Between Empowerment and Disappointment: Women Workers' Struggle for Unionization in 2020s Turkey

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A thesis presented to the

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History
at Boğaziçi University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

June 2024

Approvals

"Between Empowerment and Disappointment: Women Workers' Struggle for Unionization in 2020s Turkey" a thesis prepared by Fatma Betül Kocaaslan Doğan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts from the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, has been approved on 7 June 2024 by:

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The intellectual content of this thesis, 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

Between Empowerment and Disappointment: Women Workers' Struggle for Unionization in 2020s Turkey

Fatma Betül Kocaaslan Doğan, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2024

Associate Professor Berna Yazıcı Tepeyurt, Thesis Advisor

This thesis investigates the experiences of women workers attempting to unionize against poor working conditions, low wages, and humiliating treatment at the workplace in 2020s Turkey. It focuses on women's mobilization processes in two textile and two metal factories in Istanbul, Kocaeli, and Bursa between 2021 and 2023. Examining women's motivations for unionization, the challenges they face, their subjective transformations, and their relationships with co-workers, union officers and families during their main form of resistance, which is picketing in front of factories, this study provides a gendered analysis of women's mobilization and resistance. Employing feminist methodology, the analysis builds on fieldwork, which included in-depth interviews and participant observation with 16 women workers and 2 women union officers.

This study engages with the literature on mobilization, empirical studies on women's labor activism in the Global South and Turkey, and studies on the impact of social movements. The thesis firstly argues that the demand for dignity is crucial in the mobilization of women subjected to the gender pay gap and patriarchal pressures. Secondly, the thesis demonstrates that women experience empowerment through unionization and collective action, but the bureaucratic and patriarchal structure of the unions limits this empowerment. Hence, this thesis contributes to the literature on women's labor activism by exploring women's agency in the labor movement and their intertwined struggles against patriarchy and capitalism in the triangle of family, workplace, and union.

Özet

Güçlenme ve Hayalkırıklığı Arasında: 2020'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın İşçilerin Sendikalaşma Mücadelesi

Fatma Betül Kocaaslan Doğan, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2024
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Doçent Berna Yazıcı Tepeyurt, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, 2020'ler Türkiye'sinde işyerindeki kötü çalışma koşullarına, düşük ücretlere ve aşağılayıcı muamelelere karşı sendikalaşmaya karar veren kadınların mücadele deneyimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu tez, 2021 ve 2023 yıllarında gerçekleşen, İstanbul, Kocaeli ve Bursa'da bulunan iki tekstil ve iki metal fabrikasındaki mobilizasyon süreçlerini incelemektedir. Kadınların sendikalaşma motivasyonlarını, sendikalarla kurdukları ilişkileri, işten atılma sonrasındaki direniş sürecinde işçi arkadaşlarıyla, sendikacılarla ve aileleri kurdukları ilişkileri ve kadınların öznel dönüşümünü inceleyen bu tez, kadınların sendikalaşma ve direniş süreçlerinin toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı bir analizini sunmaktadır. Feminist bir metodolojiyi benimseyerek yapılan saha çalışması, Ekim 2022-Ekim 2023 arasında gerçekleştirilen, 16 kadın işçi ve 2 kadın sendika görevlisi ile yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelere ve katılımcı gözleme dayanmaktadır.

Bu tezde, mobilizasyon literatüründen, Küresel Güney'deki ve Türkiye'deki kadın işçi direnişlerine odaklanan empirik çalışmalardan ve toplumsal hareketlerin sonuçlarına odaklanan çalışmalardan faydalanılmıştır. Bu tez, işyerinde erkeklerden farklı olarak cinsiyet temelli ücret eşitsizliğine, patriyarkal baskılara maruz kalan kadınların mobilizasyonunda haysiyet talebinin çok etkili olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Ayrıca, çalışma kadınların sendikalaşma ve kolektif eylem süreçlerinde güçlendiğini fakat bu güçlenme süreçlerinin sendikaların bürokratik ve patriyarkal yapısı tarafından sınırlandığını iddia etmektedir. Bu tez, kadınların işçi hareketindeki özneliğini ve onların aile, işyeri ve sendika üçgeninde patriyarka ve kapitalizme karşı yürüttükleri, iç içe geçen mücadelelerini incelemesi ile kadın işçi mücadelesi literatürüne katkıda bulunmaktadır.

To my mother Şeyma and to all women struggling in every aspect of life

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Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Berna Yazıcı, for her invaluable guidance and support. I am also grateful to Professor Irmak Ertör for being on my thesis committee and for her valuable comments.

Alpkan Birelma has significantly influenced both my political activism and my academic life, guiding me in developing my ideas and constantly inspiring me with his enthusiasm, intelligence and hope. Without his sincere support, understanding, and patience, this journey would have been difficult for me.

I am deeply thankful to my dear friends Feyza, Sena, Helin, and Zeynep, whose support and love made this process easier. Their insightful comments helped me to shape the arguments in my thesis. Our solidarity during this challenging process ensured we did not have to face it alone. I am also grateful to my friends in the Labor and Justice Platform for their understanding during this time. The discussions, talks, and events at KadınİşçiI were crucial for this thesis, and I thank all the women there, especially Bahar. Without her guidance, this thesis would not have been possible.

I cannot express enough gratitude to my dear mother, who has devoted her life to me. I owe so much to her love and labor. I am also thankful to my dear husband, Salih, for tolerating me during this period and being there for me during every stressful moment.

Finally, I am deeply grateful to the women workers who generously gave me their time and sincerely shared their experiences. This is their story, their struggle.

Note: This thesis was supported by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) between March 2022 and March 2024. I am grateful for their material support.

1

Introduction

In my personal life, I became interested in different aspects of women's labor. Firstly, I began to question my mother's unpaid domestic labor, which built my father's admired career and enabled the daily reproduction of the household. With these questions, I began participating in collective reading groups focusing on women's labor. Also, I have visited the resistance of industrial workers struggling for unionization many times and had the opportunity to talk to the women workers there.

In these conversations, the women usually explained in detail the poor working conditions in the factories and the oppression they were subjected to because of their gender. Although they did the same work as men, they received lower wages and were subject to more pressure and harassment from their supervisors. Most of these women were married and had children. Some had been working from a very young age, while others started working after middle age due to financial difficulties and debts. Most women took on the burden of domestic work and childcare while having to work long hours in poor conditions in factories and being subjected to humiliation. In this situation, these women chose to organize and join the collective struggle despite all the difficulties and risks. Most of them had been dismissed due to unionization. While they were talking about the mistreatment they faced in the workplace and the employer's efforts to prevent them from unionizing, they were also very passionate and excited. They felt more confident and powerful during

collective action, and this was reflected in their words and actions. However, under conditions of authoritarian neoliberalism, in which unionization is made very difficult by legal and government policies and most workers' actions are violently suppressed, the vast majority of these workers' resistances have ended without any gains.

I wanted to explore the motivations of these women workers, the challenges they face, and the subjective impacts of collective action on them. The main personal motivation for undertaking this research and making it the subject of an academic study is a moral and political one: to shed light on the stories and struggles of the women I have met and talked to during worker protests and to strengthen women's struggle against capitalism and patriarchy.

In addition to these individual and political motivations, my reading of the relevant scholarly literatures led me to the topic of this study. I noticed a lack of focus on women workers' struggles in both labor history and labor movement studies, as well as in the feminist literature on women's labor in Turkey. In the feminist publications I followed, I saw writings and studies about women's labor history. Women workers were pioneers in the resistance of carpet workers in Uşak in the early 1900s, the Berec strike in 1964, and the Novamed strike in 2006.

After the 2020s, the number of worker resistances in which women play prominent roles has been increasing in Turkey.[1] However, the role of women in the labor movement was rarely addressed in academic studies. While women's labor literature heavily focuses on the ways women are exploited and oppressed, the labor history and labor movement literature tend to regard male workers as the main subjects. Although the picture has started to change in recent years with the contributions of feminist researchers, it is still possible to say that studies on women workers' resistance are very few. Therefore, offering a modest contribution to feminist labor studies and specifically to the literature on women's labor activism is also my academic motivation for this study.

Ruth Milkman warns us against romanticizing women's labor activism. While efforts to highlight the militancy of women workers are crucial in combating their historical invisibility in labor history, assuming that women's actions hold infinite potential carries the risk of presenting women's labor struggles in a romanticized

1 Bahar Gök, Son Yılların Kadın İşçi Eylemlerine İçeriden Bakmak, Cinsiyet Eşitliği Politikaları Derneği, (2023).

and oversimplified narrative[2]. This study aims to present women's struggle experiences in the labor movement without romanticizing their roles but rather by depicting them with all their contradictions and challenges.

This thesis focuses on the experiences of women workers in Turkey during the 2020s who decided to unionize due to low wages and poor working conditions. Given the structural conditions where unionization often leads to dismissal, this study aims to explore the motivations behind women's decision to unionize, the challenges they face, and their subjective transformation.

In recent years, workers in Turkey who have been dismissed due to unionization have often begun to picket in front of the factory with the union they joined, demanding reinstatement and union recognition. "Picketing" refers to a form of industrial action in which a worker or group of workers protests outside the workplace in cases of industrial disputes, usually strikes. However, in Turkey, it has become widespread as a type of action initiated after workers were fired rather than a strike. Related to this action, "picket line" refers to a line of people protesting against the company. In my cases, women were on the picket line for a period of time after their dismissal. Throughout the study, picketing and picket line will be used as specific terms for the process of women's action in the aftermath of dismissal, while the term "resistance" will be used to refer to women's labor struggle more in a general way.

This study is based on fieldwork on different cases of worker mobilization in the textile and metal sectors in Turkey. These industries play crucial roles in both the country's economy and the labor movement. According to data, Turkey, in 2022, ranks as the 4th largest exporter of textiles and the 5th largest of garments globally. It has also entered the top 10 countries in metal exports, particularly in automotive products[3]. Regarding the labor movement, metal and textile workers stand out as the industrial sectors most actively engaged in actions with workplace-based demands.[4] Consequently, the cases of this study were selected from industries that have explanatory power about the structure of the labor movement in Turkey.

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2 Ruth Milkman, *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of U.S. Women's Labor History*, (Routledge, 1985), 13.

3 World Trade Organization, "World Trade Statistical Review 2023", (2023), 78-80.

4 Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu, İşçi Sınıfı Eylemleri Raporları, (2015-2022).

The research sample is consisted of women workers in these four factories: one textile (Zitex) and one garment (Katex) in Bursa, and two metal factories, an automotive factory in Gebze (Automet), and an electronics factory in Istanbul (Fonmet). *Table 1* shows the basic features of my cases. Instead of focusing on a single case, I have considered four distinct cases to provide a more comprehensive analysis of women workers' struggles in Turkey. This approach allows me to examine the similarities and differences in working conditions, mobilization, and picketing processes across various workplaces.

My primary criterion for selecting cases was the significant presence of women workers. Zitex and Katex are unique in that the picket line is composed entirely of women, which leads to different dynamics compared to the other cases. Automet is notable for women workers' leading role in militant actions like work stoppages and factory occupations. In Fonmet, there were intense clashes between women workers and union officials after the union was authorized following the picket line.

This thesis aims to answer the following key questions: What are the factors that hinder women's unionization and what motivates them? What is the role of women leaders and unions in workplace mobilization? What do women experience on the picket line after being dismissed from their jobs? How do their relationships with co-workers and families change? What are the subjective impacts of unionization and picketing on women?

Table 1: Features of Cases

Company	**Union**	**Location**	**Time and duration of picketing**	**Number of workers (approx.)**	**Number of workers on picket line**	**Types of actions**	**Results**[5]
Fonmet (Metal-electronics)	Met1Union	İstanbul	2021; 10 days	800	100-150 workers, 40-50 women	Non-legal strike and picketing in the yard of factory	Legal recognition in the workplace and collective bargaining
Automet (Metal-automotive)	Met2Union	Gebze-Kocaeli	2022; 2 months	1500	150 workers, 30-40 women	Non-legal strike, factory occupation and picketing in front of factory	No gain
Zitex (Textile)	TexUnion	Bursa	2022; 6 months	450	4 women	Picketing in front of factory	Legal recognition in the workplace and collective bargaining
Katex (Garment)	TexUnion	Bursa	2022-2023; 7 months	350	9 women	Picketing in front of factory	No gain

5 The results in this table show the results for unions. The consequences for women who are the subjects of these actions differ from the institutional consequences here. The consequences in women's lives are given in the table in the picketing chapter.

1.1 Main Arguments and Contributions

This thesis draws on four main literature: (1) studies on labor movement and worker mobilization; (2) studies on women in global production and labor activism; (3) studies on women's labor struggle in Turkey; and (4) studies on social movements' outcomes.

In this thesis, I have engaged with John Kelly's mobilization theory[6], a prominent study in the literature on worker mobilization, and have combined it with gender analysis. I discuss four factors that Kelly identifies as critical for worker mobilization: Workers' sense of injustice, the framing of these injustices by leaders, the presence of appropriate opportunities, and organizational structures such as unions.

In addition, my analysis builds on scholars who emphasize the critical role of workplace dignity in mobilizing workers.[7] In the cases I studied, gendered injustices in the workplace played a crucial role in women's mobilization. Unlike male workers, women are often subjected to gender-based inequalities in pay, rank and workload, humiliating treatment, and harassment in the workplace, which damages their dignity and intensifies their desire to take action. In summary, women unionize for two primary reasons: to address inequalities in wages and working conditions and to protect their dignity, which is consistently undermined by patriarchal oppression in the workplace. Thus, I argue that justice and dignity in the workplace are closely linked for women because gendered injustices have significant implications for women's workplace dignity. Therefore, the concept of "gendered dignity"[8] is critical in explaining the mobilization processes of women workers.

The role of dedicated and self-sacrificing leaders, who frame workers' feelings of injustice in ways that inspire collective action, is crucial in

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6 John Kelly, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves (London: Routledge, 1998).

7 Randy Hodson, Dignity at Work, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Sharon C. Bolton, Dimensions of Dignity at Work, (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007)

8 Martha Crowley, "Gender, the Labor Process and Dignity at Work", Social Forces, 91 no.4 (2013): 1209-1238

mobilization theory.[9] In my research, women labor leaders play a pivotal role in fostering worker solidarity and sisterhood bonds among women facing similar oppression and mistreatment in the workplace. In the thesis, I discuss the critical role of women worker leaders, as well as the empowerment of these women themselves and the challenges they faced in balancing family relationships and motherhood throughout the organizing process.

This thesis engages with the ongoing debates surrounding the nature of unions, among the most significant instruments of workers' collective action, and their relationship with women. As widely discussed, unions have a dual and contradictory nature; while they serve as a defense mechanism for workers against capital, they also have to suppress workers' resistance to maintain the continuity of the capitalist system.[10] Due to limitations such as functioning within the capitalist system by compromising with employers and the state, and tending to transform into bureaucratic and oligarchic structures, unions are highly problematic in terms of their potentials. Furthermore, unions both unite as well as divide workers, often along specific categories like sector, type of employment, gender, and race. While unions advocate for the rights of specific groups of workers based on these categories, they often exclude a significant portion of workers.

Explanations for unions' exclusion of women often lie in patriarchy and male culture. Some argue that unions strengthen women's secondary positions in the labor market and maintain the continuity of the patriarchal system by excluding women.[11] However, Milkman suggests that these arguments are inadequate in explaining the complex relationship between unions and women, and claims that unions' exclusionary practices are related to their positions against capital and their organizational structures.[12]

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9 Ralph Darlington, "Agitator 'Theory' of Strikes Re-Evaluated," Labor History 47, no. 4 (2006):485

10 Richard Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, (London: Pluto Press, 1971); Ralph Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives," in Workers and Labour in a Globalised Capitalism, edited by Maurizio Atzeni. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

11 Heidi Hartmann, The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more Progressive Union. Capital & Class, 3:2, (1979).

12 Ruth Milkman, On gender, labor, and inequality, (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

Combining these two different explanations, my argument is that the relationship between women and unions is shaped by the contradictory nature and organizational dynamics of unions, and the dominant patriarchal structure in these organizations. In other words, rather than concluding that unions are necessarily patriarchal organizations by their nature, it is necessary to consider the patriarchal structure of unions in combination with their organizational strength and weaknesses and the structural dynamics to which they are subjected.

In addition to mobilization theories, this study engages with the literature on the roles of women workers in global production and their individual and collective resistance strategies in the workplace. The literature has primarily focused on the experiences of women workers in the Global South, where capitalist manufacturing has mostly shifted. Influenced by labor process theory, feminist researchers have conducted studies revealing the gendered nature of production processes. Furthermore, studies examining women's resistance have challenged the mainstream view that portrays women workers as docile and victimized. In the resistance literature, post-structuralist studies center on how gendered and cultural practices, as well as discourses shape the production field and produce gendered subjectivities. While ignoring the structural conditions surrounding women, these studies often regard women's resistance in the workplace as "cultural" or "symbolic" resistance that aims to undermine gender hierarchies through discursive practices.

These post-structuralist studies have made significant contributions to labor movement literature focused exclusively on unions and strikes by broadening the definition of worker resistance. However, they have been quite inadequate in addressing women's collective and organized struggles. This gap has been filled by studies that address women's organized labor activism from a gender perspective. These studies analyze the organized struggle of women workers in the Global South in the context of historical and structural conditions, that is, fundamentally in the context of global capitalism and patriarchy, and focus on women's agency in the labor movement. Particularly, Seung-Kyung Kim's study analyzing the experiences and subjectivity of Korean women labor activists, including their class struggle and family

struggle with tensions and challenges, provides a critical example of looking at women's experiences in the labor movement from a gender perspective. My study, which examines the gendered experiences of women workers in unionization and picketing processes, will contribute to this global literature.

When we look at feminist labor studies in Turkey, we see a significant focus on women's employment patterns and working conditions, but there is a notable scarcity of research on women's resistance strategies. Recent studies examining women workers' resistance from various theoretical perspectives have been heavily influenced by feminist labor process theories. In contrast, my study takes a different approach, centered around mobilization theory, which is applied from social movements into the labor movement literature.[13] This thesis aims to examine mobilization theory from a gender perspective, examining the factors that mobilize women, the experiences of women labor leaders, and the relationship between women and trade unions. In this way, it aims to make a meaningful contribution to the literature on women workers' struggle from a different theoretical framework.

Moreover, previous studies have paid relatively little attention to women's experiences with unions and male union officials in collective action processes. While some studies have addressed the exclusionary attitudes of unions towards women or the problems of women's participation in unions[14], women's relationships with unions in moments such as strikes and picketing, in which the contradictory nature of unions is concretely revealed, have not been sufficiently examined. I hope that this study, which includes the narratives of women who have had positive and negative experiences with unions, will make a significant contribution to filling this gap in the field.

I suppose that the most significant contribution of my thesis to the literature lies in its detailed examination of the subjective transformation of women workers. While studies focusing on the outcomes of movements are scarce in the literature on social movements, there are even fewer that delve

13 Alpkan Birelma's comprehensive ethnography on three worker mobilizations draws on this theory, but does not adequately address women's experiences (2014).

14 Betül Urhan, Sendikasız Kadınlar, Kadınsız Sendikalar. (İstanbul: Kadav Yayınları, 2014); Gülay Toksöz, "Sayımız Çok Az: Sendikalarda Kadınlar," in Neoliberalizmin Tahribatı: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye, (İstanbul: Metis, 2004), 234-53

into the subjective impacts of movements on participants.[15] Therefore, it is crucial to explore how labor movements affect workers and how enduring these effects are. Although studies on women workers' struggles in Turkey have emphasized women's gaining self-confidence in the process, how this self-confidence affects their working conditions and its permanence have not been sufficiently discussed. In this thesis, I investigate how women workers are affected by the processes of unionization and picketing under three main headings: empowerment, changes in class consciousness, and the formation of negative attitudes towards unions.

My core argument regarding the transformation of women is as follows: women's unionization and engagement in collective actions such as strikes and picketing create a space for their empowerment and the transformation of class consciousness. However, this process is often restricted and undermined by unions' bureaucratic and patriarchal nature. In other words, unions provide an opportunity for women's empowerment, but they also tend to suppress it and deny women's political agency.

In this regard, I consider women's experiences as an intertwined reflection of unions' contradictory positions within the capitalist system and patriarchy. Unions, by their very nature, both organize workers against capital, fostering collective struggle, and also suppress this struggle. When this contradictory nature of unions intersects with the prevailing patriarchy within them, women workers face discrimination from male union officers and are frequently marginalized as political actors. This occurs because the empowerment and agency of women workers challenge the male dominance within unions and the broader patriarchal order. Therefore, it is possible to view unions, as Hartmann suggests, as institutions that preserve the patriarchal order; however, it is important to acknowledge that they are not exclusively defined by this.

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15 Linda Markowitz, "After the Organizing Ends: Workers, Self-Efficacy, Activism, and Union Frameworks." Social Problems 45, no. 3 (1988): 356-82. Rachel Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action." (The University of Michigan, 2008); Alpkan Birelma, Ekmek ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi: Günümüz Türkiyesi'nde Üç İşçi Harketinin Etnografisi. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014)

Due to this complex relationship, many women began to feel distrust and anger toward unions during the collective action, leading to a more pessimistic view of the struggle. To alter the dynamics of women's relationships with unions and to cement women's empowerment within the action process while minimizing negative impacts, feminist labor NGOs and the feminist movement need to establish closer and more organized ties with unions and women workers.

In summary, in this thesis, I argue that women's experiences in family, workplace, and unions are shaped by patriarchy and capitalism, and these aspects are intertwined, influencing one another. Women's domestic roles, caregiving responsibilities, and family relationships affect their positions in the labor market and the labor movement. Women's workplace experiences are characterized by sexist pressures, harassment, and gender-based wage disparities. While women's labor functions as low-paid and precarious labor, patriarchal mechanisms suppress women's agency in the workplace. The resistance experiences of women are shaped by the contradictory position of unions, women's job market insecurities, and domestic and care work. While unions provide space for women's empowerment, they also suppress women's agency by drawing strength from patriarchy.

Therefore, women workers' multifaceted struggle in the triangle of family, workplace, and union is an intersectional struggle against capitalism and patriarchy. Since women's forms of oppression and struggles in these three domains are inevitably intertwined and experienced as such, empowerment in one aspect of this triangle will affect the others. Therefore, collective actions such as strikes and pickets are critical because, despite all their difficulties and contradictions, they provide space for such empowerment and transformation.

1.2 The Research

This research on the women's experiences of unionization and picketing is grounded in a feminist methodology.

Feminist epistemologists argue that the basis for unbiased knowledge of women's world lies in the direct experience of women themselves.[16] They argue that methodologically, quantitative rather than qualitative methods should be used to challenge scientific knowledge that is biased against women and patriarchally constructed. This means interviewing women and relying on their views as sources of information.[17]

Also, Maria Mies advocates that feminist research must be an integral part of women's struggle against oppression and exploitation. In accordance with this political objective, she suggests that research and researchers should actively engage in women's action and struggle, serving the interests of the women's movement.[18] Following Mies' perspective, this thesis focuses on the "actions" of women workers during workplace mobilization.

This research, which follows the feminist methodology, is based on a research process that establishes a more horizontal relationship between the researcher and the researched, rather than a hierarchical and value-free relationship, and emphasizes a "view from below" perspective and conscious partiality, which refers to partial identification with the objects of research.[19] Moreover, throughout the process, women's actions have been regarded not only as subjects of academic inquiry but also as a field of political struggle to be promoted.

During the research process, my active engagement as a political activist in women workers' protests-attending solidarity visits, conducting interviews to make women's experiences and struggles more visible, meeting women workers from different sectors at events organized by *KadınİşçiI*, a feminist labor NGO, are closely linked to an approach that regards feminist research as an "action research" with political goals.

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16 Sandra Harding, “Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method?” in S. Harding (Ed.) Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

17 Slyvia Walby, Theorizing Patriarchy, (Wiley, Blackwell, 1990): 37.

18 Maria Mies, "Towards a methodology for feminist research" in Theories of Women's Studies edited by Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein. (London: Routledge, 1983): 124.

19 Ibid.,122

1.2.1 Research Period

I conducted my fieldwork using ethnographic methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions between October 2022 and October 2023. Field interviews were conducted in Istanbul, Kocaeli, and Bursa provinces. My sample consisted of women workers who were dismissed due to unionization and subsequently initiated picket lines in front of the factory. In this study, focusing on the women's experiences in four different cases, I conducted in-depth and face-to-face interviews with 13 women workers, phone interviews with 3 women, and unstructured conversations with 4 women. Also, I conducted in-depth interviews with 2 women union officers, one in person and one via Zoom.

Considering Mies's emphasis on the direct connection of the research process with real life and the dynamic nature of the research object[20], it is evident that my research process was primarily influenced by and shaped by numerous variables related to both the lives of women subjects, my personal life, and the social and political context in which the research was conducted.

During this process, I got married. While engaged in the preparations for marriage, I missed the opportunity to visit the ongoing picket lines of my cases. The research progressed directly in connection with many conditions in women's lives, such as being dismissed from jobs, eviction from homes, funerals, illnesses, heavy workloads, childcare, and psychological issues. Shortly after starting field interviews, in February, an earthquake struck ten provinces in Turkey, which greatly affected both me as a researcher and the study itself.

1.2.2 Research Methods

This research is based on participant observation, in-depth and unstructured interviews, focus group interviews, and media analysis.

Before conducting field interviews, I reviewed articles, reports, and written and visual interviews about women workers' struggles. I prepared files containing summary information about the processes of the selected cases by

20 Ibid.,124

scanning all the news from the beginning to the end of the resistance on the internet. I scanned interviews with women on *KadınİşçiI* and *EkmekveGül* websites and recorded the issues, demands, and statements of women highlighted during the picket line.

To prepare for the fieldwork, I attended seminars and conferences on women workers' resistance. I observed the picket line area for a total of four days in the Katex case and had conversations with the women. Katex was the only case where I could conduct participant observation while the picket line was ongoing. For the other cases - Zitex, Automet, and Fonmet - I conducted in-depth interviews with women after the picket line process ended.

1.2.3 Access and Field Relations

Prior to embarking on fieldwork for this thesis, I had participated in numerous workers' protests as an activist, engaging in conversations with women workers. It was my expectation that this experience would facilitate my work in the field; however, it did not turn out as I had anticipated.

In the spring of 2022, I began preparing for fieldwork. I attended a seminar on women workers' resistance organized by a socialist workers' association in Gebze. The speakers included a women leader from an independent union and Selma[21], a journalist from *KadınİşçiI*. At this seminar, I first met Selma, a women labor leader, and this encounter profoundly influenced both my fieldwork and my personal life. The seminar provided insights into the concrete challenges women workers face in their working lives and their experiences with organizing. Selma's presentation on recent women workers' protests offered invaluable insights for my fieldwork. Among the attendees was a group of Automet workers who shared their experiences from a recently concluded picket line. Although I had not yet determined which cases to focus on, these discussions increased my familiarity with the issues.

Shortly after the seminar, I needed to conduct preliminary fieldwork for an ethnography course. In May, Selma and I visited a newly started metal workers' resistance in Gebze. The workers, dismissed due to unionization, were picketing in front of the factory. It took me about 2 hours to travel from

21 All names are pseudonyms.

Üsküdar to Gebze. Since public transportation was not allowed into the industrial zone where the factory was located, we got off the bus and walked for about 40 minutes under the sun. By the time we reached the protest area, I was exhausted. After eating with the workers, I attempted to talk with the women. However, the only shaded area was inside a crowded tent where all the workers were seated. I had to speak with the women under the sun, either near the shade of a truck or just beyond the tent. These inadequate conditions made me realize two fundamental issues: I was asking too many questions without listening, and the physical conditions of the conversation space directly affected the quality of our discussions.

With the experience gained from this preliminary fieldwork, I began conducting field interviews for my thesis in October. First, I had a lengthy discussion with Selma in Gebze. She served as both my gatekeeper and the main informant, providing me with a wealth of information for this study. She shared her own story, what she is currently involved in, and the worker mobilizations she is engaged with, and offered suggestions for my thesis.

In the initial plan for my thesis, I intended to focus on one textile, two metal, and one warehouse resistance. In the warehouse case, an independent union with a different perspective on organizing and worker participation was organized and resulting in gains. However, when I attempted to contact and persuade the women for the field interviews, I realized that the process would be more challenging than anticipated. Despite having communicated three times with a woman interviewee I had managed to convince, we could not arrange a meeting. This initial setback left me deeply disappointed and questioning. Had I chosen a topic that was too difficult to work with? Was there a problem with me personally? Were my chosen cases wrong? With all these questions and doubts, I finally conducted my first interview with a Fonmet worker, a woman known to Selma and easier to reach, in December. This lengthy and in-depth interview, lasting about 3-4 hours, revived my hopes for the fieldwork. However, after this initial interview, I once again entered a challenging process of convincing women to participate.

Regarding access issues, my main challenge revolved around persuading women workers to participate in interviews. I encountered two main difficulties. Firstly, some women were reluctant to recall and recount the

period of the picket line in which they experienced many physical and emotional hardships. For instance, despite convincing a women worker at Fonmet, who had been subjected to many slanders during the process, to talk over the phone, I was unable to get in contact with her afterward. Similarly, Hatice, a Zitex worker, refused to talk anything about the process due to conflicts she had experienced with the union and other workers during and after the picketing.

The second challenge was the limited free time of the women and their understandable reluctance to allocate this time for an interview. Almost all the women had started working in another factory after the picket line, working long hours and usually having only one day off. On their day off, they wanted to dedicate their time to household chores, spending time with their children if possible, and resting. For example, the reason I could not interview Hatice, a Zitex worker, was not only due to the negative experiences she had during the process but also because of her busy work schedule. The message Hatice sent in response to my interview request reflects the constraints women face when returning to their "normal" lives after being actively involved in labor activism:

> "Hi there, I'm so busy, darling, I can't even find the time to call you. My day off is during the week, but there are extra shifts, and I can't keep up with the housework or the kids, believe me. I haven't even seen my friend from next door for two weeks... Forget about friends, sweetheart, sometimes even my kids are already asleep by the time I get home. I feel so awful sometimes, I can't even explain it, but I'll get back to you as soon as I can, I promise." (Hatice, Zitex, 3 years)[22]

Due to these two main reasons, I could not interview many women. These challenges led me to re-evaluate many aspects of my thesis topic and the research methods I chose. After conducting my first interview in December,

22 "Canım merhaba, valla o kadar yoğunum ki güzelim, telefonla bile dönemiyorum sana. İzin günüm hafta içi aslında ama mesailer var, ne eve ne çocuklara yetişemiyorum inan. Aynı sokaktaki arkadaşımı bile iki haftadır göremiyorum... Arkadaşları geçtim kuzum, çocuklarım bile uyumuş oluyor bazen eve geldiğimde, o kadar kötü hissediyorum ki bazen kendimi anlatamam, ama en kısa sürede ilk fırsatta dönücem sana."

Selma and I visited the picket line in front of the Katex garment factory in Bursa in January. During this visit, I had the opportunity to observe the picketing process, the behavior of women in the field, and their interactions with union officers. I also participated as an observer in a group interview and conducted an in-depth interview with a women worker. During this first visit, I realized that male union officers controlled my conversations with women, though not explicitly. This situation provided some insights into the reality and limitations of the field. It became apparent that it was difficult to interview women on the picket line with the union, independent from the union and male union officials. This made it clear that I needed to focus more on the dynamics of the relationship between women and the union in my research.

After this visit, I decided to include Katex, an ongoing picket line, in my case studies. In early February, I went to Bursa again. On the first day, I interviewed women on the picket line, observing their conversations and asking questions. That evening, I stayed at the home of Zeynep, a woman worker from Zitex. We visited Ayşe's house together, where I conducted a group interview that lasted three hours. Interviews conducted in the women's homes created a more relaxed and intimate atmosphere, which positively influenced the quality of the discussions. The women shared a lot of insightful information about their experiences. On the second day, I had the opportunity to observe visits by feminist groups to the picket line.

After returning from Bursa, I had planned to revisit the Katex picket line and meet with the women again. However, two days later, an earthquake struck, altering the course of my fieldwork. During this time, public support for the protest declined, leading to a reduction in the number of women attending the picket line and eventually bringing the protest to a close.

Between June and October 2023, I conducted interviews with women from Automet and Fonmet. Throughout this period, I also encountered significant challenges in persuading women to participate. These challenges provided valuable insights into the experiences of women workers, shaping questions about how they were affected by worker actions and how they continued with their lives afterward, particularly through the lens of my inability to interview some of them.

1.2.4 Ethics

I anonymized the names of the women interviewed in the study, as well as the names of the workplaces and unions. Since the women I interviewed were still working or looking for work in the same regions, I tried to reduce the risk of any negativity from unions or employers through this anonymization.

I explained the purpose of the study to the women before the interviews and obtained their consent to audio record the interviews. In my interviews with the women, I encountered conflicting opinions and different interpretations of events. In these cases, without taking sides, I tried to understand the conditions that led women to think the way they did and make them part of the analysis.

1.3 Thesis Outline

Following the introduction, the second chapter will provide a review of the literature utilized in this thesis.

The third chapter will provide a historical and structural context of unionization in Turkey. This will include background information on the textile and metal industries, focusing on their economic significance, employment characteristics, and labor mobilization. Furthermore, this chapter will investigate the structural characteristics of the factories, women's working conditions, and an overview of the unionization and picket line processes.

In the fourth chapter, the focus will shift to the unionization process of women. This chapter will discuss the positive and negative factors affecting women's unionization. Besides, the experiences of women worker leaders, who play a crucial role in organizing women in the workplace, will be analyzed. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the structural features of unions and their relationships with women.

The fifth chapter will explore women's experiences of collective actions such as strikes and picketing. The picketing process will be examined through themes including worker solidarity, economic challenges, discriminatory attitudes of unions, conflicts among workers, family dynamics, and solidarity visits.

The sixth chapter will focus on the subjective impacts of unionization and picketing on women. It will investigate the subjective transformations of women involved in the labor movement, their empowerment, changes in class consciousness, and the formation of negative attitudes towards unions. Additionally, the chapter will discuss the permanence of these effects.

Finally, the conclusion chapter will summarize the arguments of the thesis, discuss its contributions to the literature, and outline the study's limitations.

2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In my thesis, I will draw on four main literature: (1) studies on labor movement and worker mobilization (2) studies on women in global production and labor activism, (3) studies on women's labor struggle in Turkey, and lastly (4) studies on social movements' outcomes.

These four specific areas of literature are particularly relevant to my research. In the first category, I will examine global literature on labor movement and worker mobilization and present feminist critics of this literature. In this section, after briefly touching on the transformation the literature has undergone in recent decades, I will discuss mobilization theories focusing on concepts of injustice and dignity, the role of unions in mobilization, and studies on the relationship between women and unions.

In the second category, I will examine studies on the conditions and resistances of women workers who constitute a significant portion of the workforce in the Global South, where industrial production has shifted. These studies primarily fall into two groups. The first group focuses on the gendered structure of the production sphere and the position of women in this field. The second group examines individual and collective resistance forms adopted by women in the workplace. In the latter group, I will discuss structuralist and post-structuralist studies, and those that synthesize these

two perspectives. However, my main focus will be on studies that deal with workers' collective struggle from a gender perspective.

Following the studies on the Global South, in the next section, I will examine studies on women workers' resistance in Turkey. After a brief introduction to the literature on women's labor, I will analyze studies similar to my research in terms of theory and findings. By discussing the shortcomings of these studies, I will highlight the contribution of my thesis to the literature.

The final category consists of studies focusing on the outcomes of social movements. In this section, I will discuss some studies that concentrate on the subjective impacts of movements. As one of the distinctive contributions of my thesis is to explain the subjective transformation of women workers, these studies are particularly important for my research.

2.1 Studies on Labor Movement and Worker Mobilization

There is a prevailing belief that neoliberal restructuring has diminished the influence of organized labor, leading to what is perceived as a structural and terminal crisis for the labor movement. This crisis is marked by a decline in unionization rates, fewer strikes, and a rise in job insecurity.[23] However, Silver challenges this crisis narrative regarding labor unrest. Her theory, which examines labor unrest within a broader historical and geographical context, suggests that as labor's power wanes in regions where capital relocates, new working classes emerge in new production areas, giving rise to new labor movements.[24]

The notion of a structural crisis within the labor movement led to a decline in interest and research in labor studies. Nevertheless, in the late 1990s, the successful mobilization of migrant workers, particularly in the service sector in the Global North, and the emergence of new, militant labor movements in the Global South, where industrial production had shifted, sparked a renewed interest in the field.

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23 Beverly Silver, Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003):1

24 Ibid.,4-5

In the United States, this period saw a transition in labor studies from focusing solely on labor processes to examining labor movements, reflecting the dynamic changes within the US labor movement. With a systematic decline in union density in the private sector, unions began exploring new organizing strategies for revitalization. Successful union organizing campaigns among immigrant workers during the 1990s[25] prompted a shift in focus towards organizing the "unorganized".[26] This resurgence of the labor movement redirected the attention of labor studies in this direction.[27] These studies "emerged from the interlinking of labor process and social movement theory and from articulating gender, racial, and ethnic identities with those of labor".[28] However, although the primary focus of these studies was on low-wage immigrant workers, issues of gender equality were often treated as secondary concerns.[29]

In the late 90s, the resurgence of labor movement literature in the US began to influence the traditional trade union and strike-oriented industrial relations literature developed in the UK. The institution-oriented literature began engaging with the literature on social movements and examining mobilization processes and workers' agency. John Kelly's study[30], which applies mobilization theory from the literature on social movements to the labor movement, is one of the important studies in this field. According to Kelly, collective action consists of five elements: identifying collective interests, organization, mobilization, enabling factors for action, and different

25 Ruth Milkman, L.A. story: Immigrant workers and the future of the U.S. labor movement. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

26 Michael Burawoy, The Public Turn from Labor Process to Labor Movement, Work and Occupations Vol. 35 No. 4 (2008): 379

27 Dan Clawson, The Next Upsurge: Labor and the New Social Movements, (Ithaca; ILR Press, 2003); Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss, Hard work: Remaking the American labor movement. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Ruth Milkman and Kim Voss, Rebuilding labor: Organizing and organizers in the new union movement, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004)

28 Burawoy, "The Public Turn from Labor Process to Labor Movement", 380.

29 Milkman, L.A. Story: Immigrant workers and the future of the U.S. labor movement, 202.

30 John Kelly, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves (London: Routledge, 1998).

forms of collective action.[31] The process of identifying collective interests is closely related to the workers' sense of injustice due to working conditions. Workers should attribute the injustices they face to their employer and feel that these unfair conditions can be changed through collective action.[32] On the other hand, the transformation of this sense of injustice into collective interests is linked to efforts by leaders in the workplace, including creating a common identity and framing issues.[33] Furthermore, for various forms of collective action to emerge, an organizational structure, not necessarily a union, and opportunities referring to policies and actions of employers and state is required.

