preserve cultural and spiritual heritage, as well as to ensure the family's social standing within the community, such as Halime's viewpoint. She was married to a big family who cares about being together in dinners and special days such as eids and call each other as a rite that should be protected and transmitted through generations.

> We are setting an example for our children. For example, my son says, "Dad, you are my idol." At one dinner, he says he is my idol, but at another dinner, there is an argument. After all, they are big kids. Everyone has an opinion (Laughs). But we have always attached great importance to the fact that we are all together for dinner. Whether they eat or not, they have gotten so used to it that even those who don't eat come and sit down, so as not to miss the conversation. That saying has always stuck in our ears. (Halime, 45)

Setting an example for the children to unite as a family is an issue taken to be seriously in Halime's family. It is a deliberative performative action. According to Halime, who is earnestly thinking about how to raise her children and keeping the family together, traditions and intergenerational relations should also change and be flexible according to the requirements of the time. Although traditionally the younger ones have duties towards the elders, according to Halime, nowadays the elders should make more sacrifices and not leave the younger ones alone. In this respect, what should be preserved is not traditional practices, but the love and communication within the family.

> The elders have a lot of work to do, they must be gatherers, especially in these days. The little ones should call the elders on holidays; it is a rule. Back then, there weren't so many outside influences and so much busyness. I don't agree with that rule now. I believe that the elders should be the ones to pick up the pieces, call younger relatives and ask about. Whatever you

> practice since childhood, your children will get used to it; they will learn and get used to it in that way. My husband's family is very crowded, and they are fond of each other. For example, we have been going to our village on the eve of Eid since we got married. We are there on the morning of Eid. Last year, I spent Eid at home for the first time because it was forbidden due to the limitations of a pandemic. My child is getting married. Next year, God willing, he will also come there. They will have breakfast there on that Eid morning. But they enjoy it so much that they want to come by their will. But they wouldn't want to go if I hadn't gone. I really care about this. (Halime, 45)

From the perspective of the realm of futures, this transmission is more than a functional necessity—it is an aspirational project, where families imagine their children as ideal representatives of faith. Through role modelling, oral and symbolic communication and narratives together with embodied practices of rituals, families aim to transfer their values to younger generations. In this way, religious upbringing is not merely about survival; it is about the continuity and expansion of moral and spiritual identity across generations.

5.3.2 Educational Institutions as Ideological Reproducers

In addition to the family, educational institutions significantly contribute to the reinforcement and institutionalization of value transmission. Families offer emotional and individualized religious instruction, but schools, religious institutions, and social groups codify these principles into systematic knowledge and a sense of community. Since the younger generation does not yet have children to go to school, it was mostly the older generation who commented on this issue. Religious officer Aysel underscores the importance of choosing the right schools for children. Although her parents are uneducated people, they were wise enough to send them to right education institutions which make a difference in Aysel's life.

> We need to channel our children in the right way; the right friend, the right school. Because if the family and the teachers at the school do not speak the same language, the child remains in contradiction. It is not enough for us to educate our children. Because we present the child to the community from a young age. In the ground, there is an actual prayer and a verbal prayer. O Lord, meet our children with the good ones, do not cut their path to the corrupt! It is also necessary to pay attention to who they are sitting and talking with. (Aysel, 60)

It is seen that Melek's daughter experiencing the contradiction Aysel mentioned. Melek, who sent her daughter to a very famous and expensive school instead of a religious school in order for her to get a good education, had to withdraw her child's enrollment soon after. Therefore, the education they demand for their children is not separate from their lifestyle.

> I sent my eldest daughter to Bilsen first because I wanted her to go to a good school. She is not like me, she fought with everyone there to defend her truth. While they were celebrating Christmas she said “Are you stupid? Don't you see that he is not Santa Claus, that is Ms. Pınar? There is no Santa Claus.” She sees a different lifestyle in the house. Once I got a call from school, saying your child interferes with everyone else. “What is she doing?” I asked. We started eating lunch, she said, “You didn't say *Bismillah*!” to her friends. What she sees at home and what she sees at school are completely different things. She couldn't adapt, so I realized that the child would be very confused. For example, they have swimming lessons, they go to the pool. Everyone was dressing and undressing in public. My daughter went into shock. She was wearing her swimming suit hidden behind the door. She came home and cried that day. "They made me undress in public, I hid behind the door and undressed," so I went to school and asked, "Can such a thing happen?" The answer was: "Children are at the age of curiosity, they need to see and learn everything." My child

> does not need to see and learn everything! These children are only 5 years old, so can there be such logic? We said “No, this place is not for us. We will fight every day and the child gets worn out.” Then we took her to a private college. From that day to today, all of them are in religious schools. We want their moral foundations to be strong. (Melek, 40)

In that sense, friend groups and teachers act as secondary moral agents, validating the values taught at home and expanding them into broader social obligations. Beyond standard curricula, memorization of sacred texts, participation in religious celebrations, and engagement in collective prayer make religiosity a lived, embodied experience rather than a set of abstract rules, as Selma mentions.

> My children go to a college with religious education. There are Quran lessons. Students are all like us. This college is a more established school. It's far but we preferred it. They see New Year's Eve, Halloween, a lot of things in this neighborhood. Instead of seeing them, he learns to pray. They pray together on Fridays. He learns to give gifts during the holy days. I don't think the child will be harmed if he sees them. I can send to different school for better education, but morality is more important to me. He can improve his education later. After a certain age, instilling morality becomes more difficult. If I didn’t get these values when I was a kid, I would have a hard time now. So let's instill it in the children, the rest is up to the Lord. Our prayers for the children of the people around us are in that direction, so that they pray and perform ablution. We provide it, there is no condition that it will happen, but let us do our duty. (Selma, 32)

Faith-based schools serve as ideological extensions of the home, ensuring that religious knowledge is systematically taught. In terms of public schools, imam hatip schools offer a good option to provide both qualified education and a decent network. In order to provide this framework, families made material and immaterial sacrifices. Neva sets

a good example to fight against prejudices of the society to send her child to an imam-hatip school that is very far from her home.

> We used to live on Bağdat Avenue. My son took exams and accepted to many schools. I had heard about Kartal Imam Hatip and wanted to enroll my son there. It was too far from our house, and the child was going asleep. The child used to go in the morning and was at school until four in the afternoon. I believe that teachers, friends, and education at school are also very important in a child's upbringing. That's why I wanted him to go to an imam hatip, and even many of my friends from Kalamış said, "You're wasting the child; are you going to make him an imam?" But I insisted because I couldn't go to an imam hatip school myself, so I guess there was something lacking in me. Because I saw my brothers and sisters, I was very pleased with them. My elder sister graduated from the faculty of literature. My younger sister graduated from the faculty of theology. So, we sent him to Kartal Imam Hatip. It was really far away. But then I also sent my daughter there because her brother was there. (Neva, 60)

Latife also serves an example who sent her son to a public school and experienced many difficulties. Still, his husband insisted on the son's existence in a secular environment being a very good student, as a way of activism.

> My son won Atatürk Anatolian High School in Ankara. But his S College, when my son became the best scoring student of the school, said, 'Let us educate this child here with scholarship until high school, don't take him away from us'. We were in a dilemma. The child won the Anatolian High School, but the S College didn't want to give the student. His father said, 'I will enroll him to Atatürk Anatolian High School'. God knows, my heart didn't want it then. The child also does not want to go there, crying. He also felt like a stranger there. I could never go to school because I wore a headscarf. During February 28, they knew that his father was a member of parliament. My child suffered a lot there. He finished

> school, but with such a struggle that I cannot explain. He was ostracized by his teachers; his father went to a parent-teacher meeting and there were arguments. All his grades were good, his father said, 'Son, don't give up. We will fight them'. For example, the boy was asking a question, he raised his hand and said, 'The teacher ignores me, never gives me the floor'. ' His father said, 'You will never raise your finger, but listen to the lessons well'. So there were such problems. The boy had a hard time studying there, but alhamdulillah. Then he won Galatasaray University. My daughter had always studied in the S College because of her headscarf. We came here, we enroll her to a private college. (Latife, 54)

It seems that, apart from imam hatip schools, secular public schools were not very 'safe' places for conservative families until very recently. For the upper-middle class, private colleges turned into a moral safety net to raise moral kids in a peaceful environment. These institutions, educate not only children but also the parents. Participating in all the seminars and activities offered by the schools in order to be a good parent can also be considered as part of this investment in the future.

> Since many speakers came to the school, we went to listen all of them, such as Hayati İnanç, Nevzat Tarhan. We started this process when our kids began going to the kindergarten. Since then, we have gone to every speaker who comes, and we keep up with everything. My children went to a private college. There were seminars, and attendance was compulsory but we attend willingly. My husband encourages me to attend. My husband and I would get a message from the school at the same time, and he would immediately send it to me. "There's an event at school. Are you going or not? Go." And when I said I wasn't available, he said, "No, no, hold everything. Go there. One sentence from there is enough for you. You don't need to know the speaker." (Halime, 45)

The performative theory of family life suggests that religious transmission is not just a top-down inheritance, but a repeated enactment and negotiation between ideals and realities. Although parents and institutions work hard to instill religious values, this process is neither fixed nor uncontested. New generations may change their approach to values or reinterpret them, leading parents to change their strategies over time. Doctor Aysun graduated from Anatolian High School and explained in Chapter 3 that she did not feel she belonged there. Nevertheless, when it comes to her daughter's education, instead of sending her to a religious school, she prefers a secular school like the one she attends, which leaves her caught in the middle. She says that the fact that her daughter received a good education and learned English was a consolation for her.

> I'm criticizing myself. When my daughter was young, we wanted to send her to a religious nursery school to get a Quran education and be a hafiz. The director is my mother, and there is a religious nursery school there. It's right next to our home. In my heart, I didn't want that. The age is four years and four months, and now we could send my daughter to a religious school instead of the one she is going to now. I didn't want to, and then I convince myself saying she's learning English now. I say, “Anyway, her grandmother will teach her, Mahmut will teach her, and she will go there in the summer.” But I would love to send her to a religious school, at least in primary school. You know, so that she grows up with that kind of morality and faith. At least I would like for her first friends to have veiled mothers and for her first friends to be in a school where prayers such as fasting are topical issues. Now her teacher wears nail polish, and then my daughter applies nail polish to her dolls. I would like her to aspire to spiritual things, not these. (Aysun, 34)

Despite these challenges, religio-conservative families keep in investing in the future by actualizing their ideals, illustrating that the realm of futures is not a static vision but a dynamic process of moral development.

In religio-conservative societies, the transmission of values serves as both a familial obligation and a wider societal endeavor, rendering it a performative act intricately rooted in the realm of futures. Families function as the principal moral transmitters, while educational institutions serve as reinforcing frameworks, ensuring that religious ideals remain pivotal in influencing future generations. This transmission is not a static, linear process; it entails ongoing negotiation, modification, and reinterpretation, highlighting the interaction between projections and flexibilities.

The objective of cultivating devout, ethically sound persons transcends mere religious continuity; it aims to preserve a societal vision in which religious principles are fundamental to collective identity. Consequently, religio-conservative child-rearing transcends specific family dynamics, functioning as a broader performative endeavor in which each generation acts as a conduit between historical traditions and envisioned futures.

5.3.3 Spatial Morality: How Physical Boundaries Reinforce Social and Religious Ethics

Together with families and formal schooling, the neighborhood and broader society significantly influence individuals' beliefs, especially in religio-conservative societies that prioritize collective morality. In contrast to the organized atmosphere of educational institutions or the close-knit nature of familial settings, neighborhoods serve as an expansive social arena where values are upheld through routine contacts, collective activities, and mutual experiences. Many families prefer to live in conservative neighborhoods especially after the child is born. The protection of children comes to the fore as a crucial concept. Melek lives in a fancy villa compound who moved to provide a decent neighborhood for the child.

> We rent this house and moved here because it is conservative. But we have other houses in a more upscale complex. Moved here because it was not appropriate to raise children there. Our house

> in Erenköy was an apartment building, and there were all kinds of people. Once our first child was born, we moved to Acıbadem. There were 40 houses in our Erenköy flat. Few people shared our views. Acıbadem had 20 apartments, half of which were conservative like ours. However, once the third child was born, we moved here for the kids to grow up in a decent atmosphere. In order to raise our children well, we reside in a religious compound and send them to religious school. My experiences have shown me the drawbacks of not sending. I went to a secular college and couldn't tell my pals anything. My pals went to pubs, danced until morning, drank alcohol, and ate pork without religious sensibility. However, my oldest daughter now goes out with friends in such a complex. Everyone praying, fasting together. Children learn these values in such an environment. We safeguard them this way. protect them as much as possible. I hope they live as Muslim role models. (Melek, 40)

Another important criterion that determines the suitability of an apartment complex for family life, in addition to being located in a suitable neighborhood, is the lack of an outdoor swimming pool.

> It is very important for me that it is a conservative compound and have no outdoor swimming pool. My friends said, "Your children are grown, so what's the need?" My husband and I do not swim in the pool, yes, but I don't want to live in a place like that and say, "No, son, we live here, but we don't use this pool." Because I cannot account for this in the other world, won't Allah Almighty ask to me? Then why am I going to gender-segregated halal hotels on holidays? We never go to hotels with gender-mixed pools and spas. Then I live in a compound with an outdoor swimming pool, it would be weird. I also have a house in Şerifali. It's very beautiful. Not in our compound, but there is a pool on the next compound right opposite my windows. It turns into a beach in the summer. I don’t move there. The child would study in his room watching the window, down below is like a nudist camp. I don't want this, it's

> my choice. We don't swim, but we see. I must give them my philosophy of life. If you are my child, I will teach this to you. Attitudes and behaviors. I need to show that attitude. But I won't interfere with your choices. Because after a certain age, everyone makes their own choices. (Halime, 45)

Religious and cultural gatherings serve as important social arenas where values are not only taught but also reinforced through collective participation. In religio-conservative societies, these gatherings play a fundamental role in shaping individual and collective identities, fostering a sense of belonging, and ensuring the continuity of moral, ethical, and religious traditions across generations. These gatherings, which include prayers, religious festivals, communal feasts, study circles, and rites of passage ceremonies, function as structured spaces where individuals—especially children and youth—internalize societal expectations through direct experience and observation. Unlike formal education, which often focuses on theoretical knowledge, religious and cultural gatherings offer an embodied and performative dimension of learning, where values are transmitted through rituals, storytelling, and community participation.

