ALIMONY DEBATES IN TURKEY: MASCULINIST RESTORATION, MALE SELF-VICTIMIZATION, AND GENDER INEQUALITY

by

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ALIMONY DEBATES IN TURKEY: MASCULINIST RESTORATION, MALE SELF-VICTIMIZATION, AND GENDER INEQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Alimony Debates in Turkey: Masculinist Restoration, Male Self-Victimization, and Gender Inequality

Hilal Dikmen

This thesis examines alimony debates that have been on public agenda in Turkey since 2016 in the context of neoliberal social policies and neoconservative familialist political discourse towards gender equality, family, and divorce. Article 175 of the Turkish Civil Code, which covers alimony regulations, stipulates that the spouse who fall into poverty upon divorce has the right to receive alimony for an indefinite period of time. In most cases, it is the woman who becomes entitled to receive alimony as a result of the deep-seated gender inequality in social, economic, and familial relations.

In 2014, a group of people who called themselves as "alimony victims" started organizing on social media with a demand of introducing time limitation to alimony. The same year, a parliamentary commission was established to investigate the reasons for divorces and the factors that negatively influence the integrity of family, and "alimony victims" were invited to the parliamentary commission. The commission report, released in 2016, involved a recommendation on introducing time limitation to alimony. Since then, various groups, overwhelmingly consisting of men, have been protesting "male victimization" on the ground of the right to alimony as well as two other legislations; one on assuring gender equality and the other on the prevention of violence against women (the "Istanbul Convention" and Law No. 6284 respectively). The AKP (Justice and Development Party) government has emphasized "preventing divorces" as well as brought these legal rights into question in its political discourse, particularly since 2016.

The thesis is grounded in the ethnographic research that was conducted between October 2018 and October 2020 that consists of 30 interviews with divorced men and women supporters actively involved in anti-alimony groups, divorced women, and divorce lawyers and feminist lawyers. It offers a three-fold discussion from a critical and feminist perspective. Firstly, it reveals the political influence on the rising anti-women's rights movement in contemporary Turkey within the context of the neoliberal restructuring of welfare and neoconservative familialism. Drawing from Deniz Kandiyoti's conceptualization of masculinist restoration, that is top-down and bottom-up efforts to maintain and reproduce patriarchy, thesis discusses alimony debates in the context of masculinist restoration. Secondly, based on interviews with men and women actively involved in anti-alimony groups, it investigates their experiences in marriage and divorce as well as the formation and workings of "male victimization" in anti-alimony discourse. In this sense, this thesis puts forth the concept of "male self-victimization" as one significant pillar of this masculinist restoration. Thirdly, interviews conducted with divorced women aim to shed light on common problems that women face during the process of marriage, divorce, and post-divorce. This thesis pays special attention to the financial and social consequences of divorce, to women's unpaid domestic work and to male violence in marriage and divorce in its analysis of experiences of both women and men.

Keywords: divorce, alimony debates, neoconservative familialism, masculinist restoration politics, women's rights, male self-victimization, gender, Turkey, masculinity

ÖZETÇE

Türkiye'de Nafaka Tartışmaları: Eril Restorasyon, Erkeğin Kendini Mağdurlaştırması ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitsizliği

Hilal Dikmen

Bu tez, 2016'dan bu yana Türkiye'de kamuoyunun gündeminde olan nafaka tartışmalarını toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği, aile ve boşanmaya yönelik neoliberal sosyal politikalar ve neomuhafazakâr aileci siyasi söylemler bağlamında incelemektedir. Türk Medeni Kanunu'nun nafaka düzenlemesini kapsayan 175. maddesinde, boşanma ile yoksulluğa düşen eşin süresiz nafaka alma hakkı olduğu hükmü bulunmaktadır. Sosyal, ekonomik ve ailevi ilişkilerdeki köklü toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin bir sonucu olarak, çoğu durumda nafaka almaya hak kazanan kadınlardır.

2014 yılında, kendilerini "nafaka mağdurları" olarak nitelendiren bir grup, nafakaya süre sınırı getirilmesi talebiyle sosyal medyada örgütlenmeye başladı. Aynı yıl, boşanma nedenlerini ve aile bütünlüğünü olumsuz etkileyen faktörleri araştırmak üzere bir meclis komisyonu kuruldu ve "nafaka mağdurları" meclis komisyonuna davet edildi. 2016 yılında yayınlanan komisyon raporunda yapılan önerilerden biri nafakaya süre sınırı getirilmesiydi. O zamandan beri, ezici çoğunluğu erkeklerden oluşan çeşitli gruplar, "erkek mağduriyeti" yarattığı gerekçesiyle nafaka hakkına ve diğer iki yasal düzenlemeye karşı çıkmaktadır. Bu düzenlemelerden biri toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanması, diğeri kadına yönelik şiddetin önlenmesine dairdir (sırasıyla "İstanbul Sözleşmesi" ve 6284 Sayılı Kanun). Öte yandan, AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) hükümeti, bilhassa 2016 yılından beri siyasi söyleminde "boşanmaların önlenmesi" vurgusu yapmakta ve söz konusu yasal hakları tartışmaya açmaktadır.