On the one hand, mobilization theory has significantly contributed to the orthodox industrial relations literature, which mostly focuses on collective bargaining processes and union institutions, by explaining under what conditions and processes workers become collective actors and initiate collective actions. Especially in a context where union density is decreasing, it provides insights into how mobilization processes can occur among nonunion workers.[34]

On the other hand, the theory has been criticized regarding the validity of the concept of "injustice"[35], the contradictory usage of the term "mobilization"[36], the overemphasis on leadership[37], and the lack of gender analysis[38]. Wacjman criticizes Kelly's theory for being gender-blind, as it

31 Ibid.,25.

32 Ibid.,29.

33 Ibid., 32-36

34 John Kelly, Rethinking Industrial Relations revisited Economic and Industrial Democracy (2018).

35 Maurizio Atzeni, "Searching for injustice and finding solidarity? A contribution to the mobilisation theory debate" Industrial Relations Journal 40:1, (2009): 5–16

36 Jane Holgate, Simms, M and Tapia, M, The limitations of the theory and practice of mobilization in trade union organizing, Economic and Industrial Democracy, 39:4, (2018): 599-616.

37 Peter Fairbrother, 'Book Review: Gall G (ed.) Union Organising: Campaigning for Trade Union Recognition' Capital&Class, 87, (2005):257-63.

38 Judy Wajcman, 'Feminism facing industrial relations in Britain' British Journal of Industrial Relations, 38 (2), (2000): 183–201; Geraldine Healy and Gill Kirton, The Early Mobilization of

overlooks the gendered structure of collective mobilization processes in the workplace. According to her, Kelly fails to consider "power inequalities between the sexes and the way in which such inequalities are increasingly perceived as illegitimate" when discussing how individuals with a sense of injustice come together in a social movement.[39]. Similar critique is that the theory treats the concept of injustice as universal and neutral, thus ignoring gender and race-based discrimination in the workplace.[40]

Similar to Kelly's formulation of the sense of injustice, the concept of dignity also plays a key role in worker mobilization.[41] Hodson defines dignity as "the ability to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect and to appreciate the respect of others".[42] Human dignity is an essential component of a meaningful life, but unfair and discriminatory treatment undermines one's dignity. For Hodson, workers' dignity is often violated in the workplace through mismanagement, managerial abuse, and overwork, and workers struggle in various ways to repair their damaged dignity and to continue working with dignity.[43]

While studies on workplace dignity have contributed to the mobilization studies by mentioning its subjective and moral aspects, they have barely touched on its gendered aspect. In fact, patriarchal oppression and gender discrimination at work are significantly related to workplace dignity that women workers experience. Some new studies focus on the relationship between dignity and gender inequalities and analyze women's work experiences based on the concept of 'gendered dignity' that refers to the

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Women Union Leaders- A Comparative Perspective, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 51(4), (2013):709–732.

39 Wacjman, "Feminism facing industrial relations in Britain", 189.

40 Geraldine Healy and Gill Kirton, The Early Mobilization of Women Union Leaders- A Comparative Perspective, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 51(4), (2013):709–732.

41 Randy Hodson, Dignity at Work, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Vincent Roscigno and Randy Hodson, The Organizational and Social Foundations of Worker Resistance. American Sociological Review, Vol. 69, No. 1, (2004): 14-39.

42 Hodson, Dignity at Work, 3.

43 Ibid.,5.

gender implications on workplace dignity.[44] These studies emphasize that the gender discrimination and harassment that women are exposed to in the workplace negatively affect their workplace dignity. Also, Roscigno et al., in their recent study, show that women workers "experience less respect and a greater sense of injustice" at the workplace compared to male workers.[45]

The role of unions in mobilization is also a contentious issue in the literature. Some researchers challenge the central role attributed to unions in worker mobilization and strikes, emphasizing instead the importance of worker identity and solidarity for collective action.[46] On the other hand, there are some studies discussing the impact of unions on the emergence of worker resistance and their transformative potentials as well as limits from a Marxist perspective.[47]

In the Marxist studies on unionism, the dual and contradictory nature of trade unions has been a subject of extensive debate. On the one hand, unions function as a crucial means of redressing power inequalities between labor and capital in favor of workers, providing them with a basic defense mechanism against economic exploitation and authoritarian control over work.[48] They negotiate with employers to improve workers' material conditions, engage in collective bargaining processes, and mobilize workers' productive power when necessary. On the other hand, unions primarily work within the existing system to improve wages and conditions, often smoothing

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44 Martha Crowley, "Gender, the Labor Process and Dignity at Work", Social Forces, 91 no.4 (2013): 1209-1238; Vincent Roscigno, Yavorsky, J. E., ve Quadlin, N, "Gendered dignity at work", American Journal of Sociology, 127(2), (2021): 562–620.

45 Vincent Roscigno et.al, "Gendered dignity at work", 567.

46 Marc Dixon, Vincent J. Roscigno, and Randy Hodson, “Unions, Solidarity, and Striking.” Social Forces 83 (1), (2004): 3–33.

47 Richard Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, (London: Pluto Press, 1971); Richard Hyman, Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1975); Richard Hyman, Understanding European Trade Unionism: Between Market, Class and Society, (London: Sage, 2001);Ralph Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives" in Workers and Labour in a Globalised Capitalism, edited by Maurizio Atzeni. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

48 Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives", 114-15.

over workers' resistance to capitalist exploitation to maintain social and economic order.[49]

In addition to unions' contradictory nature, the potentials of union activity had also been discussed by Marxist researchers. Richard Hyman categorizes the conflicting theories on the potential of trade union activity into optimistic and pessimistic ones. Marx and Engels were on the optimistic side, arguing that trade unions had limited economic power but significant political potential to create a "consciousness of class unity" among workers.[50] The original function of trade unions is to demonstrate to workers whom capitalism has divided based on various social categories and turned into enemies under conditions of competition, that they have common interests and to unite them based on these shared interests. For Marx, when workers, who have been forced to compete with each other, begin to act collectively, they realize the power that comes from unity, and their "common interests" are transformed into "class interests".[51] In other words, Marx defends that the economic struggle for wage increases and improved conditions, led by the unions, have the power to transform workers from a class "in itself" to a class "for itself".[52]

These optimistic views on trade unionism were later criticized by various Marxist theories. Some theorists have defended that because of their potential to be integrated into the system, to be oligarchic and bureaucratic structures, and to work in cooperation with employers and the state, unions are structures that ensure the maintenance of the existing system rather than transforming workers into revolutionary agents.[53] However, Hyman criticizes pessimistic theories of the contradictory nature of trade unions for being one-sided. According to him, these theories, to some extent, ignore the dialectical relationship between trade unionism and capitalist society.[54] In this context, Perry Anderson argues that no matter how integrated unions are with the

49 Ibid.,126.

50 Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, 5-6.

51 Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, (1847).

52 Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, 7.

53 Ibid., 11-20.

54 Ibid., 25.

capitalist system and the state, the existence of a trade union organization implies a separation between labor and capital and prevents workers from accepting the conditions of capitalism as they are. Hence, unions produce a "working class consciousness" even if they are corrupted, but this is not equivalent to a "socialist consciousness".[55] Similarly, while Gramsci criticizes the bureaucratization of trade unions, he also emphasizes that unions make important contributions to the unity and self-confidence of the working class.[56] In fact, this self-confidence emerges when workers become aware of the power that comes from production and act collectively in the process of struggle with the union.

Another notable feature of the contradictory nature of unions is sectionalism. While unions unite workers based on their shared experiences of exploitation, they also create divisions based on factors like industry, sector, and form of employment.[57] These divisions, sometimes reinforced by legal regulations, lead unions to advocate primarily for the interests of specific groups of workers who are members. Also, one of the main aspects of union sectionalism is the exclusion of workers on the basis of gender and race.[58]

2.1.1 Women's Relations with Unions

There are a great number of historical and ethnographic studies on women's relationship with trade unions, the reasons for joining and not joining trade unions, and the experiences of women trade union activists.

The exclusionary practices of unions toward women and the underrepresentation of women in unions have been analyzed from various perspectives. Ruth Milkman discusses structural and cultural explanations for unions' failure to engage women. From a structural perspective, women's exclusion from unions is seen as essential for maintaining patriarchal systems

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55 Perry Anderson, 'The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action', in R. Blackburn and A. Cockburn (eds.) The Incompatibles, (Harmondsworth: Penguin: 1967): 264-74.

56 Antonio Gramsci, 'Unions and Councils', in Selections from Political Writings 1910-1920, (London: Lawrence and Wishart:1977): 41

57 Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives", 125.

58 Ruth Milkman, On gender, labor, and inequality, (University of Illinois Press, 2016).

that confine women to domestic or low-paid jobs.[59] Conversely, culturalists argue that women are not sufficiently involved in unions due to the dominance of a "male culture" within these organizations, where discourse and practices are based on masculinity.[60] However, Milkman suggests that neither of these accounts fully explains historical variations in unions' attitudes toward women workers. Then, she proposes an organizational analysis, suggesting that women's underrepresentation in unions stems from unions' conflictual and contradictory relations with employers, as well as their tendency to ignore groups with specific demands due to their weaker bargaining position.[61] While this analysis makes an essential contribution to the debate on unions' relationship with women, Milkman's definition of the organizational structure of unions as "gender-neutral" means to underestimate the dominant patriarchal structure of unions. Therefore, combining a patriarchal analysis of unions with this organizational perspective allows for a more comprehensive analysis.

Drawing on Milkman's analytical framework, I argue that in the case of Turkey, women's relationship with unions is shaped by both the organizational dynamics of unions and the patriarchy that dominates them. In other words, instead of viewing unions as inherently patriarchal organizations, understanding the patriarchal structure of unions in conjunction with their organizational strengths and weaknesses, as well as the structural dynamics they face, provides a more holistic understanding of women's participation in unions.

On the other hand, the influence of various factors on workers' decisions to join unions is also a central topic in the industrial relations literature.[62] However, gendered patterns of unionization are frequently overlooked. Since

59 Ibid.,166.

60 Ibid.,167.

61 Ibid.,169

62 John Kelly, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves (London: Routledge, 1998); Bert Klandermans, Psychology, and trade union participation: Joining, acting, quitting. Journal of Occupational Psychology, 59(3), (1986): 189–204; Bert Klandermans and Jacquelien van Stekelenburg. Social movement theory: Past, present and prospect. in I. van Kessel; S. Ellis (Eds.), Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa (pp. 17-44). (Leiden, Brill: 2009)

the early 2000s, feminist researchers have increasingly focused on understanding the reasons behind women's union participation.[63] These studies reveal that women's decisions to join unions are influenced by a variety of factors, including family background, political orientation, and gender-based discrimination at work.[64] Later studies further developed theories on union participation, identifying four key factors influencing women's decisions: family, union, workplace, and feminism.[65] According to these studies, family history related to unionization, union attitudes towards women workers, gendered workplace experiences, and feminist beliefs and values all play significant roles in women workers' decisions to unionize.[66]

In Turkey, studies on women and union relationships primarily focus on reasons for the low union participation of women rather than why women join unions.[67] Notably, Betül Urhan's study outlines three main reasons for low participation: the structure of women's employment, women's household responsibilities, and "gender-blind" union organizations. Urhan challenges the claim that attributes women's low participation to inherent disinterest, instead demonstrating that responsibility lies with labor unions that neglect women's unique conditions and demands, focusing primarily on male workers.[68]

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63 Fiona Colgan and Sue Ledwith, Diversity, Identities and Strategies of Women Trade Union Activists. Gender, Work and Organization, 7(4), (2000): 242-257; Gill Kirton, 'The influences on women joining and participating in unions'. Industrial Relations Journal, 36 (5), (2005): 386–401.

64 Colgan et al, "Identities and Strategies of Women Trade Union Activists.", 247.

65 Gill Kirton, The influences on women joining and participating in unions. Industrial Relations Journal, 36 (5), (2005): 386–401; Geraldine Healy and Gill Kirton. (2013). The Early Mobilization of Women Union Leaders- A Comparative Perspective, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 51(4), 709–732.

66 Kirton, "The influences on women joining and participating in unions", 388-90.

67 Gülay Toksöz, Kadın Çalışanlar ve Sendikal Katılım. AÜ SBF Dergisi, 49(3), (1994):439-454; Gülay Toksöz and Erdoğdu, Seyhan, Sendikacı Kadın Kimliği. (İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi:1998);Gülay Toksöz, "Sayımız Çok Az: Sendikalarda Kadınlar," in Neoliberalizmin Tahribatı: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye, (İstanbul: Metis, 2004), 234-53; Betül Urhan, "Görünmezlerin Görünür Olma Mücadeleleri: Çalışan Kadın Örgütlenmeleri", Çalışma ve Toplum (2009); Betül Urhan, Sendikasız Kadınlar, Kadınsız Sendikalar. (İstanbul: Kadav Yayınları, 2014)

68 Urhan, Sendikasız Kadınlar, Kadınsız Sendikalar, 7-10

2.2 Studies on Women in Global Production and Labor Struggle

One significant aspect of neoliberal economic restructuring is the "feminization of labor," which involves an increase in female labor force participation and the expansion of precarious and low-paid employment traditionally associated with women.[69] This process is closely linked to globalization. As capitalist production shifts from the Global North to countries in the Global South where labor costs are lower, the workforce there is largely comprised of women and children. This global transformation has led to increased academic interest in studying women's labor in the Global South.

Many early studies defended the thesis of the "new international division of labor" from a Marxist-feminist approach.[70] According to this thesis, as labor-intensive, manufacturing production is exported to Third World countries, capital's ability to extract more surplus value by reducing production costs depends on its access to cheapest, most docile, and most manipulable workers in these countries.[71] For Mies, women are the most suitable labor force for this new production process because they are considered worldwide not as workers but as housewives, and women's work is always defined as "income-generating activity", not free wage-labor, so that it can be purchased much cheaper than male labour.[72] These structuralist studies have been criticized for presenting a stereotypical representation of third world women, treating them as a homogenous category, and ignoring women's agency.[73]

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69 Guy Standing, Global feminization through flexible labor: A theme revisited. World Development, 27(3), (1999): 600

70 Annette Fuentes, and Barbara Ehrenreich, Women in the Global Factory. (New York: Institute for New Communications:1983); Maria Fernandez-Kelly, For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press:1983); Maria Mies, Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour. (London: Zed Books:1986)

71 Mies, Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale, 114

72 Ibid.,116.

73 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles, Signs, vol.28, no.2, (2003); Ayşen Üstübici, Export-Processing Zones

On the other hand, "the focus of scholarship has shifted from assessing the gendered consequences of transnational production to showing how gendered practices and subjects are themselves constitutive of it."[74] In other words, there has been a shift from structuralist macro explanations to a poststructuralist micro analysis. These later studies often examine the relationship between the material conditions of global production and the social relations and localized cultural practices in the region of production.[75]

There emerged a large body of ethnographic work that reveals the gendered structure of global production through women workers in export-oriented production across the Global South. Most of these ethnographies have engaged with labor process theory. Building on Marx's analysis of capitalist production, the theory, which focuses on the objective condition of capitalist production, has been criticized in various ways. One of the main criticisms against Braverman's orthodox account[76] is that it ignores workers' subjectivity, agency, and forms of struggle.[77] These criticisms, however, fail to address the absence of gender analysis in theory.

Buroway claims that workers' subjectivities are determined solely by class, but as Lee argues, gender is as determinative as class in the construction of workers' subjectivity.[78] Furthermore, she challenges Buroway's theoretical prioritization of class, arguing that gender, class and race are mutually constitutive bases of power and equally influential on relations and dynamics in the field of production.[79]. Lee's argument is embodied in her study of the factory regimes in two factories in South China that are home to women

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and Gendering the Resistance: "Women's Strike" in Antalya Free Zone in Turkey. New Working Paper Series: London School of Economics, Gender Institute. (2009):6-7

74 Jennifer Bair, On Difference and Capital: Gender and the Globalization of Production. Signs, Vol. 36, No. 1, (2010): 204.

75 Ibid.,203.

76 Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974).

77 Michael Buroway, Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process under Monopoly Capitalism. (University of Chicago Press:1979); David Knights, Labour Process Theory. (Palgrave Macmillan:1990); Ezzy, D, Subjectivity and the Labour Process: Conceptualizing 'Good Work'. Sociology, 31 (3), (1997): 427-444.

78 Ching Kwan Lee, Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women. (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1998):19.

79 Ibid.,21.

workers. She questions why different factory regimes emerge in two factories owned and managed by the same enterprise, producing the same electronic products using exactly the same technology. By showing that gender relations are the explanatory factor for the variation of factory regimes, she engenders Buroway's theory of factory regimes and makes a feminist contribution to the theory of production politics.

Lee and other feminist researchers[80] included gender analysis in labor process theory through their studies. By revealing the gendered structure of power relations and labor control in the field of production, these studies have addressed gender as a constitutive tool of analysis rather than simply adding women to labor process studies.[81]

Studies focusing on women workers in the Global South have focused not only on the gendered labor process, but also on women's multiple forms of resistance in the workplace. By revealing the forms of resistance and subjectivity of Global South women, these studies have challenged their image as docile, dexterous, and victimized objects of the development process.

One study that challenges this traditional image is Leslie Salzinger's work focusing on the factories known as "*maquiladora*" in free trade zones in Mexico. To answer the question "how gender operates in global production"[82], she examines the four different factories that are feminized despite having a mixed labor force. Through her comparative research on gender regimes in factories, Salzinger argues that there is no inherent "productive femininity" associated with young women workers. Instead, it is created through gendered discourses used by managers to control the shop floor.[83] In other words, according to Salzinger, "feminization emerges as a discursive process that operates on both female and male bodies, producing the labor force".[84] She

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80 Leslie Salzinger, Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico's Global Factories. Berkeley: (University of California Press: 2003); Mary Beth Mills (2005). From Nimble Fingers to Raised Fists: Women and Labor Activism in Globalizing Thailand. Signs , Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 117-144

81 Lee, Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women, 23.

82 Leslie Salzinger, Genders in Production: Making Workers in Mexico's Global Factories. Berkeley: (University of California Press: 2003):11

83 Ibid.,6

84 Ibid.,11.

also asserts that workers' gendered subjectivities are constituted and shaped within the production relations.[85]

This study is critical for demonstrating the gendered structure of labor processes and the formation of gendered subjectivities in the point of production. However, while Salzinger opens a lot of space for the subjectivities of managers who produce gender structure in factories, she does not give enough importance to the structural conditions created by capitalism.[86] This post-structuralist perspective, which does not see capitalism and patriarchy as systems that create structural and material conditions, similarly reduces forms of resistance in the workplace to a "symbolic struggle concerning gendered meanings".[87]

Aihwa Ong's study, "*Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline*"[88], focusing on female factory workers in Malaysia, is another significant study in this field. Ong approaches women's resistance in the workplace not as a class struggle but as a "cultural struggle" from a poststructuralist perspective. According to Ong, in the modern era, workers' resistance emerges not around a collective class interest but rather in more individual and covert forms around cultural meanings, values, and norms. She argues that we can see the resistance of women workers in the Global South by looking at their "oppositional tactics, embodied desires, and alternative interpretations and images.".[89] As her study shows, Malay women resort to various covert forms of resistance against the conditions and oppressive control in the factory. Some of these everyday struggle forms include absenteeism, acting ignorant about technical details of the work, and what Ong primarily focuses on, "spirit possession." Through spirit possession sessions, women behave as if their souls are possessed in the factory, disrupting production, and leading to the women whose souls are 'possessed' being sent home.

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85 Ibid.,151.

86 Jennifer Bair, "On Difference and Capital: Gender and the Globalization of Production", 221

87 Salzinger, Gender in Production, 143.

88 Aihwa, Ong, Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press: 1987).

89 Aihwa, Ong, The Gender and Labor Politics of Postmodernity. Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 20 (1991): 296.

Ong's conceptualization of cultural struggle presents a significant challenge to the orthodox literature focusing only on organized labor struggles through unions and ignoring everyday forms of resistance workers resort to. However, under the influence of poststructuralism, she ignores the structural conditions that give rise to these forms of women's action, namely capitalist exploitation and does not include it in her analysis. In my opinion, the fact that she treats spirit possession, a form of women's resistance, as independent from the class and gender interests of workers is to reproduce the understanding that does not consider women as subjects of the class struggle.

In conclusion, these post-structuralist studies that demonstrate the gendered structure of the labor process are critical for understanding women's experiences in the production sphere and the forms of oppression they face. They prove that it is not possible to examine the organization of capitalist production and the ways in which workers are exploited and oppressed without a gender lens. On the other hand, those who engage with the labor process and present a gender analysis of production from a culturalist and post-structuralist perspective focus dominantly on discourse and meanings. As Savran puts that, poststructuralism makes definitive judgments that concrete reality consists only of the subjective local and partial; that abstraction and totality can only be authoritarian and exclusionary; and that objectivity, social relations and structures, material reality can only have any significance to the extent that they pass through discursive and perceptual mediations.[90] In this respect, these studies, while attempting to condemn structuralism, seems to limit themselves to discourse analysis by overemphasizing subjects and subjective processes.

Regarding the contributions to labor studies, these works have expanded the definition of "resistance" into the cultural or everyday forms of resistance that fall outside the conventional labor struggle, which is often associated with male workers and seen as centered around unions and strikes. However, on the other hand, studies tend to ignore collective and organized forms of resistance that aim to transform material conditions. So, if orthodox

90 Gülnur Acar Savran, Beden Emek Tarih: Diyalektik Bir Feminizm İçin. (İstanbul: Dipnot Yayınları:2019):20.

structuralism represents one extreme that ignores the experience of subjects, post-structuralism represents another extreme where it is not possible to speak outside subjectivity. I have drawn on these studies to interpret women's gendered working experiences in the workplace, but this thesis has mainly engaged with studies that address workers' organized struggle from a gender perspective, which I will discuss below.

Despite the global decline of unions, they continue to serve as essential instruments of collective struggle for women industrial workers. So, it is significant to explore the experiences of women labor activists who, despite all the risks and challenges, seek to combat both capitalist exploitation and patriarchal oppression in the workplace by engaging in industrial actions such as strikes, work slowdowns and occupations.

There are some studies focusing on women's labor activism in the Global South.[91] I want to focus on some studies that examine women's labor activism without ignoring their gendered experiences in the workplace and during struggle.

Seung-Kyung Kim's ethnographic study on the lives of women workers in the Masan Free Export Zone, which was a major industrial site of South Korea in the 1970s, examines "the ways in which these women both accommodate and resist the dominating forces of global capitalism and South Korean versions of patriarchy".[92] Korean women workers were among the most important actors in both the struggle against the military regime in the 1970s and the great labor uprising of 1987, a turning point in the Korean labor movement. Focusing on women's life histories, Kim shows how gender

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91 Seung-Kyung Kim, Class Struggle or Family Struggle? The Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Lois A. West, Militant Labor in the Philippines, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997); Jane Margold, "Reformulating the Compliant Image: Filipina Activists in the Global Factory." 28(1), (1999): 1–35.; Petra Dannecker, "Conformity or resistence? Women workers in the garment factories in Bangladesh" (Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld, 2000); Mary Beth Mills, From Nimble Fingers to Raised Fists: Women and Labor Activism in Globalizing Thailand. Signs, Vol. 31, No. 1, (2005):117-144; Madhumita Dutta, Becoming 'active labour protestors': women workers organizing in India's garment export factories, Globalizations (2021); Hwasook Nam, Gender and Labor in the Making of Modern Korea, (Cornell Press, 2021)

92 Kim, Class Struggle or Family Struggle?, 1.

dynamics have influenced the identities of these workers and the discussions among women regarding their involvement in political action. This study is significant for addressing the evolving 'femininity' and 'gender images' of women who began to work in factories, as well as for giving importance to the women's agency in the labor movement and unions. Besides, it provides the gendered experiences of women labor activists, addressing the tensions between class struggle and struggle over marriage and family relationships, the forms of oppression they face, and the tactics they develop to counter these oppressions.

While Kim provides a historical analysis covering a longer period regarding the roles of women workers in the labor movement in South Korea, some studies focused on the life stories of women labor activists, examining their subjectivities and experiences within the struggle. One of these studies is Margold's study on the struggle of factory women in the Philippines, a country with one of the most militant labor movements in South Asia. She provides a brief chronicle of a young women activist who is a member of a left-progressive women's labor center, known as KMK, to demonstrate historical and structural conditions that mediate and shape her possibilities for agency. As she puts that, women's experience of protest and picketing, which they continue despite many difficulties, enables "women's feelings of fear and victimization to be replaced by a sense of agency and capacity."[93] In addition, by showing how a militant women's labor movement has been suppressed by state and male violence, this study reaffirms the necessary link between women's labor struggle and the struggle against patriarchy.

The post-structuralist perspective discussed above has also influenced studies that address women's collective struggle. For example, Mills' study on women's labor activism in Thailand focuses on both the subjectivities of activist women and the discursive strategies they use to legitimize their political activities.[94] She emphasizes that women in global production are subjected to complex and multiple oppressions revolving around the axes of racism, patriarchy, and capitalism. In her study, Mills provides an account of

93 Margold, "Reformulating the Compliant Image: Filipina Activists in the Global Factory.", 17.

94 Mary Beth Mills, From Nimble Fingers to Raised Fists: Women and Labor Activism in Globalizing Thailand. Signs, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2005):117-144

both the culturally specific dimensions of Thai women's activism on the one hand, and an example of the common struggle of women around the world against multiple forms of oppression on the other. Though Mill's work is similar to post-structuralist studies in that it deals with discourses, I think it differs from those studies in that it uses women's discursive strategies to make sense of their experiences in the organized labor struggle.

There are also studies that have a more comprehensive approach, examining both individual and collective resistance forms adopted by women workers in the workplace. Dannecker's study analyzing the resistance forms of Bangladeshi women textile workers is a good example of this holistic perspective. She argues that women have a different "logic of action" than men within their own life conditions and experiences and that they develop different strategies and methods of resistance in accordance with this logic.[95] Criticizing the literature that sees women workers as passive and unionization as the only form of resistance, she elaborates on women's individual and collective forms of resistance. While individual forms of resistance include women turning supposed female attributes such as crying into a means of resistance and making jokes about supervisors and male workers, collective forms of resistance include women building solidarity networks against supervisors, management and family, protesting against wage delays and forming an independent union that takes everyday needs into account against male-dominated unions that ignore their agendas and demands. Dannecker's work also emphasizes that women's resistance at work affects their domestic and everyday lives and vice versa. Her comprehensive perspective broadens the discussion of resistance by showing that women's workplace-based resistance cannot be considered only in terms of unionization or only in terms of individual forms of covert resistance.

The motivations and emotions with which women join the labor movement are as important as the forms of resistance they resort to. Dutta's study on women garment workers in India examines how women interpret their labor processes and the processes through which they become labor activists through their life histories. Similar to Dannecker, Dutta emphasizes

95 Petra Dannecker, "Conformity or resistence? Women workers in the garment factories in Bangladesh" (Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld, 2000)

that organizing women workers requires not only workplace-based organizing, but also organizing and solidarity networks that address neighborhood and domestic issues. What the women activists Dutta interviewed who founded an independent union have in common is their involvement in the labor movement through organizational structures that give importance to household and community-level issues outside the workplace. Dutta also argues that women's labor activism cannot be separated from their personal sense of self-respect and dignity.[96]

As a result, my work engages with this global literature that addresses women's organized and collective resistance from a gender perspective and analyzes the strategies through which women struggle against capitalism and patriarchy.

2.3 Studies on Women's Labor Struggle in Turkey

In both labor history and labor movement studies, we do not have much information on the working and struggle experiences of women workers, who constitute an important part of the Turkish working class. Although the dominant approach in the literature for many years, which considers the male worker as the main subject of the working class, has been challenged by feminist critiques in recent years, it is still possible to see traces of this approach in concrete studies.

Studies in the women's labor literature provide a comprehensive source of information on the working experiences of women workers. The prominent topics in the literature can be listed as follows: women's participation in employment and the reasons that prevent them from participating in

96 Madhumita Dutta, Becoming 'active labour protestors': women workers organizing in India's garment export factories, Globalizations (2021).

employment[97], working conditions of women workers[98]; the conditions of domestic women workers[99] and women's experiences in trade unions.[100] When we look at these areas of focus and prominent studies, it is possible to draw the following conclusion: While studies focusing on women's exclusion, oppression and exploitation in capitalist labor markets and their inability to participate in patriarchal trade union structures are prominent in the literature, there are very few studies focusing on women workers' experiences of struggle, resistance and empowerment processes.

The lack of attention to this field is closely connected to the lack of academic interest in labor studies in general and the labor movement in particular in Turkey. On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that the literature on women's labor, which began to develop in Turkey after 1980, has primarily focused on issues related to the position of women workers in the labor market, such as forms of employment and working conditions. Since trade unions and labor struggles have long been dominated by male workers and excluded women workers, academic studies have also been affected by this situation. However, since the mid-2000s, important studies on women workers' experiences of unionization and resistance have been conducted.[101]

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97 Şemsa Özar, "Some Observations on the Position of Women in the Labour Market in the Development Process of Turkey," Boğaziçi Journal: Review of Social, Economic and Administrative Studies, cilt: 8, sayı: 1-2, (1994): 21-43; Yıldız Ecevit. "Çalışma Yaşamında Kadın Emeğinin Kullanımı ve Kadın-Erkek Eşitliği," Kadın-Erkek Eşitliğine Doğru Yürüyüş, 2000: 117-91; Meltem Dayıoğlu, "Labor Market Participation of Women in Turkey" in Gender and Identity Construction: Women in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey. (Köln: Brill, 2000)

98 Ayda Eraydın and Asuman Erendil, Dış Pazara Açılan Konfeksiyon Sanayiinde Yeni Üretim Süreçleri ve Kadın İşgücünün Bu Sürece Katılım Biçimleri. (Ankara: TC Başbakanlık Kadının Statüsü ve Sorunları Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları,1999); Saniye Dedeoğlu, Women Workers in Turkey. (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008) Suğur, S. (2005). "Türkiye'de Tekstil Sektöründe Kadın Emeği ve Değişen Toplumsal Cinsiyet İlişkileri." Amme İdaresi Dergisi, 38(1): 47-68.

99 Jenny White, Para ile Akraba, çev. Aksu Bora. (İstanbul: İletişim,1999); Gül Özyeğin, Başkalarının Kiri: Kapıcılar, Gündelikçiler ve Kadınlık Halleri. (İstanbul: İletişim., 2001

100 see footnote 65.

101 Tore Fougner and Ayça Kurtoğlu, Transnational Labour Solidarity and Social Movement unionism: Insights from and beyond a women workers' strike in Turkey, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 49, (2010); Pelin Kılınçarslan, Worker resistance and mobilization: A comparative analysis of two female-dominated textile factories (Master's Thesis, Koç

Saygılıgil's study focusing on the Novamed strike, a medical equipment manufacturing factory owned by a German company, in 2006, is one of the pioneering studies in this field. The study problematizes women's wage labor and patriarchal capitalism through the working conditions in the Novamed factory in the Antalya Free Zone, the reasons why women workers went on strike, and their experiences of organizing. Saygılıgil's study contributes to the body of scholarship focusing on the working experiences of women in export-processing zones, mainly in the global South, through the case of Turkey. After providing an account of the way patriarchy operates in the workplace through the gendered oppression and discrimination women are subjected to, the study focuses on women's experiences in union organizing and the strike process. As Saygılıgil states, "the main axis of the objections of women who go on strike is the control and oppression of the female body", such as the scheduling of pregnancy periods by management.[102] In addition, it is also noted that the dignity-based demands of women workers stand out during the organizing process.

The study is significant in that it focuses on the subjective effects of the strike experience on women. One of the results of the strike was that "women were liberated, empowered and gained self-confidence to a great extent".[103] It is also emphasized that the gendered division of labor within the home was not transformed during the strike, but the households became visible using the houses as a space for organizing.

The Novamed strike has been the subject of many other academic studies since it represents a turning point for the women workers' struggle in Turkey as a "women's strike" in which women's demands prevailed and were achieved

University, 2013); Mine Dilan Kıran, Grev ve Direnişlerde Kadın Deneyimleri: Tekel Direnişi Örneği (Master's Thesis, Kocaeli University, 2017); Feryal Saygılıgil, Bir Kadın Grevi: Serbest bölge'de kadın işçi olmak. (İstanbul: Güldünya Yayınları, 2018); Ayten Davutoğlu, "Kadın Direnişçilerin Gözünden Bir Direniş Öyküsü: Gebze Bericap Örneği", Çalışma ve Toplum (2018); Burcu Saka, "Women's shop floor militancy and empowerment: Industrial dispute in an automotive factory in Turkey", Journal of Labor and Society (2019).

102 Saygılıgil, Bir Kadın Grevi, 149.

103 Ibid.,163

with the support of social movements.[104] It is noted that the strategic cooperation established between feminist movement and the union, and transnational labour solidarity have played a significant role in the success of the Novamed strike.[105] This study has shown that coalition-building with different social movements and international labor organizations, which unions have adopted as a revitalization strategy in recent years, is also necessary and critical for labor movement in Turkey.

Another important study is Burcu Saka's work focusing on working-class feminism through the industrial actions of Mata Otomotiv workers, such as strikes, factory occupations, and picketing. Saka examines the contributions of women workers' industrial actions to feminist struggle and class politics. She argues that "women struggle against capitalism in their workplaces while at the same time fighting against sexism, which is a part of capital accumulation."[106] This thesis takes a similar stance with Saka regarding women workers' struggle as a struggle against patriarchal oppression as well as capitalist exploitation.

Saka engages with feminist debates on equality-difference, recognition-redistribution, and the position of women's labor in the labor market. Regarding the latter, the study theoretically builds on feminist labor process analysis examining the role of gender in capitalist production and specifically develops the argument that the labor process is not only a site of exploitation but also of solidarity. Following this line, Saka's argument is based on the premise that solidarity among workers takes the form of sisterhood among women workers. In this context, it is emphasized that the sisterhood strengthened among women during industrial actions played an important role in restricting gender-based discrimination in the workplace.

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104 Ayşen Üstübici, Export-Processing Zones and Gendering the Resistance: "Women's Strike" in Antalya Free Zone in Turkey. New Working Paper Series: London School of Economics, Gender Institute. (2009); Tore Fougner and Ayça Kurtoğlu, Transnational Labour Solidarity and Social Movement unionism: Insights from and beyond a women workers' strike in Turkey, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 49, (2010).

105 Fougner et al., "Transnational Labour Solidarity and Social Movement unionism: Insights from and beyond a women workers' strike in Turkey", 366.

106 Saka, Burcu. Working Class Feminism: Solidarity and Experience in A Factory Strike in Turkey. (Doctoral Dissertation: Middle East Technical University, 2018): 232.

Another study based on feminist labor process theory is Pelin Kılınçarslan's comparative analysis of two female-dominated textile factories in Izmir. The study investigates “how and why different forms of resistance emerge among women workers working under similar conditions”.[107] She discusses the impacts of the discourse of "company as a family" in the workplace and household indebtedness on workers' resistance and mobilization. She reveals that while the familial discourse may function as a source of mobilization when framed by workers in one workplace, it is used by management in another workplace as a means of suppressing workers' grievances.

Also, Kıran's study[108] focuses on the experience of women workers in the Tekel workers' resistance against state privatization and precarity. The study covers issues such as women's reasons for joining the resistance, the reactions women receive from their family and environment in relation to gendered norms during the resistance process, domestic labor, and women's empowerment. Furthermore, this study reveals that being in resistance is an emancipating experience for women and opens up space for questioning gender-based inequalities. Similarly, Ayten Davutoğlu's study[109] on the resistance at Bericap, a petrochemical factory in Gebze, examines the reasons for women's participation in the union struggle and the ways in which they make sense of "being a woman in resistance".

In conclusion, although few in number, these studies from different theoretical perspectives provide important accounts of women workers' struggles in Turkey. In recent studies, the influence of feminist labor process theories centering on gender analysis is considerable. This thesis, on the other hand, proposes to combine gender analysis with theories of worker mobilization, which points to a different theoretical perspective. In relation to this theoretical framework, this thesis will make a contribution to the

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107 Pelin Kılınçarslan, Worker resistance and mobilization: A comparative analysis of two female-dominated textile factories (Master's Thesis, Koç University, 2013);

108 Mine Dilan Kıran, Grev ve Direnişlerde Kadın Deneyimleri: Tekel Direnişi Örneği (Master's Thesis, Kocaeli University, 2017)

109 Ayten Davutoğlu, "Kadın Direnişçilerin Gözünden Bir Direniş Öyküsü: Gebze Bericap Örneği", Çalışma ve Toplum (2018).

literature by explaining in detail the women's motivations for organizing, the experiences of women worker leaders who play a leading role in workplace organization, and the relationship between unions and women.

On the other hand, although Saygılıgil and Kıran's studies slightly mention the sexist attitudes of male union officers towards women workers, most studies do not address the character of women's relations with unions and unionists in depth. My study will contribute to this gap in the literature by presenting the diverse experiences of women who have positive relations with male unionists and those who experience conflict.

In the studies I have discussed above, the subjective transformation of women workers participating in the labor struggle has not been addressed in detail. In most of them, it is emphasized that women gain self-confidence and feel empowered during unionization and resistance processes, but the effects of this empowerment in the workplace are not examined. This thesis will provide a more holistic account of women's subjective transformation by addressing the impacts of resistance on women in the contexts of empowerment, changes in class consciousness and distrust towards unions.