> During this pandemic period, I thought: How can I increase the motivation of my children? What should I do for their psychology? I have a 9-year-old daughter, and we thought of arranging a lesson with her group of friends, not a teacher, but a housewife, a friend from here. She is a business administration graduate from a very good university; before that, she studied pharmacy and theology. She says, “I have already given my children enough religious values." She said that she wanted to educate children about the way they talk to each other, their manners, these kinds of things. 6-7 friends go there once a week. They all wear hijabs in *kandil*s. Aren't these very important things? Okay, it comes from the family, but if I were alone, maybe I would be lazy to take my child. Right now, everything is related to the neighborhood where I live. School is very important, but unfortunately, school has not been

> useful in this sense in the last year due to the pandemic. (Meral, 36)

The importance of the environment seems to have become even more prominent in the pandemic. Along with school and family, the social environment also plays an important role in children's moral development. Even in periods when access to school is restricted, such as during the pandemic, it is seen that relationships within the neighborhood are very nutritious for children. These complexes, where families with certain values and a certain economic power live, offer children a controlled and wide area of freedom inside. In this respect, it is seen that the spatial environment is preferred and organized as an important factor in the transmission of values.

5.3.4 Peer Influence: Friendships and the Negotiation of Values

While families, communities, and schools offer a basic framework for value transmission, peer groups function as venues for both value discussion and reinforcement. In adolescence and young adulthood, when people actively interpret, adjust, or even question the values they have acquired, friendships especially become important. In many cases, friendships develop out of common religious, cultural, and ideological background. In religiously conservative communities, people often look for friendships that fit their family ideals to make sure their peer contacts line up with their moral upbringing. Attending the same mosque, school or religious study circle helps friends to support one another's ideas and practices. Among children and young people living in a conservative atmosphere, modest dress regulations, prayer practices, and conversations on religious or family responsibilities, peer groups can help to magnify these behaviors.

> Raising children in a conservative family is difficult; there are many obstacles. It is both easy and difficult. These obstacles are from the outside. There is the environment and the friend factor. That's why deep-rooted, solid friendships and friendships starting from childhood are very important. My

> husband always says this. If women are happy, those behind them are happy. He always says that. If I have a good vibe with you, if I like you, if I meet with you all the time and meet with you as a family, the children will meet too. How can we teach our children about Islam? How can we do that? The environment is very influential. The environment is very important. (Halime, 45)

While peers often reinforce dominant values, friendships also provide spaces for negotiation, reinterpretation, and sometimes resistance. Adolescents and young adults are particularly prone to reassessing the values they have been taught, often comparing their upbringing with alternative perspectives encountered through their friends.

> I'm not a mother who exaggerates everything. Everything is fine in moderation. The child should hang out. She should see things she hasn't seen. When she goes to Bağdat Avenue and sees those people, she shouldn't say, "Mom, she's wearing too revealing; what kind of clothes are she wearing?!" Some people want to raise their children in a closed environment, I don't. We need to raise children with a more open consciousness; today's conditions require that. But no matter how much we pay attention to children, their friends are very important. (Meral, 36)

In religio-conservative societies, peer groups and neighborhood/community networks serve as crucial forums for the exchange and discussion of values. Peer relationships offer areas for adaptation, contestation, and reinterpretation, while neighborhood interactions reinforce communal expectations. Families and educational institutions give a structured framework. While peer groups bring aspects of adaptability, resistance, and change, the neighborhood acts as an extended family, guaranteeing moral monitoring and ideological continuity. In this sense, the realm of futures is a dynamic process where people both inherit and negotiate values for future generations, rather than a static replication of the past.

5.3.5 In Brief: How to Transfer Values

Family socializing, education, spatial morality, and peer influence all help to shape the active, multifarious process of values transmission. Socializing inside the family takes place through daily interactions when values are taught not only by direct instruction but also by lived experiences and performing actions. Parents use religious discourse, establish moral limits, and set ethical frameworks for their children via modeling behaviors.

By offering organized moral and religious education, educational institutions help to connect personal beliefs with more general societal and ideological expectations, therefore reinforcing these values. Beyond formal education, spatial morality is quite important in determining ethical viewpoints; where families choose to reside, the surroundings they interact with, and the moral guidelines ingrained in those areas all help to create value. Physical mirrors of a family's moral ideals are neighborhoods, religious facilities, and even home settings.

Peer impact gives this process still another level of complexity, either supporting or contradicting family values depending on outside viewpoints. Friendships, social networks, and community ties provide venues of negotiation where values are always reinforced, changed, or challenged. Value transfer is, ultimately, a dynamic interaction between several elements rather than a linear process that guarantees continuity and adaptation in changing social settings.

5.4 Raising Future Generations: Care, Labor, and Division of Responsibilities in Child-Rearing

In the realm of futures, child-rearing encompasses not only the impartation of ideals but also the practicalities of caregiving and labor. Although much scholarly literature emphasizes the ideological transmission of views and values, the quotidian reality of child care, the division of responsibilities between parents, and the involvement of external caregivers are equally crucial in influencing the next generation.

In the child-rearing process, the roles of caregivers and how these roles are shared are shaped by gender norms and family structures. Traditionally, mothers have been seen as the primary caregivers of children. However, in modern societies, the role of fathers is increasing and the division of labor within the family is becoming more egalitarian. This shift is closely linked to movements for gender equality and the increasing participation of women in the labor force.[11] This section examines the allocation of child-rearing responsibilities among households, focusing on the roles of mothers, fathers, and external caregivers. It also examines how overarching societal structures, economic circumstances, and gender norms affect caregiving practices.

5.4.1 Conflicts in Child-Rearing: Differing Parental Expectations

Parenthood is a dynamic and complex process where spouses bring their individual expectations, values, and upbringing into the shared task of raising children. However, these expectations do not always align, leading to conflicts in child-rearing. Differences may arise due to cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, gender roles, or religious and ideological beliefs. These conflicts can impact family dynamics, decision-making, and the emotional well-being of both parents and children. Determining the method of child-rearing presents a dilemma that all parents encounter. Regardless of whether one is parenting independently or with a spouse, the desire to act in the best interest of children sometimes induces considerable anxiety when selecting an appropriate parenting style.

Parenting styles differ across individuals, although studies have recognized several primary kinds over the years. In the 1960s, psychologist Diana Baumrind delineated three primary parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive.[12] In the 1980s, Stanford

11 Hochschild, *The Second Shift*, 2.

12 Diana Baumrind, "Child Care Practices Anteceding Three Patterns of Preschool Behavior.-," *Psychology Monographs* 75, no. 1 (1967): 43–88, https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1967-05780-001.

scholars Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin subsequently introduced a fourth kind, termed neglectful.[13]

Authoritative parents equilibrate warmth with discipline, prioritizing guidance and communication. This parenting style is widely considered optimal as it strikes a balance between control and autonomy, enabling a kid to develop within appropriate limits while exploring their capabilities. Parents employing this approach will establish stringent standards that they want their children to adhere to, while simultaneously offering an emotionally nurturing environment that cultivates trust.

Authoritarian parenting, conversely, emphasizes stringent punishment, compliance, and regulation. This approach is frequently characterized as authoritarian and domineering. Regulations are rigid, allowing no scope for interpretation, concession, or discourse. Sanctions for transgressing regulations are stringent. In such households, children hardly have a voice in their own lives and are expected to comply unquestioningly with directives.

Permissive parents, in stark contrast to authoritarian parenting, allow their children considerable freedom, refraining from establishing rules or structures that could potentially cause disappointment or distress. Descriptions of this technique frequently depict the parent attempting to function more like a peer or companion to their child, acquiescing to their desires almost instantaneously. Permissive individuals value emotional connection while enforcing minimal restrictions. When one parent employs an authoritarian approach while the other adopts a permissive stance, conflicts may arise about punishment, limits, and behavioral expectations.

The final parenting style is neglectful. Neglectful parents, as the term suggests, exhibit minimal interaction with their children. The youngsters receive no regulations, organization, or affection and are predominantly

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13 Eleanor Maccoby and John Martin, "Socialization in the Context of the Family: Parent-Child Interaction," in *Handbook of Child Psychology, Socialization, Personality and Social Development*, ed. Paul Mussen and E. Mavis Hetherington, 4th ed. (New York: Wiley, 1983), 1–101.

allowed to navigate their circumstances themselves. This parenting approach, particularly when excessively applied, might jeopardize children's safety and result in their removal from the household. This approach may also be referred to as "uninvolved parenting."

Differences in parenting styles are common and often reflect personal upbringing, cultural influences, and individual beliefs about discipline and child development. However, conflicting styles can create inconsistency, leading to confusion in children and stress in parental relationships.

Latife who claims that she is a more despotic figure in home, criticizes her husband for not warning the children. He prefers to train them with role modelling while mother turns into an authoritative parent. Moreover, they have different aspirations for their children's future, including their education and career paths that upsets her and failed to pursue her dream about the children.

> My husband is not the kind of father who ever gives a preachy lecture. He always modeled behavior for them. He never says why did you do this. I would like him to tell sometimes, but he doesn't. I used to tell them more. But of course, if it was me if I did it on my own... For example, I really wanted my children to become *hafiz*. I really wanted them to get a better education in the Qur'an. But you can't do it alone. You know, the spouses must decide together. (Latife, 54)

In terms of parenting styles, Sare mentions that her husband is more authoritarian while she is more permissive. She feels satisfied about being a consulted mother. This attitude is exemplified through the issue of riding motorcycle.

> Nothing makes them happy. Because everything falls into their lap. For example, my son wanted a motorcycle. I used to ride it myself. At first, my husband Selim was uneasy. I said, "This kid has a passion for motorcycles. If we break this child's enthusiasm for motorcycles, maybe he will go and get excited about something worse!" When children's enthusiasm is broken, it can lead to

> something else and something worse. I made the boy drive a motorcycle without a license for two and a half years. He had it impounded once. But here's the thing: When children experience a problem, Selim can sometimes be more reactive, and they don't go to him. You know, they come to me instead of a stranger. I guess I'm lucky in that regard. (Sare, 45)

Sümeyra, claiming that she is responsible for every aspect of child care at home, complains about her husband's neglect and indifference about the risks of technology.

> The phone is a never-ending problem. As soon as the kid sees his father, he calls him Lightning McQueen! I say, 'Look, this kid doesn't call you dad, he calls you Lightning McQueen'. In the first year, I was working extra in an effort to hold on at work. I leave in the evenings after he comes home. During the day I'm already with the kids. He watches the soccer game on TV, he gives the phone to the kids. I take the children back unrecognizable; they give me a blank look. The children stare at me blankly. You know, I'm trying hard to bring those children back to normal after this. He's not worried, he doesn't care. (Sümeyra, 36)

If one parent is uninvolved in child-rearing, the other parent may feel burdened with all the responsibilities. This dynamic often leads to resentment, stress, and disputes over who should be responsible for caregiving and discipline. In households where the mother takes on most of the childcare responsibilities while the father remains distant, the mother may experience frustration due to the unequal division of labor.

Neglect seems to be the worst attitudes of all. As a parental attitude, it refers to a pattern of behavior where a parent or caregiver fails to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, or medical needs. It is a form of child maltreatment and can have serious, long-term consequences for a child's development and well-being. Neglect can be intentional or unintentional, but regardless of the intent, the impact on the child can be profound. For Fahriye, parenthood cannot tolerate neglect.

> Life should not be missed. If you neglect your children for your own pleasure or enjoyment, at some point in life, when you least expect it, that child takes such a return of it in you. It makes you fill that void by tearing your flesh to shreds. Nothing in life really accepts emptiness. That child's arbitrary neglects take that it from you in the later process. (Fahriye, 59)

Neglect is also inexcusable for Nihal in terms of parenting. The child cannot get love and care he should get from his father from someone else.

> If you have a child, you must make time for that child because that time is irreparable. As an adult, as a woman, I can get the love from someone else that I cannot get from you. I can leave you, without leaving you, in my marriage, God forbid, I can get that love from someone else, but these children cannot get it from another father. That's how I look at it. I mean, you must give that time and that love and attention to these children. There is no excuse for this. (Nihal, 35)

All of the interviewees are agreed about love and attention the child should get from her parents somehow, in permissive or authoritative ways. Only neglect seems intolerable. Different parenting styles might lead to conflicts between parents. Another reason of conflict in child rearing is about sharing responsibilities at home which is explained in the following section.

5.4.2 Conflicts in Child-Rearing: Sharing Duties and Responsibilities

The division of labor and responsibilities within a household can often lead to conflicts between parents, especially when expectations are not clearly communicated or if there is an imbalance in the distribution of tasks. Additionally, disputes that are associated with the division of labor might be influenced by traditional gender norms. It is possible for there to be an imbalance and feelings of resentment if the expectations about the responsibilities and roles do not match. When these gendered

expectations are highly ingrained in some societies, it can be challenging for couples to negotiate and achieve a balance between their respective norms and values. In the process of having a baby, women start to get to know their husbands as fathers as well, apart from their role as husbands and a new space for negotiation opens up. The expectations of husband about motherhood turned into a stressful situation for Doctor Aysun, started even before birth.

> I had such a difficult birth due to my husband. He nagged me for months. He kept telling, "You will have a natural birth; you will give birth standing up. It is the healthiest, and no one will touch you. You will hold the child first; you will cut the birth cord." I tell him that I'm scared. He says, "What are you scared of? After all, this is what it's like to be a mother." He said it so many times! He scared me so much that I became hellp. Hellp syndrome is pregnancy poisoning, and the reason I became hellp is because of the pressure Mahmut put on me. Allah gave me calmness. I was not scared or nervous at all. I had a very bad birth and a cesarean section. My daughter was thirty-four weeks old. I stayed in the hospital for ten days. She weighed 1800 kg. The doctor was aggressive and always tense. Twenty days later, we went for a follow-up. The doctor hugged me and said, "My daughter, you scared the hell out of us, how scared we were."(Aysun, 34)

As life changes, whether due to children, new jobs, or health issues, the division of labor may need to be adjusted. If one parent is unwilling to adapt to these changes or resents the need to take on more responsibility, this can lead to conflict. Becoming a mother is a transformative experience that involves biological, psychological, emotional, and social changes. It is not just about giving birth; it is a process of identity transformation, adapting to new responsibilities, and forming deep emotional connections. This transition is shaped by personal experiences, cultural expectations, and social structures. For many women, the responsibilities at home dramatically increased with the birth of a baby in family and burdens women more than men.