Tez, Ekim 2018 - Ekim 2020 tarihleri arasında yürütülen, nafaka karşıtı gruplarda aktif olarak yer alan boşanmış erkekler ve kadın destekçiler, boşanmış kadınlar, boşanma avukatları ve feminist avukatlarla yapılmış 30 görüşmeden oluşan etnografik araştırmaya dayanmaktadır. Eleştirel ve feminist bir perspektiften üç aşamalı bir tartışma sunmaktadır. İlk olarak, refahın neoliberal yeniden yapılandırılması ve neomuhafazakâr ailecilik bağlamında çağdaş Türkiye'de yükselen kadın hakları karşıtı hareket üzerindeki siyasi etkiyi açıklar. Deniz Kandiyoti'nin, patriyarkanın sürdürülmesi ve yeniden üretilmesi için hem tepeden inme hem de sokaktaki çabalar olarak tanımladığı eril restorasyon kavramsallaştırmasından yararlanarak, nafaka tartışmalarını eril restorasyon siyaseti bağlamında tartışır. İkinci olarak, nafaka karşıtı gruplardaki kadın ve erkeklerle yapılan görüşmelere dayanarak hem onların evlilik ve boşanmaya ilişkin deneyimlerini hem de nafaka karşıtı söylemde "erkek mağduriyetinin" inşasını ve işleyişini inceler. Bu bakımdan, tez, eril restorasyonun önemli bir ayağı olarak "erkeğin kendini mağdurlaştırması" kavramını ileri sürer. Üçüncü olarak, boşanmış kadınlarla yapılan görüşmeler, kadınların evlilik, boşanma ve boşanma sonrası süreçte karşılaştıkları ortak sorunlara ışık tutmayı amaçlar. Bu tez, kadın ve erkeklerin deneyimlerini analiz ederken boşanmanın mali ve toplumsal sonuçlarının, evlilikte ve boşanmada kadının ücretsiz ev içi emeğinin ve erkek şiddetinin üstünde durmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: boşanma, yoksulluk nafakası tartışmaları, neomuhafazakâr ailecilik, eril restorasyon siyaseti, kadın hakları, erkeğin kendini mağdurlaştırması, toplumsal cinsiyet, Türkiye, erkeklik

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ABBREVIATIONS

TurkStat	Turkish Statistical Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development
BİAP	Boşanmış İnsanlar ve Aile Platformu (The Platform for Divorced People and Family)
SNM	Süresiz Nafaka Mağdurları (Indefinite Alimony Victim)
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence

Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

The state authorities and various groups that overwhelmingly consist of men have systematically attacked women's fundamental rights, particularly since 2016 in Turkey. These groups mobilize against gender equality, women's legal rights at marriage and divorce, and prevention of and combat violence against women crystalizing in these three regulations: The Turkish Civil Code Article 175 assuring the right to receive alimony, if necessary, for an unlimited period; Law No. 6284 (on Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women) enacted in 2012, and the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence) ratified in 2012.

The most common claim to justify the demand for removing these legal regulations is that they are "the dynamite laid under family"[1] [2] [3] and cause gender inequality in favor of women and against men.[4] In August 2020, the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appealed to the same discourse and said, "No regulation that lay dynamite under family is humane and legitimate,"[5] targeting the Istanbul Convention. The government's concern for increasing divorce rates started at discursive level at first. Conservative political discourse on family and priority of the woman's marital roles as wife and mother turned into condemnation of divorce itself and divorce rates on a slight increase. With the support of pro-government media outlets and conservative opposition parties in and out of National Assembly of Turkey, this concern for divorce rates on increase started to emerge as a simulated social problem. However, TurkStat's data on

[1] For the Civil Code Article 175 assuring the right to receive alimony for an unlimited period: change.org petition. Süresiz ibaresinin olmadığı, kriterlere göre 1-5 yıl nafaka adildir (2014). *change.org*. Accessed September 12, 2018, https://bit.ly/3pWsXgh.

[2] As an example of attacks to Law No. 6284: Göral, M. (2019, June 7). "6284 sayılı kanun ailenin altına yerleştirilmiş bir dinamittir", (interview by İbrahim Koçyiğit for İLKHA). Accessed September 12, 2020, https://ilkha.com/roportaj/6284-sayili-kanun-ailenin-altina-yerlestirilmis-bir-dinamittir-79146.

[3] As an example of attacks to Istanbul Convention: doğruhaber (2019, June 19). İstanbul Sözleşmesi Feshedilsin. Accessed September 12, 2020, https://dogruhaber.com.tr/haber/605178-istanbul-sozlesmesi-feshedilsin/.

[4] change.org petition. Süresiz Nafaka Zulmüne Son Verin (2014). *change.org*. Accessed September 12, 2018, https://bit.ly/3pWsXgh.