2.4 Studies on Social Movement's Outcomes

While most studies in the social movement literature focus on the causes of movements, there are very few studies on the outcomes of movements. Even these studies generally focus on "macro level structural outcomes including political, institutional, and cultural change"[110] meaning that there are very few studies focusing on the "subjective transformation" of collective action participants.[111]

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110 Rachel Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action." (The University of Michigan, 2008):6

111 Linda Markowitz, "After the Organizing Ends: Workers, Self-Efficacy, Activism, and Union Frameworks." Social Problems 45, no. 3 (1988): 356-82. Rachel Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action." (The University of Michigan, 2008); Nuray Türkmen, Eylemden Öğrenmek: Tekel Direnişi ve Sınıf Bilinci. (İletişim Yayınları, 2012); Alpkan Birelma, Ekmek ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi: Günümüz Türkiyesi'nde Üç İşçi Harketinin Etnografisi. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014);

In her research comparing the subjective effects on participants of two successful social movements, an automotive strike and a living wage campaign, Rachel Meyer investigates the persistence of these impacts and the extent to which participants become part of a "perpetual struggle". Meyer argues that a sense of collective efficacy, which refers to the belief that success will be achieved when acting as a group, is not a cause but a result of mobilization because people only realize the extent of their power and capacities after they have actively put them into practice[112]

In this regard, Meyer asserts that while striking workers develop a bureaucratic and individualistic sense of power, participants in living wage campaigns develop a stronger sense of collective efficacy. Therefore, for Meyer, while the impacts of strikes on workers are more short-term, campaign participants undergo more lasting transformations and become perpetual labor activists. Meyer's study is significant in emphasizing the transformative power of collective action, but her overemphasis on the impacts of political-oriented movements over those that are economic-oriented risks ignoring the potential power of labor movements. Alpkan Birelma criticizes Meyer's study for two main methodological weaknesses. The first is that there is a significant difference in the duration, scale, and strength between the two cases compared: one involves a three-day strike with 100 workers, while the other is a three-year campaign with thousands of participants. The second weakness is that Meyer's study relies solely on interviews, and the lack of observational data raises questions about how much the claimed lasting effects actually influence the behavior of participants in their real lives.[113]

In Birelma's study, which is one of the most important ethnographies of labor movements in Turkey, the lasting impacts of mobilizations and the subjective transformation of workers are among the topics addressed. As emphasized by Birelma, the success of mobilization is closely related to the nature of transformation in workers' lives. In other words, the traces left by unsuccessful mobilizations are generally negative for most participants in

112 Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action.",139.

113 Birelma, Ekmek ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi, 328-29.

terms of subjectivity, and if positive, they are quite limited. However, contrary to Meyer's argument about economic-oriented movements, in a successful labor mobilization case examined in the research, workers had been transformed in various forms and degrees. Some workers took a leading role in the struggle and became passionate labor activists.[114] On the other hand, the transformative power of worker mobilizations has been intertwined with risks such as the difficulties of acting together, seeking individual interests, and the desire of leaders to establish power over the workers.[115] As a result, Birelma's study deepens the debate in this field by showing both the possibilities and limitations of workers' subjective transformation.

Another significant study that delves into the transformation of workers in Turkey is Nuray Türkmen's work, which focuses on the Tekel resistance through the lens of education and learning theories. Türkmen considers the resistance of Tekel workers against privatization and insecurity, which lasted for 78 days, as a process of learning, transformation, and liberation. Similar to Birelma's work, this study, based on in-depth ethnography, emphasizes that the transformation of workers is not a finished process, but rather a dynamic and ongoing process. However, as Türkmen emphasizes, the impacts of rapid transformations experienced with the intensity and excitement of resistance may diminish after the resistance, but even small changes in the perspectives of workers should be interpreted around the transformative power of collective struggles.[116]

As a result, focusing on the transformative power of collective action is important both in understanding its potential effects on participants and in demonstrating the potential impact of the movement but the literature on social movements has not adequately addressed this issue. As seen above, there are also relatively few studies examining the impacts of labor movements on participants. My thesis will contribute to this literature by analyzing how women workers are affected by unionization and picket line processes.

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114 Ibid.,309-10

115 Ibid.,342.

116 Türkmen, Eylemden Öğrenmek: Tekel Direnişi ve Sınıf Bilinci, 185.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this section reviews the four main strands of literature utilized in this thesis: (1) studies on the labor movement and worker mobilization, (2) studies on women in global production and labor struggle, (3) studies on women's labor struggle in Turkey, and (4) studies on the outcomes of social movements.

In the first group, I examined the global literature on labor movements and labor mobilization, addressing the studies in this field through a feminist lens. I mainly utilized labor mobilization studies that focus on the mobilization processes and subjectivities of workers. Drawing on Kelly's mobilization theory, I explored the critical concepts of "workplace injustice" and "workplace dignity," which are essential in the mobilization of workers. I then discussed the role of unions in mobilization, highlighting their dual and contradictory nature. Regarding the relationship women establish with unions, I argued that women's interactions are influenced both by the organizational dynamics of unions and by the patriarchy that permeates them.

In the second group, I reviewed studies on the roles of women workers in global production and their resistance strategies. These studies, primarily focusing on women in the Global South where capitalist manufacturing has largely relocated, emphasize the gendered nature of production processes. They also challenge the mainstream view of women workers as passive victims, revealing their forms of resistance. Post-structuralist studies often depict women's resistance in the workplace as "cultural" or "symbolic," aiming to undermine gender hierarchies through discursive practices. However, these studies frequently overlook the structural conditions surrounding women and inadequately address collective and organized struggles. To fill this gap, other studies focus on women's organized labor activism from a gender perspective. They analyze the organized struggles of women workers in the Global South within the historical and structural contexts of global capitalism and patriarchy, emphasizing women's agency in the labor movement.

In the third group, I examined studies focusing on the struggle of women workers in Turkey. This area has remained quite underrepresented within the literature on women's labor. I discussed a small number of studies that have

made significant contributions, highlighting the similarities and differences between these studies and my own work. This analysis aims to clarify the thesis's contribution to understanding women's organizing processes, the dynamic nature of their relationship with unions and male trade unionists, and the subjective impacts of collective action on them.

In the fourth and final group, I reviewed studies focusing on the outcomes of social movements. While most studies in the social movement literature focus on the causes of movements, there are very few that address the outcomes. Even these studies generally focus on "macro-level structural outcomes" including political, institutional, and cultural change, with scant attention given to the "subjective transformation" of collective action participants. This thesis contributes to the literature by examining the subjective transformation of women workers involved in collective action.

3

Introduction to the field

This section will provide the necessary background information before analyzing women's experiences of unionization and resistance. First, after briefly describing the historical and contemporary context of unionization and structural barriers in Turkey, I will examine the textile and metal sectors in terms of their share in the economy, employment characteristics, and labor movements. I will then provide background information on four cases of mobilization, including the structural characteristics of the factories, women's working conditions, and a summary of the unionization and picketing processes.

3.1 The Historical and Structural Context of Unionization

Since the late 1970s, a new economic paradigm known as neoliberalism has emerged, which mainly entails a shift from import-substitution policies to export-oriented industrialization and free trade policies, aiming for developing countries to be heavily integrated into the global economy. While developing countries adopted export-led policies as the engine of their economic growth, the international division of labor was also largely restructured, with production sites in the Global North intensively relocated

to countries in the Global South that were considered sources of cheap and submissive labor.[117] On the other hand, the basic premises of neoliberal policies are the flexibilization and precarization of labor through subcontracting and deunionization.[118] Thus, while production has become more globalized than ever before, workers have become more precarious and repressed than ever before. As many Global South countries, in the 1980s, Turkey gradually adopted an export-led growth strategy based on political and economic repression of labor.

In this section, I will present the historical context and structural barriers to unionization in Turkey. After briefly presenting the picture of women workers' unionization under these structural barriers, I will touch on the history of women workers' resistance since the 2000s.

For the neoliberal restructuring of Turkey, authoritarianism has been the primary catalyzer for implementing the new economic regime, military coup took place in 1980 and following authoritarian regimes provided conditions required for implementing neoliberal policies. The resolutions of 24 January 1980, prepared by the IMF for Turkey's transition to neoliberal policies, could only be implemented under a military regime. One of the main objectives of the military regime was to break the power of the rising labor movement during the 1970s and put an end to class-based politics.[119] Then, all union activities were banned, and the right to strike was usurped. The 1982 constitution imposed heavy restrictions on unionization and worker mobilization.[120] However, due to the rise of the labor movement in the late 1980s, global economic crises, and weak coalition governments, neoliberalization in Turkey could not be fully realized regarding privatizations and market flexibility.

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117 Alessandra Mezzadri, Globalisation, informalisation and the state in the Indian garment industry. International Review of Sociology Vol. 20, No. 3,2(2010): 2

118 Efe Can Gürcan and Berk Mete. Neoliberalism and the Changing Face of Unionism. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 3.

119 Galip Yalman, Transition to Neoliberalism: The Case of Turkey in the 1980s, (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press, 2009)

120 Aziz Çelik, Turkey's New Labour Regime Under the Justice and Development Party in the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century: Authoritarian Flexibilization, in: Middle Eastern Studies, 51(4), (2015).

During the AKP period, the 'strong state' required for neoliberal policies[121] emerged, gaining broad popular support through various containment mechanisms and populist rhetoric. Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP has strengthened authoritarian neoliberalism with the further flexibilization of the market, the proliferation of precarious working models such as subcontracting, the hampering of unionization through legal regulations, and the prevention of strikes. Aziz Çelik also explains the labor regime under the AKP period with the term 'authoritarian flexibilization'. This term refers to flexibility and precariousness in individual labor relations and authoritarianism, de-unionization, and symbiotic syndicalism in collective labor relations.[122]

Regarding collective labor relations, a new "Unions and Collective Agreement Law" was ratified in 2012. While this law included some improvements in the processes of forming and joining trade unions, it generally maintained the restrictions on the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike that had been in place since the 1980s. Turkey has a legal procedure that is highly restrictive for workers and trade unions and often abused by employers.

Unions must meet two basic conditions to negotiate collective bargaining in a workplace. First, the union must overcome the industry threshold, which requires the union to have at least 1 percent[123]of the registered workers in its industry. After overcoming this threshold, the union must then overcome the workplace threshold, i.e., 50 percent of the workers in a workplace must be members.

These thresholds are not the only challenge to collective bargaining, but also the authorization procedure itself. Once a union meets these two thresholds and applies for authorization to the Ministry of Labor, the ministry checks the records and grants authorization. The employer then has the right to file a lawsuit to challenge the authorization. According to the law, the

121 Werner Bonefeld, The Strong State and the Free Economy, (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017)

122 Aziz Çelik," Turkey's New Labour Regime Under the Justice and Development Party in the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century: Authoritarian Flexibilization", 6.

123 It reduced from 10 percent to 1 percent by the 2012 law.

objection "stops the authorization procedures until the decision is finalized". Since these lawsuits usually take at least 2 years, employers gain time to prevent unionization. In this process, pioneer workers are usually fired, and union members are forced to resign from the union through pressure and mobbing. In the cases I examined in this thesis, pioneer workers were dismissed when the union was about to complete the required number of members for authorization or when it applied for authorization to the ministry.

By the end of the court process, workers are usually frustrated and resign from the union, and so even if the union is legally authorized, it has de facto lost the majority and cannot sign a collective agreement.[124]

In summary, while employers exploit the process of union authorization to their advantage and commit all kinds of rights violations for union busting, workers who are trying to unionize are limited in what they can do. When unionized workers are dismissed, the law makes it illegal for them to strike or slow down work, and they are only entitled to union compensation if they can prove in court that the union was the reason for their dismissal. Furthermore, employers are not obliged to reinstate these workers. The major structural obstacle to workers' unionization is these conditions of precarity.

The annual reports of the Labor Studies Collective, based on a comprehensive monitoring of newspapers and internet news sites, include statistics on workers who were dismissed due to unionization. As *Table 2* shows, unionization is the reason for the dismissal of workers in a significant portion of the labor protests covered in the press in recent years.[125] Since this data was obtained through a press survey, a dismissal that was not reported in the press is not included in this data. In addition, cases in which workers were dismissed due to unionization but unions did not organize any protests are also not included in this dataset. However, despite these limitations, this table

124 Murat Özveri Türkiye'de Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Yetki Sistemi ve Sendikasızlaştırma (1963-2009). (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 2013)

125 Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu, İşçi Sınıfı Eylemleri Raporu 2022, (İstanbul: Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu, 2024): 21

provides important data on how often unionized workers face dismissal in Turkey.

Table 2: Data on workers dismissed for claiming rights (EÇT, 2022)

Year	Total number of workers dismissed due to claiming rights	Total number of workers dismissed due to unionization
2015	4158	1789
2016	2793	1016
2017	1547	972
2018	2677	964
2019	1428	881
2020	817	597
2021	1736	1634
2022	2699	1533

The most important indicators of union strength are membership numbers, collective bargaining coverage, and strike data. In the late 1980s, one in four workers was covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Since then, coverage has steadily declined, with the lowest rate of 6 percent in 2013. In other words, Turkey experienced one of the sharpest declines in union coverage among OECD countries after 1980.[126] After 2013, collective bargaining coverage slowly increased to 9% by 2021, mainly due to the unionization of public sector subcontracted workers. In 2014, AKP facilitated unionization for these workers through a law change and granted many permanent statuses in 2018.[127]

Regarding strikes, the only legal way to strike is after a dispute in collective bargaining negotiations; all other strikes are illegal. In addition to these legal restrictions, the government's power to ban or postpone strikes further hinders workers. Between 2003 and 2016, AKP banned eight strikes involving around 40,000 workers, and between 2017 and 2018, it banned seven strikes

126 Alpkan Birelma, Trade Unions in Turkey, 2022.(Istanbul: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2022): 6.
127 Ibid.,7.

involving 150,000 workers.[128] Due to increasing strike bans, arrests of unionists, and other factors, the ITUC has listed Turkey among the ten worst countries for workers' rights since 2016.

Birelma categorizes the labor movements that emerged in Turkey in the 2000s into five groups. The first group includes strikes and non-strike actions such as walkouts, marches, and rallies conducted by unionized workers, whose number and strength gradually decrease. The second group consists of actions taken by unionized workers in public enterprises during the closure or privatization of these enterprises, with notable examples including the resistances at Seka, Paşabahçe, Yatağan, Seydişehir, Tekel, and Şişecam. The third group includes actions by private sector workers protesting against injustices in the workplace, such as non-payment of wages, without the aim of unionization. The fourth group comprises the rapidly increasing number of subcontracted workers' movements against job insecurity. The fifth group includes the movements of private sector workers mobilizing for unionization.[129] As explained above, in structural conditions where laws and government policies make unionization and any workers' action so difficult, one group of workers is still fighting for better working conditions. All the cases in my thesis are movements belonging to this fifth group.

3.2. Textile and Metal Industry in Turkey

3.2.1 Textile and garment industry in Turkey

The textile and garment industry has played a significant role in the export-oriented industrialization of Turkey, similar to many developing countries. This industry has been an "easy-entry" industry because the fixed capital and technical costs required for entry and relocation are low.[130] On the other hand, for the same reasons, global competition in textiles is quite high, so employers

128 Ibid.,7.

129 Alpkan Birelma, Ekmek ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi: Günümüz Türkiyesi'nde Üç İşçi Harketinin Etnografisi. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014) 45-47.

130 Utku Balaban, A Conveyor Belt of Flesh. (Istanbul: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011):30.

strive to keep labor costs as low as possible. Therefore, during the neoliberal period in which anti-labor policies were enacted by the government in Turkey, textile producers were easily integrated into global production chains as subcontractors, making labor markets cheaper and more precarious.[131] From the 1980s, Turkey gradually became one of the largest textile exporters in the world. In 2022, according to the WTO database, Turkey is the 4th biggest textile exporter after China, the European Union, India. Similarly, in garment industry, Turkey is the 5th biggest exporter of clothing after China, European Union, Bangladesh and Vietnam.[132]

Being one of the global exporters underlies the high level of subcontracting and informality, the cheap female labor, and non-unionized workplaces with poor and precarious working conditions, which are defining features of the industry. The dominant labor force is comprised of women and young girls because they are regarded as cheap labor, less likely to unionize and easier to control.[133] According to official data in 2022, there are 1.3 million workers registered in the textile industry and about 40% of them are women. But as Dedeoğlu shows that the women's real contribution to the industry is mostly invisible in official records because of the dominance of informal employment of women workers in textile and garment production.[134]

When it comes to forms of employment, there are three different types in the textile sector in Turkey: factory, small-scale workshop, also known as sweatshop or atelier, and home-based work.[135] This multiplicity leads to significant differences in wages, working conditions and level of mobilization of textile workers in the sector. For example, while workers in small workshops often work in informal and precarious conditions with the lowest wages on the market, workers in large-scale factories have relatively higher wages, job security and insurance, and the possibility to unionize, albeit difficult.

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131 Ahmet Bekmen, "State and Capital in Turkey During the Neoliberal Era" in Turkey Reframed: Constituting Neoliberal Hegemony. (London: Pluto Press, 2014): 74.

132 World Trade Organization, "World Trade Statistical Review 2023", (2023), 78-80.

133 Mezzadri, "Globalisation, informalisation and the state in the Indian garment industry", 452.

134 Saniye Dedeoğlu, Women Workers "Turkey. (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2018): 74.

135 Balaban, A Conveyor Belt of Flesh, 30.

One of the main characteristics of the industry is the low level of unionization rate. As mentioned above, the high number of small-scale workshops where unionization is almost impossible, and the prevalence of subcontracting and informal employment are some of the factors that hinder unionization in this sector. On the other hand, workers in textile factories where unionization is possible face two major challenges when they organize: first, the risk of companies moving their workplaces in case of unionization in order to keep labor costs low and not lose their position in global competition, and second, the risk of dismissal, as in the vast majority of cases of unionization in Turkey.

For all reasons, the unionization rate in the textile industry is approximately 8.6, ranking 6th from the bottom among 20 industries.[136] When we look at this data in terms of gender, the unionization rate of male workers (68.43) is slightly more than twice the unionization rate of female workers (31.57).[137] In other words, despite the predominance of female labor in the textile sector, women are less unionized than men. This is not only related to women's employment patterns in textiles and structural barriers to unionization, but also to the attitudes of unions towards women workers, which adopt the traditional perception of women as docile and lacking class consciousness.

Despite all these restrictions on labor mobilization in textile industry, a considerable number of women workers have attempted to organize in their workplaces against low wages and bad working conditions.

3.2.2 Metal industry in Turkey

The metal industry is mostly classified into a wide range of industrial sub-sectors, including basic metal industry, metal ware, electrical equipment, machine manufacturing, and automotive. As Beverly Silver shows, the automobile industry, an important part of the metal industry, has created

136 Alpkan Birelma,"Militant minority at work: a successful case of unionisation of garment workers in Istanbul". Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement (2012). 10.

137 ÇSGB, İşkolları İstatistikleri E-Bülteni Mart 2023, (2023).

strong and effective labor movements wherever mass production spread and each time capital's response to worker militancy has been to relocate production to the regions where the labor is cheaper, more submissive and unorganized.[138] Rather than resolving the crises of capital's on profitability and labor control, geographical shifts have led to the formation of new labor movements in the new regions of production.[139] On the other hand, the workers' actions in the automobile industry, so effective that they forced capital to relocate, stem heavily from the 'workplace bargaining power' of workers which refers to the ability to exploit their strategic position within the division of labor.[140]

As a part of geographical shifts of capital, from the mid-1990s, Turkey has gradually increased its export share on metal production, specifically on automotive production. In 2022, according to WTO data, Turkey is already among the top ten exporters of automotive products in the world, ranking 10th from the bottom. During the years, Turkey's share in world trade in this sector has increased from 0.3 in 2000, to 1.3 in 2010 and 1.7 in 2022.[141] The main reason for Turkey's rise to the top of the global competition is flexible and authoritarian working conditions which is defined by lower wages and long working hours.[142] Due to both its share on the national economy and the high level of workers' militancy, metal industry in Turkey is considered as "one of the leading industries as locomotive and trend setter in terms of labor relations."[143]

There are approximately 1.9 million workers registered in the metal sector, of which 81.75% are male workers, while the share of female workers is

138 Beverly Silver, Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003):41.

139 Ibid., 64.

140 Ibid.,47.

141 World Trade Organization, "World Trade Statistical Review 2023", (2023), 78-80.

142 Meryem Kurtulmuş and Kurtar Tanyılmaz, "Uluslararası Üretim Zincirleri ve Emek: Türkiye Otomotiv Sektörü Deneyimi" in Finansallaşma Kıskacında Türkiye'de Devlet, Sermaye Birikimi ve Emek, (Istanbul, Notabene Yayınları, 2017): 211.

143 Aziz Çelik, "The Wave of Strikes and Resistances of the Metal Workers of 2015 in Turkey" (2015):5.

18.25%.[144] The metal industry is still a largely male-dominated sector in Turkey, but women's participation is increasing from 11.68% in 2010 to 14.95% in 2015 and 17.74% in 2022[145], as many large companies run projects targeting women's employment supported by government incentives as part of their R&D activities.

Furthermore, unionization in metal industry is relatively high compared to other manufacturing industries in Turkey. According to official data, the unionization rate of metal workers in 2023 is 17.76%, the majority of unionized workers are male workers with 88.13%, while the share of female workers is 11.87%.[146] There are very strong and large labor unions in the metal sector, three of them have the right to collective bargaining by meeting the official requirements. The largest union in terms of membership is Türk Metal, affiliated to the Türk-İş confederation, which defines itself non-political. The second largest union is Öz Çelik-İş, affiliated to the Hak-İş confederation which is liberal and pro-government. At the third place is Birleşik Metal, affiliated to DISK, which is known as a leftist confederation.

As mentioned above, metal workers have considerable bargaining power in the workplace so that they have power to organize militant actions including strikes, factory occupation for their demands. Therefore, metal workers in Turkey have been organizing strong workplace actions and strikes both with their unions and against the unions when they remain passive.

3.2.3 Worker Protests in Textile and Metal Industry in Turkey: A Short Comparison

After a general overview of the textile and metal industries in Turkey, I will focus on industrial actions in these industries to provide background information on my cases. In this section, my data is based on the reports of *Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu* (Labor Studies Collective in English), where I have been working as a researcher for the past two years, that has been preparing annual reports on working-class protests since 2015, by scanning

144 ÇSGB, İşkolları İstatistikleri E-Bülteni Mart 2023, (2023).

145 Data taken from the database of the Social Security Institution.

146 ÇSGB, İşkolları İstatistikleri E-Bülteni Mart 2023, (2023).

local, national, and social media. In reports, there are three categories for worker protests, which are "workplace-based protests" that refers to the actions by workers in a workplace regarding their issues or demands, "general protests" that refers to workers' actions for political demands or general demands regarding working conditions and "solidarity protests" that refers to actions organized by workers at a workplace in solidarity with the resisting workers at a different workplace.[147] For my study, I look only at workplace-based protest data.

According to the database, at least 2957 workplace-based protests have been recorded from 2015 to 2021. The main reasons for workplace-based protests are: dismissal of workers, unionization, unpaid wages, collective labor agreements and working conditions. In terms of sectors, the metal sector is the leading one with 18% of total protests while the textile comes in 5th place with its 7% share. However, when we look at *Table 3*, we see that the textile is the second manufacturing sector with the highest number of workplace-based actions after the metal sector. This is followed by the petro-chemical and food industries.

Table 3: Workplace-based protest data in 2015-2021 (prepared by using EÇT database)

Sector	**Number of cases**	**The share in all cases**
Metal	537	18%
Municipality workers	375	13%
Construction	331	11%
Health and social services (service)	258	9%
Textile, garment and leather	205	7%
Education (service)	154	5%
Petroleum, chemistry, rubber, plastics	142	5%
Food industry	101	3%

147 Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu, İşçi Sınıfı Eylemleri Raporu 2018, (İstanbul: Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu, 2019):8.

Mining	95	3%
Transportation	79	3%
Energy	60	2%
Others	620	21%
Total	2957	100%

As Beverly Silver points out, since the workplace bargaining power of automobile workers (which can be generalized as metal sectors with assembly lines) has historically been stronger than that of textile workers[148], the workplace-based actions of metal workers to disrupt production have been significantly influential on the labor movement and labor relations in Turkey. The wave of strikes led by thousands of workers in 2015, known as the "Metal Storm", organized against both low wages and the symbiotic unionism of Türk Metal, is an important example that illustrates the power of metal workers in Turkey.[149] However, we cannot easily conclude that the workplace-based actions of the textile workers are bound to be ineffective and unsuccessful. Based on Silver's analysis, militant actions of textile workers have resulted in a "universal defeat",[150] but on a shorter-term scale, it is possible to observe exceptions to this in Turkey in recent years. In the first months of 2022, similar to the Metal Storm, there happened a spectacular strike wave around the country, in which the textile workers were one of the main actors of the wave. Especially in Antep, one of the centers where textile production is concentrated, around 13,000 workers participated in the strike wave, which led to many gains for workers.[151]

148 Silver, Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870, 92.

149 Aziz Çelik, "The Wave of Strikes and Resistances of the Metal Workers of 2015 in Turkey" (2015); Alican Ç. Gökçek, Beyond Limits: The Mobilization of a Wildcat Strike in Turkey. (Master's Thesis, Bogazici University, 2019); Ulaş Taştekin, The Metal Storm: 2015 Wave of Strikes in The Turkish Automotive Sector. (Master Thesis: Middle East Technical University, 2019)

150 Silver, Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870, 81.

151 BİRTEK-SEN, Gaziantep Başpinar Osb'de 2 Şubat – 9 Mart 2022 Tarihleri Arasinda Yaşanan Fiili İşçi Grevlerine Dair Rapor, (2022).

In conclusion, metal and textile are two important industries for analyzing the structure of worker mobilization in Turkey. My study focuses on the unionization struggle of women workers in four factories: one textile (Zitex) and one garment (Katex) in Bursa and two metal factories, one automotive factory in Gebze (Automet) and one electronics factory in Istanbul (Fonmet).

3.3. Cases of Mobilization

3.3.1 Zitex

Zitex is an old-established textile factory in Bursa that employed roughly 450 people. The organized industrial zone (OSB) where Zitex located was founded in 1971, consisting of more than 500 industrial firms which are mainly focused on the metal and textile industry. 300 of them concentrated on the textile industry including fabric and yarn factories. In these textile factories, it is one of the leading firms in terms of profit on sales. According to reports prepared by Istanbul Chamber of Industry, Zitex is among the 40 companies from Bursa that entered the "ISO Turkey's Second 500 Largest Industrial Enterprises" list.[152] The company produces and dyes yarns of various materials including viscose, cotton, polyester, modal, which are mostly produced for brands such as H&M, and Zara, Pull & Bear, Bershka, Massimo Dutti, Stradivarius, Oysho which belong to the Inditex group, one of the largest global companies in the textile industry.

The majority of workers at Zitex are women. They work six days a week for minimum wage and premiums and are forced to overtime work on their days off. As a reflection of the gendered division of labor at home in the workplace, women are often assigned jobs that are not included in job descriptions, such as collecting and disposing of garbage, cleaning machines or the workshop, in addition to their own work. Also, mobbing is a defining feature of working conditions at Zitex, where women are systematically oppressed by abuse of male supervisors, and threats of being reported and

152 DOSAB, (2022), https://www.dosab.org.tr/Detay/1121/ISO-Ikinci-500%60de-11-DOSAB-firmasi-yer-buldu

dismissed. Even getting a medical report causes supervisors to feel anger against women workers and try to take revenge on them.

> "The foreman was a bit obsessive. He takes me from that machine, he takes me to another side as he wants, I go from there to there. He says to me "I'll put you in that machine (threatening me), you'll die there, I put you in this machine for your own good". I got a medical report that day, my kidney was hurting due to the stone. It was Sunday that day. He said he didn't have the staff; he was angry with me for not coming. The next day he took it out on me. "I said, 'As if I didn't come to work for my own pleasure, I had a medical report.' " (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[153]

In many textile factories including Zitex, women are not exposed to not only mobbing in the shopfloor but also harassment and physical violence by male workers, supervisors, and managers. For example, Zeynep faced the threat of becoming like "Emine Bulut", who was brutally murdered by her husband, when she complained about her bullying foreman and sent a warning through the union.

> "There was a foreman, he walked up to me. And he yells at me, we're on the night shift. I say you can't yell at me; he says he will. Besides, he threatens me with report. After this incident, I sent a warning through the union. After that, they called me to human resources to ask me why I did such a thing. They said, 'Why didn't you come and tell us something, we would have warned him, what was the need to send a warning'. The chief of staff told me, " He might have gotten angry at home, he might have been stressed at work, anyone can do anything

153 "Usta (erkek) biraz takıntılıydı, evhamlı. Beni o makineden alıyor, istediği gibi başka tarafa alıyor, ordan oraya gidiyorum. Diyor ki bana "seni bak o makineye veririm (tehdit ediyor beni), canın çıkar orda, senin iyiliğin için bu makineye verdim". O olay şeyden çıktıydı, ben o gün rapor aldıydım, böbreğim ağrıyordu, taş vardı bende. O gün pazardı bir de. Neymiş eleman yokmuş, bana kızmış gelmedi diye. Ertesi gün hırsını benden alıyor. "Ben keyfimden mi gelmedim usta, benim kapı gibi raporum var" dedim."

> in these times, look, did you see the murder of Emine Bulut, the man cut off the woman's head". (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[154]

There was also a pregnancy ban for women workers until the unionization process. Newly married women were not recruited because they were likely to get pregnant. If a woman with a child was accepted on condition that she did not become pregnant for at least two years.

> "For example, there were even people who got pregnant and wore a corset, so that it wouldn't show. So that they wouldn't fire them. There were women who were fired." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[155]

In the history of the workplace, various textile unions have attempted to organize workers several times, yet they failed. Then, workers organized in the "TexUnion" affiliated with the union confederation known as pro-government and less contentious. The major reasons for women joining the union are the gender-based discrimination, mistreatment and harassment they face at work, and increasingly heavy workloads.

As the union approached the target number of members required for legal authorization, the employer became aware of union organizing and in the mid-2022, four women workers were dismissed due to unionization. The dismissed women began to picket in front of the factory and the picket line lasted for about six months. The distinctive feature of the worker resistance was that it was a women's resistance. For this reason, various feminist groups, both locally and nationally, visited the picket line many times and organized a solidarity campaign to expose the working conditions at Zitex and make the women's resistance more visible. During the campaign, feminists sent emails to the ethics committees of the international companies to which Zitex

154 "Usta benim üstüme yürümüştü ya, ben sendika üzerinden ihtar göndermiştim. Ondan sonra beni personele çağırdılar, sen niye böyle bir şey yaptın diye. Niye gelip bize bir şey söylemedin, biz onu uyarırdık, ne gerek vardı ihtar göndermeye, birinden akıl mı aldın gibilerinden konuştular. "Ya evde sinirlenmiş olabilir, işyerinde stresli olmuş olabilir, bu zaman da herkes herşeyi yapabilir diyor, bak gördün mü Emine Bulut cinayetini, adam kadının kafasını kesti" diyor bana. Personel şefi diyor bunu bana."

155 "Mesela hamile kalıp korse takan insanlar bile vardı, belli olmasın diye. Çıkartmasınlar işten diye. Çıkartttıkları kadınlar olmuş."

exports yarn, put stickers on clothes in stores such as Zara and H&M describing the working conditions at the factory, and organized social media campaigns to spread the women's struggle and stand in solidarity with them.

Throughout the picket line, tensions arose among the women workers. Some women were uncomfortable with other women coming to the forefront of the resistance and receiving more media coverage. When these tensions turned into a visible conflict, union officials did not intervene sufficiently and even deepened the conflict by taking sides between the women. At the end of the sixth month, the employer offered the union a deal: either to set up a union room in the factory and allow workers to organize in the union without facing any pressure, or to reinstate the dismissed women workers. The women workers, overwhelmed by the material and moral burden of the process, accepted the agreement in favor of the union so that the union could obtain legal authorization in the workplace and start collective bargaining negotiations. Zitex thus became one of the few unionized companies in the organized industrial zone.

I conducted in-depth interviews with two women from this case, Zeynep and Ayşe, in their homes. These women, especially Zeynep, were among the leader workers who initiated unionization in the workplace and made huge efforts to mobilize workers. After the picket line, they started working professionally in the union. I also tried to interview two other women, Hatice and Pınar, who were both on the other side of the tension between the women and the conflict with the union. Hatice refused to be interviewed because of both her mental breakdown related to picket line and also her husband's restrictions on talking about the process. Only after much insistence was I able to interview Pınar on the phone, and she told me about her disappointing experiences during the picket line. Thanks to this interview, I was able to learn the other side of the story, eliminating the risk of sticking to a one-sided narrative about the resistance. Hatice and Pınar are both currently working in the same textile factory.

3.3.2 Katex

Katex is a garment factory which is founded in 1991. It is in the same organized industrial zone as Zitex in Bursa. The factory produces different kind of cotton and synthetic fantasy fabric. The products are mostly exported to large textile companies such as H&M, Zara, LCW, Bonotto.

The company employs roughly 300 people, most of whom are women. My interviewers had been working in the department of weaving and quality control. Women work long hours in return for minimum wage, no premiums, or any benefits. Workers in the quality control department have to work 12 hours a day, while other departments work three shifts a day. Night shifts are particularly troublesome for women workers, who are also responsible for childcare and housework, because they do not have enough time to rest.

> "Especially the night shift is exhausting for us. As a woman, we also have work at home, of course, children. You have to do the work at home too. How much sleep can you get during the day, it's not like at night." (Gülay, Katex, 13 years)[156]

Similar to Zitex, women are also tasked with additional jobs such as cleaning toilets, cutting and packing fabrics.

> "We also cleaned the toilets when necessary. Then they said men would clean the toilets too, but we were cleaning them before. They don't hire staff separately. They made us do that too. When there was no work, we wiped the machine over and over again, we wiped the wiped machines." (Meryem, Katex, 1 year)[157]

Especially the women working in the quality control department were constantly accused of making mistakes by the foremen and threatened with a report. Moreover, in case of any mistake, women were humiliated and insulted by their foremen.

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156 "Özellikle gece vardiyası mahvediyor bizi. Bir bayan olarak evde de işlerimiz var tabi, çoluk çocuk. Evde de işleri yapmak zorundasınız. Gündüz ne kadar uyuyabilirsiniz, geceye benzemiyor."

157 "Gerektiğinde tuvaletleri de temizledik. Daha düne kadar temizliyoduk. Sonrasında erkekler tuvalet temizliycekler dediler, ee biz temizliyorduk önceden. Eleman almıyorlar ayrıdan. Onu da bize yaptırıyorlardı. İş olmadığı zaman makineyi kaç kere tekrar tekrar sildik, silinmiş makineleri sildik."

> "At the slightest mistake, they would gather us, yell and scream... If a person made a mistake, they would expose it and shame them." (Sevgi, Katex, 6 years)[158]

Constant surveillance of workers and limiting their communication with each other is a key feature of managerial control in the workplace. In Katex, women were not allowed to talk to each other or even just look around. Besides, the workers I met frequently emphasized that women workers are under more pressure at the workplace than male workers because foremen are afraid of fighting with male workers. On the other hand, women endure mobbing and heavy workloads more than men, considering the possibility of dismissal and financial difficulties.

> "We are mostly women in weaving, sometimes there are men too, but men cannot withstand the pressure as much as women. We women are a bit more submissive because we think more about making a living, about the family. Men can't take as much abuse as we can. They can walk away without thinking. Foremen don't oppress men much either. If they say something to a man, he responds immediately. But if they say something to a woman, we put up with it, maybe you go and cry on the side, but then you go on. And we do the job they give us more than enough. But men are not like that." (Gülay, Katex, 13 years)[159]

Mobbing that women face at the workplace has serious detrimental impacts on their physical and mental health. In other words, women suffer from occupational diseases such as herniated discs, cervical herniated discs and

158 "En ufak bir hatada topluyorlardı bizi, bağırıp çağırıyorlardı... Kişi bir hata yaptıysa, onu ortaya çıkartıp herkese rezil ediyordu."

159 "Dokumada genelde kadınız, bazen erkekler de oluyor ama, erkekler kadınlar kadar baskıya dayanamıyor. Biz kadınlar biraz daha geçinmeyi, aileyi düşündüğümüz için biraz boyun eğiyoruz. Erkekler bizim kadar laf çekemez, laf kaldıramaz. Onlar düşünmeden çekip gidebiliyorlar. Ama biz bayanlar biraz daha düşündüğümüz için evi, geçimi sineye çekiyoruz bazı şeyleri... Ustabaşları da erkekleri çok ezemiyor. Erkeğe bir laf söylese hemen cevabını veriyor. Ama kadına bir şey deseler, biz sineye çekiyoruz, belki gidip yan tarafta ağlıyorsun ama sonra gidip devam ediyorsun yani. Verdikleri işi de yapıyoruz, fazlasıyla yapıyoruz. Ama erkekler öyle değil. Erkekler çekiyor resti. Yani ben onu gördüm, yanımızda oldu kaç kez."

fibromyalgia, caused by physical conditions and workload, as well as various diseases caused by the stress they are exposed to in the workplace.

> "For example, I got rosacea because of stress. My face turns red, I can't handle stress, it's all related to the work I do. One of my friends had a bowel disease. This is also due to stress. Where did you work, the doctor said. Some of them are undergoing psychological treatment. We always bear the stress of these people. Constant insults, pressure, mobbing... If you look to the right, it's a crime, if you look to the left it's a crime, everything is a crime." (Sevgi, Katex, 6 years)[160]

Another grievance of women regarding their working conditions is sexual and verbal harassment. Although women are subjected to various forms of sexual harassment by male coworkers, male supervisors and managers, those in higher positions within the workplace hierarchy have greater power to harass women workers without facing any consequences. Fatma, for example, worked in several different textile factories including Katex in Bursa and always felt that she was a 'sexual object' in the eyes of male workers and supervisors.

> "He was humiliating you; you are a woman; you are just a sexual object in their eyes. It's really like that, the factories are like that. You work there but he doesn't see you there as a friend, he looks at you differently... How many times have I come across him, every time I turn my eyes, I see his hand going to his genitals. I even warned him a couple of times. I said, 'don't do that'. The more he does that, the more nervous and angrier I get. I try not to look, but you have to, he's working next to you." (Fatma, Katex, 6 months)[161]

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160 "Mesela ben stresten gül hastalığına yakalandım, stresten yani. Yüzümde kızarmalar oluşuyor, strese gelemiyorum. Bu tamamen stresle, çalıştığım işle alakalı. Arkadaşlarımın birisi bağırsaklarından rahatsız oldu. Bunun nedeni de stres. Sen nerde çalıştın demiş doktor. Kimisi psikolojik tedavi görüyor. Hep bu insanların streslerini biz çekiyoruz. Sürekli bir hakaret, baskı, mobbing. Sağa baktın suç, sola baktın suç, her şey suç yani."

161 "Seni aşağılıyordu, kadınsın ya, onların gözünde sadece bir cinsel varlıksın yani. Gerçekten böyle yani, fabrikalar böyle. Sen orda çalışıyorsun ama seni orda bir arkadaşı olarak görmüyor, sana bakışları farklı oluyor. Kaç defa rast geldim, gözümü her çevirdiğimde görüyorum,

Following Zitex's success in unionization, "TexUnion" accelerated its organizing activities in other factories in the industrial zone, and in September 2022, women working under these working conditions at the Katex factory began to become members. In October 2022, four women workers were dismissed after their union membership was discovered by the employer and they began to picket in front of the factory. In the last days of 2022, five women workers were also dismissed and joined the picket line. As the picketing of nine women continued, the employer brought a truck with tankers full of acid to the field and tried to poison striking women. Workers were sent to the hospital because they breathed in acid before they realized the tanks. Such an attempt by the employer to break their struggle further increased the workers' motivation and indignation. After this incident, feminists immediately organized a protest action in front of the company office in Istanbul. A few days later, a feminist group called "Feminist Revolt Against Poverty" organized a visit to Bursa to express solidarity with the women workers.