> The first years of marriage were comfortable. I realized what marriage was after I had a child and finished school. The responsibilities increased with the child. Fortunately, it didn't happen right away. She was born 2.5-3 years after the marriage. The child part was troublesome. And my eldest daughter was an extremely difficult. I can't even describe it. I hated children. I said, "I don't want children for the rest of my life." A baby should sleep 20 hours a day, normally when he is a newborn, right? Ours was crying 20 hours, and she was colic. She was a beautiful baby. They said it is the evil eye, etc. That child cried for a year non-stop. Every part of her was examined, all her internal organs, to see what was wrong with her that she was crying so abnormally. My two children are nine years apart. I decided to have a second child thinking that my child shouldn't be alone and my husband wanted it too much. We had the second child like this. It was easier than the first one, but he was not a very calm baby either. (Melek, 40)

This hardship is doubled by the lack of her husband. Melek is so over-burdened by her husband's lack that she felt alone and did not want to have another child. The absence of men due to late shifts, out-of-town assignments, or overseas work appears to another significant hardship for women regarding the distribution of domestic responsibilities.

> Beforehand, my husband used to come home at 10 or 11 at night. He always saw the children sleeping and stroked their heads; that's it. But now he has no work, he leaves late, comes home early, etc. He can spend more time with the family. It was difficult. That's why, as I said, I didn't want to have many children, because I have all the responsibility. He only comes in the evening and sees them sleeping. He doesn't see what I go through during the day. (Melek, 40)

Even when responsibilities are shared, one parent might feel unappreciated for their contributions. If one parent feels that the work they do, whether in the home, financially, or in childcare, is not acknowledged by the other, it can lead to tension and dissatisfaction.

Doctor Aysun's husband Mahmut had to move to another city in the early months of her daughter's birth for compulsory service that overburdened her.

> My husband ruined me with my first daughter. He was far away on compulsory service. It was easier for him to ruin me from afar. My daughter was born in August, and my husband went to Gaziantep in February and stayed for a year. He used to visit us once a month during a year. How easy it is from afar! It's like giving an order. For example, I say my daughter has a fever. He says 'Okay, give her some Parol.' I'm not asking you what to do! I'm telling you to stand up. I'm not your nurse! I'm telling you to get up! Mahmut used to talk to the child on video for half an hour. Then he used to ask me if I do this or that. (Aysun, 34)

Lawyer Esma does not have a child yet, but she mentions how she felt annoyed the unequal distribution of work and expectations from women, quoting from her neighbor.

> It's like he's the father, he's the whole family, he gave birth, but she is not the mother. It was as if she had her husband's children, look, her husband's children, that's what the definition was. She said 'My husband's children, not mine'. That is how he makes her feel that about her own child. (Esma, 31)

Some women experience feelings of resentment or annoyance as a result of the perception that they are taking on a greater share of the obligations associated with running the family and caring for children as in the case of Selma. It is possible for this to occur when the distribution is not expressly discussed or agreed upon, thus leaving one individual feeling overwhelmed or overworked.

> The man's responsibility is only to go to work. He has no responsibility at home. My son is in the first grade; doesn't a person ever wonder? He says I can't educate him like you. It's the same with food and children's clothes. So, what if he doesn't sleep? So, what if he doesn't do his homework? His mind is at ease.

> Since the children are boys, they are Fenerbahçe fans. They go to football matches together, and they both go to soccer courses. He never sleeps until late on Sundays; he takes them and waits for them. But he is not interested in other things. What happened at school, did he not read his book, did he get cold, what time did he come in, what time did he go to bed... All these are my responsibilities. (Selma, 32)

Fahriye, on the other hand, got married and started living with her husband's family at a very young age, taking care of her sick and bedridden mother-in-law as well as her children. She mentions that the division of labor is more egalitarian nowadays, which makes her hopeful about the future.

> In my close circle, I see that parents share responsibilities as parents; they are more understanding, patient, tolerant, and sacrificial towards their children. But whether this is better or worse will become clear in time. Right now, those young people have not yet grown up. They are not involved in society. I am optimistic in this regard. (Fahriye, 59)

An inequitable or ambiguous distribution of responsibilities may result in conflicts when one parent perceives themselves as overburdened, undervalued, or lacking in support. Transparent and candid communication, coupled with a reciprocal regard for each individual's responsibilities, can mitigate these conflicts and foster a more equitable household dynamic. The absence of males, attributable to late shifts, out-of-town assignments, or overseas employment, also presents a considerable challenge for women in relation to the allocation of domestic responsibilities. Having support in terms of child care is another issue that comes up raising the future generations.

5.4.3 Between Necessity and Ideal: Professional Child Care in the Realm of Futures

The choice of professional in-home child care, facilitated by babysitters and caregivers, has historically elicited a mixture of admiration and skepticism among families. Certain women adopt this approach as a strategy to attain a harmonious work-life balance, facilitating professional care for their children while concurrently pursuing their careers and personal ambitions. Conversely, some individuals regard it as a disruption to the profound connection between mother and infant, interpreting it as the delegation of an essential maternal responsibility. This part examines the concept of professional child care within the home by considering the domain of future possibilities. It analyzes how families envision, navigate, and influence their children's upbringing in alignment with their aspirations, values, and socio-economic circumstances.

Engaging the services of a professional caregiver is a privilege that necessitates financial stability. The capacity to engage a caregiver or nanny is predominantly influenced by socio-economic status, rendering this option primarily accessible to families with substantial financial resources. Within the parameters of this research, all interview participants are categorized as belonging to the upper-middle class, a demographic in which numerous women possess the financial means to employ domestic assistance. This economic advantage enables them to assign caregiving responsibilities in a systematic and professional manner, in accordance with their long-term objectives for both their children and their own professional pursuits. Nevertheless, this also implies that their experiences and viewpoints regarding professional child care are influenced by access to resources that may not be accessible to families in lower-income brackets.

The realm of futures pertains to the conceptualized and aspirational visions that families formulate concerning their lives, particularly in relation to the well-being and development of their children. Decisions regarding professional child care extend beyond mere practical considerations; they are profoundly intertwined with future projections.

Families consider various factors, including educational opportunities, emotional support, financial stability, and cultural expectations, when determining whether to engage the services of a caretaker or a nanny.

While certain women appreciate professional childcare as a strategy for harmonizing various responsibilities, others dismiss it due to apprehensions regarding emotional detachment and the potential erosion of maternal influence. This divergence is frequently influenced by cultural norms, socioeconomic status, and individual beliefs regarding motherhood.

Housewife Melek always have a cleaner lady but take the responsibility of her children alone until the birth of third child. She lay down hiring a nanny as a condition to have another kid. The improved economic situation has also made it possible to meet this demand.

> I always take care of the children myself. The cleaning lady used to come to help me. I never made cleaning, but I took care of the children myself. With the third child, I said to my husband,' I don't want any more children, but if you want it so much, you can hire a live-in worker, if that's the way it's should be without changing my standard of living'. He said, 'Whatever you want is fine, as long as we have another baby'. 5-6 months later the birth of our third child, we hired a live-in nanny. I am comfortable now, thank God. I am a social person. I think I make time for my children in my own way. Some people never leave them to a babysitter, but I do. I'm a little gaily. (Melek, 40)

In her words, the demand for support to care for her children is not a condition for a good career at work or for the well-being of her children, but rather for her own social survival and not to lower her standard of living. Some families get the help from their parents for child raising to spare time for themselves.

> If my husband finishes work at 7 on weekdays, he is home at 7.20. If he wants to go on vacation, he plans it with me first. If he wants to go somewhere, he does not decide on his own. After we had children, my mother-in-law raised my first son. We would leave

> him on Friday and spend time together on Saturday. We like spending time together. No children, let's go to bed when we want, get up when we want, eat where we want. We loved it and we did it a lot. I'm glad we did it. (Selma, 32)

Designer Sena does not have a child yet, but have some aspirations and concerns about raising a child. For her, parents should raise the child and living the baby for her own pleasures is a kind of remorselessness. Moreover, care giving is not enough but financial necessities also should be met to have a child.

> Conscience is a good thing. I see a lot of people who often leave their children every two weeks and go on vacation. In the long run, it may be necessary to spend time alone with the spouse, but I don't find it right to leave a child who is still sucking, a child who is still crawling. It is better not to leave the child until the age of one, 2-3. I think the child feels abandoned before the age of 2. He worries that my parents will leave me. I'm not very courageous about the child. I need to raise my children very well; I need to take care of them; they shouldn't feel lonely. And I have some concerns. Will I hire a babysitter? Will I prepare a small room in my atelier and keep the child here with the babysitter? I can't leave him with someone else, but if that happens, will I raise him with that stress? And it's not easy to raise a child these days. It's not easy financially. It is a huge obligation. Right now, if you want to send them to a private kindergarten, it is not less than a certain amount. (Sena, 28)

Still, engaging the services of professional childcare providers is evaluated as a significant investment in child's future. Parents who subscribe to this viewpoint frequently perceive nannies and babysitters as enablers of organized early education, language acquisition, and socialization. This perspective is consistent with a forward-thinking approach in which parental responsibilities are redefined to include external support systems, thereby guaranteeing that children receive optimal care while parents engage in career development and personal

fulfillment. While Sena is against the idea of leaving her with a nanny as a baby, she is not averse to the idea of hiring a foreign caregiver to help her learn the language after infancy.

> When I was little, I would love to speak Arabic and English. That's why I want to hire a teacher. The teacher comes to the house, we sit together and chat about some religious issues, and then the teacher teaches Arabic. I don't know if it can be possible. (Sena, 28)

Some women perceive the involvement of babysitters and nannies as a challenge to the traditional maternal role. Newly-wed Sevde is working her father's company and does not have a child yet as Sena. She underscores the idea of self-sufficiency and having as many children as one can take care of.

> Ideal number of children I think 2. It may sound low, but I would like to have as many children as I can take care of. I don't want to have a child that I can't take care of. For example, when there is a meeting about the child, I want to attend. I don't want to leave my kid alone. When his friend has a birthday, I want to accompany him. I don't want his grandmother to look after him; I want to be self-sufficient in every sense. (Sevde, 24)

The skeptics toward professional child care stress the idea that mothers who devote their lives to their children and do not prioritize their own pleasures are making the right choice. Otherwise, they might feel remorseless. Devoting one's life to her children and making them the first priority seems to be the right thing to do from this perspective. Meral who does not have support from her family, had to drop out of even the courses she attended to raise here children, setting an example of this claim.

> I was going to start art history classes, but my family lives in Malatya. My mother-in-law and father-in-law are over 75 years old. I have a housekeeper lady that comes three days a week, but everything for the children belongs to me. When I get tired, I

> cannot be enough for my children. Unfortunately, I'm not a person who can do everything at once when my mind is always busy. I was already taking care of my children; I couldn't start anything or do it. (Meral, 36)

From a realm of futures viewpoint, these concerns stem from an idealized vision of motherhood, where direct maternal care is seen as the most authentic way to ensure a child's future well-being. Regardless of a woman's responsibilities, it is expected and appreciated that she puts motherhood first and does not neglect her children, at least until toddlerhood, as Sena mentions. Fahriye also confirms this idea by exemplifying her own daughter, who is a university professor, for her sacrifices to raise her children and not living life according to her pleasures.

> My daughter's life is very exemplary. She has Islamic sensitivity and really lives it. May Allah be pleased with her. For example, she took care of her children herself until the age of three. After the age of three, there were babysitters, but she always adjusted her eating and drinking according to her children, her own life, her academic and education life. For example, while she was doing her master's degree at Marmara University, she was living in Fatih. When she had her first child, she used to bring her to me. She would bring the baby, breastfeed her and go to faculty which was close to my house. In that way, she raised her two children by herself until the age of three, without any babysitter. After that, there was a teacher for Islamic education. Elif never neglected them. They became very smart, beautiful, conscious children. But Elif is a very devoted mother. Her priority was her children. She never had a life of pleasure. It never happened, I mean, she always kept her education with the love of service, like worship. Praise God. Now, she is working on her professorship. (Fahriye, 59)

They fear that reliance on external caregivers may weaken the emotional bond between mother and child, disrupt the transmission of family values, and introduce a sense of detachment. From a realm of futures

perspective, these concerns stem from an idealized vision of motherhood, where direct maternal care is seen as the most authentic way to ensure a child's future well-being. Although they have a live-in employee at home, Banu prefers her to do housework instead of childcare.

> When my daughter was 1.5 years old, I hired a live-in nanny who always did housework. I took care of the children. I never left them with the nanny, with anyone. In very rare occasions, such as going to the hairdresser, I leave the child, I get back immediately. I do that in terms of the child's comfort, not to ruin sleeping time or feeding time. I let him sleep, and I'll go and come back quickly. But even when I went for a walk, I took the nanny and the child with me. They were always with me, always under my supervision and in front of my eyes. (Banu, 36)

The manner in which families envision their destinies is reflected in professional child care provided at home. Although some see it as a critical instrument for ensuring the well-being of their children and their own aspirations, the majority are apprehensive about its potential to disrupt family dynamics and emotional connections. This debate underscores the ongoing negotiation between tradition and modernity in shaping the upbringing of the next generation, the redefinition of maternal responsibilities, and the evolving nature of parental roles within the domain of futures. In addition, the financial aspect of this decision continues to be a critical factor, as the capacity to employ a professional caregiver is primarily restricted to upper-middle-class families, which in turn influences their attitudes and experiences regarding professional child care.

5.4.4 In Brief: Raising Future Generations

Often defined by tensions between parental expectations and pragmatic reality, child-rearing is a difficult process molded by care, work, and the division of tasks. Mothers and fathers may have different opinions on parenting techniques, discipline, and the ideal upbringing, which causes

conflicts and either silent compromises or negotiations inside the family. Women are expected to manage not only the physical and emotional requirements of their children but also their moral and religious upbringing, hence the load of childcare mostly rests on them. Although fathers may help, their influence is usually secondary, therefore supporting conventional gender roles of employment.

The argument on professional childcare emphasizes even more these conflicts. Viewing it as a required support system, some families choose to pay nannies or use outside childcare facilities. Others contend that child-rearing is a necessary mother's responsibility not to be contracted out-of-pocket. These several points of view capture more general ideological positions on motherhood, responsibility, and the best approach to raise next generations. Children's upbringing is ultimately still a site of negotiation influenced by personal beliefs, social expectations, and financial reality.