[5] a3haber. Erdoğan, İstanbul Sözleşmesi'ni hedef aldı: "Ailenin temeline dinamit koyan hiçbir düzenleme insanı ve meşru değildir". Accessed September 12, 2020, https://www.a3haber.com/2020/08/13/erdogan-istanbul-sozlesmesini-hedef-aldi-ailenin-temeline-dinamit-koyan-hicbir-duzenleme-insani-ve-mesru-degildir/.

divorce published in 2018 shows that the crude divorce rates in Turkey was 1.6% in 2017 and increased to 1.75% in 2018. The percentage of divorce rates gained momentum only in 2002, 2009, and 2018. In any case, the divorce rates in Turkey are still well below the average of divorce rates in OECD countries.[6]

Divorce brings along economic consequences apart from emotional and social consequences. Turkish family law gives courts four financial tools at divorce: 1) pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages; 2) child support; 3) property distribution, and 4) alimony. According to Article 175 of Turkish Civil Code, the spouse who will be in need after divorce may request economic support for an indefinite period of time from the other spouse for living costs in proportion to their financial power. Even though this is a gender-neutral article, women become entitled to receive alimony in most of the cases. The main reason of this asymmetry is the low female employment rates and the deep-seated gender inequality in Turkey. Female employment rate was 29.4% in Turkey in 2019, one of the lowest in the world.[7] [8] In addition, Turkey was ranked as the 130th among 153 countries in terms of gender equality in 2020.[9]

These gradually intensified attacks simultaneously coming top-down and bottom-up are concerned with the survival of the "family institution" and they bring women's legal rights into question. Combined with the patriarchal values already inherent in the Turkish context, these debates reflect the government's growing concern about decreasing marriage and increasing divorce rates, especially since 2014. The government established a research commission (The Commission of Marital Breakdown for short [*Boşanma Komisyonu*]) in 2014 to investigate the factors that negatively influence the integrity of family. The commission's report published in 2016 triggered the long-standing debates. It involves two recommendations relevant to the unlimited alimony and Law No. 6284: 1) limiting the period of receiving alimony to 5-10 years at most, and 2) requesting evidence and official documentation from those who demand restraining order

[6] Ermiş-Mert, A. (Ed.) (2020). *Gender Equality in Turkey with 2018 data.* Istanbul: Center for Gender Studies at Koç University (KOÇ-KAM. Accessed December 20, 2020, https://kockam.ku.edu.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/28082020_KOCKAM_Rapor_ENG_SinglePage_20200828_1.pdf.

[7] Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat). *İstatistiklerle Kadın 2019* [Statistics on Women 2019]. Press Release numbered 33732 (March 6, 2020). Accessed September 12, 2020, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=33732.

[8] DİSK/GENEL-İŞ (2020, March). *Türkiye'de Kadın Emeği Raporu.* Accessed September 12, 2020, http://cloudsdomain.com/uploads/dosya/21031.pdf.

[9] World Economic Forum (2019). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. accessed September 12, 2020, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf.

through Law No. 6284. A great number of women's organizations evaluated the commission report as "regression in women's rights".[10]

The Commission of Marital Breakdown was the first formal appearance of social groups against the existing alimony regulation and Law No. 6284. Thereafter, the stories of "alimony victims" increasingly dominated right-wing, pro-government media outlets. The anti-alimony discourse is mainly built around anecdotal stories of divorced men who are allegedly imprisoned, forced to sell or share their property, or prevented from starting a new family due to laws enforcing alimony payments. These emotional stories aim to produce and maintain the figure of so-called "male victim".

One group opposing the existing alimony regulation and Law No. 6284 participated in the Commission of Marital Breakdown process: *Divorced People and Family Platform* (*Boşanmış İnsanlar ve Aile Platformu;* hereinafter referred to as BİAP). This group was composed of divorced men and their female allies. Female allies are in relation with these men as members of their natal families or subsequent wives in general, but there are female allies who do not have any acquaintance. BİAP was established as a Facebook group first, then started an anti-alimony campaign on change.org, all in 2014.[11] As a result of an inner conflict, BİAP split up, and some members of it formed *Indefinite Alimony Victims* (*Süresiz Nafaka Mağdurları*; hereinafter referred to as SNM). Both groups claim that the right to alimony for an unlimited period restricts divorced men's economic power and social relations and prevents them from starting a new family. Paying the former spouse alimony for an indefinite time is claimed to not only affect divorced men, but also their whole family–primarily their mothers, sisters, and subsequent wives, because these men's legal and economic challenges negatively influence their current marital relations or their relations with their natal families. BİAP demand a time limitation on alimony, between one and five years to be exact. For SNM, this limit should be between one and three years. Furthermore, they demand the abolishment of preventive detention (*tazyik hapsi*), which is effective tool in the collection of unpaid alimony debts.

[10] Kadın Emeği ve İstihdamı Girişimi (KEİG) [Women's Labor and Employment Initiative]. "Kadın örgütlerinden TBMM Boşanma Komisyonu Raporu'na tepki yağıyor!". Accessed September 12, 2020, http://www.keig.org/kadin-orgutlerinden-tbmm-bosanma-komisyonu-raporuna-tepki-yagiyor/.
[11] change.org petition. Süresiz Nafaka Zulmüne Son Verin (2014). *change.org*. Accessed September 12, 2018, https://bit.ly/3pWsXgh.

Another main demand of BİAP and SNM is the annulment of the articles regulating the principle of victim's statement and temporary alimony in Law No. 6284. This legal regulation provides important opportunities to protect violence victim–economic, physical, sexual, or psychological–and prevent perpetrators with a restraining and protection orders. The principle of statement has a preventive function, but in the case of proof of false statement, legal sanction is applied for those who make a false statement. What BİAP and SNM demand is an amendment in the law that would necessitate evidence and official document from those who demand a restraining order. The opponents claim that women misuse this law to punish their husbands. They further argue that this law causes femicides, domestic violence, and breaking-up of families.[12] The alimony opponents believe that divorced men and their natal families, as well as their subsequent wives, are the true victims.