The poisoning incident was a move that strengthened the workers' hand to squeeze the employer. Similar to Zitex case, this mobilization could have succeeded with the support of feminist groups, public pressure and pressure from global export companies. However, a few days after the feminists' visit in early February, two major earthquakes struck ten provinces in Turkey, completely changing the national agenda. The resistance lost much of its media and public support. After the earthquake, the country's general elections became another factor that shifted the agenda. Under these circumstances, the workers' chances of pushing the employer and winning the resistance diminished. The number of workers participating in the picket line also began to decline. Although the workers continued to picket until the end of June 2023, they did not achieve any gains.

I visited the picket line twice and had the opportunity to observe and talk to women in front of the factory. I was there before the visit of feminist groups organized after the poisoning incident, so I was able to observe women's reactions to feminists. In addition to participant observation, I conducted in-

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sürekli eli cinsel organına gidiyor. Hatta birkaç defa uyardım da. Dedim 'yapma bu hareketi'. O öyle yaptıkça, ben daha da geriliyorum, sinirleniyorum. Bakmamaya çalışıyorum ama mecbur bakıcaksın, yanında çalışıyor zaten.

depth interviews with five women. I also participated in a group interview with women who were later dismissed.

3.3.3 Automet

Automet is a leading company in the automotive industry, which is located in Gebze, one of the most important industrial sites of Turkey. For more than 50 years, Automet has produced automotive parts for global automotive companies such as Ford, Toyota, Hyundai, Mercedes. Paying special attention to R&D activities, the company has expanded its production scope and area by establishing cooperation with partner companies in other countries. Today, the company has operated in four countries which are Turkey, Korea, Romania and Thailand. According to ISO 2021 data, the company is among the "largest 500 industrial companies".[162]

Automet has a large complex including four production facilities in Gebze, focused on interior and exterior parts of automotives, employed around 2000 workers. The workers are registered under subcontractor companies on metal, petro-chemical, transportation. As subcontracting is one of main employer's strategies for preventing unionization in the company, workers have been divided into eight subcontractor companies with different industrial sectors.

While the company managers get 'women-friendly workplace' rewards because of their special attention to women's employment and empowerment, women workers in Automet were not on the same page with them. In other words, the 'women-friendly' image of company constructed in media completely contradicts the working experience of women. First of all, the company is identified with the gender pay gap and gender-based workplace injustices. Women did not receive equal payment even though they were assigned with equal workload as male workers, regarding women's income as an 'additional income' to the household.

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162 ISO, (2021), https://www.iso500.org.tr/500-buyuk-sanayi kurulusu?yil=2021&nace=&bagliOlduguSanayiOdasi=&calisanAraligiMin=0&calisanAraligiMax=0&sermayeYapisi=&kurulusAdi=&birinciIkinci500=1&lisanId=17

> "In a serious manner, there was an inequality; when it came to the time for raises, the man who did the same job as you on the same machine was getting a higher raise. They would say to you that you received a twenty percent raise, but when you looked at it, the minimum wage was being shown; they were making it appear that way on the surface." (Canan, Automet, 5 years)[163]

Also, in many departments, women work on heavier machines than men because supervisors regard women as more capable and manageable. Furthermore, during overtime, women continue to work on the same machines that tire them out all day, while male workers choose where to work as they please.

Similar to textile factories, female metal workers suffered from male supervisors' arbitrary and hostile treatments such as reporting, relocating in the shopfloor, yelling and disdaining someone in the front of co-workers.

> "I had a male team leader. We clashed. I was working intensely, couldn't find the opportunity to put on my gloves, and had asked him for help to put them on. He complained about me and reported me seven times that week. My shift supervisor, knowing my work ethic, called me up and tore up the reports. But if they didn't know me, they might not have done that. There were too many injustices. I couldn't speak up there because I'm a woman. But men could argue freely. They couldn't say anything to men." (Filiz, Automet, 5 years)[164]

Among the industrial sectors, the metal industry is one of the sectors where occupational accidents occur most frequently due to the sharpness of

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163 "Ciddi anlamda bir eşitsizlik vardı, aynı makinede aynı işi yaptığın erkekle, zam dönemi geldiği zaman o daha fazla zam alıyordu. Sana yüzde yirmi zam aldın diyordu ama bakıyordun asgari ücret, görünürde öyle gösteriyorlardı."

164 "Benim erkek bir ekip liderim vardı. Zıt düştük. Çok yoğun çalışıyordum, eldivenimi takmaya fırsat bulamadım ve yardım et de eldivenimi takayım dedim. Beni şikayet etti, bana o hafta 7 defa tutanak yazdı. Benim vardiya amirim benim çalışma sistemimi bildiği için, yukarı çağırıp konuştuğunda tutanakları yırtıp atmıştı ama eğer çalışma sistemimi bilmese bunu yapmayabilirdi. Yaptıkları haksızlıklar çok fazla. Orda sesimi çıkaramıyordum çünkü kadınsın. Ama erkekler takır takır savaşabiliyorlardı. Onlara sesleri çıkmıyordu."

the materials and machine parts used and the high temperatures required for operations.[165] In the case of the precautions on occupational health and safety are not taken, workers have occupational accidents which results in injuries, disabilities and death. Automet workers have been exposed to such accidents many times due to violation of rules required for occupational safety.

Regarding the mobilization history of the workplace, many different unions were attempted to organize Automet workers, but they failed in all attempts. The employer threatened the workers against unionization, saying "if necessary, I will fire everyone, if necessary, I will continue with subcontracted workers, if necessary, I will lock the doors, but I will not bring the union here". Therefore, Automet is considered as a workplace impossible to unionize by metal workers in Gebze. But workers suffering from low wages, gender-based discrimination and humiliating treatments have maintained their efforts to mobilize in the workplace.

After the declaration of the new rate of rise in January 2022, vast majority of workers went on strike against low wage increases and gathered in front of factory. This spontaneous strike led to joining more people into the "Met2Union" that already has members in the workplace. After a-day strike, the managers asked workers for a week meeting their demands but in that week many workers were taken administrative leave that regarded as a way of gaining time for dismissal. On the other hand, as the number of union members increases, employers have strived to prevent mobilization by relocating workers from dissolved subcontractor companies to the newly established companies so that union membership falls and by oppressing workers for resigning from the union and joining the one that the employer prefers.

Despite all obstacles, the union achieved to unionize majority of workers, required for legal authorization. Following the union's announcement of the application to the ministry, around 150 workers were dismissed without compensation due to being unionized. Then, workers who both continued to work and those who were laid-off attempted to occupy the workplace to show their unity and resistance. The factory occupation which is a kind of peak for

165 Esma Nur Güllüoğlu and Arif Nihat Güllüoğlu, Türkiye'de Metal Sektöründe Meydana Gelen İş Kazalarının Analizi, Int. J. Adv. Eng. Pure Sci. 2019, 1: 70-82

workers' militancy and breaking point for the process were repressed with police brutality, many workers and union officers were taken into custody.

Women workers were in the leading positions in both strike and factory occupation. In the week following the violent crushing of militancy, workers began to picket in front of factory, which would last about 2 months. During this process, many political organizations, parties, unions, and feminist groups visited to the picket line. Feminists had organized actions on March 8 with women workers. Although resistance had considerable support that became visible through visits for solidarity and public statements, they did achieve hardly ever support from workers who were in production due to ongoing oppression and mobbing. Also, resisting workers had dealt with many troubles including financial difficulties, childcare burden, disputes among workers, and union officers' discriminatory treatments.

At the end of March, the union announced the end of the picketing in front of the factory. Even though the judicial process on the legal authorization of the union in the workplace and reemployment of workers continued, workers' resistance had finished without any concrete gains.

I conducted in-depth interviews with four women from this case. Two of them, Filiz and Canan, began to work in a unionized workplace after the picket line ended thanks to the support of union. Ayten and Ebru, on the other hand, were among the women who clashed with union officers during the picket line, and who faced financial difficulties and unemployment after the mobilization. By interviewing women with different experiences on the picket line, I was able to diversify the narratives about the resistance and women's relationships with the union.

3.3.4 Fonmet

Fonmet is an electronic factory that was founded by foreign companies in Istanbul in 2021. In the beginning, about 800 workers were recruited in production, most of them were women. Women were forced to work like a machine at high speed, without speaking, drinking water or going to the toilet. Specifically, the restriction on water and toilet had turned into women's working experience into a kind of torture.

> "They forbade people to go to the restroom, they used to put water, but not glasses, so that people wouldn't drink water or go to the restroom. One woman used to put a diaper, for example, when she had her period, because she couldn't go to the restroom." (Mehtap, Fonmet, 2 years)[166]

Women were exposed to severe oppression about the number of products they had to achieve in a workday. As the request for the product by managers gradually increased, women became more repressed by supervisors yelling them as "hurry up, hurry up" *(hadi, hadi)*.

> "At first it was not like this, then they increased the pressure. "Be quiet, don't talk to each other... "They were constantly telling people 'Hurry up, hurry up' and making them compete with each other to produce 2000 products per day. At first we were doing 1000, 800, now they want 2000." (Mehtap, Fonmet, 2 years)[167]

Such pressures put by male supervisors and managers, particularly targeting women workers, have led to the emergence of various occupational diseases, including mental illnesses.

> "I had a panic attack from eating in a hurry, drinking tea in a hurry, going to the toilet in a hurry. I now have arrhythmia in my heart. So stress, anxiety. I have a rhythm disorder because I work under pressure in a tense environment." (Gamze, Fonmet, 3 years)[168]

After a while, workers began to mobilize and join the "Met1Union" against the harsh working conditions and managers' unjust treatments. Similar to the

166 "Lavaboya gitme yasağı koyuyorlardı, su koyuyorlardı bardak koymuyorlardı, insanlar su içmesin lavaboya gitmesin diye. Bir arkadaş regl olduğu zaman bez koymuştu mesela, hasta bezi. Tuvalete gidemediği için."

167 "İlk başlarda böyle değildi, sonra sonra baskıyı artırdılar. Sessiz olun, birbirinizle konuşmayın, hadi hadi... 2000 sayı çıkaracaklar diye insanlara böyle hadi hadi diyorlar, yarıştırıyorlar. İlk başlarda 1000 yapıyorduk, 800 yapıyorduk, şimdi 2000 istiyorlar."

168 "Aceleyle yemek yemekten, aceleyle çay içmekten, aceleyle tuvalete gitmekten, panik atak olmuşum. Şuan ritim bozukluğum var kalbimde. Yani stres, sıkıntı. Gergin bir ortamda baskı halinde çalıştığım için ritim bozukluğu oluşmuş bende."

previous case, when the union made the majority of workers members, the employer sought to prevent mobilization by dismissing pioneer workers. Workers' response to the layoffs was strike action on the shopfloor. While the dismissed workers continued picketing in front of the factory, a group of workers stopped production and started picketing in the factory yard. The dismissed workers, with the intervention of the union, entered the factory yard and joined the workers' picket and the workers were picketing the factory yard day and night for about 10 days.

During picketing, the union achieved the majority in the factory, gained authorization, and signed the collective bargaining agreement. In Turkey, employers often challenge the union's authorization through legal means and this prolonged court process prevents the union from initiating collective bargaining negotiations in the workplace. However, this is not the case at Fonmet. Although the employer first tried to prevent unionization by firing the pioneer workers, they did not challenge the union's authorization and the collective agreement was signed. It is possible to suggest that this situation resulted from an implicit agreement made between the employer and the union. Met1Union is a union that has a cooperative relationship with employers and its high membership rate in the sector is associated with the support it receives from employers.

Upon unionization, workers found that the heavy workloads and pressures they faced remained largely unchanged. This led to conflicts between organized workers and the union, which failed to address the urgent issues of working conditions and pressure on workers. Moreover, the solidarity and unity established during the picket line were eroded by discriminatory treatment from union officers, causing rifts among co-workers and fostering hostile feelings. Consequently, after unionization, many workers were dismissed and resorted to organizing protests in front of the factory without union support. Some workers were coerced into resigning by accepting offers prepared by the unions and employers. These workers also organized protests in front of the union offices to protest the union's neglectful attitude towards their grievances. As a result, the majority of workers reinstated following the picket line were dismissed or compelled to resign

within about a year. In this case, it is difficult to talk about any concrete gains for the workers, but the union is still organized in this factory.

I conducted in-depth interviews with three women from this case. Especially, I established a close relationship with Mehtap, and we met many times. She also helped me reach my other interviewees. Among the women I met, there were women who had different levels of affiliation with the union, as I took care to ensure diversity. I also interviewed two women who continued to work after the picket line, one of whom was later dismissed due to her official complaint regarding the work accident she had suffered.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the context and characteristics of the cases before delving into the analysis of field data. First, I offered a brief overview of the positions of the textile, garment, and metal industries in the Turkish economy, their employment characteristics, and the labor movement in these sectors. I emphasized the critical importance of the textile and metal sectors in understanding the structure of labor mobilizations in Turkey.

To provide a comprehensive analysis of the complex nature of women's labor struggles, I focused on four cases with different features and dynamics. These included two resistances consisting entirely of women (Zitex, Katex), a resistance that began with militant actions led by women (Automet), and a resistance where women's relations with union turned into intense conflicts (Fonmet).

Each case was accompanied by background information, including structural features such as the company's position in exports, the target audience of production, and the number of employees; working conditions in the factory; gendered injustices faced by women; the mobilization history of the factory; and finally, a summary of unionization and the picket line process.

Given that the pressures and injustices faced by women in the workplace are common in many factories, I focused on prominent examples and those more frequently mentioned by women. These included long working hours; mandatory overtime; heavy workload; low wages; assignment of tasks out of the job description, bullying, threats, and humiliation by male supervisors and

managers; harassment and physical violence; pregnancy bans; restrictions on women's communication and movement in the shopfloor; toilet restrictions; occupational diseases; and workplace accidents.

As a result of these harsh working conditions and gendered injustices, women have opted for unionization as a means of collective struggle. However, this decision has resulted in dismissal from their jobs, leading them to start picketing in front of the factory. In the following sections, I will delve into women's experiences of unionization and the picket line in detail, aiming to provide deeper insights into their struggles and the dynamics of collective action in the face of adversity.

4

Unionization

Unions, despite all their contradictions and limitations, are important means to redress the imbalance of power between labor and capital in favor of workers. Unions often function as a basic defense mechanism of workers against economic exploitation and authoritarian control in the workplace, aiming to improve the material conditions of workers through negotiations with the employer. Unions also play a key role in mobilizing workers to take collective action for their demands.[169]

Workers' decision to participate in unions is a complex and multi-layered process. Women's working experiences, which are marked by gendered injustices in pay, treatment, and promotion, give them many reasons to unionize. However, as explained in the previous chapter, the cost of unionization for workers is very high in Turkey because those attempting to unionize face the risk of dismissal. According to official data of 2023, the annual unemployment rate was 9.4%, while the unemployment rate for men was 7.7% and 12.6% for women.[170] Since employment opportunities are more limited for women in the gendered labor market of Turkey, the risk of dismissal is an important obstacle for them to hold back in the unionization

169 Ralph Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives," in Workers and Labour in a Globalised Capitalism, edited by Maurizio Atzeni. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

170 Turkstat (TÜİK) database (2023).

process. Because of this risk, women often try to defend themselves in the workplace in various ways and resort to various individual and collective solutions to the problems they face at work, such as complaining to the authorities, looking out for each other when they are subjected to mobbing and harassment by foremen or coworkers, supporting each other against heavy workloads, and making fun of supervisors and managers to undermine their authority. However, when these solutions are insufficient and working conditions become unbearable for women, they initiate or participate in a collective mobilization to unionize in the workplace. Thus, it would be fair to say that women have many reasons for joining unions and just as many obstacles.

In this chapter, I will firstly focus on women's motivations and fears related to union participation. Secondly, I will turn into experiences of women leaders who are key agents for mobilization in the workplace. Thirdly, I will deal with women's changing relations with unions as a collective organization of workers.

4.1 Women's Union Participation: Fears and Motivations

The factors of workers' union participation are a prominent topic in industrial relations literature, but gendered patterns of unionization often receive little attention. In recent years, feminist scholars have increasingly focused on unraveling the reasons behind women's decisions to join unions.[171] Studies in Turkey, on the other hand, have mostly examined the reasons for women's low union participation.[172] I propose to examine both the barriers to and

171 Fiona Colgan and Sue Ledwith, Diversity, Identities and Strategies of Women Trade Union Activists. Gender, Work and Organization, 7(4), (2000); 242-257; Geraldine Healy and Gill Kirton. (2004). Shaping Union and Gender Identities: A Case Study of Women-Only Trade Union Courses, British Journal of Industrial Relations 42:2, (2004): 303–323; Gill Kirton, 'The influences on women joining and participating in unions'. Industrial Relations Journal, 36 (5), (2005): 386–401; Geraldine Healy and Gill Kirton. The Early Mobilization of Women Union Leaders- A Comparative Perspective, British Journal of Industrial Relations, 51(4), (2013): 709–732.

172 Gülay Toksöz, "Sayımız Çok Az: Sendikalarda Kadınlar," in Neoliberalizmin Tahribatı: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye, (İstanbul: Metis, 2004): 234-53; Betül Urhan, Sendikasız Kadınlar, Kadınsız Sendikalar, (İstanbul: Kadav Yayınları, 2014).

motivations for women's unionization. In Turkey, where women face challenges balancing work and home responsibilities, where unionization carries high risks, and where unions tend to neglect women workers, understanding why women still join unions is crucial. In other words, it is both important to uncover the barriers that prevent women from organizing and the reasons that mobilize them to take risks and engage in collective action and organizing.

4.1.1 Barriers to Unionization

There are three main factors that impede women's unionization. The first is the risk of increased mobbing in the workplace and the risk of dismissal, which can be defined as "structural risks". The second is the negative discourse about unions. The third is women's previous negative experiences with unions.

One of the most important reasons for women's reluctance to unionize is that employers use various strategies to prevent unionization in the workplace, from mobbing to dismissing unionized workers. Partial improvements in workers' material conditions and increased pressure in the workplace are two different aspects of prevention strategies. For some workers, wages are increased, and bonuses and premiums are provided to discourage unionization. Other workers are forced to resign from union membership through pressure and mobbing. In fact, in Turkey, union membership is officially confidential, meaning that employers do not have access to information on who a union member is in the workplace. Recently, however, managers have sought to access the official website (e-government portal) where workers register for union membership, identify those who are members, and force them to quit by threatening them. For example, at the Katex factory, human resources asked for workers' e-government passwords to find out who was a union member and who was not, and supervisors explicitly stated that this was carried out to find "traitors in the workplace."

Also, when management becomes aware of the unionization process in the workplace, the pressure on workers often intensifies, and various punitive methods are used to intimidate workers. These include arbitrarily changing

workers' shifts, changing the departments they work in, and not allowing them to take leave. Some of the women I interviewed described how managers directly pulled women workers aside and threatened them, trying to dissuade them from joining the union.

> "When we joined the union, we were quiet at first. We were slowly multiplying among ourselves, but now it started to be heard. The boss heard it. Then they came on me a lot. One day the deputy director took me aside and insulted me. He said, "How can you look your child in the face?" I was crying from anger. Then they saw that I was still organizing, first they changed my department within the same enterprise, then they moved me to another enterprise." (Fatma, Katex, 1 years)[173]

In addition to employers' oppressive practices for union busting, the risk of dismissal is also an important factor that makes it difficult for women to unionize. Because many unionized workers have been dismissed without compensation, women tend to abstain from union activities in their workplaces. Especially, pioneer workers in a workplace were firstly dismissed to menace other workers. For example, in Zitex case, women who lead the organization were fired from the code 29 in Article 25/2 which refers to immoral behaviour of workers in labor law.

> "They dismissed us from Article 25/2, from the moral rules. People were scared, they thought, 'how many years they have been working, they even fired them without compensation, what will they do to us'. People were scared, but when we got our rights, they trusted the union.

173 "Sendikaya üye olunca sessizdik ilk başta. Kendi aramızda yavaş yavaş çoğalıyorduk. Ama bu artık duyulmaya başladı. Patron duydu. O zaman çok fazla üzerime geldiler. Müdür yardımcısı bir gün beni kenara çekti, bana resmen hakaretler etti. "Sen çocuğunun yüzüne nasıl bakıyorsun" dedi. Sinirden ağlıyordum artık. Bir de o zamanlar haklarımı çok fazla bilmiyordum. Beni baktılar önümü alamayacaklar, önce bölümümü değiştirdiler aynı işletmenin içerisinde. "

However, people didn't believe in the beginning." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[174]

When workers are dismissed based on codes in Article 25, it makes it difficult for them to find work elsewhere, as their employment contracts are terminated on charges such as theft or immorality. For example, the dismissal of a female worker on a charge referring to immoral behavior causes her to face various difficulties both in her personal life and in her future working life. These articles, which have become a weapon used by employers to prevent unionization, are an important reason why women are reluctant to unionize.

"Especially our women friends were not convinced to become members. One woman was there for 10 years and said, "I'm 40 now, I can't find a job after that. Especially women often gave up thinking about how to find a job in case of dismissal." (Filiz, Automet, 5 years)[175]

On the other hand, women's decision-making processes are significantly influenced by negative discourses about unions. Due to the familial discourse resorted by management to justify exploitative working conditions, absorb workers' discontent and ensure workers' loyalty,[176] union activities are often depicted as a 'betrayal to the family' that provides them with bread. This narrative of betrayal has also been internalized by the workers.

174 "Bizi 25/2 maddesinden, ahlaki kurallardan çıkarttılar. İnsanlar korktular yani, 'baksana kaç senelik eleman, onu bile tazminatsız çıkarttılar, bize ne yapmazlar' diye düşündüler. İnsanlar korktular ama ne zaman haklarımızı aldık, sendikaya güvençleri geldi. İnanmıyorlardı yani insanlar."

175 "Ve bizim eski çalışan arkadaşlarımız mesela gelmiyorlardı, özellikle kadın çalışanlar. Kadın 10 senesini vermiş oraya ve diyorki ben şimdi 40 yaşındayım, bu saatten sonra iş bulamam diyor. Özellikle kadınlar ben nasıl iş arayıp bulayım diye düşünüp geri çekildi çoğunlukla."

176 Seung-Kyung Kim, Class Struggle or Family Struggle? The Lives of Women Factory Workers in South Korea. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ching Kwan Lee, Gender and the South China Miracle: Two Worlds of Factory Women. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Pelin Kılınçarslan and Özlem Altan-Olcay, We are family: Women's labor mobilization and gender norms in Turkey. Women's Studies International Forum 72, (2018): 9–16.

> "We said, 'Let's not betray the place where we earn our bread,' but they betrayed us." (Sevgi, Katex, 6 years)[177]

Another negative discourse on unions is about the union dues (*sendika aidatı*) collected from unionized workers, which are equivalent to the workers' one-day wages. Employers try to dissuade workers from unionizing by claiming that union dues will cause financial harm to the workers.

> "I had a direct conversation with the employer. He took me in and asked, 'Why are you doing this?' He said, 'If the union comes in, it will divide our bread.' I replied, 'It's not about dividing the bread; it's about getting what I deserve.' They always tell workers, 'If you join the union, one day you'll work for the union. Instead of working for the union one day, work for yourself.'" (Fatma, Katex, 6 months)[178]

> "People fail to see the benefits of the union; they are obsessed with the dues the union will collect. You're currently earning 5,000, and after joining the union, your salary becomes 8,000, but they deduct a daily wage – what difference does it make? Let them treat you like a human; make you feel like a person. Occupational safety, preventing workplace accidents – everything falls under this. But some only view it in terms of financial gain." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[179]

In addition, workers' prior negative experiences with unions play an inhibiting role in mobilization processes. For women who had been dismissed due to unionization in the past or whose rights were not adequately defended by the union they were a member of, it took a longer process for them to trust a union again and become a member. Sevgi, one of the Katex workers, had been a

177 "Hadi ekmek yiyoruz, ihanet etmeyelim dedik ama ekmek yediğimiz yer bize ihanet etti."

178 "Ben patronla birebir konuştum. Aldı beni karşısına neden bunu yapıyorsun dedi, 'sendika buraya girerse bizim ekmeğimizi bölüşücek' dedi. Sen bunlarla ekmeğini bölüşmek istiyormusun diye sordu. Ekmeği bölüşüp de neyi bölüşecek dedim. Hakkımı vericek bana dedim. Şunu hep öne sürüyorlar, sendikaya bir gün çalışıcaksın, sen sendikaya bir gün çalışacağına kendi ekmeğine çalış."

179 "Sendikanın sana fayda verceklerini görmüyor, senden bir yevmiyeyi kesicek ya, ona takılmış insanlar. Ya sen şu an 5bin maaş alıyorsun, 8 bin maaş alsan da bir yevmiyeni kesse nolacak. Sana insan gibi davransınlar, insan olduğunu hisset. İşgüvenliği, iş kazalarının önlenmesi, her şey giriyor bunun içine. Ama onlar sadece maddiyat olarak bakıyorlar."

member of a textile union in the past, but after her dismissal, she did not receive the necessary support from the union and could not get their rights. Because of this negative experience, Sevgi was more prejudiced against the union in Katex, and decided to become a member after observing and communicating with unionists for a long time. Similarly, Gülay was dismissed for being a union member at a workplace where she worked in the past but could not receive her compensation due to not completing one year of service. Therefore, she thought more before joining the union in Katex and feared that she would be dismissed, just like her previous case. She became a member after receiving assurances from the union that she would receive her severance pay. Besides, workers with negative union experiences in their workplaces attempt to discourage other workers from joining the union. Given this, It is fair to say that workers who have had negative experiences with unions tend to discourage union organizing. On the other hand, many women I met, especially those working in the textile sector, do not have sufficient knowledge and experience with unions, and their participation in unions is related more to their workplace experiences than to their views on unions, either positive or negative.

4.1.2 Motivations for Unionization

According to Kirton's theory[180], family history associated with unionization, feminist beliefs, union attitudes towards women and gendered workplace experiences collectively shape women's decisions to unionize. Based on this theoretical framework, I will analyze factors that enable women's participation in unions.

When it comes to family background, some women mentioned their fathers' and husbands' union experiences to demonstrate their acquaintance with unions. Especially, Kurdish and Alevi women workers, particularly those from leftist families, exhibit a higher level of familiarity with trade unions. On the other hand, the majority of married women who knew little about the unions joined the union with the approval and support of their husbands, who

180 Gill Kirton, 'The influences on women joining and participating in unions'. Industrial Relations Journal, 36 (5), (2005)

had prior experience with unions. Studies often highlight the family responsibilities and husband's reactions as a barrier to women's unionization.[181] This can be seen in situations where women are unable to join unions solely by their own decisions, and where the burden of domestic work hinder their participation in union activities. As for my cases, family-related obstacles do not have much impact on single or divorced women. Therefore, these women are more prominent in labor activism and can participate in union activities more easily than married women.

On the other hand, almost all married women I encountered received support from their husbands and families when joining the union. Family support, while implying the denial of women's agency and will, can also be viewed as a factor that makes it easier for women to decide to unionize. Thus, both family history with unions and family support for unionization are important factors shaping women's participation.

As for the influence of feminism on unionization, none of the women I interviewed identified themselves as feminists or presented feminist motivations, so it might be an exaggeration to say that they joined the union under the influence of feminist ideas. However, the majority highlighted that the pressures, mobbing, and harassment they faced at the workplace were specifically gender-related. In other words, it can be said that women interpret their workplace experiences with gender consciousness. Moreover, the explicit and unreserved articulation of workplace harassment by female workers can be directly linked to the overall empowerment of the feminist movement in Turkey.

Women's decision to join a union is heavily influenced by their working conditions and the gender-based injustices they experience in the workplace. In particular, low wages, gender pay gaps and disrespectful treatment are the most significant reasons for the women's participation. Therefore, I will comprehensively present my findings on these reasons, grouping them under two main categories: low wages and gender pay gaps, and workplace dignity.

181 Betül Urhan, Sendikasız Kadınlar, Kadınsız Sendikalar, (İstanbul: Kadav Yayınları, 2014).

4.1.2.1 Low wages and gender pay gap

One of the primary factors motivating women to join unions is the issue of low wages. It is widely recognized that gender-based wage inequality exists between male and female workers in the labor market, and that women are intensively employed in low-paid and unskilled jobs.[182] Moreover, the textile sector is one of the lowest paid sectors for women.[183] In the case of Katex, women's motivation to unionize is largely related to wages below the market average and the absence of premiums and social benefits. Women began to feel that they were not well remunerated for their labor and decided to unionize.

> "I am doing this job when there are more comfortable jobs elsewhere, but why should I get less than elsewhere? Other companies offer food subsidies. Or there are workplaces that have agreements with hospitals. I joined the union because we have not received our rights for how many years. Our wages are low compared to the market. There are no social benefits. I think I am not getting my labor's worth." (Aynur, Katex, 10 years)[184]

Although metal workers' daily wages are higher than textile workers[185], the gender pay gap can be seen more dramatically in metal industry because of more mixed gender workplaces compared to textile workplaces. Even though female workers do equal value work with male workers, they do not receive the equal wages with them. In the case of Automet, gender-based wage discrepancy is legitimated by emloyers with the discourse that women's income is an "additional" income for household, without considering their marital status or financial conditions.

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182 Betül Urhan, "Kadın Emeği ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet", in Toplumsal Cinsiyet Tartışmaları, edited by Feryal Saygılıgil (İstanbul: Dipnot Yayınları, 2016): 148.

183 Serap Suğur, "Turkiye'de Tekstil Sektöründe Kadın Emeği ve Değişen Toplumsal Cinsiyet İlişkileri." Amme İdaresi Dergisi, 38(1), (2005):51

184 "Başka yerlerde rahat işler varken ben bu işi yapıyorum ama başka yerden niye daha düşük alayım? Başka firmalarda erzak yardımları var. Yada hastanelerle anlaşma yapan işyerleri var... Kaç yıldır hakkımızı alamadığımız için sendikaya üye oldum. Maaşımız piyasaya göre düşük. Hiçbir sosyal yardım yok. Ben emeğimin karşılığını alamadığımı düşünüyorum."

185 SGK database, Table 16 (2022).

> "They gave an advance of 3500-4000 thousand to a male shift supervisor who doesn't know shit. What do you do for a living that you get that money? He walks around with his hands on his waist, you don't change molds, you don't give training, you just tell people to do this and do that. You get more than me, what's wrong...? We (women) are left in the status of additional income again; I am additional income in their eyes. Actually, they don't know that I am trying to survive on my own, which additional income are you talking about?" (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[186]

The major reason for workplace actions including strikes and factory occupation took place in January is that workers found out that they get very low wage rises such as 50 liras. There was also a visible gender-based discrepancy between wage rises. As women already suffer from gender pay gap in the workplace, unfair wage rises had prompted women to strike by turning off their machines.

> "I said, right now a child is not even given 50 liras as an allowance for Eid. I said, is 50 liras raise for such a hardworking person deserved? I said, if you had given these people 150 liras instead of 50 liras, these people would not have dared to riot like this again." (Ebru, Automet, 5 years)[187]

In conclusion, gender-based wage inequality and low wages are among the most significant factors for women's participation in union struggles. However, in explaining women's participation, we need to consider not only the material conditions but also the gender-based pressures they face in the workplace.

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186 "Bir b** bilmez vardiya amirine 3500-4000 bin avans vermişler. Ulan duyduk zaten çıldırdık, sne ne iş tutuyorsun da sen o parayı alıyorsun? Eli belinde geziyosun. Kalıp mı değiştiriyosun yok, eğitim mi veriyosun yok, ee sadece millete onu yap bunu yap diyorsun. Sen benden fazla alıyorsun, hayırdır..? Ek gelir statüsünde biz (kadınlar) kaldık yine, ben ek gelirim onların gözünde. Aslında bilmiyorlar ki ben tekim, hangi ek gelir?"

187 "Ya dedim şuan bir çocuğun eline bayram harçlığı diye 50 lira harçlık bile verilmiyor dedim. Bu kadar çalışan bir insana 50 lira zam hak mı dedim. Ha bunun yerine bu insanlara 50 değil de 150 yapmış olsaydınız bu insanlar yine böyle ayaklanmaya cesaret edemezdi dedim."

4.1.2.2 Workplace dignity

The other important reason that pushes women to unionize is the indignities they are exposed to in the workplace. According to Hodson[188], dignity is the capacity to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect, as well as to recognize and appreciate the respect given by others. In the workplace, workers often face violations of their dignity through mismanagement, managerial abuse, and excessive workloads. Hodson argues that workers strive in different ways to restore their compromised dignity and to maintain a sense of dignity while continuing to work.[189]

There are two key dimensions of dignity which are dignity *in* work and dignity *at* work. Dignity *in* work (inherent dignity) refers that "being treated as valuable in their own right"[190] and getting respectful treatment by managers and co-workers. On the other hand, dignity *at* work (earned dignity) is related to the recognition of workers through just treatment in terms of wages and opportunities.[191] As a result, studies underline that respect and recognition are two fundamental components of workplace dignity.

Patriarchal oppression and gender discrimination in the workplace significantly impact the dignity experienced by women workers. Recent studies have started to explore the link between dignity and gender inequalities, examining women's work experiences through the concept of 'gendered dignity'.[192] These studies highlight how gender discrimination and harassment in the workplace undermine women's dignity.

For my cases, the concept of gendered dignity is useful to explain the mistreatment of women in the factory. The fact that women are subjected to different oppression and humiliating treatment from male workers illustrates the gendered nature of the concept of workplace dignity. Besides, dignity

188 Hodson, *Dignity at Work*, 3

189 Ibid.,5.

190 Roscigno et.al, "Gendered dignity at work", 567

191 Sharon C. Balton, “Dignity in and at Work: Why It Matters.” in Dimensions of Dignity at Work, edited by Sharon C. Bolton, (2007): 3-16.

192 Martha Crowley, "Gender, the Labor Process and Dignity at Work", *Social Forces*, 91(4), (2013): 1209-1238; Vincent Roscigno, Yavorsky, J. E., ve Quadlin, N, "Gendered dignity at work", American Journal of Sociology, 127(2), (2021): 562–620.

violations and workers' demand for decent treatment is a critical factor for mobilization. I argue that gender discrimination and gender-based injustices in the workplace exacerbate humiliating conditions for women so the demand for work with dignity is a highly influential factor in their mobilization process.

Almost all women I interviewed mentioned humiliating treatment and injustices at work as a factor behind their motivation to join unions. As noted above when describing the working conditions in the cases, sexual harassment, mistreatment by managers, humiliation in front of workers, and threats are among the most common violations of dignity that women face at work. These conditions become key factors for women's mobilization in the workplaces. For example, Zeynep as one of leader workers for mobilization at Zitex, decided to join the union after the manager, who is also her relative, insulted her when she wanted to take leave for doctor appointment. Like Zeynep, other women's main motivations for unionization are being treated decently and respected at work.

> "I said my most natural right is to be a union member. I said if I am not treated like a human being, I will rely on the union. If the union wants, it can take not one but two of my wages as dues, I was saying that I want to be treated like a human first. I don't want the foreman to knock on my door when I'm in the restroom. I'm in the restroom, I'm a woman. Women, we tell each other, our clothes get dirty because of the menstruation, we don't realize it as we are so busy at work." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[193]

As the quote above dramatically indicates that, oppression and restrictions related to toilet breaks in the workplace are also among the common treatments which undermine dignity of female workers who have certain specific needs in their menstruation and maternity periods. Practices such as knocking on toilet doors, keeping time for toilet, not giving permission even

193 "Benim en doğal hakkım sendikalı olmak dedim. Bana eğer insan gibi muamele yoksa, ben de sırtımı sendikaya dayarım dedim. İsterse bir değil iki yevmiyemi alsın, ben ilk önce insan gibi muamele görmek istiyorum diyordum. Ben tuvaletteyken ustanın kapımı tıklamasını istemiyorum. Ya ben lavaboya girmişim, ben bayanım. Kadınlar birbirimize söyleriz, arkamıza geçmiş (regl) haberimiz yok işten."

in emergencies cause women to feel humiliated. For example, in Automet, a woman messed her clothes due to being not allowed for toilet by foreman and this caused to her being mocked by her co-workers for a while. This example reveals the extent to which despotic working conditions and mistreatment attack women's dignity.

Similarly, women working at Katex decided to join the union because of both the sense of being worthless in the eyes of employers and humiliating treatment by managers. Gülay, one of the senior workers in the factory, underlines the desire for being treated as valuable at work among her motives for joining the union.

> "Workers are not valuable as workers, they are not valuable as human beings. We are like a slave in their eyes. They think that I pay them, they have to do what I say under all circumstances. You have to do what they want... I did some research about the union, that's how I decided. And I did well, it was very good. Because everyone has the right to work under better conditions. At least to be valued as human beings." (Gülay, Katex, 13 years)[194]

Also, as Roscigno et al. underlines, dignity is not only related to the respectful treatment, but also to the fairness in the workplace in terms of pay and conditions.[195] That is, gender-based wage inequality and gendered segregation in terms of tasks, rules and treatment are also associated with the gendered aspect of workplace dignity. For example, women are often subjected to workplace rules that do not apply to male workers.[196] In my cases, women pointed out that restroom restrictions, strict break rules, communication restrictions in the shopfloor and frequent reporting in case of mistakes were often not applied to male workers.

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194 "İşçinin değeri işçi olarak yok, insan olarak da yok. Onların gözünde bir köle gibiyiz. Ben onun parasını veriyorum, 7.5 saatlik parasını ödüyorum, 8 saat burda çalışmak zorunda. Ben ne diyorsam yapmak zorunda her koşulda. Onlar ne istiyorsa yapmak zorundasın... Biraz araştırdım sendikayla ilgili, öyle karar verdim. İyi de yaptım, çok iyi oldu. Çünkü daha iyi şartlarda çalışmak herkesin hakkı. En azından insan olarak değer görmek."

195 Roscigno et.al, "Gendered dignity at work", 567.

196 Crowley, Gender, the Labor Process and Dignity at Work", 1215.

In conclusion, there are three main reasons that make it difficult for women to unionize: fear of mobbing and the risk of dismissal, prejudices against unions, and prior negative union experiences. Despite these risks and prejudices, however, many workers resort to unionization for better working conditions. As Kelly puts that, workplace injustices play an important role in the mobilization process of workers.[197] Women unionize primarily for two reasons: to redress injustices in wages and working conditions and to protect their dignity, which is constantly undermined by gender-based discrimination in the workplace. Thus, I argue that for women, justice and dignity in the workplace are intertwined because gendered injustices have certain implications for women's workplace dignity. Therefore, the concept of gendered dignity is critical to explain the mobilization processes of women workers.