5.5 Parenting in Crisis: The Struggles Within the Realm of Futures

This section investigates the ways in which contemporary societal transformations challenge families' future-oriented aspirations and disrupt traditional parenting models. In the realm of futures, where parents envision the ideal upbringing and development of their children, external pressures and changing cultural norms introduce new uncertainties. The aforementioned uncertainties have resulted in a "crisis" in parenting, as it becomes increasingly challenging to maintain stability, cultivate values, and prepare children for the future. The three challenges each reflect a more general tension between continuity and change, adaptability and preservation, individualism and collective responsibility in child-rearing practices, will be elaborated.

5.5.1 Parenting in the Age of Screens

Digitalization has revolutionized the manner in which children interact with the world in modern society, influencing their learning, socialization, and entertainment. Although technology provides an array

of advantages, including educational resources, global connectivity, and immediate access to information, it also introduces substantial concerns for parents who are guiding their children's future development. A growing dependence on digital devices has resulted from the pervasive presence of screens in daily life, which has raised concerns about addiction, social isolation, and the eroding of traditional family structures and values. Halime is a very meticulous mother in raising her children and being aware of what they watch is part of that meticulousness. She mentions that the content they are exposed to on television is not what it used to be and that there is moral degeneration. Along with her dissatisfaction that their values have been transformed along with this content, she mentions that watching television has ceased to be an activity where they can spend time together as a family.

> We are going through hard times, and it's getting more difficult. Beforehand, the most sexual thing on TV was kissing. If children are in the room, we used to change the channel. Now, we don't change it. I look at my daughter to see if she turns her head, and she does the same. We look away, and then we continue watching. My elder son warns me to switch the channel, but it is not possible now. Because many different scenes can pass from different angles on the scene, from the side, from the bottom, everywhere. We are not a family that watches TV at all. We used to watch Ertuğrul just because we could watch it with our children, but that ended. We didn't like Kuruluş Osman. We've started to watch Teşkilat on Sunday evenings, only because we can watch it together. My child once said, "Mom, we used to sit together and watch TV, it was so nice. Why don't we watch it?" What should we watch, for God's sake? Yasak Elma? Sen Çal Kapımı? I know all the TV series; I must know. Muslims must know. I have to know because my kid says, "Mom, everyone is watching Çukur". I say, "What is Çukur?" I say, "No, it's not for us." I spend a lot of time for that. But I never neglect my life outside of home because I spend time at home. My friends say, "We admire

> your energy; how can you keep up?" I guess it's a bit about priorities. (Halime, 45)

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly increased the amount of screen time that children spend, which is one of the most pressing concerns. As a result of confinement restrictions, online learning, and school closures, digital devices have become the primary method of social interaction and education. Consequently, children became increasingly dependent on technology, which resulted in a change in their behavioral patterns that persisted even after they resumed participating in in-person activities.

Parents have observed that children find it difficult to disengage from their displays, favoring digital interactions over real-world engagement. The brain's reward system has been overstimulated as a result of the widespread availability of entertainment, including video games, social media, and streaming services. Consequently, non-digital activities appear less alluring. The pandemic has served as a catalyst for the normalization of excessive screen time, which has further complicated the task of parents in establishing boundaries and promoting alternative forms of play and interaction.

Turkey, like numerous other countries, instituted stringent lockdown protocols to mitigate the virus's dissemination during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, schools and universities transitioned to distance education, utilizing digital tools such as Zoom and EBA (Education Informatics Network) to conduct live classes. Inequalities in digital access persisted, despite the Ministry of National Education's provision of free internet access and tablet distribution to disadvantaged students. During extended lockdowns, children were confined to their homes for months, resulting in a decrease in social interaction and an increase in screen time. Hybrid education models persisted for an extended period, thereby reinforcing children's dependence on digital learning and entertainment, as schools progressively reopened in phases. The pandemic has revolutionized educational experiences, transforming them into an essential component of daily life. However, it has also raised

concerns regarding its potential long-term effects on family dynamics and the development of children.

The disruption of family communication is a significant concern. The fragmentation of shared family time is becoming more pronounced as digital devices become more ubiquitous. Digital distractions frequently obscure mealtime conversations, outdoor activities, and direct parent-child interaction. As a grandma, Fahriye worries about her grandchildren.

> Comparing with the past, I wonder what will happen to the children? So fast, with the factors brought by the pandemic, they are all alone in their rooms, by a screen, studying, studying. Especially my grandchildren. Always studying... But I think this is too much. They're in a constant study mode. We get together on Friday nights and had dinner. They eat, and then right away, they say, "Grandma, we have to study; we should go". Their studies never end. Too much. And the children are fed up. It's like they've lost their life energy. (Fahriye, 59)

Nazife believes that, this change undermines the transmission of family values, increasing the difficulty for parents to inculcate cultural, moral, and ethical principles in their children.

> My children should be basically moral; I care very much that they become moral people and develop themselves by realizing their potential. I have three children. There is no such realization yet. These are utopias. I mean, their minds haven't reached there yet. I put an ideal, but I understand so much that I am so far away from my children, especially with this distant education. They get closer to the screen, and the distance between us gets bigger and bigger. (Nazife, 45)

Melek is critical of using tablets that turned into a daily routine together with pandemic. To get her children away from the screen, Melek sends them out of the house to play with their friends as soon as the online class is over. This is a very accessible alternative for her as she lives in a gated community with security and a circle of friends.

> I want them to play outdoors and socialize. Now he has two hours to come back from school. Then the little one will take tablet. That little one, probably watched it for 2 hours, then I'll take it from her too. I try to protect them, but my little one will talk back at me when we're at home. She says, "My brother has been playing with it all morning; why do I play less?" I tell her he has online lessons to attend, and she says she has online lessons, too. It's very hard to keep it away. They didn't know what a tablet was until last year. They used to smuggle phones sometimes, but they didn't take my phone for very long. Because either it rings or a message comes, so they can take the phone for 10 minutes at most. But tablet is not like that. I have one now, but I won't buy a second one. I'm stubborn. Actually, if I buy two, they will look at it all the time, now they have to wait for each other alternately. (Melek, 40)

The constant accessibility of digital content results in the exposure of children to external influences that are beyond the control of their parents is another main concern. Parents are perpetually challenged to oversee and moderate these influences while simultaneously honoring their children's increasing autonomy. Melek has certain limitations to overcome her concerns.

> My biggest concern is that they constantly carry a tablet. We have internet limited; because there are all kinds of advertisements. Young people may see improper stuff, such as early sexual content, I don't want them to be awakened in an early age. That's why phones and tablets in our house are in restricted mode. I don't open video clips with women dancing in bikinis when I'm listening to a song. The later they are introduced to television, tablet or YouTube is the better. My phone was all I had at home. Due to the pandemic, we got a computer first and started online classes the next day. The older daughter tried to attend class on her phone, while the younger daughter took mine. My phone was gone all day. I also have work to do. We had a lockdown at the time. We bought a tablet and a computer, and now I can't take it

> back. They fight all the time. Their class ends at three. Now I say you're going out; the tablet is gone. Their right is over. Now they have 2 hours of free time, they go to their friend's house. (Melek, 40)

The worldviews of children are occasionally influenced by social media, online communities, and algorithm-driven recommendations, which may be in opposition to familial expectations and teachings. Meral explains this situation as a challenge to raise children.

> It is very difficult to raise a child right now. Especially social media and the friends circle affect children so much. For example, my closest friends in Malatya were not veiled before I wear veil. I had no difficulty when I get covered. But now, YouTubers and social media greatly affect children and young people. My daughter is 9 years old. When she looks at those YouTubers, she is aware of our own family life; she is aware that she cannot be like them, but from within, she has enthusiasm and curiosity. (Meral, 36)

The realm of futures is fundamentally concerned with the tension between the preservation of traditional forms of socialization and the adoption of technology. Parents envisage a future in which their children will benefit from digital advancements without becoming engrossed in them. In order to guarantee that children are actively involved in both virtual and real-world experiences, this vision necessitates structured digital boundaries, mindful media consumption, and active parental intervention.

5.5.2 Raising Children in an Individualistic Age

One of the increasing concerns among parents is the perceived increase in instability and selfishness among younger generations. Contemporary societal shifts, including the dominance of individualism and rapid lifestyle changes have weakened traditional values of responsibility, forbearance, and gratitude, which is a cause for concern for many parents. A critical dilemma arises within the realm of futures, where

parents envision their children developing into morally grounded, well-rounded individuals. This tension is between self-fulfillment and collective responsibility.

The current generation of children is growing up in an era that strongly encourages self-actualization, personal desires, and independence, in contrast to previous generations, in which familial and communal responsibilities were central to a child's upbringing. There is a developing sense of self-centeredness among children, as many parents observe that they prioritize their own interests over familial duties and social obligations. Although personal development is indispensable, unbridled individualism has the potential to cultivate a lack of empathy, entitlement, and a reluctance to make sacrifices for others. Latife thinks individualism is one of the threats to family.

> The family should be together. The Prophet (pbuh) says, 'Sit at the table together, there is blessing in it'. But unfortunately, this has become impossible today. We used to sit together and wait for our father, we didn't touch anything, we didn't start eating before my father arrived. It was like that, and it was very nice. Now, things cannot be done in this way. This is what people call individualization. (Latife, 54)

When society consistently reinforces messages of self-prioritization, parents find it difficult to inculcate values of mutual support, patience, and collectivism. For example, in contrast to the promotion of long-term perseverance, compromise, and communal well-being, consumer culture, social media, and educational models encourage children to pursue immediate gratification and personal success. This results in an ongoing conflict between the aspirations of parents for a socially responsible future generation and a world that increasingly endorses self-serving ambitions. Fahriye observes the transition from a productive generation to a consuming one which makes her frustrated.

> In the generation before me, there were people who were happy by producing. Women would knit lace, sew and be happy with it. They would be excited and happy with a glass they bought. But

> now such an unsatisfied, consumerist, selfish, and lonely generation is coming. I'm not very hopeful to be honest. (Fahriye, 59)

One of the fundamental issues in this framework is the transition from gratitude to expectation. Parents are becoming increasingly concerned that their children are disregarding their privileges and resources, regarding them as natural entitlements rather than earned benefits. This change is especially evident in upper-middle-class families, where children are raised with convenient access to entertainment, education, comfort, and travel, which makes it difficult for them to appreciate the effort that goes into establishing these amenities. Nazife explains this situation is caused living in luxury compounds.

> One of the problems of this new generation of our children is that they live in housing estates. There is neither lower nor upper income; neither educated nor illiterate. They are all more or less the same standard. If you consider education, access to water, etc., we are in a horrible comfort. Think about it: we could have been born in a village in Pakistan or in Africa, and there are people working as enslaved. (Nazife, 45)

Parents frequently observe that children experience difficulty with resilience and delayed gratification due to their habit of receiving what they desire without exerting much effort. This trend is further exacerbated by digital culture, which provides instantaneous access to a wide range of resources, including entertainment, information, and social validation. Unlike previous generations, who were required to wait, work, or compromise in order to accomplish their objectives, the current generation lives in a world where their desires are fulfilled promptly, rendering patience and perseverance unnecessary. Sare believes that individualistic attitudes stem from parenting styles and also pave the way for the high divorce rates in the community.

> The increase in divorce is because young people are not self-sacrificing. Young people grow up without any difficulties. This is

> because of us. Parents say, 'Oh, you're the girl. Oh boy, all is you. Oh, my child, you are worth it'. And young people have no tolerance for trivial things. They are selfish. That's why there are so many divorces. I consider my own experience. For a young person, what I went through is a reason for divorce but I endured. They are not altruistic. They are selfish and don't know how to manage. Because parents do not give responsibility to their children. There are parents who go to buy clothes with an 18-year-old child. (Sare, 45)

Within the realm of futures, parents are confronted with a critical question: How can they rear children who are both socially responsible and self-fulfilled in light of these challenges? In an era that relentlessly promotes self-prioritization and personal ambition, how can they maintain moral values and resilience? Some parents endeavor to compensate for excessive individualism by emphasizing family obligations, gratitude, and responsibility such as Sare.

> I gave the children a lot of responsibility in this regard. When they were in middle school, they took buses and minibusses alone. They used to go somewhere alone. But I was checking. I used to control them discreetly. For example, there is something they need to buy, a book, a notebook, or a pen. They took care of everything themselves. Yunus got his driver's license. I was even unaware of it. He went and took care of everything himself. Parents do not give responsibility to children. There are occasions I don't give. Of course, I cannot say that I am a perfect mother and I have perfect children. Young people are so incredibly selfish. Unfortunately, their selfishness ruins everything. (Sare, 45)

Some regret that by not giving responsibilities, they failed to prepare the children for life such as Saide. Although she is very idealistic about raising future generations morally, in this regard, it could be claimed that individualism does not always stem from the children but parents blame themselves for not struggling enough.

> We need to give children responsibility at a young age. I didn't do that either. I didn't prepare children for life, it's always schools and lessons. When summer comes, it's hot, when winter comes, they have this exam, that exam... We didn't prepare children for life. (Saide, 60)

The issue of selfishness and individualism is indicative of a more extensive transformation in family life and child-rearing. Although self-expression and independence are indispensable for personal development, the future of family structures, relationships, and social stability is jeopardized by unrestrained self-prioritization and the avoidance of long-term struggles. Parents endeavor to maintain the resilience, responsibility, and commitment required to maintain meaningful personal and social bonds while simultaneously preparing their children for an uncertain world within the realm of futures.

5.5.3 The Challenge of Raising Motivated and Productive Children

Idleness has become a concern among parents in the context of this research, particularly in the context of evolving social, economic, and technological landscapes. Some parents have observed that children are less inclined to engage in meaningful labor or responsibilities, struggle with discipline, and lack motivation in the present day. The transition from a structured, duty-oriented upbringing to a more leisure-driven, entertainment-focused lifestyle has generated concerns regarding the future. Parents in the realm of futures envision their children as self-sufficient, productive, and goal-oriented. However, they are encountering increasing challenges in the process of instilling the values of hard work, perseverance, and responsibility in a world that is increasingly focused on comfort and passive consumption. Nazife believes that the children have the potential and working hard and trying different tactics to mobilize this potential.