Their demands and complaints on alimony regulation, Law No. 6284, and the Istanbul Convention were swiftly brought to the government's agenda. In June 2018, Abdulhamit Gül, the Minister of Justice, declared that they will work on a reform package on the alimony regulation that introduces lower- and upper-time limits to end the unjust suffering of citizens.[13] In the first 100-day action plan of Turkey's new presidential cabinet unveiled by the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in August 2018, it was proposed to amend regulations concerning alimony to make it "fairer."[14]

Since 2014, the groups defining divorced men or divorced fathers as victims due to the existing legal regulations have increased in number and become more heterogenous. They involve people from various ideological backgrounds including nationalism, Islamism, and conservatism. Islamist and conservative media channels such as *Yeni Akit, Yeni Şafak*, and *Milli Gazete*, lawyers, and those who have authority in the Supreme Court[15] played a pioneering role in circulation of the anti-alimony discourse.

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[12] Yeni Akit (2017, September 9). 6284 yuva yıkıyor. Accessed October 20, 2018, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/6284-yuva-yikiyor-393091.html.

[13] Karakuş, A. (2018, June 9). Nafakaya kademeli süreler ve alt sınır geliyor, *Milliyet.* Accessed October 5, 2018, http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/abdullah-karakus/nafakaya-kademeli-sureler-ve-2685328/.

[14] Cumhuriyet (2018, August 3). "İşte Adalet Bakanlığı'nın 100 günlük eylem planı". Accessed October 5, 2018, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/1045368/iste_Adalet_Bakanligi_nin_100_gunluk_eylem_plani.html.

[15] As will be discussed in Chapter 2, one particular personality, Ömer Uğur Gençcan had a leading role in the growth of the debates. He is the head of Second Civil Chamber, and women's rights organizations called for his resignations due to his sexist statements on alimony. Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı [Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation] (2019, February 20). "Kadınların Nafaka Hakkını Yok Sayan Yargıtay 2. Hukuk Dairesi Başkanı Ömer Uğur Gençcan Derhal İstifa Etmelidir; Etmiyorsa Görevden Alınmalıdır!"

Members of BİAP and SNM conducted meetings with political parties about their demands, and their preferences on who to meet are informative about their political stance. Islamist and conservative Kurdish party HÜDAPAR[16] (Free Cause Party); Islamist, conservative, and nationalist party Saadet Partisi[17] (Felicity Party); nationalist and conservative party MHP (Nationalist Movement Party); and the ruling party AKP (Justice and Development Party) that is Islamist, nationalist, and conservative are among the institutions with whom anti-alimony campaigners held meetings. AKP and MHP then jointly proposed judicial reform package including amendments in the existing alimony regulation.[18] Even celebrities became a part of these debates and claimed that the existing alimony regulation was not fair for men.[19]

Based on this information, this research sets out to investigate the anti-alimony campaign that has gained momentum since 2016. Through interviews with members of BİAP and SNM, it seeks to delineate the discourse of anti-alimony campaign, common problems for divorced men in the marriage, divorce, and post-divorce processes, and the formation and workings of male self-victimization in alimony debates. Interviews conducted with divorced women aim to include women's voice that is almost invisible in alimony debates, and to shed light on common problems that women face during the process of marriage, divorce, and post-divorce. Furthermore, alimony debates indicate which social classes, regardless of their gender, experience economic struggles as result of divorce. Therefore, class and gender are fused as units of analysis in this research to depict how rising anti-women's rights movement reflects various existing social and economic inequalities in contemporary Turkey.

This research proposes that anti-alimony campaign is a part of male-dominated, anti-women's rights movement. Various groups' protests on streets[20] and on social media

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Accessed February 5, 2021, https://morcati.org.tr/haberler/kadinlarin-nafaka-hakkini-yok-sayan-yargitay-2-hukuk-dairesi-baskani-omer-ugur-genccan-derhal-istifa-etmelidir-etmiyorsa-gorevden-alinmalidir/.

[16] İLKHA (2021, January 30). Süresiz nafaka mağdurları sorunlarının çözülmesini istiyor. Accessed February 5, 2021, https://ilkha.com/guncel/suresiz-nafaka-magdurlari-sorunlarinin-cozulmesini-istiyor-151151.

[17] For the announcement of the meeting with Saadet Partisi: https://twitter.com/arabul_mesut/status/1095368297338540038, accessed February 5, 2021.

[18] Demirören Haber Ajansı (DHA) (2019, October 29). "İkinci yargı paketi, AK Parti ile MHP'nin ortak teklifi olacak." Accessed February 5, 2021, *https://www.dha.com.tr/politika/ikinci-yargi-paketi-ak-parti-ile-mhpnin-ortak-teklifi-olacak/haber-1733532*.