4.2 Women Leaders' Experiences

Mobilization theory puts particular emphasis on the role of leaders in channeling workers' discontent into collective action. Worker leaders have several functions in the organizing process. First, leaders frame workers' sense of grievances arising from workplace conditions in such a way that they attribute them to employers. Second, leaders help workers form a group identity by recognizing that their group interests conflicted with those of employers. Finally, they mobilize workers to engage in collective action targeting employers as the source of injustice.[198]

Therefore, it is not enough to examine gendered workplace experiences to understand women's workplace mobilization. We need to look at the experiences of women leaders who transform gendered injustices into collective action in the workplace. In this chapter, I focus on the processes of transformation and empowerment of these women leaders, the challenges they faced in organizing their co-workers, and the sacrifices they made. All of

197 John Kelly, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves. (London: Routledge, 1998)

198 Kelly, *Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves*, 30.

these provide some insights on the conditions under which women workers' mobilization took place in Turkey.

4.2.1 Zeynep's story

"This Zitex ruined the best years of my youth.
It destroyed my life".

After dropping off the resisting women workers at their homes by car, we set out towards Zeynep's house in a neighborhood distant from the heart of Bursa. As we ventured into the area marked by expansive fields and solitary houses, Zeynep began sharing her life story. Zeynep's father had made a living cultivating tobacco for many years, but the modest earnings only allowed him to build a small, humble house after a decade. Due to financial constraints, Zeynep couldn't pursue education beyond primary school and began working in tobacco fields as a child laborer. At the age of 18, she started working in textile factories. In her early twenties, after getting married, thanks to a relative's connection, she managed to enter the Zitex textile factory in Bursa, which avoided hiring newly married women due to the risk of pregnancy. She worked for 14 years in the factory, described as where "she wasted the most beautiful years of her youth." The working conditions were initially challenging, but with debts from her early marriage, quitting was not a feasible option. A few years later, when her daughter was just two years old, Zeynep went through a divorce. Faced with the daunting task of supporting herself and her child, she found herself compelled to persist in her employment at Zitex.

One day, Zeynep asked managers for permission for health appointment by the telephone, she heard the swear by her relative who is white-collar staff there about her demand for permission and she got angry. Until that day, Zeynep did not join the union even if some workers insist on her, for "keeping her relative's head down", by considering being unionized as a betrayal against him. After this incident, Zeynep joined the union, but initially felt guilty for joining the union and feared being fired because of rumors spreading among

the workers that if a worker joined the union, the employer would find out immediately.

Initially, Zeynep did not know much about workers' rights and organizing, but she gradually learned and began organizing fellow workers into the union. Before her, Fatma had been working on organizing at Zitex, but women workers were not happy with her because she did not fulfill her work-related responsibilities, and co-workers had to complete her tasks as well. After Fatma was dismissed due to unionization, Zeynep became the leading organizer in the workplace by gaining the trust of the workers as a hardworking and responsible worker. She played a critical role in the unionization of Zitex by putting great effort into this process.

As Darlington puts that organizing of a workplace requires a group of workers who are confident, dedicated, self-sacrificing, and capable to achieve worker's trust and channel workers' grievances to collective ends.[199] Birelma's study focusing on a successful unionization case also demonstrates that workers who are hardworking and respected by their co-workers have considerably more power to convince other workers.[200] Similarly, Zeynep is a worker who works without mistakes, who "does her job perfectly" and is admired by her co-workers for her work and character.

It is a very common strategy to offer bonuses or prizes to encourage workers to compete against each other.[201] Worker leaders like Zeynep try to rebuild the bonds of solidarity between workers by addressing the collective interest of workers in this competitive atmosphere.

> "Now they were hanging a list there, they started to give *baklava* to those who turned off the lights the fastest. People started running for *baklava*. One day they asked me, "What would you do if you got *baklava*?" I said, "If I got baklava, I would throw it in front of the manager." I said, "I'm not the only one who works here, if so many people work here, if even walking around here is a problem, everyone

199 Ralph Darlington, Agitator 'Theory' of Strikes Re-evaluated, *Labor History*, 47:4, (2006): 492.

200 Alpkan Birelma, "Militant minority at work: a successful case of unionisation of garment workers in Istanbul". *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, (2022).

201 Kim, *Class Struggle or Family Struggle*, 53-55.

deserves it. I said I wouldn't take that *baklava*." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[202]

Also, Zeynep's self-confidence increased throughout the process of organizing and she began to raise her voice more confidently against unjust and gendered treatment in the workplace. She defended the rights of women who were subjected to verbal and physical harassment at the workplace and clashed with supervisors and male workers over such incidents. In other words, she also tried to build sisterhood solidarity in the workplace against gendered injustices.

Zeynep often mentions the need to "[do] organizing with a strong belief" (*inançla yapmak*). Since the process of unionization at the workplace is often difficult and exhausting, it is critical that the pioneer workers are persistent, faithful and stands strong in the face of difficulties. This commitment is also a prerequisite for workers to have confidence in their leaders. This is because workers' decisions to join a union or a collective action do not exist in a social and cultural vacuum but are conditioned by social networks and relations.[203] As Birelma demonstrates through the cases in his study, the social relations in which workers are embedded and their trust in pioneer workers have a significant impact on their individual decision to participate in the movement.[204]

In this regard, one of the underlying reasons for the success at Zitex is that workers trusted the women leaders and were impressed by their efforts and commitment. For example, Zeynep's tremendous efforts and dedication influenced Ayşe, who decided to mobilize other workers "both for themselves and to support Zeynep's struggle".

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202 "Şimdi oraya bir liste asıyorlardı, en çabuk lambaları söndürenlere baklava vermeye başladılar. Millet var ya nasıl koşmaya başladı baklava için. "Ulan ben size alırım baklava, benim hakkımı versin, ben gider baklavamı alır ailemle beraber yerim yani." diyordum. Bir gün "sana baklava gelse ne yaparsın" diye sordular bana, bana baklava gelse müdürün önüne atarım dedim. Burda sadece ben çalışmıyorum, burda bu kadar insan çalışıyorsa, burda gezmek bile sıkıntıysa, herkes hak ediyor bunu. O baklavayı almazdım dedim."

203 Marc Dixon and Vincent J. Roscigno, Status, Networks and Social Movement Participation: The Case of Striking Workers. American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 108, No. 6 (May 2003): 1293.

204 Birelma, *Ekmek ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi*, 109-110.

"If you are doing this job, you will do it faithfully and from the heart. If you can't give people confidence, don't do it at all." (Zeynep, Zitex,14 years)[205]

"I'm actually a very introverted person. I admired Zeynep's efforts. Those people made me wait so many times at those bus stops. I get on the bus, I get angry, I think, what can she do? I was telling people to become a member both for ourselves and to support Zeynep's struggle. " (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[206]

As mentioned above, one of the critical functions of the workplace leaders is to frame workers' grievances so that workers are convinced that the solution is collective mobilization and struggle. For example, when a work accident took place or a worker was unfairly dismissed, Zeynep and Ayşe have translated these incidents into a discourse that proves the necessity of union organizing in the workplace.

"A woman went on vacation, she got a report, she asked the manager for permission, and he supposedly said okay. But when you arrive, he doesn't make you sign a paper, he gives you an uncompensated exit because you were absent for two days. He gives permission over the phone, but there is no document, nothing. I was telling people to join a union so we wouldn't be like her. That's how I was able to make one of them a member. I said, "Look, there is no one to defend you". This is an example for those who understand." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[207]

Zeynep had been working on organizing workers about 6 years in the workplace. For her, this long process was full of hardships, exhaustion and

205 "Bu işi yapıyorsan inançlı bir şekilde gönülden yapacaksın. İnsanlara güven vermiyceksen de hiç bu işe bulaşmayacaksın."

206 "Ben çok içe kapanık bir insanım aslında. Ben Zeynep'in emeğine ve çabasına çok hayran kaldım. Şu insanlar, şu duraklarda kaç kez beklettiler beni. Servise biniyorum sinirli sinirli, Zeynep ne yapsın diye düşünüyorum."

207 "Bir kadın tatile gitmişti, rapor mu almış ne, telefondan izin almış. Alper beyden izin istemiş, o da tamam demiş sözde. Ama gelince kağıt imzalatmıyor, sen iki gün devamsızlık yaptığın için tazminatsız çıkışını veriyor. Telefonda izin veriyor ama belge yok bir şey yok. Sendikalı olalım ki onun gibi olmayalım diyordum insanlara. Bir tanesini öyle üye yapabildim. Bak seni savuncak kişi yok dedim. Bu da bir örnek anlayana."

even anger against workers who were not willing to join the union. After a while, Zeynep was subjected to severe pressure and mobbing at work because the management found out about her organizing efforts. She could not even take her weekly leave because managers frequently changed her shifts. For example, she worked 6 days a week and her day off was on Friday, but her supervisors called her to inform about the changes in shifts, so she could not take leave and had to work non-stop for a week. Aware that management was looking for a pretext for dismissal, she endured all the pressure and tried to complete tasks without fail.

In addition to the pressure from management on union organizers, convincing workers was not an easy process. Workers had various fears, distrust of unions and a firm belief that conditions would not change. For this reason, the organizers' efforts were not always met with positive reactions by workers. For example, some workers mocked Zeynep and Ayşe for failing to secure the necessary majority for union authorization in the workplace, despite their many years of efforts, and this was demoralizing for them.

> "They were even making fun of me, saying, 'Come on, bring the union on your own'" (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[208]

> "Some people were saying, "Zeynep has been trying for how many years on her own, it's not going to happen, you are trying in vain". They were discouraging us like this, so it's hard on people. I kept getting angry with myself, I kept saying Zeynep is right, she is on the right way." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[209]

Even when they persuade workers to join the union after long negotiations, there were those who get scared and give up at the last minute. For organizers, such "withdrawals" are very frustrating.

> "I was talking to someone on the night shift, asking her if she would become a member. She said, "I will, let's go in the morning after work".

208 "Benle alay bile ediyorlardı be. 'Hadi tek başına getir sendikayı' diyorlardı."

209 "Zeynep boşuna uğraşıyor, bak kaç senedir uğraşıyor, gene aynı gene aynı, sen boşa uğraşıyorsun" diyorlardı. Böyle umudumuzu kırıyorlardı, insanın zoruna gidiyor yani. Ben kendi kendime sinir olup duruyordum, Zeynep haklı diyordum, doğru yolda diyordum."

> I would call the union official at night and let him know. He would get up at 5 a.m. and go and open the union office. When I went to the worker in the morning, she said, "No, I've given up." Now what should I tell the unionist? I was going to the branch alone, I was going crying, I was coming back crying. This time I got a phone call, Zeynep, "where are you", I said I'm at the office. She said she would come after the day shift. Look, I've left the night shift, I'm waiting for the afternoon shift... I know I came to work with 2 hours of sleep, I was always working with my eyes closed. I tore myself apart." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[210]

Despite all the difficulties and constraints, the leaders did not give up or "let them down" as long as there were some workers who believed in them because they also had some moral motivations to organize, which was the improvement of collective conditions of workers. Most importantly, they could improve their individual conditions if they cooperated with the employer, but for them the unity of workers and better conditions for all workers was more important than individual gains. In other words, the moral motivation for leaders stemmed from the idea of playing a role in enhancing both workers' wages and their treatment at work.

> "For example, my mother says, "What do you care, are you going to save them?" I say, "Mom, if I don't take the lead in this, there are 450 people here, if I take the lead in this, 450 people's lives will be saved, if 450 people have two children each, that makes 900 people, so many people's lives will be saved." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[211]

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210 "Gece vardiyasında biriyle konuşuyordum, gelip üye olurmusun diyordum. Olurum tabi niye olmayayım, sabah çıkışta gidelim diyordu. Ben gecenin 12-1'inde Serkan başkanı arıyordum, sabah biz erkenden gelicez, ona göre şubeyi açın diyordum. Adam sabahın 5'inde kalkıp geliyor, şubeyi açıyor. Sabah hadi gidelim diyince, "yok ya ben vazgeçtim" diyordu. Şimdi ben sendikacıya ne diyeyim. Ben tek başıma gidiyordum şubeye, ağlaya ağlaya gidiyordum, ağlaya ağlaya geliyordum. Bu sefer bir telefon geliyordu, "Zeynep nerdesin", şubedeyim diyordum. Gündüz vardiyası çıkışı gelicem diyordu. Bak ben gece vardiyasından çıkmışım, öğlen 3 çıkışını da bekliyorum... 2 saat uykuyla işe geldiğimi biliyorum ben, hep böyle gözlerim kapalı çalışıyordum. Ben çok parçaladım kendimi."

211 "Mesela annem diyorki "sanane, sen mi kurtarıcan" diyor. Ben diyomki "anne ben bu işin başını çekmesem, burda 450 tane kişi var, ben bu işin liderliğini yaparsam 450 kişinin hayatı

On the other hand, the process of mobilization has been constructed above the women leaders' sacrifices from their life and family. As Mills notes in her study of women's labor activism in Thailand, women activists often employ the discourse of "responsibility" and "sacrifice"-ideals closely linked to women's domestic roles- to support their participation in labor struggles.[212] In my case, Zeynep also emphasized the sacrifices she had made to organize workers in Zitex. As a single mother, it meant to sacrifice from the time devoted her child, transferring childcare into her mother. Although this turned into a feeling of guilt over motherhood, the moral motivations mentioned above and the responsibility she felt for the workers enabled her to continue her organizing work.

> "I couldn't spare time for my child so that Zitex would be unionized. I paid the price for my child...What sacrifices have I made, those were the times when my child needed love the most, there was no father around." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[213]

It should also be noted that being single and having a family to transfer childcare has allowed Zeynep to focus on organizing and union work, which requires a lot of time and effort. On the other hand, as a woman trying to stand on her own and as a labor activist, Zeynep also struggled with various negative reactions from her male relatives in the family and her environment.

As a result, the role of confident, dedicated and self-sacrificing leaders in workplace mobilization processes is crucial. With great effort, these workers convince other workers to join the collective struggle. As in my cases, women leaders work to build worker solidarity against the competitive environment in the workplace and sisterhood bonds against gendered injustices. Sacrificing their own lives, they carry out the organizing process with the moral and political motivation of improving the collective conditions of workers and

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kurtulur, 450 kişinin ikişer tane çocuğu olsa 900 kişi yapar, bu kadar kişinin hayatı kurtulur" diyorum."

212 Mary Beth Mills, From Nimble Fingers to Raised Fists: Women and Labor Activism in Globalizing Thailand. *Signs* , Vol. 31, No. 1, (2005): 129.

213 "Çocuğuma vakit ayıramadım yani, bu Zitex'i kazanıcam diye. Ben de çocuğumdan bedel ödedim...Ben ne fedakarlıklar yaptım ya, çocuğumun en sevgiye muhtaç zamanında, baba yok başında, onlardan feragat etmişim."

ensuring their decent treatment. In this section I have described the experiences of women labor leaders through Zeynep's example.

4.3 Unions

Following mobilization theory, workers with grievances often requires a union organization to engage in collective action in the workplace.[214] The role of unions has long been debated due to their dual and contradictory nature. On one side, they serve as crucial defenders of workers' rights, negotiating better conditions and challenging exploitation. Yet, they also function for maintaining existing system by limiting and smoothing workers' resistance.[215] Furthermore, unions often divide workers based on industry or sector, as well as based on gender and race. Historically, women and marginalized groups have faced exclusion or underrepresentation in unions, prompting discussions on the structural and cultural reasons behind these practices. This chapter examines the intricate relationship between women and unions, considering both the organizational dynamics of unions and their patriarchal structures, especially within the Turkish context.

In order to explain and compare the differences between these unions, I will use Hyman's theoretical framework on different models on trade unionism. For Hyman, unions "have had three distinct strategic and tactical orientations around the axis of 'market, 'class' and 'society'.[216] In the corner of market, the form of "business unionism" mainly prioritize collective bargaining to achieve pure economic interests of workers related to wages and conditions by establishing colloborative relationships with employers. In the axis of society, "social democratic unionism" functions as a means of promoting social integration with the goal of progressively enhancing social

207 John Kelly, Rethinking Industrial Relations: Mobilization, Collectivism and Long Waves. (London: Routledge, 1998)

215 Richard Hyman, Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism, (London: Pluto Press, 1971); Ralph Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives" in Workers and Labour in a Globalised Capitalism, edited by Maurizio Atzeni. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

216 Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives", 129.

welfare and cohesion. On the other hand, the aim of "anti-capitalist unionism" is to achieve revolutionary transformation by increasing the mobilization and militancy of the working class.[217] While these three ideal models of unionism correspond to particular ideological positions, no union is purely characterized by a single model. As Hyman argues, most unions "have tended to incline towards an often contradictory admixture of two of the three ideal types".[218] In other words, unions have tendency to focus on one side of the triangle: between class and market; between market and society; and between society and class.

In my cases, women are organized in three different unions –one textile union (TexUnion) and two metal unions (Met1Union and Met2Union). For these three unions, I argue that Hyman's "geometry" on unionism is functional. As I will elaborate below, I argue that TexUnion and Met1Union have clear characteristics of business unionism but are still located on the market-society axis, whereas Met2Union is characterized by social democratic unionism with traces of class unionism. In this section, I will examine unions' organizational structure, the activities of women's commission, and the relationship between union officials and women.

217 Richard Hyman, Understanding European Trade Unionism: Between Market, Class and Society, (London: Sage, 2001): 2-3

218 Ibid., 4-5.

Table 4: Features of Unions

Union	Union's structural features	Women's commission	Mobilizations	Mobilizations' results for the union
TexUnion	A member of pro-government and conservative confederation Business unionism Strong union bureaucracy and male-dominated structure	An institutionally strong women's commission Projects funded by international organizations and agencies Actively participating in international union organizations	Zitex and Katex	Zitex: Legal recognition in the workplace and collective bargaining Katex: No gain
Met1Union	A member of mainstream confederation Business unionism Known for its bureaucratization, corruption, and male-dominated structure	No women's commission	Fonmet	Legal recognition in the workplace and collective bargaining
Met2Union	A member of left-wing confederation Social-democratic unionism Relations with social-democratic and leftist political parties, and social movements	Active women's commission Relations with feminist movement	Automet	No gain

4.3.1 TexUnion

TexUnion is a member of union confederation that is pro-government and non-confrontational, embracing conservative ideology. Also, recently, the confederation has adopted "pro-European position and is seeking to become part of the international labour movement".[219] Tex Union, a well-established union with a strong union bureaucracy, is known for its cooperative relationship with employers. In the case of Zitex and Katex, workers were member of TexUnion.

The institutional identity of the union's women's commission is strong. It is one of the most active women's commissions among the unions in Turkey. The commission has two main characteristics: firstly, conducting work through projects funded by international organizations and agencies, and secondly, actively participating in international trade union organizations. Since the mid-2000s, they have been carrying out various projects aimed at addressing the issues faced by female textile workers in their working lives. In my interview with the chairperson of the women's commission, detailed descriptions of the projects led by the commission were provided. They have implemented various projects on issues such as daycare services, training women leaders in unions, reconciling work and family life, and preventing violence and harassment in workplaces. The outputs of these projects, due to the close relationship of the confederation with the government, are conveyed to the government channels as recommendations, and some laws regarding working life are regulated in this way. In this respect, it is possible to say that the union is positioned to influence the government's policies on women's labor.

In addition, the woman union official I met stated that they "strongly represent the union internationally." They hold memberships in international trade union organizations and hold positions on their executive boards. She mentioned that they attend meetings of these trade union organizations, learning from the experiences of other countries regarding "empowering

219 Demet Dinler, *Country Trade Union Report*: *Turkey*. (Istanbul: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012):3.

women" and sharing their own experiences and achievements. Besides, they collaborate with other organizations on the signing and enforcement of international agreements by Turkey.

Thanks to the active works of the women's commission, over the years, the number of women members and provincial representatives in the union has increased. Also, with the project of training women leaders in unions, they aimed to increase women's participation in unions and to instill "leadership" qualities such as self-confidence, effective communication, persuasion skills, and public speaking specifically tailored for women. However, when they noticed that women, despite gaining leadership qualities, could not participate enough in unions due to domestic responsibilities, they organized training sessions on gender equality for both men and women. The woman official described the work of the women's commission as different from the superficial activities of other commissions in other unions as follows:

> "Please do not see the existence of our women's commission as just a platform that has been officially established, that merely celebrates Women's Day on March 8, as we see in other unions. Think of us as a union that conducts very active work, contributes to what national policies should really be with our confederation, and at the same time sets an example in international terms by addressing women's issues." (Woman union official, TexUnion)[220]

Linda Briskin criticizes the high emphasis placed on women's participation in leadership for women's empowerment, stating that the presence of women in the higher positions of trade unions does not necessarily mean equality policies for women members.[221] Briskin also argues that focusing on the achievements of a small number of women union leaders can lead to an

220 "Kadın komisyonumuzun varlığını sadece kurulmuş, işte 8 Mart Dünya Kadınlar gününü kutlayan, diğer sendikalarda benzerlerini gördüğümüz şekilde, sadece kadını 8 mart'ta anan bir platform olarak görmeyin lütfen. Hani bu çok aktif çalışmalar yapan, ulusal politikaların gerçekten neler olması gerektiğine konfederasyonumuzla birlikte katkı veren ve aynı zamanda da uluslararası anlamda da kadın sorunlarına örnek olan çalışmaları gerçekleştiren bir sendika olarak düşünün."

221 Briskin, "Trade Unions, Collective Agency and the Struggle for Women's Equality: Expanding the Political Empowerment Measure", 215.

association of leadership with personality traits and promote neoliberal individualism rather than social and economic transformation.[222] In this sense, TexUnion's organization of trainings for women to gain individual leadership qualities can be taken as an example of this kind of neoliberal individualism. Also, as Dickens puts that, there is a distinction "being there" and "making a difference" in relation to women's presence in unions.[223] As a result, while the women's commission's focus on developing women union leaders is critical for these women individually, it is ambiguous whether this women union leadership translates into egalitarian policies in collective agreements regarding working conditions for women members of the union. Moreover, when we consider that the union does not have a feminist perspective and policy, and that the women's commission has no ties to the feminist movement in Turkey, the extent to which women union leaders have "made a difference" becomes even more questionable.

The commission does not specifically focus on organizing and mobilization processes because they mainly conduct education and project-focused work. The woman unionist mentioned that they organize visits to resistances and try to exert pressure on international brands in the struggle for unionization if a factory is producing for a brand that has signed a 'global framework agreement'[224] committing to allowing union rights and ensuring decent working conditions.

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222 Linda Briskin, Victimisation and agency: the social construction of union women's leadership, *Industrial Relations Journal* 37:4,(2006): 359–378.

223 Linda Dickens, Illuminating the process. In Equal opportunities and collective bargaining in Europe. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. (1998): 35.

224 Global framework agreement (GFAs) refers to a global agreement between trade unions and a multinational companies, establishing consistent standards for trade union rights, health, safety, environmental practices, and work quality principles, regardless of specific country regulations. By signing a GFA, a multinational company commits to respecting fundamental labor rights, such as the right to organize and collectively bargain, and to conduct due diligence on human rights impacts throughout its operations and supply chain. GFAs are particularly valuable for resolving disputes, especially within supply chains. If there are violations of trade union rights within companies covered by GFAs, these issues can be addressed directly with the company, through trade unions in the company's home country, or via IndustriALL, utilizing the GFA and its implementation mechanisms (IndustriAll website).

While the women's commission focuses on projects aimed at training women union leaders, the organizational experts and branch managers at TexUnion are largely male dominated. According to official website of the union, the union's five-member executive board is all men, while the six-member supervisory and disciplinary board has only one woman. Out of a total of sixteen branches and provincial presidencies, only four have a small number of women on their boards. In other words, it is very difficult to say that women who participate in the women's commissions' projects on training women union leaders are able to take part in the executive ranks of the union.

Given that the textile sector is predominantly composed of women and yet there are almost no female organizers and officers in the union, the initial contact with women workers during a mobilization process is usually conducted by male union officers. These relationships often tend to be paternalistic and protective. Rather than viewing women as equal political subjects, there is a tendency to regard them as sisters or daughters in need of protection. For example, in the field of the Katex resistance, I witnessed a male organizer asking the women in the resistance "let's see if you are learning how to struggle" (*mücadele etmeyi öğreniyor musunuz bakalım?*). This is a proof of a patriarchal union mentality that does not see women as political agents.

From my observations, union officers maintain strong relationships with women whom they can patronize, but conflicts arise with those who oppose them. For instance, at Zitex, during negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement with the employer, the employer demanded the closure of social media accounts opened by workers during a period of resistance. When two women refused, interpreting this demand as an attempt to undermine the legacy of the resistance, a confrontation ensued between these women and the union officers, who reacted harshly against them for jeopardizing the union's negotiations. On the other hand, although patriarchal attitudes of male officials play a role in the deepening of this conflict, the main source of conflict is the tension between the mobilization process and the bargaining process in the unionization process. Unions are by their very nature a means of negotiating with employers for better wages and working conditions. Therefore, no matter how fierce and militant workers' struggle, the union's goal is to end the process with a compromise with the employer. In other

words, union officials have to come to the settlement table with the employer whom they have targeted together with the workers during the resistance. At this stage, the task of officials is to "establish a stable and cooperative bargaining relationship" with the employer so they have to manage workers' discontent and sometimes even suppress threatening elements in some way.[225] In this respect, in the case of Zitex, the conflict that arose between some women and union officials during the bargaining process has more to do with the structural limitations of unions than with the patriarchal behavior of male officials.

Also, there are changes in political alliances from branch to branch due to local relationship networks. For example, despite being affiliated with a confederation that emphasizes a conservative nationalist identity, the Bursa branch of the union has formed alliances with various leftist parties and groups to increase its local power. Some of the women involved in the Katex resistance became members of a leftist party with which the union branch has close ties. In addition, the Bursa branch of the union has established a pragmatic relationship with the feminist movement and independent women's labor groups during women's resistance, as they are aware that these groups have the power to increase the visibility and public pressure of the resistance.

4.3.2 Met1Union

Met1Union is affiliated to a confederation that positions itself "above party politics". The union, which have a large number of members in the industry, is notorious for its bureaucratization, corruption, and male-dominated structure. It maintains a symbiotic relation with the goverment and cooperative relationship with employers. The union's high membership rate and the large number of organized workplaces are attributed to the support of metal employers. It is argued that the union has a "partnership in coercion" with metal employers and MESS (Metal Industry Employers' Union in

225 Darlington, "The Role of Trade Unions in Building Resistance: Theoretical, Historical and Comparative Perspectives", 126.

English) and this has played a role in increasing the number of its members. Moreover, the dominance of this pro-employer union in the sector restricts workers from organizing in unions other than this union.[226] In the case of Fonmet, electronics factory in İstanbul, workers were member of Met1Union.

The union lacks an organization such as women's commission or committee. The union only organizes a women's congress focusing on the issues of women metal workers every year on March 8th. Other than these annual congresses, which are limited to social events where male union officials give speeches, the union does not have any activities targeting women workers.

Moreover, male officials often communicate with women workers through paternalistic discourses. During the mobilization process at Fonmet, male union officials tried to show their interest in women workers with discourses such as "you are our sister, you are our mother, we value women workers very much". However, this close relationship intertwined with paternalism changed dramatically after the union gained legal authorization. Women criticizing the union's passivity in the workplace were met with indifference and dismissive attitudes from union officials. Later, when women were dismissed with the cooperation of the union and the employer, they blamed the union and were subjected to the humiliating attitudes of the male officials.

4.3.3 Met2Union

Met2Union is a member of left-wing union confederation. The union has a relatively more confrontational relationship with the employer. In the case of Automet, automotive factory in Gebze, workers were member of Met2Union.

The women's commission of union has been very active in recent years. The commission organizes regular trainings for women members, differentiated from the trainings given by union experts. Feminist scholars give lectures to women members on topics such as women's labor, violence, harassment, women workers' health, and safety. The woman union official I

226 R. Gökhan Koçer, "'Trade Unions at Whose Service?' Coercive Partnerships and Partnership in Coercion in Turkey's Metal Sector." Industrielle Beziehungen 14 (3), (2007):255.

interviewed from the women's commission reported that these trainings have led to an increase in women's self-confidence and their demand to take part in various levels of the union. They have also organized special trainings for men to transform male union officers and male workers. According to her, who has worked in different unions for many years, the feminist transformation of the union requires "patience and persistence" and "strategic behavior". Thanks to the persistent efforts of the commission, the number of women members and women representatives has gradually increased. Since the women's commission began to actively work, the number of female workplace representatives has increased from three to twenty-one, while the percentage of female members has risen from 6.5% to 10.5%.

On the other hand, the main goal is to ensure the grassroots organization of women workers and to give them the power to put pressure on the branches to which they belong. Therefore, branch-based women's commissions have been established. But the development of grassroot organization of women is not an easy process. As the official emphasized, male unionists often try to interfere with and control the activities of women members.

Establishing relationships with both central and branch union officers and having the power to intervene are critically important for the commission aiming to conduct independent women organization. In fact, it seems that the struggle of the women's commission is multifaceted. On the one hand, they engage in constant negotiations with male-dominated union managers at the center regarding the commission's work, on the other hand, they strive to create space for women by preventing interventions from male managers at the branches. Furthermore, they encourage women members to participate more in grassroots activities, thereby strengthening the grassroots organization of women's work. As the woman official pointed out, the women's commission have to act by considering the internal dynamics of the organization and developing strategies.

When I asked about her the challenges of being a woman official in a male-dominated field, she mentioned that it is difficult but also rewarding when successful. She explained that they have seen the results of their struggle at the grassroots level, and as the number of female representatives increases, the women's work within the union becomes stronger and more independent.

The women's commission's activities are critical for women's empowerment and consciousness raising. Unlike TexUnion, Met2Union's women's commission has organic relations with the feminist movement in Turkey. The woman I interviewed defines herself as a "feminist" and organizes visits of feminist groups to women's resistance. The presence of a feminist union official and organic ties with the feminist movement are critical for the work of the women's commission to translate into more egalitarian and permanent policies for women members. However, it is possible to say that this women's commission does not have a strong and solid position within the bureaucratic and male-dominated structure of the union. In addition to this fragility, it seems that the commission limits itself to training and awareness raising activities.

The commission is not sufficiently effective in women's organizing and picketing processes; in fact, it does not set itself such a mission. However, the absence of intervention by the commission in these areas has damaging consequences for women workers. As the woman union official explained, the union often takes a pragmatic approach to women workers to make the resistance more visible to the public. Women, who are brought to the forefront to gain public support during picketing, often do not receive the necessary support after the process ends and are pushed to the background by male unionists.

> "I know, many resistances might end, but they continue because of women, that persistence and determination sustain that resistance within women. Does it garner public attention? Yes, it does. Women really commit themselves, believing in what they do. They take all the risks, when necessary. They continue the resistance by facing conflicts with their families, with their husbands, with their surroundings. But the worst part is, if the resistance is successful, after the resistance, the union forces them to turn back to their old selves. After the resistance, the process needs to be managed, the show is over, now it's time for collective bargaining... Power dynamics... The question of who will hold power comes into play. And if you abandon women at that point, they fall behind. During the picketing, the effort the union puts into keeping women there and supporting them, once the resistance is over

> and the union withdraws its support, they revert to their old selves. Because that support still needs to continue, it needs to carry over to their subsequent processes. If it were a union that believed in gender equality, whose right do you think it is? It's the women's right, you'd say. They withdraw support for women because there's another power dynamic at play. And women returning to their gender roles, transitioning back to their passive position in the factories, and men becoming representatives, managers, and so on, emerge from there." (Woman union official, Met2Union)[227]

While the women's commission contented itself with only visits during picketing, the process at Automet unfolded differently. In the factory, where organizing increased during the militant actions, most workers had superficial contact with the union. According to the official, the intervention of numerous socialist political groups in the resistance of these workers, who were unfamiliar with the union, caused confusion and internal conflicts among them. Therefore, to prevent harm to women workers, the women's commission became more actively involved in the process. They aimed to create a platform where women could discuss their issues and acted as a balancing factor between the branch and women workers.

227 "Ben biliyorum, birçok direniş belki bitecek ama kadınlar olduğu için sürüyor, o inat ve o ısrar kadınlarda o direnişi sürdürüyor. Kamuoyu da topluyor mu, topluyor. İnanarak da yapıyor kadınlar bu işi. Bazı direnişlerde yaparlar, sendika seni orda tutuyordur filan... Ama kadınlar gerçekten kendilerini vererek, inanarak yapıyorlar. Bütün riskleri de göze alarak yapıyorlar yeri geldiğinde. Aileleriyle çatışma, kocalarıyla çatışma, çevreleriyle çatışma gibi şeyleri göğüsleyerek o direnişin içerisinde o direnişi sürdürüyorlar. Ama en kötü şey, direniş bittikten sonra başarılı olursa tekrar eski hallerine sendika tarafından döndürülüyorlar. Yani sendika direnişe çıkarken onlara verdiği desteği, direnişten sonra vermiyor. Direnişten sonra artık sürecin yönetilmesi lazım, artık gösteri kısmı bitti, şimdi toplu sözleşme zamanı...İktidar alanları... Kim iktidar olucak meselesi gündeme geliyor. Ve orda da kadınların peşini bıraktığın anda kadınlar arka tarafa düşüveriyorlar. Direniş zamanında sendikanın kadınları orda tutmak ve desteklemek için verdiği eforu, direniş bittikten sonra sendika elini çektiği anda eski hallerine dönüyorlar. Çünkü o desteğin hala devam ediyor, onların sonraki süreçlerine taşınıyor olması lazım. Toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine inanan bir sendika olsa, kimin hakkıdır dersin, kadının hakkıdır dersin. Kadınlara desteği bırakıyor çünkü orda başka bir iktidar alanı var. Ve kadınların cinsiyet rollerine dönmesi, fabrikalardaki edilgen konumuna geçip, ordan adamların temsilci olması, yönetici olması filan ortaya çıkıyor."

"As the women's commission, we tried to facilitate women's quick acquaintance with both the branch and the union, aiming to create a platform where they could discuss all their issues on a certain ground. I've said it many times: "friends, you will face problems here, it's inevitable, this is a resistance field and it's a tense environment, everyone is tense during resistance, and we expect something from everything, and the other side may not always meet our expectations. Tell the other side how you want to be treated first, if what you've explained isn't done, then let's sit down and talk, let's discuss. There's no problem here that we can't solve, we'll solve it somehow, where you fall short, we step in, where we fall short, the head office"... We tried to maintain that balance. We talked separately with the branch, separately with the managers... Because it's also a resistance open to the public. Both to prevent women from being harmed or abused... And also so that they can eventually reach somewhere within the organization, without being sacrificed by the organization... That proper communication will also affect their positions here, they will be hired in other factories, etc... If you establish proper communication, people will directly refer you when someone is looking for a worker. Indeed, we did that for many friends. We have to take care of those friends; I spoke about it separately because they all worked tirelessly. I said to the union managers, "they have become the face of the union; we need to make sure that they start working in a unionized place". We managed to hire many of them; of course there were some who were not hired, I don't remember them one by one." (Woman union official, Met2Union)[228]

228 "Biz de kadın komisyonu olarak kadınlarla mümkün olduğunca şubeyi ve sendikayı hızlıca tanımalarını sağlayıp, belli bir zemin üzerinden bütün sorunlarını konuşabilecekleri bir zemini yaratmaya çalıştık. Ben defalarca dedim: arkadaşlar siz burda sorun yaşamayacak değilsiniz, yaşayacaksınız burası bir direniş alanı ve burası gergin bir alan, herkes gergindir direnişte, ve her şeyden bir şey çıkarırız, bir beklentimiz var çünkü sürekli ve karşı taraf her zaman bu beklentimizi karşılayamayabilir. Size nasıl davranılmasını istiyorsanız onu anlatın karşı tarafa önce, anlattığınız halde yapılmıyorsa o zaman oturup konuşalım, tartışalım. Çözemeyeceğimiz bir mesele yok burda, çözeriz bir şekilde, sizin yetmediğiniz yerde biz, bizim yetmediğimiz yerde merkez... Ama şuanda bu meselede ne diğer sendikayı, ne polisi,

However, despite the involvement of the women's commission, as mentioned by union official, some women in the picketing were "sacrificed by the organization". While women workers who had good relationships with the union were hired in other factories after the picketing, those who did not have close ties with the union received little support during and after the picketing. In addition, as will be detailed in the next section, some women faced various forms of discrimination by the union during picketing. I assert that there are two main reasons for these situations to arise. First, the women's commission lacks sufficient power to intervene in men's power dynamics and prioritize the interests of all women in this area. Secondly, women union officials may not have acted in a way that jeopardized their position within the union and therefore may not have defended the rights of women who were excluded during the picketing and not supported afterwards to avoid conflict with the union.

As a result, unions function both as a basic defense mechanism for workers against capitalist exploitation and also smooth workers' struggle for maintenance of the capitalist system. Due to this dual and contradictory nature, unions tend to have many structural weaknesses such as sectionalism and bureaucracy. Also, unions have historically a weak relationship with women workers, due to their structural dynamics, patriarchal structures and male culture dominating these organizations.

Looking at three unions in focus, two - TexUnion and Met1Union - are examples of business unions that prioritize collaborative relationships with

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ne de işvereni umutlandıracak bir şekilde bir çatışma, bir söylem, bir dedikodu olmaması lazım. O dengeyi sağlamaya çalıştık. Şubeyle ayrı konuştuk, yöneticilerle ayrı konuştuk... Arada böyle bir şerit yapmaya çalıştık direniş sağlıklı yürüsün diye. Kamoyuna da açılan bir direniş çünkü. Hem kadın arkadaşlar zarar görmesin, hırpalanmasın diye... Hem de o örgüt içerisinde bir süre sonra bir yerlere gelebilsin, örgüt onları harcamasın diye... O düzgün iletişim bazen burdaki konumlarını da etkileyecek, fabrikalara yerleşecekler vs. Düzgün bir iletişim kurarsan karşılıklı olarak, insanlar bir yerde bir işçi aradığında direk seni yönlendirir. Nitekim çoğu arkadaşa öyle yaptık. O arkadaşları aldırmamız lazım, hepsi canla başla çalıştılar diye ben ayrıca konuştum. Sendikanın yüzü oldular, onları sendikalı bir yerde başlatmamız lazım, sendika olarak bize yakışan da budur, hem de kadın politikası olduğunu söyleyen bir sendika için dedim. Birçoğunu aldırdık, alınmayanlar olmuştu tabi, tek tek hatırlamıyorum."

employers and collective bargaining, while Met2Union primarily embodies the characteristics of social democratic unionism. In terms of women's commissions, Met1Union does not have any commission, while TexUnion and Met2Union have strong women's commissions, yet there is a clear ideological difference between the work of these two commissions. TexUnion's commission prioritizes individual empowerment of women through project-based work, whereas Met2Union aims for women's collective empowerment and greater representation within the union ranks through a feminist perspective and policies. When we look at the relations that male union officials establish with women workers during the organizing process, it is possible to say that there is a common paternalistic attitude towards women that varies in level from union to union. At the same time, male officials establish closer relationships with women they can patronize, while excluding women engaging in conflict in various ways. However, the negative experiences of women with unions stem not only from the patriarchal attitudes of male officials and the dominant male culture within the organization, but also from the structural weaknesses of the union and the contradictory positions that inevitably arise at different stages of mobilization.