> I see my child's potential. I care very much that he develops himself on both sides and that he saves both this world and the

> hereafter. I basically want them to be virtuous people. When they go out in society, alhamdulillah, we are not ashamed. But I see that they definitely do not use their potential. They grow up very shallow. I don't know what to do about it. As a last person to do it, I made an offer to my little boy. I said, 'Fatih, read a book, every time you finish a book, I'll let you post it on Youtube.' Only to make him read. No, he doesn't do that either. One day I said, the last solution was to meet the neighbor boy; a very close friend. I said we'd get together every evening and have a reading hour. 'Work, son. Work. Get somewhere. You're a moral child. I hope you adopt religious principles to at least save this world.' I say. It must be ignited from the inside. You can't do it from the outside. You can't fire that idea. (Nazife, 45)

Historically, it was customary for children to engage in domestic chores, community activities, and even economic labor at a young age. Work was perceived as a moral obligation and a method of personal growth. Nevertheless, this dynamic has been substantially altered by contemporary behaviors, technological advancements, and economic changes. Currently, a significant number of children are raised without the opportunity to experience genuine responsibility or labor, which has resulted in concerns regarding their resilience, initiative, and capacity to overcome obstacles. In this research work did not directly mention by the interviewees, but the NGOs established by the women are reflected as a kind of moral work, which is ignored by the coming generations.

> On the other hand, there is my daughter. We've set up an association. I say, 'What good is an association for me? You're its heir. It is yours and your brothers.' No, nothing. It's hard. My daughter says my friend's birthday is next week, there's a shirt in the shop, can I buy it for her birthday? I say, 'Honey, when will you wear that shirt again? It's a silk shirt.' 'I have nothing to wear', she says. Her wardrobe is full. 'What are you going to do with all that money?', she says. I say, 'We'll spend it on your education for something more meaningful. You can't be happy with stuff. You

> can't be happy with what you buy with money. You only experience a momentary pleasure, and it's over. Focus on that. You can't be happy with anything money buys. You can't have lasting peace of mind.' But I don't know how to implement this. (Nazife, 45)

In many households, children are no longer expected to contribute to daily chores or family responsibilities. This lack of engagement in household tasks creates an unrealistic expectation that work and effort are optional, rather than necessary for survival and self-sufficiency. Idleness is not merely about leisure and relaxation; it has profound psychological and social consequences that concern parents. Due to lack of the ability to work hard and sustain themselves, their children may will face difficulties in building stable lives, relationships, and careers. Consuming too fast and not producing enough turns them into unhappy individuals.

> There comes an asocial generation. A generation that does not produce but consumes and considers consuming as a skill. We have become a really consumer, fast consuming society. And they are happy about it. They actually think they are happy like this. In other words, such a generation has emerged who thinks that the more they consume, the happier they will be. God forbid. This idea is also increasing fast. But the thing is that people will realize that they will not be happy by consuming, they will be happy by producing, maybe if technology goes away from their hands. (Fahriye, 59)

In an era where comfort and leisure are more accessible than ever, idleness presents a significant challenge for parents who wish to raise self-sufficient, motivated, and resilient children. The struggle to balance providing a comfortable life while ensuring children develop responsibility and discipline remains a key concern in the realm of futures. While modern lifestyles promote ease and self-indulgence, parents must actively counteract these influences by instilling a sense of

purpose, discipline, and commitment. Without these qualities, children may enter adulthood ill-prepared for its challenges, ultimately impacting their ability to sustain meaningful careers, relationships, and contributions to society.

These three concerns illustrate how the envisioned future of family life is continuously disrupted by new uncertainties. Within the realm of futures, parents negotiate between upholding core values and adapting to changing realities. The crisis in parenting, therefore, is not just about the difficulties themselves but about how families attempt to reconcile tradition with transformation, ensuring that their children inherit a future that remains meaningful, stable, and fulfilling.

5.5.4 In Brief: Parenting in Crises

In regards to futures, parenting is molded by new issues including digitization, individualism, and the difficulty of raising motivated and successful children in a period of financial comfort. These elements hamper conventional parenting techniques and force families to be always adjusting. Digitalization changes family dynamics since kids interact with technology in ways that question moral limits and parental authority. Parents battle to control screen time, internet effects, and the decline of conventional socializing norms.

Parenting becomes much more difficult when children grow unique identities molded by personal goals instead of only family or social expectations. This change causes conflicts between modern ideas of self-expression and autonomy and conventional values. At last, financial luxury ironically makes it more difficult to raise driven children. For parents who want to inculcate a strong work ethic, keeping discipline, ambition, and perseverance becomes a top priority when less challenges lie ahead. Families try to equip their children for an unknown but always changing future, so navigating these challenges calls for a mix between adaptation and value preservation.

5.6 Synthesis of Findings

The realm of futures in family life is a reflection of how parents envisage the next generation, which influences their child-rearing efforts through ideals, values, and anxieties. Parents must navigate the intricacies of instilling values, reflecting on past errors, transferring traditions, managing caregiving responsibilities, and confronting new threats as they strive to prepare their children for a meaningful future. The tensions between the evolving realities of contemporary society and parental aspirations are underscored by each of these aspects.

Ensuring that their children adopt moral and religious principles that will serve as a compass for their lives is one of the primary concerns of parents. Religious ideals are essential in conservative families, as they influence the behavior, decision-making, and relationships of children, defining the concept of a good existence. The realm of futures encompasses not only aspirations, but also self-reflection and past experiences. These regrets frequently serve as a motivating factor for corrective measures, influencing the manner in which they interact with their children as they mature and the advice they provide to younger parents.

The transmission of values is not an automatic process; it necessitates active engagement, negotiation, and adaptation. Parents are confronted with the challenge of ensuring that their children internalize values through lived experiences, rather than solely through verbal instruction. Strategies are diverse; some prioritize religious education, storytelling, and modeling behavior, while others depend on rituals, discipline, and controlled exposure to external influences. Nevertheless, the process of value transfer is an ongoing struggle rather than a one-time endeavor, as generational shifts and the increasing individualism in modern society create resistance.

Parenting is not solely about ideals; it necessitates financial investment, emotional labor, and practical work. The daily responsibilities of child-rearing are determined by the division of responsibilities between mothers and fathers, extended family members,

and even contracted caregivers. Although some parents are amenable to external assistance, such as professional childcare and nannies, others are apprehensive about outsourcing these responsibilities, as they believe it may erode their influence or family connections. Parents must determine the appropriate caregivers for their children, the amount of time they should allocate to this task, and the influence of gender and class on this process within the realm of futures.

Parents acknowledge a variety of external hazards that have the potential to disrupt their vision for their children's future, despite their aspirations. These encompass the evolution of cultural norms, the emergence of digital addiction, the alteration of economic conditions, and ideological shifts that challenge conventional values. Parents are perpetually in a state of negotiation, as they attempt to balance protection with exposure, discipline with freedom, and stability with change, all while preserving traditions and transitioning to modernity

In parenting, the realm of futures is the point at which ideals, anxieties, and lived experiences intersect. Although parents endeavor to raise children who will uphold their values, navigate life with resilience, and maintain familial traditions, they are also confronted with personal misgivings, societal transformations, and structural changes. This process is profoundly performative, uncertain, and fluid, necessitating continuous adaptation as families endeavor to influence the future in a world that is constantly evolving.

Lastly, the realm of futures does not stand alone; it is deeply connected to the realm of necessities and the realm of flexibilities, forming a dynamic, interdependent structure that shapes family life. While each realm represents a different layer of meaning and action within the family, they are not separate or hierarchical—instead, they continuously influence and reshape one another. The realm of futures reflects aspirations and projections, but these aspirations emerge from established necessities and the negotiated flexibilities that structure everyday life.

6

Conclusion

Not only is the family a private institution, but it is also the subject and object of authority in the political, economic, and religious spheres. Throughout history, governments have always endeavored to reimagine the concept of the family and construct their own version of the ideal family. The family, on the other hand, is not a passive structure that is simply driven by the policies of the state; rather, it is a living organism that lives with its own dynamics, the ability to adapt and transform, and the ability to preserve and reproduce values that are passed down from generation to generation. The purpose of this thesis is to get an understanding of the new family imagination that has emerged in Turkey over the course of the past twenty years, with a particular focus on the roles that women have played in this shift.

The family is the focal point where people build their identity; this process of interaction is framed by relationships, norms, and day-to-day experiences. Values and identity are not natural; they are created by cultural acts, behaviors, and everyday activities. Families are directly engaged in moral teaching, discipline, and preservation of cultural and religious values. The majority of the respondents highlighted the family's role in safeguarding them from outside dangers and leading them to morality. Identity formation is not confined to the nuclear family;

extended family members, especially grandparents, play important roles in cultural continuity and value transmission.

It is observed that women are unable to call themselves pious because of perceived shortcomings in knowledge or practice. Personal conscience and social expectations help to create their religious self-concept. Women say that Islam makes them feel guilty for not practicing it as fully as possible, but they consider it to be more than merely religious mandates. Some hold inner moral restraint higher than religious outward rites. Women are worry about being condemned for not fully representing religious values. They sometimes decline to declare themselves openly conservative in order to escape criticism.

Self-doubt and dissatisfaction arise through inability to address theological criticisms. Most sense that they must widen their knowledge of theology so that they can defend their faith in social and intellectual situations. Whereas some stress the importance of education, questioning, and a more aware and intellectual religion, other women find piety easy and cheerful. Some women move from images of God founded on fear to love-based relationship, hence mitigating guilt and stress. Such a movement enables people to hold onto spirituality and accept their fallibility. Muslim women's experiences across religious upbringing, veiling, and practice of piety are brought to light. The testimonies evidence a generation gap in how people engage with religion: many women criticize their parents' religiosity as conventional, unreflective, or emotionally lifeless, grounded more in habit than in spiritual or intellectual investment.

Often encouraged by education, introspection, and membership in religious communities, they seek a more aware, reflective, and emotionally fuller way of faith than their parents'. Others, for instance, Melek and Selma, explain that veiling marked a crisis usually succeeded by internal struggle, social pressure, or divine awakening. They suggest a process in which veiling is not necessarily a precipitate or superficial practice but rather one aspect of a larger spiritual bargain. Beyond its status as a symbol of religious duty, veiling is an affective and

performative practice at once defining and creating religious subjectivity and thus becoming a dominant theme.

In a theory of performativity drawing on Judith Butler, the paper suggests that veiling is an iterative process in which Muslim women perform their pious identity. Even so, such a process need not always be simple or agential; as interviewees such as Selma and Melek show, ambiguity and struggle bring to light that veiling always involves emotional dialogue, social restraints, and symbolic breakpoints such as dreams or spiritual revelations. These interactions highlight the conflict between inner faith and external appearance as some women struggle with the need to "look" religious even when their inner spiritual state is in doubt. Selma's narrative demonstrates this internal conflict. Instead of an abstract religious duty, it becomes a tool of performativity where Muslim women perform and build their pious selves. Few women like Nihal blame the fatalism of their families' religious approach. She faults religion as taught in her youth, deploring suppression, constraint, and lovelessness of spiritual practice.

By negotiating religious practice—beyond usually imposed rules, oftentimes by their taking it up through dreams, crisis of self, or affective awakening—women perform spiritual agency. On the whole, the accounts show how active construction of piety through mental work, emotional labor, and body practices rather than inheritance or imposition compensates. Oftentimes in ways that subvert both family authority and prevailing cultural storytelling, it shows the Muslim women's agency to create their religious subjectivity.

Traditional religious figures and politicians generally assert that men and women have complementary rather than equal roles based on their nature. Women are characterized as being soft, emotional, and submissive and best suited to caregiving and motherhood, while men are rational, strong, and authoritative and best suited as protectors and breadwinners.

This building of nature has been legitimized by state rhetoric, especially after President Erdoğan's ascension to power, and has been written into state policies and religious establishments. Women

themselves reproduce these assumptions in creating their gendered selves, with a tendency to see domestic harmony as dependent on women's emotional intelligence and obedience.

It is noted that interviewees reaffirm gendered perceptions of nature. Most of them assume that men and women are born to play different roles in society and family, like thinking emotionally to build a family, cleverly handling men's authority, having moral obligations for women and taking religious and financial burdens for men. Additionally, gender-specific occupational restrictions are rationalized through physical differences. Yet, with regard to legal equality, all the interviewees are in favor of equality before law.

Family identity formation, particularly for women, is key to understanding how their roles shift within larger social structures. The reading illustrates that women's identities—particularly in religiosity and gender roles—are performative and dynamic according to familial norms, cultural demands, and everyday experiences. It is not fixed but is constantly negotiated as they balance internal spiritual beliefs with external demands, such as societal expectations and modern-day critiques.

The performative construction of identity, is central here. Women appropriate reiterated acts (e.g., veiling, religious practice) that not only announce their identities but also help to constitute them. This dynamic aspect of identity has relevance to social change because it shows how women, even within traditional family formations, can redefine their family and societal roles through individual agency and negotiation.

The paternalism concept arises when gender roles according to divine nature are being considered. The idea that men and women have complementary but not equal roles has been endorsed by religious authorities and state discourse (e.g., President Erdoğan's policies). These roles are not determined by biology but are culturally constructed and often used to justify women's subordination in the family and society. These roles usually get passed through generations in every family, and examples include the way parents and grandparents affect how women see themselves in society and in their respective families.

Paternalism is reinforced when women internalize such gendered roles. This can be seen by the manner in which many of the women in the narrative affirm gender-specific responsibilities—such as motherhood or management of home emotions—by appealing to their nature. Even when they sense the potentiality for social transformation and gender equality, some women continue to accept these roles as divinely assigned, hence entrenching the cycle of gendered power relations.

The research also discovers social change through the identification of tensions between established religious tradition and emerging, empowered religiosity. Women who object to their families' religious life as "mechanical" or ritualistic are pushing against traditional models of religious socialization and calling for more intellectual focus and emotional engagement with religion. This change must be understood within a larger social shift in the understanding of religion, gender roles, and family in modern Turkish society.

In building selfhood and negotiating existential needs family plays a central role in the construction of identity, particularly religious and gendered identity. But it also sheds light on how patriarchal gender roles—defined by religious law and state policy—are negotiated and contested in the modern world. Women's testimonies reveal social change in action, as they challenge traditional role interpretations and embrace performative forms of religiosity that allow them to construct their own identities beyond rigid social expectations.