[19] For instance, Tuba Ünsal, a famous actress, had negative reactions because of her anti-alimony statements: Hürriyet Kelebek (2019 , November 21). Nafaka açıklamasıyla gündem olan Tuba Ünsal: Erkekten para almaya utanırım. Accessed February 5, 2021, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/galeri-nafaka-aciklamasiyla-gundem-olan-tuba-unsal-erkekten-para-almaya-utanirim-41378976/1.

[20] For example: Sputnik News (2018, August 1). Erkeklerden Protesto: "Evden kediyi attığınız zaman cezası var ama babayı attığınız zaman yok". Accessed September 25, 2020,

reveal how misogyny is embedded in their rage against three main legislations seeking gender equality and women's fundamental rights, and how they exploit the institution of family at discursive level. This research seeks to examine the dynamics of this movement, borrowing Kandiyoti's (2016) concept of "masculinist restoration". It investigates the formation and workings of "male victim" figure in marriage and divorce. Anti-alimony groups and the government has put forward this figure of "male victim" as one of the main reasons to dissolve legal regulations in question. Thus, it proposes the concept of "male self-victimization" as one significant pillar of "masculinist restoration".

The government has also promoted the debates on alimony, Law No. 6284, and the Istanbul Convention. The government's political discourse works against gender equality, women's rights, empowerment, and those who advocate them—far from offering any solution to increasing cases of femicide, violence against women, or deepening polarization between these two groups in these debates.[21] The government rather underlines the importance of the values and sacredness of the family and openly attacks feminists as well as women who are not *traditionally acceptable* in terms of their "unconventional" lifestyles.[22] This research will thus frame the context of this debate at the intersection of neoliberal welfare, neoconservative familialism, and the politics of gender.

This chapter involves research problem and research questions, and it explains how the data was obtained and which methods are adopted to analyze the data. Then, it discusses feminist dilemmas I experienced in the fieldwork. This is an important discussion, because I aim to design this research as feminist research and to follow feminist methodology. Drawing on the existing literature on feminist research and feminist methodology, I discuss how to produce feminist knowledge through studying men and masculinities, how differences between the researcher and the researched may lead productivity, and my experiences with the interviewees in terms of observing,

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https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201808011034564504-erkekler-protesto-ev-kedi-ceza-baba/. As another example, the protest of Yeniden Refah Partisi, that is an Islamist, nationalist, and conservative political party, about Istanbul Convention: doğruhaber (2020, February 16). Yeniden Refah Partisi: Istanbul Sözleşmesi ile ilgili önlem almaya davet ediyoruz. Accessed February 5, 2021, https://dogruhaber.com.tr/haber/642465-yeniden-refah-partisi-istanbul-sozlesmesi-ile-ilgili-onlem-almaya-davet-ediyoruz/.

[21] For a discussion of unequal attitude of the government of media towards alimony debates: Dikmen, H. (2019)."Nafaka tartışmalarında iktidarın ve medyanın tavrı", *Duvardibi*, 23: 42-45.

[22] For further information, please *see.* Lordoğlu's (2018) ethnographic research focusing on single women, residing in Istanbul. She investigates women's lives and relations with private and public spaces, and strategies they develop under conditions of patriarchal Turkish society and social policies that excludes them. Lordoğlu, C. (2018), *İstanbul'da Bekâr Kadın Olmak*, İletişim: İstanbul.

experiencing, and reproducing of power relations and gender roles in the field. Then, I explain the limitations of this research and the organization of chapters.

1.1 ***Research Problem and Research Questions***

Social scientists have been dealing with how neoliberal and neoconservative transformation of Turkish society has influenced social policies and women's lives during the last decade. These studies showed that social policies and political discourse towards women have mostly been built around family affairs. Simultaneously, the ethnographic research on personal experiences of divorced or single women and the subordination of women also revealed various physical, economic, and psychological violence women experience in family and society (Acar & Altunok, 2013; Yazıcı, 2012; Lordoğlu, 2018; Yıldırım, 2017). There is also a growing critical literature on men and masculinities that explores discursive, social, and economic construction of masculinities through ethnographic research (Sancar, 2013; Connell, 2005; Hearn, 1998). Although there are studies on how men experience post-divorce process in terms of economic, social, and emotional relations (Sevim & Güldeste & Öner, 2016; Aktaş, 2018), these studies lack a feminist critical perspective. Moreover, there is a gap on the formation and workings of male self-victimization in and through family, and on how the state policies shape and, in turn, are shaped by this self-victimization. How the discourse of male self-victimization are produced and circulated in the society must also be examined.

In this research, the following questions will be raised: How can we understand the recent debates on alimony with a focus on the government's discourse and policies towards family, divorce, and gender equality? How do divorced men construct male self-victimization at discursive level in a political and social environment in which male domination has been increasingly exalted and reproduced through political discourse and mainstream media? What are the experiences, motivations, and narratives of alimony opponents? What is the role of women in construction of male self-victimization and male domination? How do the experiences of divorced women who can or cannot receive alimony shed light on these debates, particularly on gender inequality, in general? How do alimony debates provide an insight to analyze the politics of masculinist restoration in Turkish society?