4.4 Conclusion

In Turkey, joining a union poses risks such as job loss and extended unemployment. Understanding why women take this risk, along with the challenges they face, is crucial. In this chapter, I explored the factors that complicate women's unionization efforts, their motivations, the experiences of women worker leaders in mobilization, and the relationships between unions and women workers.

Structural risks like increased mobbing and the threat of dismissal, coupled with negative perceptions about unions and prior negative union experiences, hinder women's union participation. However, factors such as family support, interpreting workplace experiences through a feminist lens, and working conditions including low wages and gender-based injustices encourage women to unionize.

When it comes to the role of leaders in workplace mobilization, I analyzed the organizing experiences of women worker leaders through the experience of Zeynep, who played a key role in the Zitex mobilization. Throughout this process, women leaders not only empower themselves but also strive to build solidarity among workers and sisterhood bonds among women, framing workers' grievances to persuade them to engage in collective action. Convincing workers, given the structural risks and negative perceptions, is very challenging. Despite the difficulties, women leaders, with moral motivations such as improving collective conditions and ensuring decent treatment for workers, tend to make numerous sacrifices in their personal lives to drive the organizing process.

Lastly, in the section on unions, I analyzed the institutional characteristics of the unions in my cases, the activities of the women's commissions, and the relationships between unionists and women. Among three unions I examined, TexUnion and Met1Union represent business unions focused on collaboration and collective bargaining, while Met2Union embodies social democratic unionism. Regarding women's commissions, Met1Union lacks one, whereas TexUnion and Met2Union have strong commissions with different ideological priorities. TexUnion's commission emphasizes individual empowerment through projects, whereas Met2Union aims for collective empowerment and increased representation using feminist policies. In mobilization efforts, male unionists often adopt a paternalistic attitude towards women workers, favoring those they can control while sidelining those who challenge them. However, women's negative experiences with unions are not solely due to patriarchal attitudes but also stem from the unions' structural weaknesses and inherent contradictions.

5

Collective Action: Strike and Picketing

In the literature on the labor movement in Turkey, labor actions have centered on legal strikes for many years. However, recent studies have begun to focus on non-strike labor actions such as press releases, work slowdowns, factory occupations, marches and picketing.[229] Due to the increasing authoritarianism and flexibilization of labor markets in Turkey since 1980s, workers' unionization efforts are often interrupted by dismissals. In some cases, dismissed workers, together with the union they are members of, initiate sustained picket lines in front of the factories. In recent years, the presence and influence of women workers in these actions have been increasing. However, very few studies have been conducted on what women workers go through in this process, what difficulties they struggle with and how they are affected by this process.[230]

229 Aziz, Çelik, "Türkiye'de 2000'li Yıllarda Grevler ve Grev Dışı Eylemler: Çalışma Hayatında "Pax Romana" mı?" in *Sosyal Haklar Ulusal Sempozyumu IV Bildirileri*. (İstanbul: Petrol İş Yayınları, 2012); Alpkan Birelma, Ebru Işıklı and H. Deniz Sert, 2010'ların İkinci Yarısında Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı Protesto Eylemleri. Çalışma ve Toplum, C.3, S.74. (2022): 1861-1900.

230 Feryal Saygılıgil, Bir Kadın Grevi: Serbest bölge'de kadın işçi olmak. İstanbul: Güldünya Yayınları,2018); Ayten Davutoğlu, "Kadın Direnişçilerin Gözünden Bir Direniş Öyküsü: Gebze Bericap Örneği", Çalışma ve Toplum, (2018); Burcu Saka, "Women's shop floor militancy and empowerment: Industrial dispute in an automotive factory in Turkey", Journal of Labor and Society, (2018); Bahar Gök, Son Yılların Kadın İşçi Eylemlerine İçeriden Bakmak, Cinsiyet Eşitliği Politikaları Derneği, (2023).

For women workers, picket line processes involve many challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, they experience and strengthen worker solidarity and sisterhood bonds, struggle with material difficulties and anxieties, and have to endure divisions among workers and various conflicts with their families and the union. The most important point that differentiates women's resistance experiences from those of male workers is the conflicts women face in the family, the burden of domestic labor and motherhood during picketing. In other words, workers' resistance against the employer turns into a multi-dimensional resistance for women, carried out in different spheres. But despite all the difficulties and negative experiences, most women do not give up the resistance and as Ebru, one of Automet workers, puts it, "they do not abandon what they have started and keep going until the end".

As Table 5 which summarizes the features of the resistance cases shows, in the metal cases, in addition to picketing after dismissal, industrial actions such as strikes and occupations were also carried out. In these industrial actions, women workers have played leading roles. In this chapter, I will focus on the experiences of unionized women workers in industrial actions and picketing.

Table 5: Features of Picketing

Company	Number of workers	Number of participants at the beginning	Duration	Types of actions	Results for the union	Results for the women
Zitex (Textile)	450	4 women	6 months	Picketing in front of factory	Legal recognition in the workplace and collective bargaining	Two women began to work in the union as officers, two women having conflicts with the union began to work in different factories.
Katex (Garment)	350	9 women	6 months	Picketing in front of factory	No gain	Two women were employed in unionized workplaces through the union, one woman left the workforce, five women cut ties with the union. One woman is still looking for a job.
Automet (Metal-automotive)	1500	150 workers, 30-40 women	2 months	Non-legal strike, factory occupation and picketing in front of factory	No gain	About ten women were employed in organized workplaces through the union. A group of women cut ties with the union, remained unemployed for a long time, or took short-term jobs.
Fonmet (Metal-electronics)	800	100-150 workers, 40-50 women	20 days	Non-legal strike, picketing in the factory yard and in front of factory	Legal recognition in the workplace and collective bargaining	Most women who were employed after the resistance were dismissed within the next year. All the women had conflicts with the union in various ways and their relations were cut off.

5.1 Industrial Actions

Industrial actions refer to workers' actions to resolve a workplace dispute over working conditions. The most common examples are strikes, work slowdowns, and factory occupation. There are two types of strikes in Turkey: legal and non-legal strikes. Legal strike means that workers going on strike in accordance with the law in the event of a collective bargaining dispute at a union-organized workplace. However, since 1980s and especially during the AKP government period, legal strikes have often been prevented through postponements and bans. In other words, workers' so-called "legal" right to strike has also been systematically usurped.[231] On the other hand, non-legal strike means that workers, whether union members or not, stop production in order to meet their demands. In Turkey, non-legal strikes have become more widespread in conditions where legal strikes have become impossible.[232]

In my cases, metal workers have gone on "non-legal strike" for their demands mobilizing their productive power. In Automet, workers stopped production several times consecutively against a low pay raise. First, they stopped work for two hours during the day shift, and then again during the night shift, shutting down machines and stopping production. The next morning, all workers in Automet's four factories went on strike in mass and gathered in the factory yard. This spontaneous strike wave accelerated union organizing in the workplace.

> "When the raises were too low, we didn't work for the first two hours, everyone was notified section by section, we stopped work. We came back at night, we didn't work. Human resources officers came and said they would fix it. Everyone went back to the machines. The next morning the ropes broke again, the machines stopped. Everyone crowded in front of the factory, and people started making their memberships at that time. Then the CEO came, made a promise, asked

231 Aziz Çelik, Turkey's New Labour Regime Under the Justice and Development Party in the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century: Authoritarian Flexibilization, in: Middle Eastern Studies, 51(4), (2015): 618–635.

232 Birelma et.al, 2010'ların İkinci Yarısında Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı Protesto Eylemleri, 1883.

for a one-week deadline. He ruined us all in that one week." (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[233]

It was women workers who initiated the machine shutdowns at Automet. After stopping their own machines, they persuaded their co-workers to join the strike.

"When everyone gathered at night, we were the first to leave the machines. When we left the machines there, we turned them off. The day the union was also coming... We realized that no one was leaving the machines. We shut down the first three machines as women, then the others shut them down. Before we did there was no one shutting down, everyone was looking at each other." (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[234]

Industrial actions at Automet were not limited with the non-legal strike. After many unionized workers were dismissed following the strike wave, workers attempted to occupy the factory. Since the occupation was organized together with the union, even the dismissed workers somehow entered the factory and joined the action alongside their co-workers. The workers planned to stay in the production area until their demands were accepted, but when rumors of police intervention spread, they moved from the production area to the roof of the factory to delay the intervention. But not all the protesters took part in the rooftop action. Some of the male workers who had not yet been fired did not go to the roof and left the factory. The women who went up to the roof were very disappointed that the number of workers had decreased, which was detrimental to the unity and motivation among the workers. A large proportion of those who participate to rooftop action and continued the

233 "Zamlar çok düşük gelince ilk ikişer saat çalışmadık, bölüm bölüm herkese haber verildi, çalışılmadı durdu. Gece de yine geldik, çalışmadık. İnsan kaynakları geldi, düzelticez filan dediler. Herkes makinelerin başına geçti. Ertesi sabaha yine ipler koptu, makineler durdu. Herkes T1'e doluştu işte, millet de o sırada üyeliklerini yapmaya başladı. İşte CEO geldi, söz verdi, bir hafta müsaade istedi. O bir haftada hepimizi halletti."

234 "Gece herkes toplandığı zaman ilk biz makineleri bırakıp çıktık. Orda bırakıp çıkınca kapattık makineleri. Sendikanın da geleceği gün... Baktık kimse bırakmıyor makineleri. İlk 3 makine biz kapattık, ondan sonra diğerleri kapattı. Kapatan hiç kimse yoktu, herkes birbirine bakıyordu."

occupation were women. These included workers like Ayten and Ebru, who had not yet been fired and were taking to risk being fired.

> "Our first disappointment was when we went on the roof. We were expecting more people at the roof protest." (Ebru, Automet, 5 years)[235]

> "When we went to the roof, there were many people running away. Mostly men escaped, women stayed there. Men ran away to avoid unemployment. " (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[236]

The women continued to protest on the roof overnight in very cold weather and were detained in the morning by police with violence. This action became an unforgettable experience in women's lives. During the interview, Ebru often talked about her experiences on the roof protest. While Ayten and Ebru were on the roof, they were calling their team leaders and making excuses for illness because they could not make the morning shift, while waiting for the police to intervene. Also, Ebru imitated Ayten saying "the police are coming" several times when she saw the police entering the factory. While recalling what happened that day after a long time, Ebru tried to minimize the traumatizing impact of this experience on her life by joking and making fun of it.

Filiz, one of the Automet workers, was a woman who was dismissed before the rooftop action. But when she heard about the factory occupation, she and her friends immediately went to the front of the factory. Although security prevented them from entering the workplace, they managed to get inside. For Filiz, who comes from a Kurdish and left-wing family background, the occupation is an experience that embodies the workers' struggle. Also, she mentioned the police violence against women workers.

> "It was a very good thing for me, I'm a person who loves action, to be honest (laughs). You have to fight; you really have to fight. If you don't, you can't win the war anyway... The temperature was maybe -5, it was

235 "Biz ilk hüsrana çatıya çıktığımızda uğradık. Çatı eyleminde daha çok kişi bekliyorduk."

236 "Çatıya gittiğimiz zaman aradan kaçanlar da çok oldu. Çoğunlukla da erkekler kaçtı, kadınlar kaldı orda. Erkekler işsiz kalmamak için kaçtılar. " (Derya-Farplas)

very cold, and we stayed there until the morning. That day the governor's office came to wish the employer well. We were the ones who were seeking our rights there, we were the workers, we were mobbed, and our friends were taken away crawling, the police cursed at us, but the governorship came to wish the employer well." (Filiz, Automet, 5 years)[237]

At Fonmet, following the dismissal of around twenty pioneer workers, workers inside started a non-legal strike to protest. While the dismissed workers continued picketing in front of the factory, a group of workers stopped production and started picketing in the factory yard. During picketing, the union achieved the majority in the factory and gained authorization.

In Turkey, employers often challenge the union's authorization through legal means and this prolonged court process prevents the union from initiating collective bargaining negotiations at the workplace. However, this is not the case at Fonmet. Although the employer first tried to prevent unionization by firing the pioneer workers, they did not challenge the union's authorization and the collective agreement was signed. It is possible to suggest that this situation resulted from an implicit agreement made between the employer and the union. Met1Union is a union that has a cooperative relationship with employers and its high membership rate in the sector is associated with the support it receives from employers.

In the Fonmet case, it is possible that the union assured the employer that it would engage in cooperative and compliant unionism. After authorization and the signing of the collective agreement, the union's failure to intervene sufficiently in workers' conditions, the subsequent dismissal or forced resignation by the employer of active workers in the process of resistance, and the union's preparation of an incentive package to make these dismissals possible, are manifestations of the union's cooperative policy. About a year

237 "Benim için çok güzel bir şey oldu, ben aksiyon seven bir insanım açıkçası (gülüyor) Mücadele ediceksin, gerçekten ediceksin, etmezsen zaten savaşı kazanamazsın...Hava -5'ti belki, çok soğuktu ve biz sabaha kadar orda kaldık. O gün de valilik işyeri sahibine geçmiş olsuna geldi. Orda hakkını arayan biziz, işçileriz, orda mobbing gördük ve arkadaşlarımız sürünerek götürüldüler, polislerden küfredenler oldu, ama valilik işverene geçmiş olsuna geliyor."

after the resistance, about two hundred workers were dismissed and these workers organized protests in front of the factory without the support of the union.

5.2 Picketing

The form of action, which usually starts with the tenting in front of the workplace as a result of the dismissal of leading workers in unionization struggles, is quite common in Turkey.[238] This form of action overlaps to some extent with the concept of "picketing" in the global labor movement literature, which refers to the act of gathering and standing in front of the workplace during a strike. However, this type of action, which has become increasingly widespread in Turkey in the last decades, does not start because of a strike but of the dismissal of unionized workers.[239]

Picketing is primarily intended to prevent the employer from dismissing more workers and to preserve the unity of the workers inside. If a majority has not been reached in the factory, the workers in the factory are expected to continue organizing during the picketing. If the majority has been reached and the employer has challenged the union's authorization, the picket line is maintained so that the workers' organization is not weakened during the long court process.

In my all cases, women who dismissed due to unionization began to picket in front of factory with the unions they are member of. As *Table 5* shows that the duration, the number of participants and results vary among the cases. At Zitex, four women have kept up to action for six months, while at Katex, very few of nine women continue the picket line until the end of six months. While Automet workers have picketed for two months, Fonmet workers' picketing lasted about twenty days. The results for these resistance for unions and women workers also change from the case to case.

238 Birelma et.al, 2010'ların İkinci Yarısında Türkiye'de İşçi Sınıfı Protesto Eylemleri, 1883.

239 Aziz, Çelik, "Türkiye'de 2000'li Yıllarda Grevler ve Grev Dışı Eylemler: Çalışma Hayatında "Pax Romana" mı?" in *Sosyal Haklar Ulusal Sempozyumu IV Bildirileri*, (İstanbul: Petrol İş Yayınları, 2012): 108.

In the rest of the chapter, I explain the women's picketing experiences from different aspects including worker solidarity, financial difficulties, personal and structural splits, family relations and solidarity visits.

5.2.1 Worker Solidarity in Resistance: "We became like relatives"

Worker solidarity is an important and necessary condition for the emergence of collective action. As Hodson et.al puts that worker solidarity develops out of shared work experience of workers.[240] In other words, a relationship of solidarity is established between workers who are subjected to the same forms of oppression and exploitation in the factory. The women I interviewed often talked about the intimate friendship networks at the workplace. These bonds of friendship enable women to establish various mechanisms of solidarity against the heavy workload and to defense each other against mobbing and harassment. At the same time, however, this solidarity is systematically undermined by inter-worker competition and management's methods to increase this competition, and solidarity between workers can be replaced by distrust. On the other hand, worker solidarity does not only emerge from the shared experience of work, but also emerges or is strengthened in the experience of collective action.[241]

The process of picketing after dismissal brings about many financial and psychological difficulties for workers. Despite these hardships, worker solidarity is a decisive feature of resistance. In some cases, workers who do not know each other in the production area have found chance to meet each other. For Fonmet, which is a newly founded factory, many workers have familiarized each other on the picket line. In this case, the dismissed workers have stayed in the garden of factory day and night for ten days. The collective experience of resistance led to the formation of intimate relationships between workers. Mehtap described this intimate relationship by saying "we became like relatives".

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240 Randy Hodson, Sandy Welsh, Sabine Rieble, Cheryl Sorenson Jamison and Sean Creighton, Is Worker Solidarity Undermined by Autonomy and Participation? Patterns from the Ethnographic Literature. *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (1993): 399.

241 Fantasia, Rick. (1988). Cultures of Solidarity: Consciousness, Action and Contemporary American Workers. Berkley: University of California Press.

"We slept together in the garden at the factory, everyone was bringing blankets. In the mornings I would say "wake up, ward," and everyone would bring something from outside. We all cooked and brought food. For example, I brought a triple plug, everyone charged their phones that way from the security guard's booth. Then the employer turned off the electricity so we wouldn't charge them. This time we took the triple plug from the union car. There was a secret place in the garden, we broke the wire there, we were making people jump from there... Songs and folk songs at night. It was like the Gezi events. I mean, we became like relatives with everyone." (Mehtap, Fonmet, 2 years)[242]

"During the resistance, we were very good with each other. We were all sitting together, laughing, having fun, if there was a problem, we immediately formed a round table and talked amongst ourselves." (Zehra, Fonmet, 2 years)[243]

Worker solidarity is also built in moments of facing the challenges of resistance together. The Automet workers started their picket line in the very cold days of February and the police did not allow them to light a fire in the tent. Waiting together in the rain and cold every day and being cold together served to strengthen the bonds and sense of unity between the workers.

"It was very important for me, in that rain the police didn't even allow us to light a fire in a small tin can. There was a small air vent, hot air was coming in, we were all shivering in front of it. We were few, sometimes twenty, sometimes fifty. We were few, but this unity was very, very important to me. Let me put it this way, when I think about

242 "Fabrikada bahçede birlikte yattık, herkes battaniye getiriyor, ben diyorum koğuş kalk, battaniye geldi, yorgan geldi. Herkes dışarıdan bir şey getiriyor. Yemek yapıp götürdük hepimiz. Ben diyordum ki mesela üçlü fiş bahçede yoktu, ben üçlü fiş getirdim, herkes telefonlarını öyle şarja taktı güvenliğin kabininden. Sonra işveren sigortayı kapattı, şarj etmeyelim diye. Bu sefer üçlü fişi sendikanın arabasından çektik. Gizliden böyle bir yer var, teli kırdık, milleti ordan atlatıyoduk...Geceler şarkılar, türküler. Gezi olayları gibi böyle. Yani bir akraba gibi olduk herkesle."

243 "Direniş zamanı çok iyi olduğumuz insanlardı. Hepimiz içiçe oturuyorduk, gülüyorduk, eğleniyorduk, bir sorun sıkıntı varsa orda hemen bir yuvarlak masa oluşturuyorduk kendi aramızda."

my working life, it was the best period. It really was." (Canan, Automet, 5 years)[244]

On the other hand, the bonds of solidarity among workers are often extremely fragile. Material realities prevent us from romanticizing the process of workers' resistance and the worker solidarity felt during this process. Workers' precarious conditions, economic hardship, feelings of hopelessness and discriminatory attitudes of the union lead to various conflicts among workers as the process drags on.

5.2.2 Economic Burden of Resistance

The dismissed workers have suffered serious economic hardship during the picketing. Unions often provide them with a small amount of money as a support, but this falls far short of the level of wages required for subsistence. So, most workers are stuck between two paths: either to continue to resist by running up debts or to find another job and give up the resistance. On the other hand, even if the workers gave up their resistance, they could not find work immediately because the employer usually ensured that the workers were blacklisted in the industrial zone where they located so they were often forced to work in casual or informal jobs.

In textile cases, both of which were women-only resistance, women did not give up resistance due to the economic hardships. I think, there are two reasons for that. Firstly, the financial support provided by the union was almost equivalent to half of the minimum wage determined during that period, and it was nearly sufficient for the women to continue. However, it should be noted that the union's ability to provide adequate material support to all workers is related to the small number of workers on the picket line. Secondly, most women were married with children, and the gendered

244 "Benim için şey çok önemliydi, o yağmur altında polis bizim ufak bir tenekeye ateş yakmamıza bile izin vermemişti. Ufak bir havalandırma vardı, sıcak hava geliyordu, hepimiz onun önünde tir tir titriyorduk. Azdık, yeri geldiğinde 20, yeri geldiğinde 50 kişi oluyorduk. Azdık ama bu birlik benim için çok çok önemliydi. Olacağını düşünmüyordum, ama az da olsa benim için çok önemliydi. Şöyle söyleyeyim, iş hayatımı düşündüğüm zaman en güzel dönemimdi yani. Gerçekten öyleydi."

discourse on the division of labor positioned men as the main breadwinners, while women's income, no matter how indispensable, was seen as "additional" income. Therefore, it was more possible for married women textile workers to continue the resistance for a while without much financial hardship.

On the other hand, in the Automet case, the union's financial support to the workers amounted to one third of the minimum wage. Despite this inadequate support, few workers left the picket line by the end of the first month. However, at the beginning of the second month, the union cut off financial support to some workers, causing them to quit the resistance.

While the majority of the workers continue the picketing by taking on debt, the debt cycle for single mothers who have to survive on their own led to more prolonged economic difficulties for them. For example, Ayten is a divorced women and have three children. She underlines the prevalence of indebtedness among workers and blames the union for its lack of financial support.

> "Everyone has children, they need to earn money, there is no money. And my child was in kindergarten, I had to rush there and back...You want to keep the workers there, but you don't support them, they are all in debt. Everyone is supporting a house. The union didn't support them, they scattered them. It started distributing them from the very beginning. When the union cuts off the funds, people start searching for jobs, and the strike area weakens." (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[245]

Ayten accumulated a significant amount of debt during the picketing, and after the process ended, this debt increased exponentially during a year-long period of unemployment. Therefore, the economic burden of the Automet resistance is too much for her.

> "The daycare for my child filed a foreclosure suit against me. I paid 20,000 for a 7,000-lira daycare due to the execution debt. The debt

245 "Herkesin çoluk çocuğu var, para kazanması lazım, para yok pul yok. Gidiyoz geliyoz ama nasıl gidiyoz geliyoz? Bir de benim çocuğum kreşteydi, koştur koştur oraya git, koştur koştur gel...Adamları orda tutmak istiyosun ama adamlara destek vermiyorsun, ordakilerin hepsi borçlu. Herkes ev geçindiriyor. Onu da yapmadı (sendika), milleti dağıttı. En başından dağıtmaya başladı."

> remains, the burden remains; there is nothing else (left from the resistance). We received unemployment benefits, but we were immediately using it to pay the rent – what else can you do at home? Days passed half-hungry, half-full; that's it. We were only accumulating credit card debt; there's nothing else. The card isn't your father's property, after all – the guy wants his money in the end." (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[246]

Similarly, Ebru had also run into huge debts during the picketing. Because she and Ayten had been unemployed for a long time, when we spoke to her about 1.5 years after the resistance, she still had not managed to pay off these debts. Ebru is one of the workers for whom the union stopped providing financial support in the second month of picketing. Union officials have implied that since she is married and her husband is working, the financial cut will not affect her much. However, she criticizes this attitude, which is built on the gendered division of labor.

> "So what if my husband is working? Even if my husband is working, you can't know my source of livelihood, you can't know how much trouble I am in; nobody can know without experiencing it." (Ebru, Automet, 6 years)[247]

So, it is obvious that male union officers tend to reproduce the traditional gender discourse that considers women's income as "additional" income for the household.

246 "Çocuğumun kreşi bana icra davası açtı. Yedi bin liralık kreşe yirmi bin para verdim icra borcundan dolayı. Borcu kaldı, yükü kaldı, başka da bir şey değil (direnişten kalan). İşsizlik maaşını aldık ama onu direk kiraya veriyorduk, ne yiyeceksin evde? Yarı aç yarı tok günler geçti bitti işte. Anca kart borcu yapıyorduk, başka bir şey yok. Kartta babanın malı değil ki, adam istiyor sonuçta parasını."

247 "Eşim çalışıyormuş da bilmem ne? Ya eşim çalışıyorsa da, sen benim geçim kaynağımı, sen benim ne kadar sıkıntıda olduğumu bilemezsin, bunun içinde olmadan kimse bilemez."

5.2.3 Groupings and Tensions on the Picket Line

Picketing is challenging for workers not only economically but also psychologically. As the process extends, workers crushed under the economic burden gradually start losing hope for success, and a sense of regret replaces hope for some. In these conditions, conflicts arise among workers based on personal and structural reasons, and the sense of unity weakens, leading to factionalism.

In my cases of Zitex and Automet, the personal conflicts that arose during the picket line process led to groupings and feelings of hostility among workers. At Katex, the women did not openly voice a conflict between them, probably because the picket line process was ongoing. Also, Katex had a different process than Zitex. Three months after the picketing started, five more women were fired, and after a while the employer tried to poison the workers. Both the increase in the number of women and the harsh attempts by the employer to prevent picketing may have motivated women to keep their bonds strong rather than clash with each other. On the other hand, rather than a personal conflict, there was an implicit grouping between women who had a closer relationship with the union and women who did not have such relationship.

In Fonmet, on the other hand, the major cause of conflicts between workers was the discriminatory attitudes of the union, rather than individual groupings, as will be discussed in the next section. This is because Fonmet workers picketed for a short period of time, 10 days, which probably prevented the emergence of individual conflicts. As a result, in this section I will examine the personal conflicts and tensions that arise between women on the picket line through the cases of Zitex and Automet.

At Zitex, women were close to each other in the early days of the picketing, but from the third month onwards, the relationship among women began to break down. The women were divided into two groups with people they were already closer to, Zeynep and Ayşe on one side and Pınar and Hatice on the other. For Pınar, the reason for the conflict is that Zeynep and Ayşe are jealous of them, because they come into prominence in the resistance, giving

interviews to the media about the resistance and making speeches during visits.

> "We were closer with Hatice, Zeynep and Ayşe were closer to each other. Then we had some disagreements. Zeynep didn't want Hatice to come to prominence. Because Zeynep had been struggling for years, she started to pick a fight. Then Ayşe didn't want me to come forward, so she stood behind Zeynep. So we became a bit like enemies to each other, or rather they became enemies to us. These situations started in the third month or so. Usually, it was either Hatice or me doing the interviews, either Hatice or me doing the speeches, and they were disturbed by them. Zeynep even started talking about ending the picketing, she started to argue with the union officials. In front of the factory, sometimes we sat separately and sometimes we sat together, so some people noticed the conflict between us. In the last month of the resistance, it was very visible. I can say that the unionists did nothing about this situation. They silenced us there.There is no solution by silencing one person." (Pınar, Zitex, 1 years)[248]

The issue of "coming into prominence" (*öne çıkma*) is really matter for the relations among workers during the resistance. Some workers who put great effort into the organization may remain in the background, while others come into prominence thanks to their personal skills in expression and communication. While the effects of this unequal situation, which tends to

248 "Biz Hatice ablayla daha çok yakındık birbirimize, Zeynep abla ile Ayşe abla da onlarda daha çok birbirine yakınlardı. Sonrasında bizim bazı anlaşmazlıklarımız oldu. Hatice ablanın öne çıkmasını istemedi Zeynep abla. Zeynep abla çünkü yıllardır uğraşıyordu, oradan bir sürekli kavga çıkarmaya başladı. Ondan sonra Ayşe abla benim öne çıkmamı istemediği için, Zeynep ablanın arkasına durdu. Öylelikle biz biraz birbirimize düşman kesildik gibi bir şey oldu, daha doğrusu onlar bize düşman kesildi. Üçüncü aylarda filan başladı bu durumlar. Genelde röportajları ya Hatice abla yapıyordu ya ben yapıyordum, konuşmaları ya Hatice abla ya ben yapıyordum, onlar da bundan rahatsız oldu. Hatta Zeynep abla bitirelim tarzında konuşmaya başladı, sendika başkanıyla atışmaya başladı bu sefer, bizim aramızı bozdu. Fabrikanın önünde bazen ayrı oturuyorduk bazen beraber oturuyorduk, oradan bir anlayanlar oldu zaten. Direnişin son ayında çok rahat bir şekilde gözüktü. Sendikacılar bu duruma hiçbir şey yapmadılar desem yeridir. Orayı susturdu, orayı susturdu. Bir kişiyi susturmakla bir çözüm elde edilmez yani."

lead to conflicts, can be mitigated by the union, the union itself exacerbates conflicts between workers by discriminating against them or ignoring conflicts that arise between them.

Similarly, at Automet, factionalism among workers emerge during the permanent resistance and some workers, such as Ayten and Ebru, began to feel excluded from the field. They were inclined to blame the union officials who did not intervene for their exclusion.

> "The union didn't keep people together there, there was factionalism, they couldn't even prevent that. The factions started in front of the door. They realized that nothing would come of it, the workers immediately started to group together, they immediately started to look for work." (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[249]

> "If we embarked on this journey with this community, and later you take someone aside and whisper privately, and when I approach, you fall silent, I withdraw myself from that side. We experienced it. Our own circle of friends did this, and the union officials didn't put a stop to it. We told the union officials that there was factionalism happening here. We said we feel excluded, constantly outside with Ayten. We just couldn't get under that tent. Whether it was rain or snow, we were always outside. We started this journey together, so why were we later excluded? Why did you form groups? What happened now, which one of you sees the other?" (Ebru, Automet, 5 years)[250]

On the other hand, Automet workers began to blame each other for not sacrificing enough for the resistance and not showing up regularly. Women

249 "Sendika orda insanları bir arada tutmadı, hani ayrımcılık, bölücülük oldu orada, ona bile engel olamadılar. Gruplaşmalar kapı önünde başladı. Baktılar bu işten bir şey çıkmayacak, hemen gruplaşmaya başladı işçiler, hemen iş derdine düşmeye başladılar."

250 "Biz bu yola bu toplulukla çıktıysak, sen daha sonradan tutup birilerini kenara çekip fısır fısır ayrı konuşup ben yanına geldiğimde susarsan, ben o kenardan kendimi geri çekerim. Biz onu yaşadık. Kendi arkadaş çevremiz yaptı bunu, sendikacılar da buna dur demedi yani. Biz sendikacılara dedik burda gruplaşma oluştu diye. Biz kendimizi dışlanmış hissediyoruz dedik, sürekli Ayten ile dışarda şurda burdaydık. O çadırın altına biz bir türlü giremiyorduk. Yağmur da olsa kar da olsa biz hep dışındaydık. Bu yola beraber çıktık da, niye sonradan dışlandık? Niye gruplaştınız? Şimdi noldu, hanginiz hanginizi görüyorsunuz?"

with small children could not come to the picket line on some days, and even this absence could turn into a cause for conflict. Similarly, a woman who was subjected to police violence during the roof protest could easily blame Canan, who could not attend that protest because of her child. In other words, the sense of solidarity and unity among women workers was gradually weakened by factionalism and gossip during the picket line.

> "They dragged me by my hair (referring to the police violence at the roof protest) but you weren't there," she tells me. I'm trying to reconcile, to at least avoid a breakup, but the woman yelled at us a lot. We can't shut her up. She was looking for a place to shout." (Canan, Automet, 5 years)[251]

As a result, during the picketing, in which there is a lot of uncertainty, individual conflicts between workers sometimes arise from jealousy, from pursuing personal interests more, sometimes simply from not getting along with each other. However, there are personal as well as structural reasons for conflict among workers. The discriminatory attitudes of union officials towards workers is one of the most important structural causes of conflict and hostility between workers.

5.2.4 Unions' Discriminatory Attitudes

Unions are ideally supposed to be structures that organize and protect the unity of workers, but this often does not correspond to the reality. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the major shortcomings of unions is sectionalism refers to dividing workers on the grounds of certain criterions such as industry, sector and form of employment. But unions do not only segregate workers based on these, as we have seen on the picket lines; unions often discriminate among their own members in various ways. These discriminations weaken the fragile solidarity of workers who have been fired and continue to resist in difficult conditions, sometimes even turning them

251 "Beni saçımdan sürüklediler (çatı eylemindeki polis şiddetini kastediyor) ama sen orda yoktun" diye laf söylüyor bana. Ben arayı toparlayalım, en azından bir ayrılık olmasın diye uğraşıyorum, kadın bize baya bağırdı yani. Susturamıyoruz kadını. Bağırmaya yer arıyormuş."

enemies against each other. In my cases, some women in the Fonmet and Automet cases indicated that they had faced discrimination by unions.

Following the Fonmet resistance, the union became authorized at the factory and workers began to work as union members. During this period, the union organized a vacation to Ankara for some women workers who had close relations with the union, under the pretext of training. This became one of the reasons for the conflict and hostility between the workers; in Zehra's words, "the workers were turned against each other." Some women workers also made moral judgments and accusations against the women who went on vacation.

> "After the union became authorized, they took us to Ankara for three days, under the name of training, a kind of vacation. This Ankara incident also caused us to eat each other. They were saying 'we all slept in front of the factory, but the union took only them to Ankara'. The union should have taken us all to Ankara. I can say that they turned us against each other." (Zehra, Fonmet, 2 years)[252]

In the Automet case, women I met mentioned that some women were taken by union officials to apply for jobs while the picketing was ongoing. The economic and psychological burden of resistance has been already discussed in the previous sections. As the picketing continues, women feel despair about returning to work and worry about whether they would be able to find another job. In this regard, the union's discrimination among workers has led disadvantaged women to bear hostility towards both the union and the women supported by the union.

> "Right in front of our eyes, while we were protesting there, we were all in front of the gate... They put some friends in the car. When we asked where they were going, they said they were going to the restroom,

252 "Sendika içeri girdikten sonra bizi 3 gün Ankaraya götürdüler, eğitim adı altında, bir nevi tatildi yani. Bu Ankara olayı da içimizde birbirimizi yememize sebep oldu. 'Onları Ankaraya götürüyorlar, biz bahçede yattık' diyorlardı. Sendika ya hepsine birden bir imkan sağlayacaktı yada hiçbirine sağlamayacaktı. Bizi birbirimize kırdırdılar diyebilirim yani."

when in fact they were taking us to apply for a job." (Ebru, Automet, 5 years)[253]

Filiz, who has a closer relationship with the union, admits that the union has helped some women in the picket line to find jobs earlier. Filiz is also one of those who started work immediately after the resistance at a workplace where the union was organized. According to her, the reason why this causes hostility among workers is that some workers do not wait for a while for the union to get them a job. However, it is unclear how the union selects the workers that the union assists to get hired. This uncertainty led to increased gossip and rumors among workers.

Another form of discrimination in the Automet case is related to the financial support given to workers. From the second month of the picket line onwards, the union cut financial support to some workers while continuing to provide it to others. This discrimination is one of the most important reasons for the weakening of the resistance and the breaking down of solidarity among workers. Furthermore, as stated by women, some union officials implied that workers came to the resistance to receive money, which undermined their dignity.

"In the first month the union gave 1,500 liras so that everyone could come to the resistance. In the second month they cut it off. They started giving it to certain people... If it's necessary for them to make a living, isn't it necessary for us too? This is already known, why should I go? Those who heard about this started not to come. The man says, "I'm the breadwinner," why should he continue to resist?" (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[254]

253 "Ya gözümüzün önünde biz orda eylemdeyken, hepimiz kapının önündeyiz... Bazı arkadaşları arabaya bindirdiler. Nereye gidiyorsunuz diye sorduğumuzda lavaboya gidiyoruz dediler, halbuki iş başvurusuna götürüyorlarmış."

254 "İlk ay sendika 1.500 lira destek verdi, yine gelinsin diye. İkinci ay kestiler onu zaten. Belli kişilere vermeye başladılar...Madem onların geçinmesi lazım, bizim geçinmemiz lazım değil mi? Ee bu duyuldu zaten, ben niye gideyim? Duyan gitti, duyan gitti. Ben ev geçindiriyorum diyor adam, niye dursun?"

> "They said those who leave on administrative leave will not be paid. They said, "That 1500 lira will no longer be given, if you are coming for money, don't come at all." They said this explicitly. When people didn't come, they looked at it as "oh, so they were coming for money". I was one of those who was put on administrative leave. I said, "Were we stupid to come here until now, did we come here for money?" I said, "You are making such accusations against the people, you pushed the people yourself. I said this resistance is doomed to disintegrate." (Ebru, Automet, 5 years)[255]

In the Automet case, the decision to cut financial support for some workers and the use of discriminatory language by union officials are closely tied to the unions' contradictory positions throughout the mobilization process. These actions would stem from the realization among union officials that the chances of success are weak and their eagerness to end the picket line quickly. Since the primary goal of a trade union is to negotiate with the employer, it seems rational to end a process of action with a crowd that does not lead to gains and that becomes more and more difficult to control. However, this decision should be openly discussed with the workers. In other words, the flawed attitude of union officials, which alienates workers and prematurely ends the process, arises from the undemocratic structure of unions that exclude workers from decision-making. In other words, it is more reasonable to examine the discriminatory behavior of male union officials toward women not only through patriarchy but also through the contradictory nature of unions.

5.2.5 Women's Despair and Disappointments

As mentioned earlier, many women who were initially hopeful about winning during the first weeks of the picket line began to feel despair as the process

255 "İdari izinlilere para verilmiycek dediler. O 1500 lira da artık verilmiycek, para için geliyorsanız hiç gelmeyin dediler. Açıkça bunu dediler. Millet gelmeyince de " aa demekki para için geliyor" gözüyle baktılar. İdari izinlilerden biri de bendim. Salakmıydık bugüne kadar buraya geldik, para için mi geldik şimdiye kadar dedim. Siz millete böyle suçlama yapıyorsunuz, siz kendiniz milleti ittiniz dedim. Burası dağılmaya mahkum dedim."

dragged on. Various disappointments have fueled this despair, but one of the most significant factors is the lack of support from the workers who continue to work in the factory. Except for a group of workers from Fonmet who went on strike to support the picket line, women in Zitex, Katex, and Automet cases mentioned that they did not receive explicit support from the workers. The women's definition of support includes continuing to organize inside, taking actions such as stopping work to support the picket line, or at least acknowledging the workers on the picket line by waving or looking in their direction when passing by. However, not receiving support from their co-workers, with whom they work and face the same pressures, greatly lowered the motivation of the women. Also, it is disappointment for them because most of them regard themselves as not only fighting for their own rights but also for the unionization of the factory, aiming to improve conditions for all workers.