Physical needs, such as education and occupation, have a direct impact on an individual's future, development, and well-being rooted deeply in the family system. Education, in particular, plays a central role in determining one's intellectual maturity, skill acquisition, socialization, and economic autonomy. Educational decision-making is strongly influenced by family values, while social institutions like schools and peers can influence one's attitudes and beliefs, sometimes opposing or expanding familial values.

Turkish religious education has been deeply influenced by political developments, particularly since the establishment of the Republic, which introduced secular policies contrary to conventional religious

teachings. Women's narratives of their education are often intertwined with these state policies, revealing ongoing conflicts between secularism and religious values.

All interviewees attended secular public schools for primary education.. The shift to adolescence often marked a crucial stage in identity development, especially for women coming from conservative families. Public spaces like schools played a key role in shaping personal and social identities. The headscarf bans during the late 20th century, particularly the February 28 process, caused significant disruption for religious women in education and public life. This period also triggered a broader cultural conflict between secular and religious ideologies, which affected women's educational and career paths. It caused a social divide, pushing religious women into alternative education routes, including private religious schools and Quran courses. The ban disproportionately affected older generations of women, who were often unable to complete their education. In contrast, younger generations had more opportunities, though they still faced challenges in navigating a secular educational system. This paternalistic approach to education was designed to modernize the nation but also placed restrictions on religious expression, particularly for women.

Women's educational experiences are profoundly shaped by state interventions. The historical tension between secularism and religion continues to impact women's educational paths today. The education system, particularly in public schools, serves as a critical site for identity formation, where individuals confront societal norms and values. For women from conservative backgrounds, these spaces often prompted a negotiation of their religious and secular identities.

The lifting of headscarf bans after 2010 further facilitated higher education and professional opportunities for veiled women, and the data supports this shift—more recent generations of conservative women tend to have higher education and professional careers compared to older generations. Conservative families, in particular, place significant value on religious education that is sometimes in conflict with the secular system of education. Private religious schools, particularly those with

Islam-based curriculums, have emerged as substitutes for the state system for those families that are interested in safeguarding their religious values while simultaneously obtaining education for their children. Education plays a crucial role in driving social transformation, and in Turkey, it has been one of the most significant sites wherein conflicts between paternalism, identity, and modernization occur.

Previous exclusion of religious women from public life and formal education was not only a manifestation of secularist paternalism but also a force of social transformation. The spread of private religious schools, greater visibility of religious women in universities since 2010, and the shift in attitudes towards women's employment are all manifestations of broader societal transformations. These are also shaped by differences across generations.

The correlation between educational attainment and age at first marriage is significant. Women with higher educational attainment tend to marry later, with data showing that women with university education marry between 25-29 years old, while those with no formal education or lower education levels marry earlier, often before 18. This is a clear reflection of the increased educational opportunities available to women, particularly those who were born after the 1980s.

The character of women's experiences in the labor market has changed over time. Women's work has shifted, with neoliberal policies making it possible for more religious-conservative women to work in socially acceptable occupations, even if family-work balance remains a significant concern for most. The older generation used to view the primary role of a woman as domestic, with work being permissible only if it was vital for the family's survival. Younger interviewees, however, are more likely to view employment as a path to personal empowerment and social contact, prioritizing individual happiness and job satisfaction.

Working of women is elaborated as another physical necessity in the research. Interview participants like Aysel, for whom work is a "sacred" duty, particularly in professions that are aligned with Islamic values, illustrate the ongoing relevance of family roles in shaping career choices. Other women, like Latife and Melek, highlight the balance between

professional and domestic work, making clear that professional work should not interfere with a woman's domestic work, especially if there are young children. These views contrast with those of the younger generations, who emphasize personal fulfillment, empowerment, and professional identity, as seen in the narratives of Güzide and Benan.

Earlier generations, having been forced to abandon education aspirations due to state-imposed secular restrictions, are more likely to place family and marriage ahead of career. Later generations, on the other hand, are more likely to emphasize education and job fulfillment, having had fewer barriers to higher education and career progression. The lifting of headscarf bans and the expansion of education and job opportunities for religious women have thus allowed them to renegotiate their roles in society, driving broader transformations in gender roles and expectations. The dynamics between paternalism, identity, and social change in Turkey highlight the complex and often contradictory way in which state policies, family values, and religious beliefs intersect to shape women's educational experiences and identities.

At the core of social and familial necessities lies the fulfillment of emotional and social needs—belonging, love, trust, support, communication, and acceptance. These needs are not only shaped by individuals' imaginaries and expectations of family life but also inform broader societal dynamics. The family, in this respect, becomes a primary site for the negotiation of social identities and emotional well-being. Intra-family communication is especially emphasized as a mechanism for cultivating empathy, problem-solving, and resilience. The notion of “family as us” denotes the development of a shared identity within the family unit. Through shared experiences and emotional intimacy, family members internalize a sense of “we-ness” that extends beyond biological ties. Drawing on the views of respondents, this collective identity is reinforced through mutual respect, love, shared routines, and communicative practices.

The notion of family as “a cornerstone of family” addresses the family as the foundational institution of society, drawing from both classical conservative thought and empirical evidence. Historically and

ideologically, the family has been understood as central to social stability, moral development, and cultural continuity. Contemporary participants in the study echo these ideas, expressing concern about the erosion of familial values due to systemic and societal changes. The sanctity of the family is frequently reinforced with reference to religious beliefs, particularly Islamic teachings, which conceptualize marriage as a sacred covenant and highlight the destructive consequences of familial breakdown.

In line with conservative frameworks, traditional gender roles are also viewed as central to family stability. The complementary roles of men and women are often idealized as contributing to both familial and societal coherence. Although some voices offer critical reflections on these roles, the dominant discourse emphasizes the moral and societal function of maintaining traditional family structures.

Unlike the realm of necessities, which delineates the immutable moral and emotional foundations of family life, the realm of flexibilities signifies the dynamic, performative sphere in which identities, expectations, and familial practices are continuously redefined. While the realm of necessities establishes the moral and emotional groundwork for familial belonging, the realm of flexibilities functions as a second, more fluid layer built atop this foundation. It is shaped by experience, participation, and performative engagement with everyday life. This layer encompasses both the satisfaction and disappointment encountered in familial roles, highlighting the contingencies and adaptations that emerge in lived relationships.

Marriage, in this thesis is not a stationary institution but a performative and inherently risky project. It joins people and their families together in a shared but uncertain enterprise. Marriage is also not entirely a personal decision; it is subject to biological, psychological, and sociocultural forces. Cultural norms, religious convictions, and gender roles strongly influence spouse selection.

Family has a primary influence on marriage concepts and criteria for spouse selection. While most still view marriage with high esteem, younger generations are less accepting of its idealization and social

pressures. There are others who see marriage as a rite of passage or a "degree" in the "school of life," and others who reject its sacredness altogether.

Social pressure in terms of age, fertility, and marriage leads to emotional stress and forced decision-making. Women's aspirations before marriage are discovered to be largely determined by gender roles and social upbringing. Personal accounts show that some women internalize traditional expectations, attempting to "make others happy." Others negotiate or reject roles, setting boundaries with their future husbands (e.g., Aysel explicitly stating that she would not be a "perfect housewife"). Some seek companionship, love, and peace, rather than fulfilling family or societal expectations.

Spouse selection, in a performative family theory perspective, is a negotiation whereby individuals "perform" their identities through partner choices, either reinforcing or challenging societal expectations. Religiosity significantly affects marital adjustment and satisfaction. It is a powerful predictor of marital quality, with religious homogamy being linked to greater marital satisfaction. Piety is the most significant characteristic for females, as they consider it to be a requirement for trust and stability in marriage. Religious homogamy is not only an individual characteristic but also a social and cultural norm. It assists in preserving faith-based values and the social integration of families and communities. Good morals, shaped in relation to religion, are deemed essential to a harmonious and happy marriage. Equity is also essential in maintaining balance and understanding between partners, reducing potential conflicts based on differences in expectations or values. Long-term marriage success is viewed as being established on the foundation of love, harmony, and understanding of morals, not physical attractiveness. However, physical appearance is still on the list for certain women, with a preference for men who bear some similarity to male family members. Rationality is respected by women for its link to stability, problem-solving ability, and the possibility of bringing long-term compatibility. Emotional security and the capacity to solve problems constructively within a relationship are emphasized under this category as being

supplied by rationality. On the other hand, trust is associated with emotional security, commitment, and relationship stability. Responsible financial management is also pinpointed in the narratives as one of the foundations of trust. Family background, especially religious homogamy (a preference for marriage within the same religion), is noted as another crucial factor in spouse choice and marital stability. The reference to family background places well within the overall theory of family as a performative institution where family norms and traditions are acted out again and again down the generations.

In the contemporary arranged marriage system, especially in the religious middle-upper class urban women, the "presentation method" is practiced. A mediator introduces a potential spouse, and the sides must agree to a meeting. It is a more flexible and less rigid model than the traditional arranged marriages, where the groom's family can initiate the process without the prior knowledge of the bride. The narratives of women like Latife, Fahriye, and Neva highlight how such modernized arranged marriages still maintain family approval but with more room for individual choice and consent. These women's lives also indicate that while the process remains tradition-based, individual desires and familial expectations are considered.

In conservative environments, there are firm limits on acceptable flirting and premarital relationships. The pre-marriage stage, marked by engagement and betrothal, is considered a time for adjustment and couple testing and not as a time to "get to know one another." With modernization and urbanization, the conventional arranged marriage is giving way to more informal dating habits, yet family influence still plays a significant role in many cases. For example, the "semi-arranged" model, where a family might introduce a couple but the two have the liberty to make their own decision, is increasing. The focus on individual consent and the reconfiguration of marriage as an option founded on personal choice points to broader societal transformation.

Despite the increase in love marriages, cultural values and social norms continue to influence family acceptance. Family approval, is still sought after, and sex before marriage is condemned. In the older

generations, love marriages that occurred spontaneously were less usual, but as age goes down, these kinds of marriages are increasingly observed. Education is a major factor in this shift. Flirting can be regarded as a breach of moral rules from a conservative religious point of view, particularly if it contradicts conventional gender scripts. Women often avoid long engagement periods or flirting and marry shortly after they meet someone to preserve these boundaries. Women's behavior is still closely linked to social notions of purity, even today, and their courtships are often brief and public. The narratives suggest a conflict between modern desires for romantic freedom and the conservative societal expectations around relationships. Women navigate this tension by adhering to cultural norms while seeking personal happiness.

Paternalism in the context of marriage technologies refers to the practice of family, community, or religious authorities controlling or guiding marital decisions, particularly in conservative societies. In such societies, marriage technologies align with patriarchal systems, ensuring that marriages serve not only personal happiness but also familial, social, and economic purposes. Despite the apparent control, paternalism is also justified through the notion of protection—shielding individuals, especially women, from potential harm or social scandal by regulating their sexual and romantic behavior. Hence the marriage process itself becomes a performative act, where women, through their decisions, negotiate their desires, autonomy, and adherence to cultural and religious norms.

These shifts also reflect broader societal changes related to gender equality. As women gain more access to education and employment, they are able to exercise greater autonomy in marriage decisions. They are not merely passive recipients of familial decisions but active participants in the negotiation of their marital identities. All the women interviewed emphasized that they were the primary decision-makers in their own marriages, reflecting their autonomy in choosing their life partners. Family support, including love, peace, and counseling, is central to maintaining positive relationships within the family. The interviewees value their families' support in their decision-making process. In some

cases, social pressures influenced the women's decisions. For example, Banu faced significant social pressure due to her age and the long engagement process, but her family's support was crucial in maintaining her relationship.

Many women expressed differences and difficulties to overcome. The flexibility in family life allows for adaptation, growth, and resilience, enabling families to navigate differences and adjust to new circumstances. Differences in cultural values, manners, upbringing, and socioeconomic backgrounds often emerge in marriage, especially for newlyweds. These differences require a process of adaptation, which can be challenging. Examples include mismatched expectations between families regarding customs, traditions, and even basic social etiquette.

Differences in cleanliness habits, shaped by cultural and familial norms, can lead to tension and exclusion, especially when one partner does not adhere to the other's expectations. Hygiene is often linked to femininity, and any deviation from societal standards can be perceived as a woman's inadequacy. Domestic labor has historically been divided along gender lines, with women often bearing the brunt of household responsibilities. However, there is growing flexibility in how domestic tasks are shared within families. Some women, like Benan, have more egalitarian divisions of labor with their spouses, while others, like Sümeyra, experience frustration and burnout due to unequal task distribution.

Beyond physical tasks, women often bear the emotional and mental load of managing household responsibilities. This includes planning, organizing, and overseeing the well-being of the family. These invisible tasks can be exhausting and contribute to emotional distress if not recognized and shared. Flexibility in household duties requires ongoing negotiation and adaptation. Some women are more proactive in seeking equality in domestic work, while others may feel restricted by traditional gender norms, leading to frustration and feelings of being overburdened. Older generations may resist changes in traditional roles and expect younger family members to adhere to established norms. Despite these barriers, flexibility remains key to achieving a more equitable

distribution of responsibilities and fostering collaboration within the family unit.

Upon marriage, women may face discrepancies between their expectations and the reality of their spouse's religious practices. Women often compromise, adjusting their beliefs or practices to accommodate their partner's religious perspectives, which can create emotional and spiritual tensions. The need for flexibility often falls more heavily on women, exacerbating gender inequalities in religious observance. Women's spiritual autonomy may be limited by their husband's stricter or more liberal interpretations of religion, leading to emotional burdens and a sense of estrangement. Power imbalances in marriages may allow husbands to exert control over religious practices, reinforcing patriarchal control over women's spiritual lives. This dynamic can undermine women's ability to develop their own religious identity. Women may feel isolated or resentful when they are forced to compromise on their faith to maintain marital or familial harmony. However, these negotiations also reveal women's resilience and adaptability in balancing their faith with marital dynamics.

The concept of flexibility—whether in religious practices or in employment/volunteer roles—requires women to navigate complex negotiations influenced by societal norms, familial expectations, and gendered power dynamics. While these negotiations offer women some agency, they also reflect the burdens women carry to balance personal desires with societal demands.