Answering these questions, this research seeks to contribute to the literature of gender studies, sociopolitical studies, and critical studies on men and masculinities, as well as

providing a feminist criticism of socio-legal and family studies. It explores the experiences of divorced men in terms of economic, social, and legal difficulties which they claim to face within the context of alimony debates so as to expand the limits of the existing literature on men and masculinities. By including the experience of female members of divorced men's natal families and subsequent wives, my research reveals the role of women in reproducing and consolidating male dominance, and how power relations between women and men is constructed. Finally, by including neoliberal and neoconservative transformation in Turkey, it reveals how alimony debates have become drivers of neoliberal rationality and neoconservative governmentality.

1.2 ***Data and Methods***

I have been a part of feminist activism for many years now. After the Report of Marital Breakdown Research Commission in 2016 was released with recommendations presented as solution to protect family in the report came to public's agenda. Recommendations on alimony and Law No. 6284 had particularly become prominent. The report was widely criticized among women's rights organizations. These heated debates on alimony intersected with my personal history.

I had my own story about receiving–in my case, not receiving–alimony. As a daughter of divorced parents, alimony was a long-standing topic of discussion when I was growing up. I could not receive the child support that should have been paid as per the court decision. I was familiar with possible social, cultural, and economic problems that a divorced woman and her child can experience. Therefore, the alimony debates piqued my curiosity, and to be honest, this was an *emotional* curiosity at the beginning. I became more and more interested in claims and demands of alimony opponents on conventional media outlets and social media. I followed and attended some social media protests on the topic through my anonymous account on Twitter. The government seemed very eager to pay attention to victimhood stories of divorced men and their female supporters. The more I followed these debates, the more I wanted to understand what lies behind the victimhood stories of divorced men, how divorce became a social problem, and what the role of the government's neoconservative politics towards sexuality, marriage, family, and women's rights was.

As I investigated the posts sent by "alimony victims" on social media, namely Facebook and Twitter, and the reports on conventional and pro-government media

outlets, it did not take long to discover *Divorced People and Family Platform* (BİAP) was the most popular online group composed mostly of self-victimized divorced men. BİAP also had female members. The head of BİAP had participated in the Research Commission's meeting in 2016 and the group's complaints and demands appeared in the official report. Given its public visibility, I decided to focus on the members of this group. During the fieldwork, I learned that this group had recently divided because of an internal disagreement, and the newly emerged group took on the name Indefinite Alimony Victims (SNM). SNM also gained increasing public visibility on media outlets. Thus, I decided to include SNM into my research as well.

In diverse online and offline platforms, divorced men and their female supporters were telling stories about how they were rendered penniless because of alimony, how they could not get remarried since they had to "carry the burden of paying alimony each month", how they had psychological problems which might have led them to go mad and murder their ex-wives, how women had more legal rights than men did, how legal regulations were the real reasons behind violence against women and femicides, and so on. As a feminist, and a researcher who is interested in critical studies on men and masculinities, I was able to recognize these outcries blaming women for economic, social, political, and legal problems. However, I wondered if they were actually derived from absolute misogyny or if there were other underlying reasons that could not be seen at first glance. I also wanted to understand the experiences of female alimony opponents who criticized women's rights discourse by asking about their rights as new wives and mothers of divorced men. The absence of divorced women's stories, claims, and counterarguments in the public debate on alimony caused me to raise an eyebrow. Moreover, women's rights organizations, especially feminist lawyers, were silent on the topic, and that distressed me. But as I learned later from a feminist lawyer, that they had strategically waited before they started a counter-campaign on the right to receive alimony because they did not want to turn these debates into a hot topic by adding the fuel to the fire. With the decision to investigate alimony debates, I aimed to design a research that involves alimony opponents and supporters to deepen our understanding of alimony and what it highlights regarding gender politics in Turkey.

I conducted an ethnographic research in four cities.[23] These interviews took place in two different time periods, first period was between October 2018 and September 2019,

[23] In the research, these cities are named as A, B, C, D, and E to ensure anonymity of the interviewees. A and B are among biggest cities in Turkey, whereas C, D, and E is known as relatively conservative and

second period was between September 2020 and October 2020. I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews, dividing interviewees into three groups: 1) Divorce lawyers and feminist lawyers; 2) the alimony opponents including divorced men and female supporters; 3) divorced women who (can or cannot) receive alimony and/or child support. I also participated in a symposium, named "Fair Solution to Indefinite Alimony Symposium" ("Süresiz Nafakaya Adil Çözüm Sempozyumu" held on September 30, 2018 at Aydın University in Istanbul. A feminist lawyer whom I interviewed invited me to a workshop on alimony law, held on May 25, 2019, by Istanbul Bar Association Women's Rights Center. At this workshop, I was in the group focusing on the history of alimony, and I had the chance to contribute to workshop with my previous research on the topic. During the lunch break, I had the chance to ask questions to lawyers and women's rights activists who played an active role in the debates. To provide a broader and comparative context of gender inequality in Turkey, I benefited from quantitative resources, namely databases of TurkStat and OECD on income, employment, violence against women, and femicides as well as divorce, marriage rates, and gender equality.