> "Do you know when we lost hope? It was four o'clock in the afternoon, they were going to start a new shift. We were in a conversation with our shift mates. They were coming, they were passing in front of us with their heads down. They had already changed their service section; they were entering from the back. Don't enter from the back, enter from here, come on, you're passing in front of us on a bus or shuttle service, raise your head. My psychology was ruined there. I wasn't going in front of the door while they were entering, I was cleaning on another side. I was getting a negative energy when I saw that situation..." (Filiz, Automet, 5 years)[256]

> "We kept ourselves busy, we couldn't find any support. If there was support from within, there are thousands of workers... It's one thing for one or two people to revolt, it's another to shut down all the

256 "Biz umudumuzu ne zaman yitirdik, biliyor musun? Saat 4 oluyordu, vardiya arkadaşlarımızla bir konuşma iletişim halindeydik, geliyorlardı kafalarını eğiyorlardı. Onların servis bölümünü değiştirdiler zaten, arkadan giriyorlardı. Arkadan girme, burdan gir, hadi önümüzden otobüsle servisle geçiyorsun, başını kaldır yani. Benim orda psikolojim altüst oldu. Ve ben kapı önüne gitmiyordum, temizlik yapıyordum orda. O durumu gördüğümde negatif bir enerji alıyordum..."

machines... The employer would inevitably have accepted the demands." (Canan, Automet, 5 years)[257]

Workers' lack of support for the resistance can be explained both by threats of dismissal and the employer's black propaganda about the resistance. For example, in the Automet case, because the union was known to be left-wing and had engaged in militant actions such as occupations, the employer associated the union with terrorism and accused workers who were members of the union of being "terrorists.

5.2.6 Family relations and Motherhood

As Mills notes, women's political activities are rarely confined to public arenas of contest, but rather encompass the broad contexts of women's lives, linking the intimate settings of the family, the household, and the wider community.[258] The process of picket line also affect and transform women's relations with families, reproductive work, and motherhood in various ways. Due to the patriarchal division of labor, women who work in the labor market are also burdened with reproductive work within the household, including housework and care work.[259] During the picket line, women have to deal with family conflicts and manage the reproductive work to continue the resistance.

In some cases, women openly clashed with their family members, especially male ones. For example, Zeynep, a Zitex worker, had a fight with her brother for spending the night with unionists in front of the factory on the night she was laid off, and they did not talk to each other for a long time. Since Zeynep's spending the night in front of the factory as a divorced woman with children did not conform to dominant patriarchal norms, she was humiliated and oppressed by her brother. However, Zeynep's relative economic power and the support of her father reduced the impact of this pressure.

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257 "Kendimiz çaldık, kendimiz oynadık. Bir destek bulamadık yani. İçerden bir destek olsa, binlerce çalışanı var... Bir iki kişinin ayaklanması farklı, tüm makinelerin kapatılması farklı... İster istemez kabul edecekti yani."

258 Mary Beth Mills, From Nimble Fingers to Raised Fists: Women and Labor Activism in Globalizing Thailand, *Signs,* Vol. 31, No. 1, (2005):121.

259 Heidi Hartmann, Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex. *Signs*, Vol,1:3 (1976).

"My brother dropped me off at the strike area. I told him, 'You're going to work in the morning, go if you want,' to my brother. After one day, he said to me, 'You didn't come, you were there until 4 in the morning.'. Pınar was with me as a girl, and those people (unionists) had also come to defend my rights. 'Brother, what are you trying to say to me? I've worked for this employer for 15 years, he fired me for moral reasons, accused me of prostitution and theft,'. I said these in front of my father. 'What's wrong, what do you want from this girl?' my father said. 'If she's getting involved with the union, if she's messing with the union, it's none of your business,' my father said. In fact, we hadn't been talking to my brother for a year because of this incident. Because of union matters... Just last week, my brother and I made up, also because of my mother's insistence." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[260]

Most of the married women in Katex stated that they had the support of their husbands for their participation in the resistance. It is possible to say that this support is a necessary condition for women's participation because some women mentioned that they could not join the resistance if their husbands did not support them. As Urhan[261] points out, the permission and support women need from their husbands and families is crucial for their participation in union activities. As union membership and resistance is a way of participating in the public sphere, for most women it depends on convincing the men in the family.

"If my husband didn't support me, I wouldn't be here anyway, I can't. I can't do anything he doesn't allow me to do. If you do it, you don't

260 "Abim bıraktı beni grev alanına. Sen sabah işe gidicen, git istersen dedim abime. Sonra bana "sen gelmedin o gece, sabahın 4'üne kadar ordaydın" dedi. Pınar da vardı yanımda kız olarak, bir de o insanlar (sendikacılar) benim için gelmişlerdi hakkımı savunmaya. "Abi sen bana ne demek istiyorsun, ben bu işverene 15 yıl çalışmışım, beni ahlaki kurallardan işten atmış, beni orospulukla, hırsızlıkla suçlamış" dedim. "Sen abi gibi gelip patronun yakasına yapışacağına, kalkıp bana ne diyorsun" dedim. Babamın yanında dedim bunları. Babam "O sendikaya bulaştıysa, sendikayla uğraşıyorsa da sanane" dedi. Hatta bir seneden beri abimle konuşmuyorduk biz. Bu olaydan dolayı. Sendika işlerinden dolayı yani... Daha geçen hafta barıştık abimle, o da annemin zoruyla. Sendikalı oldum diye, bir de ben gece niye orda durmuşum, ne gerek varmış greve."

261 Betül Urhan, Sendikasız Kadınlar, Kadınsız Sendikalar. (İstanbul: Kadav Yayınları, 2014):56.

> feel comfortable, there will be trouble, you will go home and have a fight. But we have nothing like that. When he asks where I am, he finds out where I am, he doesn't say anything else. Because I got into this because of him, he is conscious about it (about unionization)." (Meryem, Katex, 1 years)[262]

This support persists as long as the gendered division of labor and patriarchal power relations within the home have not been shaken. At Katex, women had been at the site of resistance from 9am to 4pm, quickly returning home after the picket line to take care of household chores and look after the children. When they were asked to go to the union for a meeting or interview, it became a challenge for them.

On the other hand, in the Fonmet case, the workers had protested day and night in the factory yard and some women like Zehra could not participate in the night part of the resistance because of husbands' disapproval. Although Zehra tried to participate, risking conflict with her husband, she failed to do so in many protests. Therefore, it is possible to say that husbands often draw certain boundaries for women's actions and do not allow them to go beyond these boundaries.

> "During the resistance in the factory garden, I honestly couldn't stay the night, my husband didn't allow me to. Even in spite of him, there were frictions within the family because I said, "We have come this far, you were with me, I will fight for my rights from now on. There were periods when I could not participate in most of the protests, but of course there were friends who did." (Zehra, Fonmet, 2 years)[263]

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262 "Eşim destek olmasa ben zaten burda durmamki, duramam yani. O izin vermediği bir şeyi yapamam yani. Yaparsın canına sinmez, sıkıntı olur, eve gidersin kavga edersin. Ama hiç öyle bir şeyimiz yok. Gece gündüz işim oluyor. Nerdesin diye nerde olduğumu öğrenir, başka bir şeyde demez. Çünkü ben onun sayesinde bu yola girdim, o bilinçli bu konuda."

263 "Fabrika bahçesindeki direniş sürecinde ben açıkçası geceye kalamadım, eşim müsaade etmedi. Ben ona rağmen bile, buraya kadar geldik yanımdaydın, bundan sonra da hakkımı arıycam dediğim süreçte sürtüşmeler oldu aile içinde. Çoğu eyleme katılamadığım dönemler de oldu, giden arkadaşlar oldu tabii ki."

One of the most important reasons for women's conflicts with their male family members is about the disruption of the domestic order and women's "neglect" of housework. While working in shifts and overtime, women also have to do housework such as cooking and cleaning. However, when women are working, some disruptions in these chores are "tolerated" by men. During the resistance, however, the disruption of housework has become a means of blaming women. This is directly related to the gendered division of labor, where women's main duties are housework and childcare, unless they bring home income.

The ill-treatment and accusations against Kadriye by her husband during the resistance intensified when the process ended with no gains and even financial losses for them. Her husband increased the psychological pressure on Kadriye, saying that she had continued to resist for two months "in vain".

> "You have a husband and you neglect your home. My husband would come home from work at 4 in the evening and it would take us until 6. So where is the food? I had already left the house with him in the morning, I was leaving the house around 8 or 9 a.m. He comes home and there is no food, when are you going to cook? I'm going to cook after 6 p.m., I'm going to feed the kids... He said, "Don't you have a house?" he said, "Does everyone come daily like you". So we were arguing. After that, my husband said:" What happened?". Now he still says it sometimes, "What happened?" He says, "You lost your job for nothing. Because it ended like this, and now he sees how I struggle to find a new job. You went there for 2 months (to the resistance), as if you were an employee there, but what happened? He says what did you gain, did they stand behind you (for the union). He is right. I can't find anything to say to the man. I mean, I can't answer him. I mean, it has been a very tiring time for us for almost 2 years." (Ebru, Automet, 5 years)[264]

264 "Bir eşin var ve evini ihmal ediyorsun yani. Akşam eşim 4te işten geliyor, bizim eve gelmemiz 6yı buluyordu. E nerde yemek? Sen zaten sabah onunla beraber çıkmışsın, sabah 8-9 gibi evden çıkıyordum. Eve geliyor yemek yok, hangi ara yapacaksın? 6'dan sonra yemek yapıcam da, çoluk çocuğun karnını doyurucam da...Senin evin yok mu ya dedi, herkes sen gibi günlük mü geliyor dedi. Yani tartışıyorduk da. Ondan sonra eşimin dediği laf şuydu zaten:" Noldu?".

It is possible to consider that Kadriye experienced these because she had an oppressive and patriarchal husband. However, Canan, who states that she has an egalitarian husband, has also experienced conflict with her husband over domestic labor. This shows that men, despite their ideological differences, view women's participation in protests as "wasting time" after a certain point.

> "My husband and I are egalitarian people, he does not interfere in my decisions in any way, but after the second month my husband was complaining. For example, he comes home, I'm in front of the door with the child, sometimes I leave the child with my mother. He says what are you doing, you're not interested in the house, you leave in the morning and come back at 5. I can't get involved in anything at home, I can't spend time with my wife, there is no money... Towards the end, there was a lot of discomfort." (Canan, Automet, 5 years)[265]

Motherhood

Most of the women I met, 16 out of 20, are also mothers. In our interviews, these women mentioned the "guilt" they felt about their motherhood. Being unable to take care of their children sufficiently during the unionization and picketing caused women to feel inadequate and guilty. It is possible to say that women who do not have any support mechanism for childcare are stuck between motherhood and being a worker resisting for their rights and have to deal with "emotional burden".[266]

Şimdi hala daha bazen söylüyor yani noldu diye. Boşu boşuna işinden oldun diyor. Böyle bittiği için, ve şuan işsiz süreçte de arandığımı didindiğimi görüyor. Gittin oraya 2 ay, sanki oranın çalışanıymış gibi gittin de noldu diyor. Ne kazandın diyor, arkanda mı durdu diyor (sendika için). Haklı. Adama da diyecek bir şey bulamıyorum. Yani cevap veremiyorum. Baya 2 seneye yakın bizim için yıpratıcı zaman oldu yani."

265 "Biz eşimle eşitlikçi insanlarız, hiçbir şekilde benim kararlarıma karışmaz ama ikinci aydan sonra eşim de söyleniyordu. Eve geliyor mesela, ben çocukla kapı önündeyim, bazen çocuğu anneme bırakıyorum. Napıyorsun diyor, alakan kalmadı evle, sabah gidiyosun 5te geliyorsun diyor. Evde hiçbir şeye müdahil olamıyorum, eşimle vakit geçiremiyorum. Ortada para yok... Son dönemlerine doğru baya huzursuzluk olmaya başlamıştı yani."

266 Ayşe Arslan, Industrial workers in the garment industry, house-workers in the family: women's productive and reproductive labour in Izmir, Turkey, (PhD thesis, SOAS University, 2019): 286.

"My child was sick, couldn't hear, was becoming deaf. I couldn't take the child to the doctor because I was going back and forth to the resistance. What was the point? One of the child's ears still can't hear, there's a tube. Because you will go there when he is sick (to the resistance), you neglect the child." (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[267]

"Sometimes I couldn't go to the resistance because of my child, when the weather was too cold. Sometimes I couldn't stay, I was taking the child with me, coming to the resistance together. Once I took him, the child was wet inside the stroller. With an umbrella, I was so scared that if he gets sick, I would be scolded, I was confused about what to do." (Canan, Automet, 5 years)[268]

The sense of guilt described by women Automet workers regarding the picketing process is a condition that persists longer for Zeynep, a Zitex worker. As a single mother, Zeynep recounts how she neglected her child and couldn't give him the attention she needed while dedicating herself to unionizing at Zitex for six years.

"God bless my mother, she has put a lot of effort into my daughter. I have been running after this job for 6 years, haven't even had time for the child. People go home, have breakfast in the morning, take their child to school, and come back. I've always been in the union. On weekends, they take their child by the arm, go to Anatolia, go to the park. I am in the corners of the union. I take my daughter by the arm, take her to Kent Square for a walk, spend five minutes with the child, and then take her straight to the union. My child has grown up in the union since the age of 5. It's been 7 years, she's 12 now. I haven't had

267 "Benim çocuğum hasta, kulağı duymuyor, sağır oluyordu çocuk. Direnişe gidip gelicem diye çocuğu doktora götüremedim. Ne gereği vardı? Çocuğun bir kulağı hala duymuyor, tüp var. Hasta olduğunda oraya gidicen diye (direniş) çocuğu ihmal ediyorsun."

268 "Bazen çocuğumdan dolayı direnişe gidemiyordum, hava çok soğuk olduğu zaman. Bazen de duramıyordum, çocuğu da alıp götürüyordum artık, onla birlikte geliyordum direnişe. Bir defasında götürdüm, çocuk da ıslanmıştı bebek arabasının içinde. Şemsiyeyle, hasta olursa laf yerim diycem diye korkudan ne yapacağımı şaşırmıştım."

time for my child, all for winning in Zitex. I have paid a price for my child too." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[269]

While Zeynep recounts this, Ayşe begins to lament that she also could not find time for her child while running between home and work. On a day off, women are still burdened with house cleaning and preparing weekly meals; they have no time to take their children anywhere or even to rest themselves.

"If we were there, what would change? We're dying from exhaustion. Get up, rush to make food, go to work, and even on weekends, during our weekday break, we have to clean. How much cleaning can you do from exhaustion? The child says, 'Let's go out, Mom,' but where are you going to go? You're dying from exhaustion." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[270]

In conclusion, it is difficult to say that family dynamics and the division of domestic labor have radically changed during women's resistance. As Saygılıgil points out, throughout the picket line, women reshaped their roles traditionally confined to the private sphere, such as "motherhood and being a good wife," thus asserted their political agency outside the space typically assigned to them.[271] On the other hand, challenging the gendered division of labor within the household and resisting against husbands who exerted pressure on them would have increased the number of fronts women had to fight on, given the many challenges, dynamics, and uncertainties of the picket line process.

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269 "Allah razı olsun, annemin çok emeği var kızımın üzerinde. Ben hep böyle eleman peşinde koştur 6 seneden beri, çocuğa vakit bile ayıramadım. İnsanlar gider evine sabahleyin kahvaltısını yapar, çocuğunu okuluna götürür gelir. Ben sendika köşelerinde. Haftasonları olsun, tutarlar çocuğunun kolundan, Anatoliama giderler, parka giderler. Ben sendika köşelerinde. Kızımın kolundan tutuyom, Kent Meydanına götürmeye gidiyom gezmeye, beş dakika dolandırıyom çocuğu, doğru sendikaya götürüyom. 5 yaşından beri çocuk sendikada büyüdü. 7 seneden beri, 12 yaşında şuan. Çocuğuma vakit ayıramadım yani, bu Zitex'i kazanıcam diye. Ben de çocuğumdan bedel ödedim."

270 "Biz yanında olsak ne olur, yorgunluktan ölüyoz. Kalk, haldır haldır yemek yap, işe git, haftasonu da, haftaiçi tatilimizde yani temizlik yap, onu da yorgunluktan ne kadar yapabilcen. Çocuk anne gezelim der, nereye gidicen, ölüyon ki yorgunluktan."

271 Saygılıgil, *Bir Kadın Grevi*, 181.

While gaining approval from their families is often a prerequisite for women to engage in such activism, it is evident that women's increasing self-confidence in these processes has impacted their positions within family relations, often leading to conflicts with male family members. Women who face such conflicts are often accused of neglecting their home and childcare responsibilities and of "wasting" their time in the resistance. Apart from external accusations, these women also struggle with feelings of inadequacy and guilt towards their children. As a result, women continued their resistance by managing with household chores, their husbands' complaints, childcare, and emotional burden of motherhood.

5.2.7 Solidarity visits

In the early stages of picket line, many groups come to visit the field. Workers' groups from different sectors, trade unions, political parties, labor organizations and women's groups have visited the workers to show their solidarity. These visits aim both to increase the public visibility of the resistance and to make workers feel that they are not alone. For the workers, these visits are very meaningful and motivating. As I mentioned above, workers come to the picket line every day amidst a lot of despair, doubt and conflict, and for them these visits are a source of moral support and empowerment. In my cases, in particular, feminist groups and women's organizations' visits to the resistance served the function of breaking women's sense of "loneliness" and increasing their energy.

During the Zitex resistance, a feminist group called "Feminist Rebellion Against Poverty" *(Yoksulluğa Karşı Feminist İsyan)* (hereafter, FRAP) from İstanbul organized a solidarity visit to the field of resistance. The feminists came to the site with purple flags and streamers, carrying a large banner with the sentence "We stand with the workers at Zitex who resist against harassment and mobbing and for the right to unionize". They chanted common slogans of feminists such as "long live women's solidarity", "we don't shut up, we don't fear, we don't obey", "the world would move if women were free".

> "It made us feel that we are not alone, that we are valuable. We thought that they value women and workers. We don't know them, it's a very good thing. What were our friends working inside doing (not supporting) us? I thought that people we never knew came, it made me very happy." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[272]

This visit was not limited to a meeting of Zitex workers and feminists. After this meeting, feminists organized a solidarity campaign. On the one hand, emails were sent to the ethics committees of the international brands that Zitex manufactures for, about the working conditions of women, and on the other hand, stickers exposing the factory were attached to the clothes in the stores of these brands. This campaign of feminists was very influential in the victory of the mobilization.

> "There were a lot of visits, I learned that nothing is ever unsolvable. We were very happy, the more they came, the more strength we gained, the more ambitious we became. They were always with us in every way, not only by coming there, but they also called us on the phone, they asked us all the time, God bless them all. If those four women made it this far, it was really thanks to the supporters who came with us. No one came empty-handed even for a single day, they tried to help us and they tried to win the resistance." (Pınar, Zitex, 1 years)[273]

Similar to Zitex case, feminist women from FRAP have organized a solidarity visit to Automet resistance, in coordination with the women's commission of the Met2Union. During this visit, in which I participated as an activist, about 30-40 women from Istanbul arrived at the factory in Gebze by bus and started

272 "Bizim yalnız olmadığımızı, değerli olduğumuzu hissettirdi. Kadına, işçiye değer verdiklerini düşündük. Biz onları tanımıyoruz ya, çok güzel bir şey. Bizim içimizdeki insanlar bize neler yapıyordu. Hiç tanımadığımız insanlar geldi diye düşündüm, beni çok sevindirdi."

273 "Çok fazla ziyaret oldu, hiçbir zaman hiçbir şeyin çözümsüz olmadığını öğrendim. Çok mutlu olduk, gerçekten çok mutlu olduk onlar geldikçe biz daha çok güç kazandık, onlar geldikçe daha çok güçlendik, daha çok azimlendik hırslandık. Her zaman her şekilde yanımızda oldular, sadece oraya gelmekle değil telefonla da aradılar, sürekli her zaman sordular, Allah razı olsun yani hepsinden. Bu zamana kadar getirebildiyse o 4 kadın, o yanımıza gelen destekçiler sayesindeydi gerçekten. Gelen kimse bir gün bile eli boş gelmedi, hem bize yardım etmeye çalıştılar hem orayı yükseltmeye çalıştılar."

to march with slogans towards the front of the factory. The women's commission and women workers welcomed us with accompanying our slogans.

> "During the day they were coming from different places to support us. Construction workers, textile workers, women's NGOs... it was very, very nice. It made us feel that we were not alone. We were already waiting in front of the door until the evening. Vehicles coming and going, giving support, waving...We were saying that our friends didn't come out to support us, but people from Istanbul, from here and there, they see us, they know about us, they support us... This was very good for us." (Meryem-Farplas)[274]

Solidarity visits not only serve as motivating and empowering experiences for workers, but also create a public space and generate conflicts among the workers regarding this space. Usually, a press statement is made during crowded group visits, and the workers take the floor to speak. Some women are naturally hesitant and lack confidence speaking in a public space where the press is present. Therefore, in such visits, confident women are either naturally brought forward or highlighted by the union, while insecure women remain in the background. Eventually, in all visits and press statements, these confident women start speaking and become the visible face of the resistance. For example, in the Automet case, a white-collar woman worker became the visible face of the resistance and started addressing the issues faced by blue-collar women as well.

At the same time, some women have several prejudices regarding left-socialist parties and feminist groups. Therefore, visits entail both an opportunity for encounter and a necessity for "role-playing" for these women. For instance, during a visit by women from a leftist party to the Katex resistance, the act of women from the party making victory signs while taking

274 "Gün içinde farklı farklı yerlerden desteğe geliyorlardı. İnşaat işçileri, tekstil işçileri, kadın sivil toplum kuruluşları... çok çok güzeldi. Yalnız olmadığımızı hissettiriyordu. Akşama kadar zaten sürekli bekliyoruz zaten kapı önünde. Araçlar gelip geçiyor, destek veriyorlar, el sallıyorlar...Diyorduk ki bizim arkadaşlarımız bize desteğe çıkmadı ama insanlar istanbuldan, ordan burdan bizi görüyorlar, haberleri var, bize destek çıkıyorlar... Bu bizim çok için güzeldi."

photos with the female protesters became a topic of discussion among the women after they left. In the conversation I observed in the field, one woman worker mentioned understanding from that gesture that the group was leftist, and they had no interest in politics, so she suggested not sharing those photos anywhere.

In addition, I was present with the women before the feminist groups visited the Katex picket line. A woman worker from Zitex resistance "warned" the other women about feminists. She said that when the feminists arrived, they would create a commotion, would not let male union officials speak but would want women to speak, so the protesting women needed to be prepared. Indeed, the feminists arrived with excitement and enthusiasm. This enthusiasm was a different and special experience for women workers. They also joined in with the enthusiastic slogans of the feminists. I think, this visit also led a breakthrough in the prejudices held by the women.

On the other hand, during these visits, workers tend to depict a positive picture of the resistance and try not to reveal both their internal conflicts and doubts in their minds. One of the main reasons for this is that the workers have not yet established a trust bond with people visiting for the first time. When visiting a picketing multiple times, workers begin to establish a more intimate relationship with the visitors and start sharing their frustrations and exhaustion regarding the process.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the experiences of women who engaged in various forms of industrial action, such as strikes and factory occupations, to organize into unions. Many of these women were subsequently dismissed and found themselves on the picket line in front of the factories. I analyzed the picketing process through themes such as worker solidarity, economic hardships, groupings among workers, union officers' discriminatory practices, women's disappointments, family relations, and solidarity visits.

As a result, while feeling empowered as participants in collective struggle and strengthening their bonds of solidarity, these workers also faced numerous challenges and uncertainties. For women, this process meant

dealing with family dynamics, domestic responsibilities, and the emotional burden of motherhood, while simultaneously striving to establish themselves as political agents in what has traditionally been viewed as male-dominated public spheres. The intersection of these complex and diverse struggles had different subjective impacts on women, as I will elaborate in the following chapter.

6

Subjective Transformation of Women

Events such as the worker resistance, "where people break from daily routines, unite in new ways, and clash with elites" represent important "turning points" in the lives of subjects.[275] As Birelma points out, the state of workers at the moment of struggle is a state of rebellion against the oppression they have suffered at the workplace for years:

> "It is a 'moment' when workers stop blaming themselves for their class position and begin to notice and feel uncomfortable with the many inequalities and injustices that are the routine of working life...This is, of course, a state of screaming out years of repression." [276]

For women, picket line also entails breaking out of the endless routine between reproductive labor and wage labor. Women who work long hours, often do overtime, and face pressure and bullying from supervisors, also perform second shifts at home with household chores and childcare. Due to this "double burden", women often lack the opportunity to rest and socialize. Although there may not be a radical change in women's reproductive work during picketing, this period still signifies a different routine and socialization

275 Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action.", 8.

276 Birelma, *Ekmek ve Haysiyet Mücadelesi*, 26.

for women. In Ayşe's words, they feel like they have been released from prison. Furthermore, seeing the supervisors who oppress them at work during the picket line process brings a kind of satisfaction for women. It is as if they are showing their strength to those supervisors, who humiliate and punish them unfairly, through their actions.

> "Always shuttling between work and home, you have no social life. You're practically in prison, but you don't even realize it until you break free from that psychology. You can't even say, 'I'm tired, let me go out for a bit.' It's like I've aged, but I don't have the energy to go anywhere, that's how I feel. And I think it's normal. You think everyone feels the same way, too. This place (home) is just four walls. There are no windows or anything in the factory anyway. I wonder how I managed to work there. During the picket line, I felt like I was released from that prison. I felt like saying, 'Look at me, you put so much pressure on me, you overwhelmed me,' as if. The factory has a shuttle service, and I looked the supervisor in the eye on that shuttle and said, 'This is how it's done,' as if to say it's not like that. They were not expecting that from me." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[277]

Picketing also signifies a period when women feel more dynamic and empowered, both because they break free from the routine they feel trapped in and because of the collective actions and solidarity they experience.

> "I feel more dynamic, stronger. We lead a monotonous life when we work. At home, you think about work, you think about what to do. But here, you defend your rights, and you wake up feeling more dynamic. Because you came to the resistance, because you know something. So, it's positive. With God's permission, it will get better. I want it to be

277 "Hep ev-iş, ev-iş yap, hiç sosyal bir hayatın yok. Resmen hapishanedesin, haberin yok. Onun psikolojisini çıktıktan sonra anlıyorsun. Yorgunluktan dışarı çıkıp şurayı gezeyim diyemiyorsun. Yaşlanmışım da şurdan şuraya gidecek halim yok sanki, öyle hissediyorum. Onu da normal zannediyorum. Herkes öyle zannediyorsun, bir de. Burası (ev) dört duvar. Fabrikada zaten cam yok bir şey yok. Nasıl çalışmışım diye düşünüyorum. Direniş sürecinde o hapishaneden çıktım, bak görün bana o kadar baskı yaptınız, üstüme geldiniz, beni bunalttınız dedim sanki. Fabrikadan servis çıkıyor ya, o serviste ustanın gözünün içine baktım, öyle değil böyle olur işte diye. Benden öyle beklemiyorlardı da."

positive not only for us but for everyone, for women. Not just for women, I want it to be positive for workers." (Aynur, Katex, 10 years)[278]

Therefore, in this specific moment, women experience a series of subjective transformations. However, in the literature on social movements, the subjective impacts of movements on individuals have been relatively underexplored.[279] I argue that these subjective transformations do not begin with the picket line, but with the unionization in the workplace. In this chapter, I will examine the subjective impacts of mobilization and the picket lines on women under three main categories: empowerment, changes in class consciousness and formation of negative attitudes against unions. In each section, I will also discuss the persistence and limitations of these impacts for women.

6.1 Empowerment

Marxist thinkers have discussed the political impacts and possibilities of unionization from theoretical perspectives but empirical studies focusing on the subjective impacts of these processes on workers are quite scarce. Workers who organize and participate in collective struggle become aware of their own power and increase their self-confidence.[280] In my cases, women also experienced this process, and I will discuss this process through the concept of "empowerment" in the feminist literature.

Empowerment can be defined as a process of raising awareness and building capacity, leading to increased participation, decision-making power, and transformative action.[281] This concept emerged from feminist and civil

278 "Daha dinamik, daha güçlü hissediyorum. Çalışırken git-gel monoton bir hayat yaşıyoruz. Evde işi düşünüyorsun, ne yapacağını düşünüyorsun. Burda hakkını savunuyorsun ama daha dinamik kalkıyorsun. Direnişe geldiğin için, bir şeyleri bildiğin için. Olumlu yani. Allahın izniyle de daha iyi olucak. Sadece bizim adımıza değil, herkes adına, kadınların adına olumlu olmasını istiyorum. Sadece kadınlar da değil, ben işçilerin adına olumlu olmasını isterim."

279 See Meyer 2008; Türkmen, 2012; Birelma, 2014.

280 Perry Anderson, 'The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Union Action', in R. Blackburn and A. Cockburn (eds.) The Incompatibles, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967)

281 Marilee Karl, Women and empowerment: Participation and decision-making. (UN NGLS: Zed Books, 1995).

rights' movements in the late 1960s, reflecting the idea of subordinated groups who struggle to alter their circumstances, thus becoming more aware of their agency for social change.[282]

However, in recent times, women's empowerment has been usually associated with individual agency and measured by the level of women's political representation in decision making, politics, and organizations.[283] While Kabeer highlights the importance of social movements for women's empowerment, where taken-for-granted injustices and hierarchies are questioned[284], the concept has been detached from links with social change.[285] But it is clear that women have achieved many gains in equal rights, largely through their collective efforts and actions. In this regard, Linda Briskin offers a new perpective on measuring women's empowerment through collective agency. According to Briskin, "unions can empower women to act collectively in their own interests, and thus are key vehicles for advancing women's equality"[286]. Briskin challenges the complete neglect of unions' potential for equality and their treatment as patriarchal structures that remain unchanged, asserting thar dismissal of unions as patriarchal and undemocratic means to dismiss the women's agency struggling inside and outside union organizations to transform these structures. Therefore, she considers "unions as vehicles for women's collective agency, and women's agency as a source of union transformation."[287]

Based on Briskin's approach, I consider unions as structures that create space for collective agency and collective actions, which are the main source of women's empowerment, without ignoring the practices of unions that limit and suppress women's agency. In other words, women who unionize are empowered both by their participation in collective action and the existence

282 John Drury; Atalanti Evripidou, and Martijn Van Zomeren, "Empowerment: The Intersection of Identity and Power in Collective Action" in The intersection between power and identity, edited by Denis Sindic et.al (Psychology Press, 2015):4

283 Naila Kabeer, The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. UNRISD Discussion Paper, No. 108, (1999).

284 Ibid., 49

285 Drury et.al, "Empowerment: The Intersection of Identity and Power in Collective Action", 5.

286 Briskin, Trade Unions, Collective Agency and the Struggle for Women's Equality: Expanding the Political Empowerment Measure",214-16.

287 Ibid.,219-222.

of a structure to defend their basic rights, but this sense of power is ultimately limited and controlled to some extent by male union officials and the organizational structure of unions. So, in this section, I will examine both women's experiences of empowerment in unionization and picket lines as a form of collective action, and the ways in which women's empowerment is constrained.

6.1.1 Unionization

As noted in several studies[288], unionization serves as a process through which women gain strength and self-confidence within a collective struggle. Many women I interviewed mentioned feeling more self-assured after joining the union and no longer being afraid of the supervisors who oppressed them at work. This empowerment also enables women to speak out against the gender-based discrimination and oppression they experience in the workplace.

I analyze women's empowerment at the workplace through various aspects. The first aspect is related to "learning about rights". Many women, who previously had no union experience, begin to learn about workers' rights and interpret their workplace experiences based on this newfound knowledge after joining the union.

> "As I started going to the union more frequently, I learned about my rights. Okay, I was a member, but that's all it was in the beginning; I didn't know much. Once I thoroughly understood my rights, I used to tell my friends, 'While it's like this, they are being unfair to us. Why are we staying silent? We are also at fault; we shouldn't be doing this." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[289]

The second aspect is that women who have been consistently humiliated and intimidated begin to realize their own power and become less fearful when they join a union. For Fatma, this transformation occurred after she joined the

288 See Saygılıgil, 2018; Saka, 2018, 2019; Davutoğlu, 2018.

289 "Sendikaya gide gele ben haklarımı filan öğrendim. Tamam üyeydim ama o zaman öyle kalmıştı. Haklarımı iyice öğrendim ya, ben arkadaşlarıma diyordum bu böyleyken böyle, bunlar haksızlık yapıyor, niye böyle yapıyoz, biz de suç var, böyle yapmamamız lazım."

women's committee of the union, attending various meetings where she felt the strength of women coming together. Additionally, the head of the union's women's committee has become a strong role model for her, which has helped Fatma feel more empowered in the workplace.

> "I actually realized my power after I met the union. I didn't think you could do whatever you wanted, I thought you had to accept whatever the factory said. I met the women's committee members, I met the head of the women's committee, my whole life changed after I met them. I saw how strong women can be, and I saw what they can achieve. And I tried to tell this to all the women in the factories where I worked." (Fatma, Katex, 1 years)[290]

Another aspect is the change in women's perspectives towards the supervisors who subject them to mobbing, pressure, and harassment at work. Metaphorically, as women become empowered, the "walls of fear" surrounding them begin to crumble one by one. In many cases, unionized women have started to challenge the arbitrary and unfair practices they previously remained silent about and felt obligated to endure. For instance, Zeynep sent a warning through the union to the master who was bullying her, while Meryem didn't hesitate to confront her bullying supervisor.

> "For example, if the foreman said something, we used to say okay, even if it was against us, even if we were right. We used to overestimate him (the master), we used to see him as powerful. But now I see him like an ant. You shouldn't insult an ant either (laughs), it earns its own bread, it struggles." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)"[291]

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290 "Ben aslında sendikayla tanıştıktan sonra gücümü farkettim. Sen istediğini yapabilirsin yoktu benim gözümde. Fabrika ne derse onu kabul etmek zorundasın vardı. Ben nasıl sendikayla tanıştım ve kadın komite üyeleriyle tanıştım. Kadın komitesi başkanıyla tanıştım. Onlarla tanıştıktan sonra benim bütüm hayatım değişti. Kadının ne kadar güçlü olabildiğini gördüm, ve neler başarabileceğini gördüm. Ve bunu çalıştığım fabrikalardaki bütün kadınlara anlatmaya çalıştım."

291 "Mesela usta bir şey desin, sana ters gelse bile, haklı olsan bile tamam diyorsun. Onu(usta) böyle gözünde büyütüyorsun, onu güçlü görüyorsun. Ama şimdi onu bir karınca gibi

"The foreman says to us, "You're talking all the time." I replied, "Can the job be done without talking? Try describing it without speaking." This time, he got angry too because we're saying against him. He can't tolerate that either. He was getting mad at us for suppressing him."(Meryem, Katex, 1 years)[292]

Furthermore, they have begun refusing compulsory overtime, which they previously felt obliged to accept due to pressure and fear of dismissal. For example, at Katex textile factory, women collectively refused to work overtime because their wages have not been increased.

"Because they haven't made a proper improvement in our salaries recently, we finally said we won't work overtime. You don't give me my rights, you make me work under these bad conditions, and on top of that you ask for overtime. I personally didn't want it anyway. My children are small anyway. You are tired at home for the children, you are tired when you come to work. And moreover, he wants you to work overtime." (Aynur, Katex, 10 years)293

Women's empowerment not only alters their relationships with foremen and supervisors but also with management. Some female textile workers noted that prior to unionization, they tended to sign every document requested by management without reading it. However, after joining the union, women began refusing to sign documents, such as performance reports and renewed labor contracts, without thoroughly examining them.

"For example, they used to bring a paper in front of me and say, "Take it, sign this," while I was working. It was about contract renewals and

görüyorsun. Karıncaya da hakaret etmemek lazım, kendi ekmeğini kendisi çıkarıyor, mücadele ediyor."

292 "Konuşuyorsun diyor. "Konuşmadan iş yapılıyor mu, sen konuşmadan tarif et bakalım" dedim. Kızıyor bu seferde. Çünkü ona karşı laf söylüyorsun ya. Onu da yediremiyor. Onu bastırdığımız için kızıyordu bize."

293 Son dönemde bizim maaşlarımıza düzgün bir iyileştirme yapmadıkları için, en son biz gelmiycez dedik. Kim gelirse gelsin, fazla mesaiye gelmiycez dedik. Sen bana haklarımı vermiyorsun, şu şartlarda çalıştırıyorsun, bir de üstüne üstlük fazla mesai istiyorsun. Ben şahsen istemiyordum zaten. Benim çocuklarım küçük zaten. Koşturuyorsun sürekli, evde ayrı koşturuyorsun çocuklara, işe geliyorsun ayrı koşturuyorsun. Bir de fazla mesai istiyor."

such. Lately, I've been saying, "I can't sign without reading; I don't know what it contains or doesn't contain. But in the past, I wouldn't have known, and I would have signed just because the workplace wanted it." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)294

"We had a supervisor who was very authoritarian; everyone was afraid of him. They would bring a folded paper called as performance evaluation, and it would contain our scores, but they wouldn't show it to us; they would just ask us to sign it. We didn't know what we were signing. One time, the manager called me into the office and tried to force me to sign it. I told him I didn't want to sign, and he said then you have to write a defense. I also said I didn't want to write a defense, and I walked out, closing the door behind me. They bring that paper every year, but they never show the scores. I haven't signed it again. Until then, I would sign everything like a fool because I didn't know." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)295

As a result, unionization represents a process of empowerment for women workers. Thanks to the union, they become informed about their rights, which in turn makes them feel more powerful to stand up against supervisors and management. However, as I mentioned above, the only source of women's empowerment is not unionization but also collective actions through unions. Now, I will examine the picketing, one of these collective actions.

294 "Mesela önüne al şunu imzala diye kağıt getiriyor ben çalışırken, karamboleye getiriyor. Sözleşme yenilemesi filan. Ben de onu okumadan imzalayamam, içinde ne yazıyor ne yazmıyor bilmiyorum. Ama önceden olsa bilmemki, demekki işyeri vermiş derim, imzalarım."