Women navigate patriarchal systems by making compromises that allow them some degree of autonomy, security, or respect. The "patriarchal bargain" involves women accepting restrictions on their freedom in exchange for stability or social validation. Moreover, for many women, volunteer work offers a socially accepted form of engagement outside the home, providing purpose and empowerment. Volunteer work is often viewed as a continuation of nurturing roles rather than a career, allowing women to fulfill societal expectations while participating in meaningful activities. Women often employ subtle, non-confrontational strategies to navigate oppressive patriarchal systems. These strategies

allow women to assert agency and autonomy within restrictive frameworks without directly challenging the status quo.

This research explores how financial flexibility represents a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of women's roles within marriage. Initially, women enter marriage with a set of expectations about their roles in financial management, shaped by cultural, societal, and individual factors. These expectations are rooted in the "realm of necessities," where gender roles and financial obligations are clearly defined. Post-marriage, women often encounter a "realm of flexibilities," where they have to reassess and modify their preconceived notions about financial roles. This shift occurs as women face the realities of marriage and engage in ongoing negotiations with their spouses about household finances. In this process, their financial roles evolve, requiring continuous adaptation. Women must adapt and negotiate their roles within the family, especially concerning household budget management. This involves strategic decision-making, where women assume new responsibilities or reinterpret existing ones, often challenging traditional gender roles. Their ability to manage finances creatively becomes an important part of family administration, demonstrating their agency and adaptability.

Financial management is described as a performative action, where women not only manage finances but also assert their agency in everyday practices. Through budget management, women influence the economic and emotional dynamics of their households, often engaging in conversations with their spouses that require diplomacy and negotiation. In many cases, women depend financially on their husbands due to limited access to education, career opportunities, or independent income. This dependency creates a power imbalance in the marriage, where the husband, as the primary provider, has significant control over domestic decisions. These dynamic pressures women to comply with their husbands' financial decisions to maintain domestic peace and security.

This thesis also shows how cultural and societal expectations often designate men as the primary financial providers and women as

caregivers. This cultural framework further reinforces the dependency of women on their husbands, limiting their financial autonomy and reinforcing power disparities in the relationship. Acknowledging the performative nature of financial flexibility and supporting women's financial agency will help create more equitable family dynamics and empower women in society.

Handling difficulties requires some coping mechanisms. Patience is one of the ways that involves resilience in the face of hardship, turning negative situations into opportunities for spiritual growth. It is learned and practiced, often through prayer, reflection, and interactions within the religious community. It is also seen as a form of agency and resistance, where women use patience as a tool for navigating challenges in family life, marriage, and personal struggles.

In familial settings, tolerance and gratitude are essential for managing unfulfilled expectations and maintaining harmony, especially in the face of generational issues, marital conflicts, or differing religious views. Compatibility is seen as another critical factor in marital success, influencing communication, conflict resolution, and emotional connection. It refers to the alignment of values, beliefs, and personalities between partners. However, compatibility is not a static trait; it is an ongoing process that requires continuous negotiation, adaptation, and effort from both partners. It is continuously shaped through rituals, routines, and mutual adjustments. Performative theory suggests that marital success stems from proactive efforts by both partners to adapt, negotiate, and engage in reciprocal behaviors that strengthen their relationship.

Women often engage in also emotional work, managing both their own and their partner's emotions to ensure marital harmony. This involves a strategic balance of emotions, not submission, to maintain stability. Emotional intelligence and relational rituals play a key role in maintaining this balance over time.

The family is elaborated as a dynamic institution that extends beyond present experiences into future projections, shaping aspirations, ideals, and anticipations. This is conceptualized as the realm of futures, which

blends generational continuity, child-rearing, and the transmission of values. This realm complements the realms of necessity and flexibility, offering an understanding of family life that emphasizes idealized projections rather than static, linear stages of development. Families actively construct future narratives that influence decisions related to marriage, reproduction, and child-rearing. These projections are deeply intertwined with both individual aspirations and societal cultural expectations. Families serve as crucial agents of ideological transmission, particularly in conservative contexts. They transmit religious and cultural values, reinforcing moral frameworks and social norms.

The intergenerational transmission of beliefs is not static but actively reinterpreted and negotiated over time. This process shapes the political, cultural, and social landscape, as families influence societal ideologies and public opinion. The analysis of women's familial aspirations uncovers how gendered performances shape expectations for family life and continuity. Women are seen as the agents who express and project future family ideals, particularly in the conservative context studied. These aspirations often create tension when anticipated outcomes are not realized, leading to complex negotiations of roles and expectations within families.

In the realm of futures, instilling religious ideals in children is a performative act aimed at ensuring the continuation of faith and tradition. Families project their religious values and aspirations onto their children, seeing them as the conduits through which these values are perpetuated. This forward-looking projection aims to ensure the child's role in carrying on the family's religious and ethical ideals into the future. Religious practices (such as prayer, rituals, and moral teachings) shape the child's identity and sense of belonging within the family and community. These practices are not just symbolic but integrally linked to forming the child's worldview and sense of purpose. The family prioritizes religious and national values over material success, with religious and moral integrity being considered paramount in raising children. Parents view their children's embodiment of these values as a reflection of their success in instilling the family's religious ideals.

It is observed that the family's transmission of values, particularly religious and moral ones, is a long-term project that shapes the child's sense of identity and their relationship to broader societal structures. The family is not only an institution of reproduction but also a locus where future generations are prepared to embody and enact the values and ideals of the past. The family becomes a site where values are not merely inherited but actively embodied and enacted through daily practices, ensuring their relevance across generations.

In religious-conservative contexts, raising a pious generation is seen as a communal responsibility that extends beyond the family. Families perceive this as an investment in the future, aiming to ensure that the younger generation embodies piety, morality, and social responsibility. This societal dimension reflects a belief that religiously observant children contribute to the moral and ethical framework of society, thus strengthening social cohesion. Families view themselves as moral architects, with the task of shaping their children into virtuous individuals who can contribute positively to society. This sense of responsibility ties religious upbringing to broader societal goals, positioning moral education as both a parental and societal duty. The performative aspect of religious education ensures that religious values are not only taught but also actively embodied, turning religiosity into a lived, bodily experience for the child.

Families feel an obligation to raise children who will positively contribute to society. Religious values instill virtues like honesty, compassion, and respect, which are viewed as essential for social harmony and the prevention of moral decay. The moral education provided within the family is seen as fundamental in maintaining the moral fabric of society, with the hope that these values will counteract societal instability. For some, like Saide, the religious upbringing of children intersects with political beliefs. Raising children to be pious not only meets religious goals but also aligns with political ideologies about the role of religion in society. This process reinforces the child's sense of belonging and continuity within their religious and cultural community.

Families see this task as crucial for shaping the future of both their children and the broader community.

In religio-conservative communities, the transmission of values is not simply a matter of instructing children in moral or religious concepts. It is a complex process involving identity formation, socialization, and the reinforcement of cultural and spiritual legacies. Parents, particularly mothers, are seen as the primary agents in this process, fulfilling a societal obligation to shape the moral and spiritual outlook of their children.

Children absorb values not just through spoken lessons but also by observing the lived behaviors of their parents. Religious rituals such as daily prayers, fasting, and attending services are not just symbolic; they actively shape a child's identity and sense of belonging. These practices become integral parts of the child's everyday life, deeply embedding the values they represent. The transmission of values is thus a lived experience, where actions such as prayer or wearing modest clothing become essential parts of the child's moral and spiritual development.

While traditions and rituals are important, there is an understanding that they must be flexible to adapt to changing times. Families, like Halime's, emphasize maintaining love and communication within the family, even if specific traditional practices evolve. The transmission of values is thus framed not as a rigid adherence to past practices but as a dynamic process that responds to contemporary needs and circumstances.

Educational institutions also play a significant role in reinforcing and codifying values taught within the family. While families provide emotional, individualized religious instruction, schools, religious institutions, and social groups offer more systematic knowledge, shaping a sense of community and moral responsibility. Religious institutions, especially faith-based schools, act as extensions of the home, ensuring religious knowledge is systematically taught and that values are integrated into everyday life. Families make intentional decisions regarding the educational institutions they choose for their children, based on the alignment of those institutions with their religious and

moral values. Families, especially in religio-conservative contexts, make material and immaterial sacrifices to provide an education that aligns with their values. These sacrifices reflect a broader investment in the future, as the transmission of values through education is viewed as part of securing a morally sound and spiritually devout future for the next generation.

Religious transmission is not a fixed, top-down process but rather a dynamic negotiation between ideals and realities. New generations may reinterpret or adapt values, prompting parents to adjust their strategies over time. The involvement of institutions in religious education is part of a broader performative endeavor, where families and schools together ensure that religious ideals continue to shape future generations. The transmission of values through education goes beyond religious continuity; it aims to preserve a collective societal vision where religious principles are foundational to the community's identity. This reinforces the performative nature of value transmission, where each generation is seen as a conduit between historical traditions and the envisioned future.

Neighborhoods and broader society also play a critical role in shaping beliefs, especially in religio-conservative settings. Families often choose neighborhoods that align with their values, ensuring a supportive environment for children's moral development. In such environments, individuals internalize societal expectations through direct interaction and participation in community rituals and gatherings.

In addition to familial and educational influences, peer groups, especially in adolescence and young adulthood, provide a space for negotiating, questioning, and adjusting the values taught by families and institutions. Peer groups often reinforce shared religious, cultural, and moral values, but they also provide opportunities for reinterpretation or resistance, allowing individuals to adjust their beliefs and practices based on alternative perspectives encountered within their friendships.

In terms of the decision to hire professional child care (babysitters/nannies) within the home evokes both admiration and skepticism. Some women see it as a way to balance their work and personal ambitions, while others view it as a disruption to the maternal

bond, seeing it as a form of neglecting maternal responsibilities. Access to professional child care is largely dependent on financial resources, making it more common among upper-middle-class families. This demographic benefits from the ability to employ caregivers, which supports both their professional aspirations and their children's well-being. The discussion around professional child care highlights an ongoing negotiation between traditional views on motherhood and modern, more flexible approaches to family roles. The ideal of hands-on motherhood is juxtaposed with new visions of parenting that embrace external support systems for child-rearing.

The realm of futures is increasingly challenged by new societal realities, which create uncertainty and instability in parenting. Parents today face a significant challenge in raising motivated, responsible, and productive children due to shifts in social, economic, and technological landscapes that encourage idleness and passive consumption. Parents are caught between continuity vs. change, adaptability vs. preservation, and individualism vs. collective responsibility. Digitalization is one of the main concerns of parents for raising children. While technology offers educational and social benefits, it also raises parental concerns about addiction and overstimulation of the brain's reward system, loss of real-world interactions and social skills and erosion of family values and time together. Many parents notice their children lack motivation, struggle with discipline, and avoid meaningful responsibilities. Children are less willing to engage in tasks that require effort, like reading or helping with family duties. Traditional values of hard work and moral responsibility are being replaced by a culture of leisure, entertainment, and materialism. Children grow up in environments prioritizing comfort, which limits their exposure to real-life challenges and responsibilities. Unlike past generations, today’s children are not involved in domestic chores, community service, or work that fosters a sense of responsibility. This detachment from “moral work” has led to concerns about their resilience and life preparedness

COVID-19 amplified these problems. Distance learning and long-term lockdowns made screen dependency unavoidable. Hybrid education

models reinforced digital reliance. Halime and Nazife express concern over moral degeneration through media. Melek actively limits screen time by sending her kids outdoors, taking advantage of her secure gated community. Fahriye and Meral worry about long-term impacts on values, behavior, and communication. It can be argued that digitalization undermines family communication. Parents find it harder to transmit cultural, moral, and ethical values due to reduced parent-child interaction, influence of algorithmic recommendations and online subculture. Parents worry that younger generations are becoming more self-focused, undermining values like responsibility, gratitude, forbearance and empathy.

The core crisis in modern parenting lies in trying to reconcile tradition with transformation—preserving meaningful values while adapting to a rapidly changing world, in hopes of securing a stable and fulfilling future for the next generation.

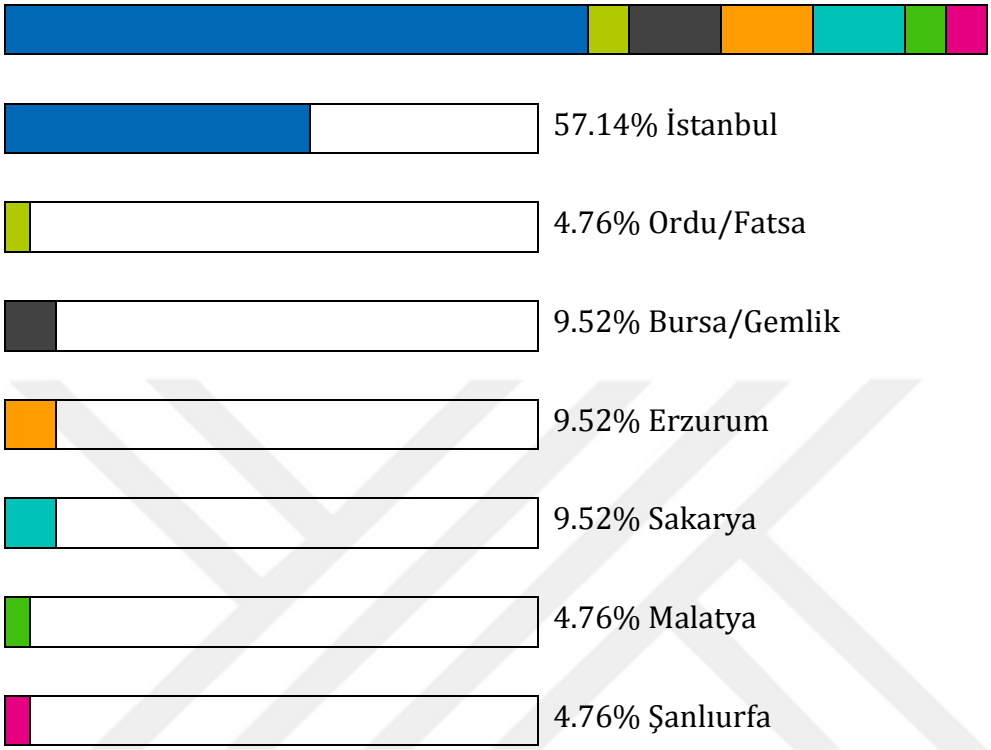
Paternalism in the context of this text is not simply top-down control but rather a value-driven, moral authority exerted by families—especially parents—within a conservative context. It is enacted through several ways. Firstly, through transmission of religious and moral values: Parents believe they must ensure their children follow a virtuous path, often using religion as a moral compass (e.g., in the realm of futures). Secondly through performative discipline and caregiving boundaries: Parents manage children's development not just through commands, but via strategic emotional labor, rituals, and value modeling. This reflects a soft paternalism, deeply embedded in care and love but still oriented toward guiding behavior and preserving tradition. And lastly, through the emphasis on controlled exposure, resistance to outsourcing caregiving (e.g., to nannies), and setting boundaries to protect children from "external hazards" like digital culture or shifting ideologies shows how paternalism is redefined within modern concerns. Paternalism is reworked here as a negotiated, culturally embedded strategy to preserve continuity while adapting to new conditions, balancing protection with exposure, and tradition with modernity.