Discourse Analysis

I used discursive analysis to investigate the contemporary political outlook towards alimony and divorce. The official report on investigation of reasons for divorce (TBNA, 2016); the report of the Commission of Marital Breakdown; and parliamentary minutes involving alimony were main legal secondary sources I have collected and analyzed. I also utilized the socio-legal research report on alimony (Akçabay, 2019). Through various media channels that could be defined as pro-government (*Yeni Akit, Sabah, Star)* and as dissenting to the government (*Evrensel, Gazete Duvar, Ekmek ve Gül*), I collected official declarations of political figures on alimony, Law No. 6284, the Istanbul Convention, and women's right organizations. I determined some key words such as "family and alimony", "family and Law No. 6284", "indefinite alimony", "male victimization", "divorced men", "divorced women", "alimony victims". Through discourse analysis, I aimed to set the framework of the familialist, neoconservative political discourse and to identify hegemonic ideas about divorce, divorced men and women, and women's rights.

smaller cities. The interview with the interviewee residing in City E was conducted via Zoom, I did not visit them in person.

The discourse of the alimony opponents reveals how male victim figure is constructed and reproduced in the public eye. My main focus was to examine how gendered identities were constructed through language, and how written and visual materials related to alimony, women's rights, Law No. 6284, the Istanbul Convention, and divorces reproduce and reinforce male domination in the society.

In-Depth Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews using a voice recorder (unless otherwise requested by participants). Duration of the interviews ranged from 90 minutes to 9 hours. The total number of interviewees is 30: 2 feminist lawyers and activists, 5 divorce lawyers; 10 divorced men, 3 female alimony opponents; and 10 divorced women. The open-ended interview questions differed depending on interviewee groups. In the case of interviewing feminist or non-feminist divorce lawyers, the interview questions focused on their experiences and observations on alimony and child support during divorces (for instance one question was "In which social groups do contested or consensual divorces take place predominantly?"), the grounds for requesting divorce, and the social and economic consequences of divorce for men and women. The interviews with feminist lawyers also involved questions regarding their activist backgrounds and roles in legal regulations–namely, new Civil Code based on gender equality within family, Law No. 6284, and the Istanbul Convention.

In the case of second interviewee group, that is, alimony opponents including divorced men and female opponents, the interview questions mainly focused on marriage-, divorce-, and alimony-related experiences. I aimed to obtain data on which narrating strategies alimony opponents used to construct male self-victimization in the context of survival of the family. As they bring forward economic, social, cultural, and even health problems when defining the reason for their victimization, the interview questions aimed to unveil their understanding of "successful" manhood. Interviewees' approach to violence occupied more place when answering questions shaped during the interview than I expected at the beginning. The questions for female alimony opponents included their relations to these men and the platform as well as their personal experiences in marriage and divorce as women.

The interviews with the third interviewee group, the divorced women, mainly focused on women's lived experiences in marriage and during and after divorce. Alimony

and child support was part of interview questions to understand economic consequences of divorce for women. Child custody was also a topic of conversation in terms of social, economic, and emotional influences on women. Domestic violence, including physical, economic, sexual, and psychological, constituted a significant part of interviews because women's accounts about their marriage, divorce, and post-divorce life intertwined with various types of violence.

I reached participants by using a snowball sampling method which is a non-probability sampling technique. I contacted divorce lawyers, feminist lawyers, and divorced women through my personal network. After I completed my pre-research on the topic, official reports, interviews of the members of BİAP on media outlets as well as their social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter, I reached the founder of BİAP through her contact information on the platform's website. Afterwards, she helped me to recruit future interviewees among their acquaintances. Then, I telephoned other interviewees too. I reached the head of SNM through the contact number that he shared on his Twitter account, and he brought four other members to the café that we conducted the interview. To reach women was harder than I expected because many women, whom I asked if we could conduct an interview on divorce experiences and alimony, refused to talk to me. Some had concerns about their identities being disclosed even though I assured them the definitive information about them could be changed for the sake of anonymization. Some did not want to talk because they found divorce and post-divorce processes traumatic, and they did not want to relive it at all. I conducted interviews with four women at first. They all were my friends. Then, after almost a year, I made a new friend and she proposed that she could ask women at her workplace if they would want to talk to me. That's how I met five more women and interviewed them. I heard the story of the last divorced woman among interviewees first from an acquaintance and, thanks to him, I was able to make contact with her.

My primary concern was to establish both an effective and a comfortable relationship with the interviewees. To build a rapport, I developed some strategies. First, I thanked them for their time, hospitality, and assistance. Then, I briefly introduced myself as a researcher and my research topic. I informed them that interviews would probably take about 45 minutes to one and half hour depending on their availability, that I would use a recorder if they consented, and that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. I stressed how valuable their contributions were for my research. We arranged the date and time of the interviews according to their availability. I am not sure

how I was perceived by the interviewees from the second group. However, on one occasion, when I was in City B to interview three divorced men, one of them asked me if I could convey their problems to authorities so that they could change the relevant legal regulations. Another man interrupted him and said: "No, no. She's doing her homework, it's not something important." So, I observed that there was a certain level of understanding of my position in this particular context.

In terms of the third interviewee group of divorced women, I frequently needed to emphasize that I would anonymize their information during the interviews when they asked, and I thoroughly explained how I would do it to make sure that they felt safe. While divorced men were comfortable with me using their full names and information openly, women were worried about their information being disclosed. This difference was striking for me, because I saw how inequality works in everyday life from the very beginning. As I listened to women who told how their ex-husbands and families-in-law kept harassing them after divorce, I understood their concerns more clearly. Two women thanked me after the interview. Both said, "It was like a therapy session." When one interviewee asked me if she could choose her anonymous name, I happily accepted it. Then, I asked other divorced women which name they preferred. But I could not do the same for alimony opponents, lawyers, and two divorced women, since it did not occur to me that I could so at the beginning of my research. In this research, eight divorced women chose their own names.