295 "Bizim bir tane usta var, çok otoriter, herkes korkuyor ondan. Biz de o zamanlar korkuyoruz, ne bilelim. Performans değerlendirmesi diye bir kağıt, kağıdı katlamışlar ikiye, içinde senin puanların varmış, içini göstermiyorlar sana, üstüne imza attırıyorlar. Neye imza attığını bilmiyorsun. Usta beni çekti odaya, "üretimi ne kadar, arkadaşlarıyla geçimi ne kadar, burada senin puanların var, burayı imzala" dedi. Ben imzalamak istemiyorum dedim, o zaman savunma yaz dedi. Savunma da yazmak istemiyorum, dedim, çektim kapıyı çıktım. Yok yetersizdi bilmem ne her sene o kağıdı getiriyorlar, ama göstermiyorlar sana. Hiç imzalamadım bir daha. O zamana kadar her şeyi sazan gibi imzalıyordum Bilmiyordum çünkü."

6.1.2 Picketing

The confidence of women who have been dismissed due to unionization and find themselves on picket lines in front of the factory undergoes a significant transformation. Simply put, the empowerment process, which begins with unionization in the workplace, becomes more evident with the enthusiasm and energy of collective resistance. I had the opportunity to observe and interview only the women involved in the Katex textile case during they were picketing in front of factory. All the women who mentioned an increase in their confidence during this time are Katex workers. This suggests that during collective action, workers become aware of their "collective efficacy"[296], resulting in a sense of power and unity, which makes the women feel stronger. However, the extent to which this sense of power lasts remains a topic of debate.

Müge, a textile worker at Katex, goes to support her friends who continue their protest in front of the factory at the end of the shift, even though she has not been fired yet. During this process, she emphasizes that her "confidence has returned".

> "My confidence has returned. I used to spend 8 hours at work, then I would go to support my friends. And people from accounting followed me, but they never said anything. They tell you on your last day. I asked why they were firing me. I said, 'I guess it's because I joined the union.' They said it wasn't because of that. 'If it were, would we allow you to go there after your 8-hour shift?' they said. 'That's my constitutional right, whether you allow it or not,' I said. Once I've completed my 8 hours, I'm done. I went, then my friends came to me too. 8 months later, they fired both my friends and me. But my confidence has returned." (Müge, Katex, 5 years)297

296 Rachel Meyer, "Perpetual Struggle: Sources of Working-Class Identity and Activism in Collective Action." (The University of Michigan, 2008):139.

297 "Özgüvenimiz yerine geldi. Ben işyerinde 8 saatimi dolduruyordum, sonra arkadaşların yanına desteğe gidiyordum. Ve beni muhasebeden kişiler takip etti ama hiç sesleri çıkmadı. Çıkış günü söylüyorlar bunları. Neden beni çıkartıyorsunuz dedim. Sendikaya yazıldığım için olduğunu tahmin ediyorum dedim. Ondan değil dediler. 'Ondan olsa 8 saat doldurup da

Women's sense of power during the picketing is directly linked to collective action and solidarity. Also, the crowd that Gülay mentions in the quote below refers to feminist groups that came to the picket line to show solidarity. In other words, moments when women feel they are not alone in their resistance contribute to their empowerment.

> "If only one person had been fired, nothing would have happened. They couldn't have done anything. But when everyone comes together, and especially when there's a union behind them, you really feel strong. You feel like you can accomplish things. When I saw that crowd today, I thought, 'We can do it, we can change things.'" (Gülay, Katex, 13 years)298

Moreover, during this process, workers found the opportunity to reflect on the injustices they had faced in the workplace up to that point. Recognizing these injustices means understanding that their own position is stronger and more justified.

> "People fear what they don't know, but I'm not afraid anymore. Why am I not afraid? Because I learn something new every day. Every day, I learn how much we've been oppressed, how unfairly we've been treated. It saddens me greatly; we've worn ourselves out for so many years. Everything has been in vain." (Sevgi, Katex, 6 years)299

In conclusion, many of the women I interviewed expressed that their self-confidence increased through participation in collective struggles for rights.

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oraya çıkmana izin verirmiydik' dediler. 'O benim anayasal hakkım, ister izin verirsiniz, ister vermezsiniz' dedim. Ben 8 saatimi doldurdum mu doldurdum, ondan sonra eyvallah der çıkarım. Ben gittim, sonra arkadaşlarım da geldi yanıma. 8 ay sonra arkadaşlarımı da beni de çıkardılar. Ama özgüvenimiz yerine geldi."

298 "Tek kişi işten atılsaydı hiçbir şey olmazdı. Bir şey yapamazdı. Ama herkes bir araya gelince, bir de arkasında sendika olunca insan kendini gerçekten güçlü hissediyor. Bir şeyleri başarabiliriz gibi hissediyor. Bugün o kalabalığı görünce de 'yapabiliriz, bir şeyleri değiştirebiliriz' diye düşündüm."

299 "İnsan bilmediğinden korkar, ben korkmuyorum artık. Neden korkmuyorum? Her gün bir şeyler öğreniyorum. Her geçen gün ne kadar ezildiğimizi, ne kadar bize haksızlık edildiğini öğreniyorum. Çok üzülüyorum, o kadar sene boyunca kendimizi o kadar yıpratmışız ki. Her şey o kadar boşuna geçmiş ki."

However, workers who indicated gaining confidence during the process were predominantly textile workers. This is closely related to the success of their mobilizations and the way women interpret their experiences at different stages of the process.

The mobilization at Zitex was successful. Women who began working at the union after this process frequently recalled their experiences positively and emphasized their empowerment. Among the women who experienced conflicts with the union during the picketing, there was relatively little emphasis on empowering impacts of resistance. However, this should not be interpreted as these women not being empowered during this process. In my opinion, there could be two fundamental reasons for this. First, empowerment may fade unless it is reactivated in various ways after the collective action ends. Second, when women who have experienced negative events recall the process, they naturally recall the negative issues affecting their lives more intensely than the positive effects of the resistance.

In the Katex case, when I talked to the women, the picket line was ongoing, and different groups frequently visited the picket line. Most of the women were hopeful and excited. Therefore, these women often emphasized how strong and confident they felt. However, this resistance ended without any gains. Months after the resistance, in phone conversations with women, except for those who maintained close relationships with the union, there were no remarks about the positive impacts of the process; they had started working in different workplaces. Although it is difficult to measure the sustainability of the confidence they felt on the picket line in their current lives, it is possible to say that the failure of the process reduced this potential impact.

When it comes to the metal cases, the Automet case, which began with militant actions, ended in failure. In the Fonmet case, although the union gained recognition, most of the women on the picket line were fired shortly after getting hired. I spoke with the women in both cases about a year after the resistance ended. In both cases, while the women touched upon the positive feelings they experienced during collective actions, the failure of the process influenced their ways of remembering and interpreting their experiences. Especially, women who faced discrimination and sexist attitudes from male union officials during the picket line recalled the process in a way that largely

emphasized their negative experiences. However, I think if I had the opportunity to interview these women while the picketing was still ongoing, they would likely have talked about feeling strong and confident. In this regard, it is possible to say that the confidence women felt during collective action was diminished due to the patriarchal treatment of male union officers and the discriminatory attitudes of the unions. For these women, the impact of the process was not empowerment, but rather anger and distrust towards the unions, which will be discussed in the following section.

In conclusion, unionization and collective actions such as picketing are crucial for women's empowerment. When women join the union, their self-confidence increases, their relationships with supervisors and management change. During the picketing, the sense of collective efficacy and solidarity visits take women's empowerment to another level. Women feel empowered to "make a difference," and they begin to speak out loudly about injustices they face in the workplace. On the other hand, women's empowerment is closely related to the outcome of the mobilization, their experiences with union officials, and the way women remember their experiences after the mobilization.

6.2 Changes in Class Consciousness

One of the subjective impacts of collective action on workers is the changes in their class consciousness. This term, extensively discussed in Marxist class theory and often heard in everyday conversations about the working class, is a highly contentious concept. While categorical and sharp judgments about whether workers are class conscious or not are quite common, many academic studies have offered a more complex and nuanced analysis of class consciousness.

In his significant study on the variations and character of class consciousness, Michael Mann[300] argues that there are four main elements of class consciousness. First is "class identity" which refers to workers identifying themselves as part of the working class. Second is "class opposition" which

300 Michael Mann, Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1973).

involves the perception that capitalists are a constant opponent. Third is "class totality" which is an understanding class as defining the entirety of society. The last one is the conception of an alternative society.[301] This theoretical framework is useful for making sense of the various levels and manifestations of class consciousness, but it can be misleading to think that consciousness develops in a linear manner. Mann also discusses the Marxist concept of dual consciousness, distinguishing between "actual" and "possible" consciousness. According to this, there is a distinction between workers' ordinary, everyday consciousness and the "possible" consciousness that erupts during collective struggles like strikes. However, this distinction assumes that workers are not aware of their class interests during ordinary times. In fact, workers' experience of exploitation and dignity at the workplace is the real source of their consciousness. We see traces of it in individual grievances of workers or varies forms of individual resistance like work slowdowns or absenteeism. On the other hand, it becomes more visible and "explodes" during collective actions.

Erik Olin Wright's class theory offers a more nuanced and subjectivity-oriented framework regarding class consciousness. He defines the concept as "particular aspects of the subjectivity of individuals".[302] According to Wright, the "class" character of consciousness is determined by two main features. First is beliefs with a class content, and second is individuals' actions within given class relations. From this perspective, he uses this concept for mentioning a general consciousness with a class content related to class practices. He argues that class consciousness can take on attributes like 'anti-capitalist' or 'revolutionary'. In other words, unlike classical Marxist usage, he doesn't imply a judgment of consciousness as "true" or "false".[303]

Wright claims that class consciousness, as a form of subjectivity, can be understood through three fundamental dimensions. The first dimension relates to workers' perceptions and observations. This involves workers' beliefs and perceptions about employers and their working conditions. For example, some workers may view their employers as solely profit-driven, while others

301 Ibid.,13.

302 Erik Olin Wright, Class Counts, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997):382.

303 Ibid., 385.

believe that employers genuinely care about workers' welfare. According to Wright, class consciousness must contain perceptions with a class content that lead to class actions. The second dimension concerns workers' understanding of the consequences of their actions. If workers believe that unionization is impossible, they will not take action or achieve desired outcomes. The third dimension relates to workers' preferences. The extent to which a worker's preferences include concerns for the welfare of other members of their class reflects class consciousness. In conclusion, Wright argues that individuals make choices with a consciousness shaped by these dimensions within their material conditions. However, this is not a one-sided relationship; the choices individuals make also shape their consciousness.[304]

Drawing from these theoretical perspectives, there are various manifestations of class consciousness arising from the poor working conditions and sexist pressures women face in the workplace, as seen in my case. An example of this is when Ayşe highlights that the real guilty, who fosters competition among workers through strategies aimed at increasing it, is the employer. As the following quote shows, she is trying to change workers' perceptions of the employer.

> "They were competing with each other to win baklava. I used to tell them, 'Don't get angry at other workers, you're working, they're working too. Who's doing this? It's the ones in charge.' Why are we fighting each other? For a piece of baklava, for one point..."(Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[305]

As noted above, Wright views workers' preferences, which involve a commitment to the welfare of class members, as an aspect of class consciousness. In this regard, women's decision to unionize, despite many risks and obstacles, usually indicates a desire to improve not only their individual conditions but also the collective conditions of workers. As such, it embodies their class consciousness.

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304 Ibid., 380-90.

305 "Baklava kazanmak için birbirleri ile yarışıyorlardı. Ben onlara "Sen diğer işçiye kızma, sen de çalışıyosun, o da çalışıyor. Bunu yapan kim, başımızdakiler. " diyordum. Biz niye birbirimize düşüyoruz? Bir baklava için, bir puan için..."

> "Let the union come in, so my friends can benefit from it too. We want our jobs, and we also want the union to come in." (Sevgi, Katex, 6 years)[306]

What Mann refers to as "class opposition" is also essential to the discourse of many women. In my interviews, workers often stressed that the employer "gets rich by taking from them, by stealing from them", implying a clash of class interests.

> "You are getting richer, but by taking from the workers... We don't want your property. We just want our rights. For 10 years he did this and that, built 3-4 factories, we struggled to buy a house, and we're still paying off the debt. Well, obviously I haven't earned anything, he's the one who's always working". (Aynur, Katex, 10 years)[307]

The discourse of class conflict constructed through wealth and poverty also manifests itself in women's everyday conversations. Zeynep and Ayşe, during our interview, talked about the poverty of the working class and the enrichment of the employers while workers continue to get poorer. We conducted this interview in Ayşe's ground floor apartment without a balcony. Zeynep questioned why Ayşe couldn't afford an apartment with a balcony on the second floor.

> "Why can't you move up to the second floor, Ayşe? Because you haven't stolen or cheated." (referring to buying a second-floor apartment) "Do you know what they say? Now you've gotten married, by the time you're 30, you pay off furniture debts, by the time you're 50, you might barely become a homeowner, then you marry off your children, and

306 "Sendika içeri girsin, arkadaşlarım da bundan yararlansın. Hem işimizi istiyoruz, hem sendikanın içeri girmesini istiyoruz."

307 " Sen yükseliyorsun ama işçiden keserek yükseliyorsun... Biz senin malında mülkünde değiliz. Hakkımızı istedik sadece. 10 yıldır, adam onu yaptı bunu yaptı, 3-4 fabrika dikti, biz bir evi zor aldık, onun da borcunu ödüyoruz hala. Canım ben hiç kazanmadım demekki, o çalışıyor hep."

then you can die. They say you can go without taking a breath of relief, you can die." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[308]

"But our people don't understand, they look at it like 'that's the boss, you're just a worker there, it's his property, whatever he says goes'... My husband can only smoke in the bathroom, for example. Look, I couldn't even buy an apartment with a balcony." (Ayşe, Zitex, 6 years)[309]

Another aspect of the transformation of class consciousness is the changes in women's perspectives about worker resistance. Previously, women who were uninterested or even found meaningless any worker action, after experiencing it themselves, express a desire to support for the actions of other workers.

"For example, if we didn't know about the union, if we saw a press release there, we would just pass by and think, who knows what's going on there, but now, wherever something happens, I go. Because I'm aware now. Ten years ago, I didn't know anything." (Zeynep, Zitex, 14 years)[310]

"Now I say I would go anywhere (to protests) because I know what's going on. Before, for instance, when Zitex was on strike, we would pass by. I used to think, what are they doing, just standing there all the time? Because we didn't know what was happening. But when you get

308 "Sen niye ikinci kata çıkamıyon Ayşe? Çalmadığın, çırpmadığın için. (ikinci kat ev almaktan bahsediyor) Ne diyorlar, biliyormusun? Şimdi evlendin ettin, 30una kadar mobilya borcu öde, 50 sine kadar anca bir ev sahibi ol, zaten ondan sonra çoluğunu çocuğunu evlendir, ondan sonra da ölebilirsin. Rahat bir nefes almadan gidebilrisiniz, (ölebilirsiniz) diyorlar."

309 "Ama bizim insanlarımız anlamıyor işte, "o patron, sen orda işçisin, onun malı mülkü, o ne derse o olur" gibi bakıyor...Eşim sadece tuvalette sigara içebiliyor mesela. Bak işte, bir balkonlu ev alamadım."

310 "Biz mesela sendikayı tanımasaydık, orda bir basın açıklaması görsek, aman kimbilir neyin nesi der geçerdik yanından, ama şuan nerde ne olsa giderim. Çünkü bilinçlendim artık. Bundan 10 sene öncesinde hiçbir şeyi bilmiyordum."

involved, when it happens to you personally, you learn some things, more or less." (Meryem, Katex, 1 year)[311]

In addition, for workers whose mobilization did not result in success, successful labor protests elsewhere hold significant meaning. In other words, workers who had experience of mobilization and were aware of the challenges of the process were motivated by the success of other workers.

> "Yesterday I saw the resistance in Pulver Chemical. Believe me, if I wasn't on the night shift, I would definitely have been there. I danced in front of my own house with the excitement of that. It was very beautiful, very fulfilling. Maybe today I couldn't get the union into Automet, but sharing the happiness of other places is also my happiness, to be honest. That's how I see it." (Filiz, Automet, 5 years)[312]

As a result, the class consciousness that comes from the workers' experience of exploitation and oppression in the workplace is transformed during the process of unionization and picket lines. The clarification of workers' perceptions about employers and their class positions, the decisions they make considering the collective interests of their class members, and the changes in their perspectives on other workers' protests are various reflections of the transformation of women's class consciousness.

6.3 Formation of negative attitudes toward unions

In the previous chapter on women's picketing experiences, I discussed the discriminatory attitudes of unions towards workers. One of the most

311 "Şuan neyin ne olduğunu bildiğim için ben heryere (direnişlere) giderim diyorum. Önceden diyordum mesela, Zitex yoldaydı, önünden geçiyorduk. Napıyor bunlar sürekli bekleyip duruyorlar diyordum. Ne olduğunu bilmiyorduk çünkü. İçine girince, kendi başımıza da gelince, az çok bazı şeyleri öğreniyorsun yani."

312 "Dün Pulver Kimya direnişini gördüm. İnan ki gece vardiyasında olmasaydım, muhakkak orada olacaktım. Onun heyecanıyla kendi evimin kapısının önünde halay çekmiş insanım. Çok güzeldi, çok mutlu edici bir şey. Bugün ben belki sendikayı Automet'e sokamadım ama başka yerlerin mutluluğunu paylaşmak da benim mutluluğum açıkçası. Ben böyle bakıyorum."

significant outcomes of worker resistance is that, by the end of the process, some workers develop feelings of distrust and anger towards unions. In three cases I examined, except for the Katex case, there are women who clashed with the unions on the picket line and subsequently lost trust in them. This distrust also reduces the likelihood of women participating in union organizing and mobilization efforts later in their working lives.

In the Zitex case, both Pınar and Hatice experienced numerous tensions and conflicts both individually and related to the union during the picket line. As part of this conflict, they were subjected to direct mobbing and mistreatment by male union officials.

> "The union official once said to me, 'Who are you without the TexUnion?' I turned to him and said, 'I have existed without the union until today, but who are you without us workers?' I asked him, 'Who is the union?' I said, 'You are a group of parasites who live off the backs of workers, feeding on their dues, and preying on their labor.' You know how they say in those interviews that they support women, that they stand by them? I swear, it's all lies. They are worse than the employers when it comes to women. He said that 'this resistance didn't achieve anything, that Zitex was won because of them and the brands'. I asked him, 'If it was possible with the brands and the union, why didn't you get recognition before this resistance?'... I went through very difficult times, both at Zitex and afterwards with the union. I have started a new job now, and I am quite happy with my work and the environment. I literally tore myself apart for the union for months, but I was stabbed in the back the most by the union, just like the bosses... I no longer trust any of them; the moment they make a deal with the employer, they sell out the workers." (Hatice, Zitex, 3 years)[313]

313 "Sendika görevlisi adam bana bir gün dedi ki "TexUnion olmasa sen kimsin ki" dedi. Ben de dönüp ona dedim ki "Ben bugüne kadar sendika ile var olmadım ama asıl biz işçiler olmadan sen kimsin ki?" dedim. Sendika kim ki dedim, işçilerin sırtından onların aidatları ile yaşayan onların emeklerine çöken asalaklar topluluğusunuz dedim. Hani o röportajlarda falan kadınlara desteğiz, onların yanındayız falan diyorlar ya yemin ederim külliyen yalan, patrondan beterler kadınlara karşı. "Bu, direniş sayesinde alınan bir sonuç değilmiş, Zitex onların sayesinde ve markalar ile kazanılmış", bana öyle dedi. Ben de ona "madem markalar

In the Automet case, some women's perception of unions has changed negatively due to the discrimination they faced from union officers. Ayten and Ebru are among the workers who had their financial support cut off by the union in the second month of the resistance. They also felt marginalized in the field because of the factions among workers. Also, after the picket line ended, they experienced long-term unemployment and financial difficulties because the union did not reintegrate them into work.

> "It was an experience. Still, I'm glad we were involved. We learned that we should never trust the unions again. But we learned well." (Ayten, Automet, 6 years)[314]

> "For two months, they made us shout "yellow union, yellow union" like dogs at the door. You were no different from the yellow union. It was in vain that we were screaming at them." (Ebru, Automet, 5 years)[315]

Ayten also stated that, after this negative experience, she would only consider rejoining a union if she felt secure. She emphasized that she could only trust a union again if it provided workers with the necessary material and moral support both during mobilization and after the dismissal.

Lastly, in the Fonmet case, almost all the workers, who were reinstated after the picket line, were dismissed in various ways about one year later. As women continued to face pressure and harassment at work, despite being union members, they began to feel distrust and anger towards unions. For example, Zehra stated that she would not participate in any union organization in the future.

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ve sendika ile oluyordu niye bu direnişten önce yetki alamadınız" dedim...Çok zor günler yaşadım inan hem Zitex'te hem de sonrasında sendika ile. Ben artık yeni bir işe başladım, işimden ve ortamımdan gayet memnunum. Sendika için aylarca kendimi parçaladım resmen ama en büyük kazığı sendikadan yedim yine patronlardan bir farkı yok sendikacıların da... İnan asla güvenmiyorum artık hiçbirine patronla anlaşma yaptıkları anda işçiyi satıyorlar."

314 "Tecrübe oldu. Yine de iyi ki içinde olmuşuz. Sendikalara bir daha güvenmememiz gerektiğini öğrendik. Ama güzel öğrendik."

315 "Bizi iki ay boyunca kapıda köpek gibi "sarı sendika, sarı sendika" diye bağırttılar. Sarı sendikadan senin hiçbir farkın yokmuş ki. Boşuna adamlara çemkirmişiz."

> "A friend of mine says, 'I entered a sector, encountered a union, oh my God,' she says. She says, 'I will never participate in any union activities again, I don't even want to work in a unionized workplace anymore.' There is a distrust towards all unions." (Mehtap, Fonmet, 2 years)316

> "I met them for the first time, it was a bad experience, would I ever get into such a mess again? I don't think so, I won't. From now on, I'll say, 'a little soup, worry-free head.' I won't get into such a mess because I have lost my faith." (Zehra, Fonmet, 2 years)[317]

In conclusion, the negative experiences women face with union officials, the discrimination they endure, and the factionalism unaddressed by the union during the picketing all lead to feelings of distrust and anger towards unions. It is important to analyze this as one of the subjective impacts of resistance on women. Because they generally take on more risks and challenges than men in mobilizing, the feelings of distrust and regret at the end of the process often have a negative impact on their engagement in labor activism. However, on the other hand, these women also develop a critical attitude towards the bureaucracy and patriarchy within mainstream unions. This critical perspective can have positive effects when it intersects with new labor organizations that allow more worker participation in decision-making and provide space for women's political agency.

6.4 Conclusion

As a form of collective resistance, picketing represents a period during which the daily routines of women between home and work are disrupted, leading them to feel more liberated by breaking out of these routines. During this time, workers undergo various subjective transformations. However, the literature often overlooks social movements' subjective impacts on the participants. In

316 "Geçen davası olan arkadaş diyor ki, ben bi işkoluna girdim, karşıma bir sendika çıktı, aman aman diyor. Ben artık hiçbir sendika çalışmasında bulunmam hatta sendikalı işyerinde bile çalışmak istemem diyor. Bütün sendikalara karşı bir güvensizlik oluştu."

317 "İlk defa tanıştım, kötü bir tecrübe oldu, bir daha da girermiyim böyle bir topa, sanmıyorum girmem. Ben de bu saatten sonra "azıcık aşım, kaygısız başım" derim. Böyle bir topa girmem çünkü inancım kalmadı."

this chapter, I explored the subjective transformations experienced by women during mobilization and picket line through three main themes: empowerment, changes in class consciousness, and the formation of negative attitudes towards unions.

Firstly, I approached empowerment through the lens of collective agency and collective actions led by unions. I demonstrated that women become empowered, feel more confident, and engage in practices of speaking out against oppressive supervisors and management during mobilization process. However, the form and impact of this empowerment are closely related to the success of mobilization, women's experiences throughout the process, and how they recall them.

Secondly, I discussed changes in class consciousness, arguing that the class consciousness arising from workers' experiences of exploitation and dignity undergoes a transformation in the process of collective action. This transformation was analyzed through perceptions of employers, their own class positions, choices that prioritize collective interests, and their ideas about the labor movement.

Lastly, I explored how workers' subjective transformations are not always positive. I examined how women who conflict with unions during the picket line and face discrimination begin to feel negative emotions like distrust and anger towards unions. These negative experiences and feelings also decrease their likelihood of re-mobilizing and participating in collective action in their work lives.

7

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the experiences of a group of women industrial workers in Turkey. Pursuing these stories has profoundly changed my life. During this process, I met Selma, a women labor leader, and we became comrades, engaging in political discussions and attending workers' resistance together. I have learned immensely from her and continue to do so.

I also met with KadınİşçI, a feminist labor NGO founded in 2021 by women experienced in the field of women's labor in Turkey, and started working as a reporter for their news portal. I interviewed metal workers in Eskişehir, food workers in Izmir, and textile workers in Çorum and so on. These interviews, published on the KadınİşçI website, helped women's resistance become more visible and their voices reach other women. Supporting and communicating with these women has been incredibly rewarding, making me feel useful and motivating me for future work.

Through KadınİşçI, my political and academic goals have become intertwined and strengthened. While I academically examined the experiences of women workers in the labor movement, I also worked to make their struggles visible by reporting on them and staying in touch with the women involved.

This thesis focuses on the struggle experiences of women who joined unions against low wages, poor working conditions, and patriarchal pressures and faced dismissal. My study is based on in-depth interviews and participant observation with women involved in four mobilization cases in the textile and

metal sectors between 2021 and 2023 in Istanbul, Kocaeli, and Bursa. I conducted interviews with 16 female workers and 2 female union officials. Additionally, I carried out four days of participant observation during the picketing in the Katex case.

This study employs a feminist methodology that considers women's experience as a source of information, adheres to the principle of conscious partiality, and puts forward supporting women's struggle as a goal of feminist research. It examines the conditions that both trigger and hinder women from unionizing, the relationships they establish with unions, their experiences during the challenging picketing process following dismissal, and the subjective impacts of these processes on their lives.

In the introduction chapter of this thesis, I explained my personal and academic motivations for selecting this topic, presented my research questions, and described the fieldwork process. The second chapter includes an overview of the literature I engage with and the key studies within those fields. In the third chapter, I provided background information on my field research. This includes an examination of the historical and structural context of unionization, the characteristics of the textile and metal sectors in Turkey, their roles within the labor movement, and the specifics of the cases studied. I detailed the working conditions in the factories, the unique challenges faced by women, and offered a brief summary of the unionization and following picketing in each case. This set the foundation for the discussion of field findings in the subsequent chapters. The fourth chapter explored women's experiences with unionization, focusing on the conditions that either hinder or motivate them, the experiences of women labor leaders, and women's relationships with unions. In the fifth chapter, I dealt with the positive and negative experiences of women who were dismissed due to unionization and participated in picketing, highlighting the challenges they faced in terms of family relations, motherhood, and financial difficulties. Finally, the sixth chapter examined the subjective impacts of the unionization and picketing processes on these women, categorized under three main themes: empowerment, changes in class consciousness, and distrust towards unions.

This thesis contributes to the literature by offering a gendered analysis of the mobilization and collective action processes of women workers. Engaging with global literature that focuses on the resistance and labor activism of women workers in Global South countries, I analyzed how the mobilization

processes of women in Turkey, who produce for international companies, are shaped within the context of patriarchal capitalism. With this study, I aim to contribute to the limited literature on women's labor struggles in Turkey by exploring women's motivations for unionization, the relationships they establish with unions, and, most importantly, the impacts of these processes on the women involved.

In this thesis, I presented two main arguments. First, I argued that the gender injustices women face in the workplace, such as gender-based wage discrimination and humiliating treatment, play a critically important role in their mobilization process. Second, I contend that while women gain strength and their perspectives on class struggle evolve through unionization and collective action, this empowerment is often constrained by union bureaucracy and patriarchal attitudes of union officers. I explored this limitation through the narratives of women who have had negative experiences with unions and who feel disappointed about unions and the labor movement following their resistance.

In regard to the shortcomings of this study, I think this thesis has three main limitations. First, the use of participant observation is very limited, resulting in a heavy reliance on women's narratives. Since workers' resistance is a dynamic, multi-layered process involving many actors, participatory observation will provide more comprehensive information about workers' actions and transformations in their ideas, behaviors, and relationships.

The second limitation is that the study cannot adequately address women's experiences of women from different racial and ethnic groups. Although Kurdish women touched upon the racism they were exposed to in working life, this was not thoroughly examined. The majority of the interviewees were Turkish and Sunni women. In future studies, by selecting a more diverse participant group, a more complete analysis of how class, gender, and race affect women's working conditions and resistance can be presented.

Thirdly, the thesis lacks cases organized by independent unions, which have gained prominence in the Turkish labor movement in recent years. The bureaucratic and patriarchal structure of mainstream unions has frequently been the subject of political and academic debate, but independent unions stand in a different position in terms of both union democracy and women's participation.

Last year, at the summer camp organized by KadınİşçiI had the opportunity to spend time with women workers from different cities in Turkey. Here, I met Hasibe, a textile worker from Malatya. Her energy, self-confidence and determination to struggle impressed me a lot. In the textile factory where Hasibe works, workers have been screwed over by many mainstream unions. Eventually, they began to "protect" themselves from the unions and fight against the injustices of the employer with their own power. Halime is one of the pioneer workers who organized this process. They have organized non-legal strikes many times for their demands. A handful of workers who were fed up with the unions but did not give up the struggle achieved many gains in this way. They then contacted BİRTEK-SEN, an independent textile union based in Antep. This union was founded in 2022, during the strike wave in Antep in which thousands of textile workers participated. As a contentious union with a class unionism approach, it has become an important tool of struggle for workers who have had negative experiences with mainstream unions and have lost trust in them.

Independent unions tend to be more democratic, more inclusive of workers in decision-making and more combative. While they paint a more promising picture than the mainstream unions, this democracy has an important link to the fact that these unions are newly established, too small to become bureaucratized and create union oligarchs, and too far from passing the sectoral threshold required to gain collective bargaining authority. Nevertheless, the role of independent unions is critical at a time when unions in Turkey are suffering from an organizing crisis in many ways, with bureaucratization, patriarchy and legal barriers. Further research might examine the mobilization and action processes of women organized in independent unions. Comparing their experiences with those of women in mainstream unions would provide a more comprehensive account of the potential and possibilities of women workers' struggle.

Moreover, the role of feminist labor NGOs such as KadınİşçiI in the resistance of women workers could be a subject of future research. In order to overcome the structural limitations of trade unions and transform women's empowerment into a permanent one, the involvement of feminist organizations such as KadınİşçiI in the labor movement is critical.

In conclusion, working class women all over Turkey are seeking a way out. They are struggling for a decent life and equality. Against the domination

of patriarchal capitalism that oppresses every aspect of our lives, the struggle of women workers shows us the possibility of another world.

Appendix A Information of Interviewees

ZİTEX

Zeynep: She is 39 years old. She is from Bursa. She graduated from primary school. She is divorced and has one daughter. She lives with her family. She worked as an agricultural laborer during her childhood and as a textile worker from the age of 18. She worked at Zitex for 14 years. She was one of the leaders in organizing for the textile union there for 5-6 years. After the resistance, she started working as a professional in the union.

Ayşe: She is 36 years old. She is from Zonguldak. She graduated from primary school. She is married and has one daughter. When they got married, she moved to Bursa. In 2008, she started working in factories in Bursa. She worked at Zitex for 6 years. After the resistance, she started working as a professional in the union.

Pınar: She is 23 years old. She is from Bursa. Graduated from open education. Single. Before Zitex, she worked in a children's store for two years. She worked at Zitex for 5.5 months. Zeynep organized her into the union. She is closer to Hatice during the resistance. She has various conflicts both with other women resisters and with the union. She is now working in another textile factory.

Hatice: She is 42 years old. She is married with one child. Before Zitex, she worked in many textile factories. She has conflicts with two other women in the resistance because she has come to the forefront during the resistance. In the last period of the resistance, she also had conflicts with the union. She is currently working in another textile factory.

KATEX

Fatma: She is 42 years old. She is from Bursa. She is divorced and lives with her 15-year-old daughter. She started working when her daughter was 5 years old due to economic difficulties. She worked in many textile factories,

including Zitex. She first met the TexUnion union at Zitex, became a member and organized the union. She also organized for TexUnion in other workplaces. In one factory, she was fired for being unionized and she continued resistance in front of the door for 4 months. After that, she joined Katex and was dismissed after 4 months. Throughout her working life, she worked in both weaving departments and quality control departments. She emphasizes that women are seen as "sexual objects" in the workplace. She tells a lot about workplace harassment. She also talked about her efforts to reach out to women workers at the workplace throughout the interview. After the resistance, she was employed through unionists in a textile factory where TexUnion was organized.

Sevgi: She is 49 years old. She is from Samsun. She is married for 30 years and has 3 children and 4 grandchildren. Since her early 30s, she has been working in textile factories. She worked at Zitex for a while. She worked for 6 years at Katex in the quality control department. In 2014, she experienced unionization and became a member of the Batis union. She says that they could not even get the rights they won in court, and that the union did not take care of them. This negative experience led him to investigate and question the union more during the TexUnion process in Katex. She is one of the women who established the closest relationship with male unionists during the resistance. She was in constant contact with the unionists and also undertook the supervision of the other women workers on behalf of the them. After the resistance, she was employed through unionists in a textile factory where TexUnion was organized.

Meryem: 41 years old. She is from Samsun. She is married and has 2 children. She has been working for 23 years in various textile factories in the region. She worked at Katex in the twisting department for 10 months. Her first union and resistance experience is Katex. One of those who had close relations with unionists during the resistance. She did not continue to work anywhere after the resistance.

Gülay: She is 47 years old. She was born in Bulgaria. She is married with 1 child. They came to Bursa at the age of 14. At the age of 15, after finishing secondary school, she started working. She worked mostly in textiles. In 1993-94, she participated in the organizing activities of one of the biggest textile unions at Zitex, but when it was found out that she was unionized, she was fired. She worked for 13 years in the weaving department at Barutçu. She was hesitant to join the union at Katex, fearing that she would be dismissed, similar to her previous experience.

Aynur: She is 40 years old. She is from Samsun. She is married and has 3 children. When she was 16, they moved to Bursa. She started working in a garment shop. Then she worked in various textile factories. For 10 years she worked at Katex in the weaving department. She tried to solve the problems she faced at work many times as an individual, but when she couldn't get any results, she joined the union. This is her first experience of unionization and resistance.

Hasibe: For 11 years, she worked in weaving at Katex. She is one of the women who did not have a very close relationship with the union during the resistance.

Müge: For 5 years, she had been working in weaving at Katex. While the resistance of four women was going on in front of the factory, she was going to join them after the shift, so it was revealed that she was a union member and she was fired. She is one of the women who did not have a very close relationship with the union during the resistance.

AUTOMET

Filiz: 28 years old. She graduated from high school. Single. She has been working since she was 15, mostly as a subcontracted worker. She has working experience in metal, textile and grocery stores. She was subjected to various forms of racism in her working life because she is Kurdish, her family is politically close to the Kurdish movement. She worked for 5 years at Automet

in the injection molding department. She is one of the organizing workers of Met2Union at Automet. She is one of the women who has close relations with the union. After the resistance, through the union, she got a job in a union-organized workplace.

Canan: She is 34 years old. She graduated from university. She is married with 1 child. While studying at university, she worked as a bakery master in a pastry shop. She worked in grocery stores. Since job opportunities were limited in Altınoluk, her family moved to Gebze. She worked in plastic factories. She worked for 5 years at Automet in the injection molding department. During the resistance she had problems with childcare. After the resistance, she got a job in a union-organized workplace through the union.

Ayten: She is 43 years old. She is from Trabzon. She is divorced and lives with 3 children. Before Automet, she worked in various plastic and metal factories. She worked at Automet for 6 years. She is one of the organizing workers of Met2Union at Automet. She was one of the workers who led work stoppages and occupations. During the resistance, she suffered many financial difficulties and debts. She was also subjected to discrimination by the union and experienced various conflicts during this period. She was unemployed for 1 year after the resistance and now works in a metal factory. She feels distrust and anger towards unions because of her damaging experience at Automet.

Ebru: She is 38 years old. She is from Karabük. She is married and has 2 children. She graduated from secondary school. She has worked in many different factories for many years. Her first experience of unionization and resistance is Automet. During the resistance, she had many conflicts with her family. She was also subjected to discrimination by the union. After the resistance, she worked in temporary jobs and is still unemployed.

FONMET

Mehtap: She is 33 years old. She is from Ardahan. She is Kurdish and Alevi. Her parents died at an early age and she lives alone. She could not continue

her education the village due to financial difficulties and started working in the farms at a young age. At the age of 14, she came to Istanbul alone to work. At first, she worked as a live-in maid in houses, then she worked in factories in different industries such as warehouses, food and metal. She took part in various union organizations in food factories. From time to time, she has also been working as a babysitter in houses. Throughout her working life, she was discriminated against because of her identity and political views. She worked at Fonmet for 2 years. She was the first worker to be dismissed during the organizing process of Met1Union. She was reinstated after the resistance in the factory yard but was dismissed a year later. During this period, she had many conflicts with unionists. Together with her friends she organized a press statement in front of the union. She still changes jobs frequently and is trying to cope with a lot of financial difficulties.

Arzu: She is 43 years old. She is from Urfa, but her family moved to Bursa in 2008. She started working at the age of 14. She worked mostly in office jobs. She worked in three factories: food, chemical and metal. She worked for 1 year at Fonmet, her first experience of unionization. She was not hired after the resistance. She is very angry at unionists for discriminating against women. She defines herself as a Republican and Kemalist. Now she works as an assistant in an office.

Zehra: She is 46 years old. She is from Tokat. She is married and has 2 children. She started working at the age of 13. She worked in textile workshops and factories for many years. She opened a textile workshop herself for a while, but she could not run it. During the pandemic period, she opened a dessert shop, but that didn't work either. Then she got a job at Fonmet. She is one of the women workers who established close relations with the union during the unionization process. Because of this, negative rumors are spread about her by other workers. Recently, she wanted to resign and quit her job because her husband's financial situation was good, but because her friends insisted, she stayed until the employer fired her. Fonmet is her first union and resistance experience.

Gamze: She's 40 years old. She is divorced and has two children. She entered Fonmet after the first unionization process. In a workplace where the union was organized, she often stated that the union was not behind the workers. She had a work accident while working under stress under heavy conditions in the factory. She was fired for complaining about this work accident.

Union Officers:

Woman Union Officer from Met2Union: She graduated from the department of mining engineering. After university, she started working in trade unions. Before metal, she worked in textile and petroleum unions for many years. She played an active role in women workers' organizing and resistance. In 2016, she started working in the Met2Union union.

Women Union Officer from TexUnion: She has been working at TexUnion since 2006. She holds senior positions in the Women's Commission and the International Relations Commission.

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