Social change is not abrupt or radical in this context; rather, it's gradual, negotiated, and performative, often taking place under the surface through small shifts in how roles are enacted and values are transferred. The family is presented as both a site of preservation and a space of transformation in the face of social change. This plays out through the realm of flexibilities, where families reinterpret traditions, roles, and marriage practices in light of evolving norms. Flexibility is described not as opposition to tradition, but as a subtle mechanism for change within continuity—slow, unspoken, and sometimes hidden within religious or cultural discourse.

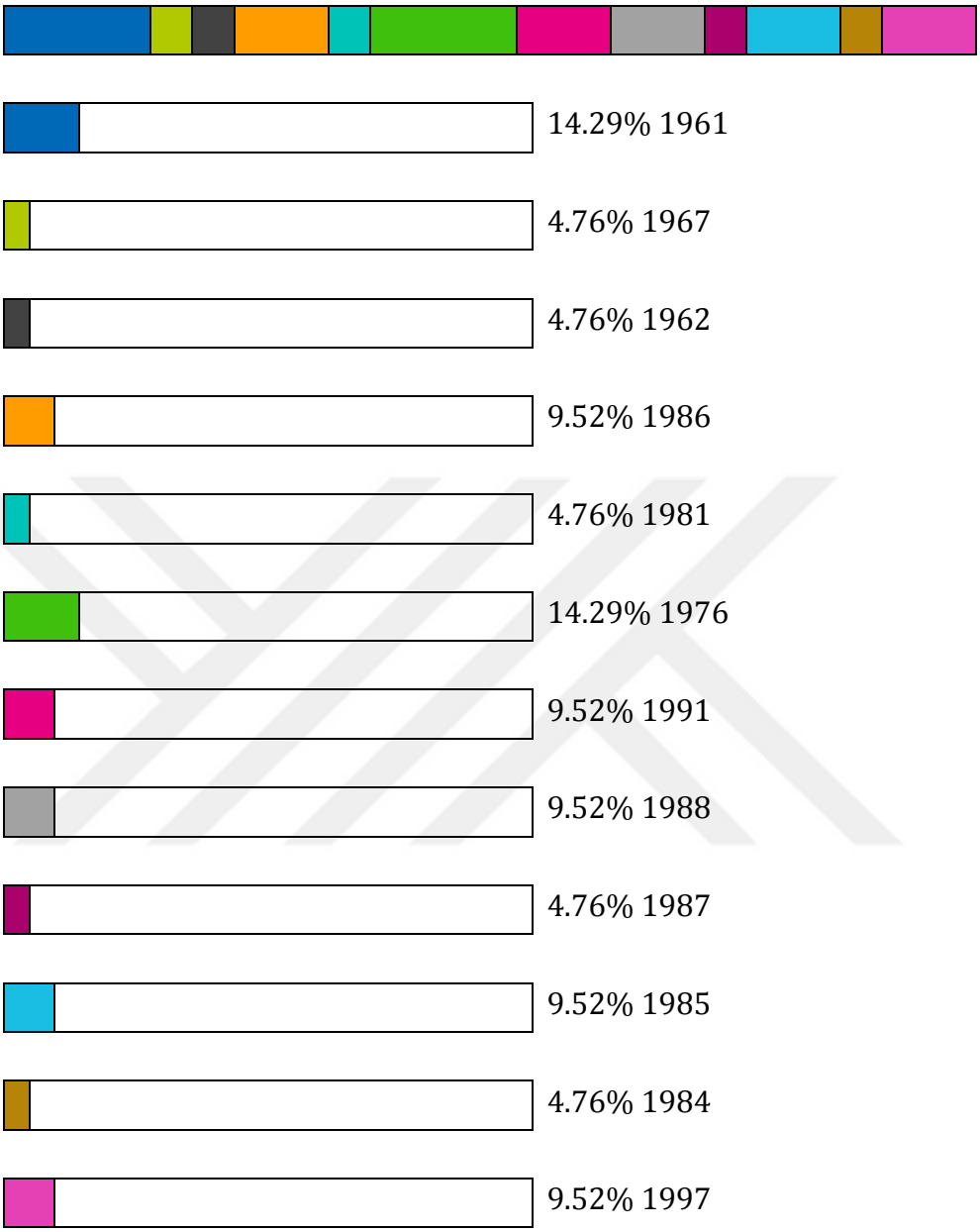
This thesis positions the conservative family as a performative arena where paternalism, identity, and social change interact through daily negotiations, caregiving, and value transmission. These processes do not occur in isolation but are embedded in broader sociocultural and economic shifts, creating a dynamic and adaptive—but still bounded—space for continuity and transformation. The three partite family model that is offered in this research not only offers a framework for comprehending the religious-conservative nuclear family that exists in Turkey at the present time, but it also makes it possible to examine family structures that adhere to a variety of ideologies. Therefore, the thesis not only adds to a more comprehensive academic discussion on the institution of the family, but it also offers a grassroots viewpoint on the religious-conservative family ideal that remains prevalent in Turkey in the present day.

Appendices

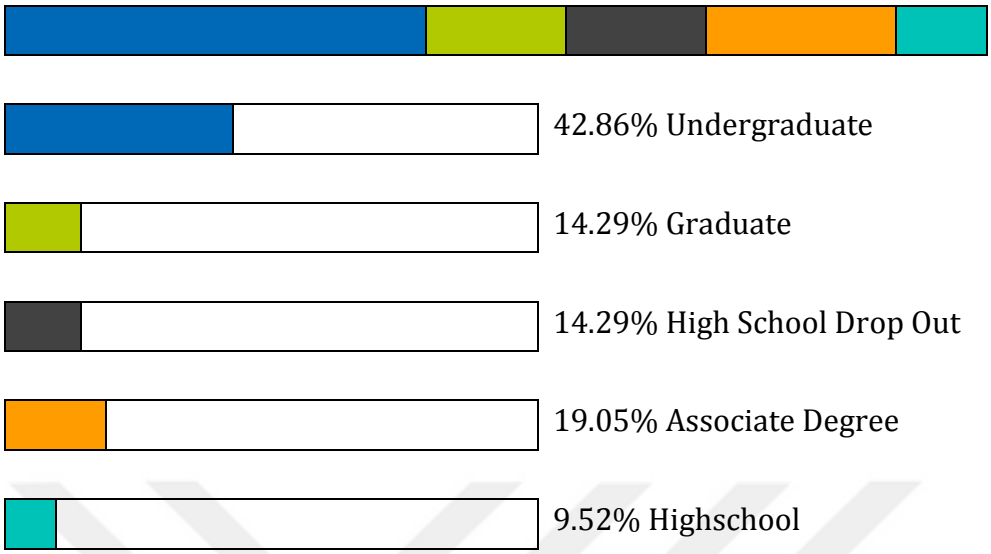
Appendix A Birth Place of the Interviewees



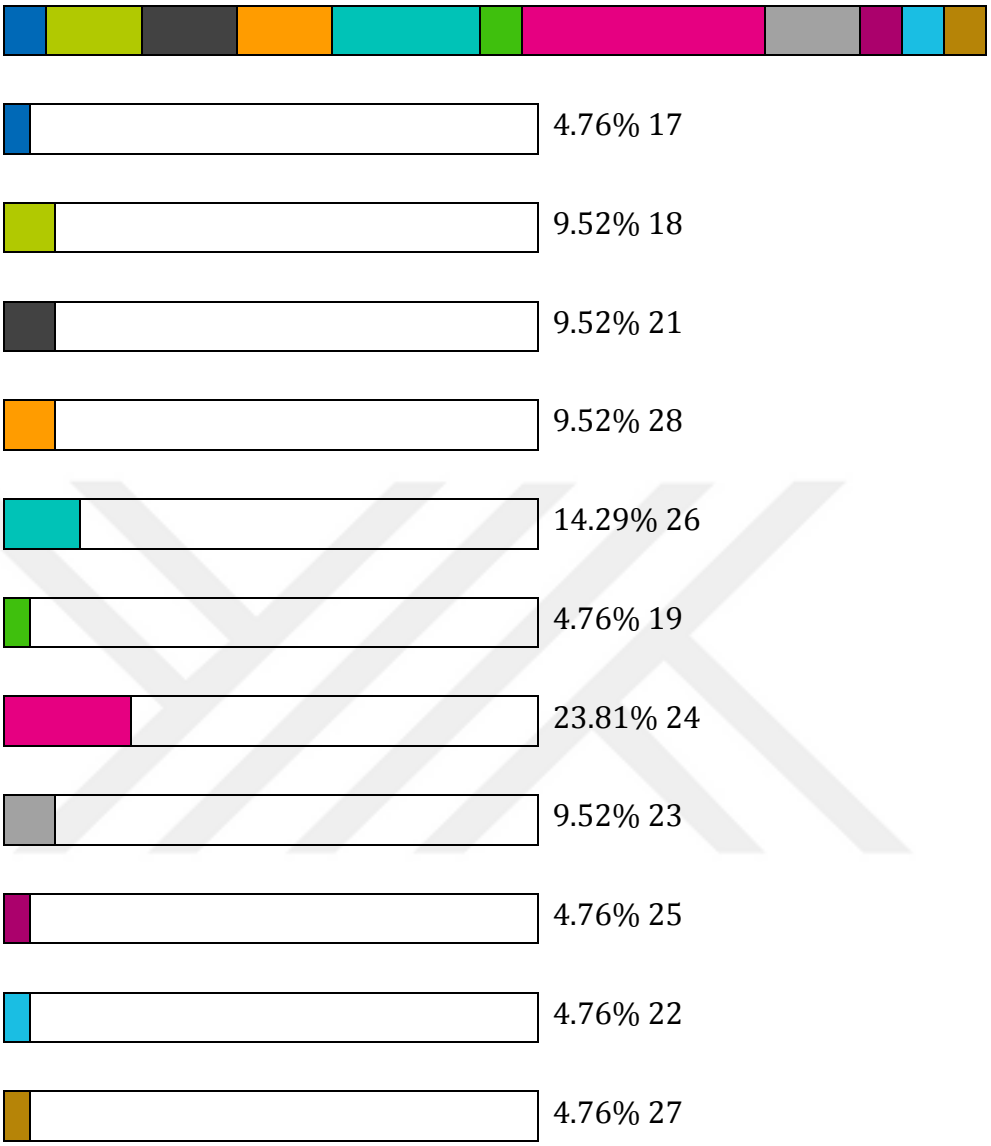
Appendix B Birth Date of the Interviewees



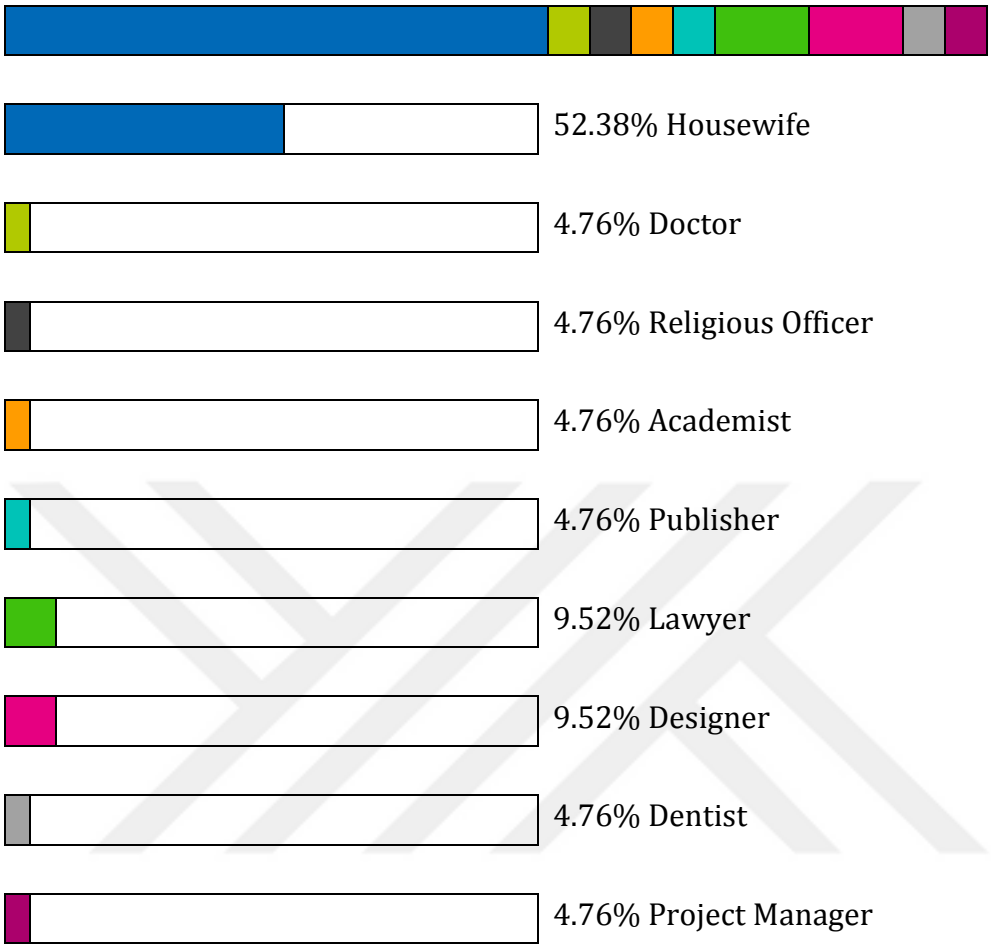
Appendix C Educational Level of the Interviewees



Appendix D Marriage Age of the Interviewees



Appendix E Occupation of the Interviewees



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