1.3 Feminist Dilemmas in the Fieldwork

"Feminist praxis takes up issues of power, authority, ethics, and reflexivity" (Hesse-Biber, 2012: 17), therefore, one fundamental aspect of feminist research is being mindful of intersectional power relations and authority throughout the research process (Hearn, 2013; Hesse-Biber, 2012). DeVault (1996) defines feminist methodology as a field of investigation "rooted in feminist activism and in feminists' critiques of the standard procedures of social science" (DeVault, 1996: 29). Furthermore, according to Stacey (1988), who asks the burning question "Can there be a feminist ethnography?", to seek an "egalitarian research process characterized by authenticity, reciprocity, and intersubjectivity" (Stacey, 1988: 22) is a significant goal. To reflect on personal experiences as a researcher in the fieldwork itself is a part of feminist methodology that I embrace in this study. Political, social, and cultural atmosphere influences the research

process in various ways. Moreover, inequalities based on gender, class, ethnicity, or sexuality run in everyday lives of the researcher and the researched.

During my research I paid specific emphasis on how gender influences the relationships between me and my interviewees and among the interviewees themselves had been a significant point for me to analyze and discuss. The interviewing process led me to confusing feelings, questions, and dilemmas. Interviewing male interviewees, especially anti-feminist men, as a woman researcher highlighted gender differences and hierarchies during the interviews in unexpected ways.

Before I elaborate on these, I will briefly discuss the inclusion of men into feminist research and how to produce feminist knowledge through conducting research on men and masculinities.

1.3.1 How to Produce Feminist Knowledge Through Studying Men and Masculinities

How to conduct a feminist research has been scrutinized from various perspectives by feminist researchers, particularly since 1980s (Stacey, 1988; Harding & Norberg, 2005; Hesse-Biber, Leavy & Yaiser, 2004; DeVault, 1996; Hesse-Biber, 2012). The second wave of feminism in the 1960s and in the beginning of 70s produced the method of consciousness raising, i.e., an empirical method that "provided a systematic mode of inquiry that challenged received knowledge and allowed women to learn from one another" (Allen, 1973, Combahee River Collective 1982, cited in DeVault, 1996: 30). During this period, feminists criticized positivism through examples of androcentric bias within natural sciences and social sciences, and they unveiled masculine norms within academic disciplines. They pointed out that many mainstream scientific researches excluded and distorted women's experiences whereas they tended "to universalize the experience of men (and relatively privileged women)" (DeVault, 1996: 30). They include gender as a unit of analysis, instead of a variable, challenging traditional researchers (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Following the critique of positivism and its research methods as a central discussion topic, standpoint epistemologies came into prominence. The journey of feminist knowledge and thinking has had a similar progress in Turkey (Erdoğan & Gündoğdu, 2020). The Turkish literature on feminist methods has also been flourishing through edited volumes (Çakır & Akgökçe, 1995; Harmanşah & Nahya, 2016; Erdoğan & Gündoğdu, 2020), elaborating on fundamental discussion topics in the literature within

the context of research in Turkey. As Erdoğan and Gündoğdu (2020) elaborates, ever since the second wave of feminism, the feminist literature in Turkey mainly has focused on women's historiography, women's labor, legal issues, and women's rights. However, as a result of postmodernist influence, feminist researchers and their preferences for the researched have been changing. Therefore, the number of feminist researches which do not have women as researchers and researched is increasing. This reflects the diversifying theoretical tendencies of feminism in Turkey (Erdoğan & Gündoğdu, 2020: p.18, 23-24).

Feminist philosopher Harding (1987) suggests that we distinguish between "methods" (tools for gathering data), "methodology" (theorizing and analysis of research practice), and "epistemology" (the study of how and what we can know and whether what we know is adequate and valid), since "method" is used as an umbrella term to refer to all three constituents of the research process and the use of this term when addressing the question what makes our research feminist becomes confusing. Many scholars are on the same page about the necessity and benefit of this distinction within the debates on the definition of feminist research (Hesse-Biber, Leavy & Yaiser, 2004; Wolf, 1996; Erdoğan & Gündoğdu, 2020). Even though there are no single feminist research epistemology or methodology, the focus has been on the "women's oppression and a concern for improving their state." Hence, many feminist researchers embraced the idea that feminist research should be "'concerned with values,' should focus on 'women-related research questions', should analyze 'the condition of women's lives' and should be 'grounded in actual experiences closely related to social change'" (Webb, 1993: 416-417).

How, then, a research investigating men and masculinities may be considered as producing feminist knowledge? Kremer (1990) and Evans (1990) excludes men from feminist research as subject or object. Campbell (2003) states that the inclusion of men into feminist research as subject or object is a controversial topic and argues that how to theorize and methodologically perform men's inclusion in epistemological terms is the actual question, more than whether this inclusion is conceivable. However, the probability to adopt "an epistemological approach which might lead to ghettoization of feminist concerns into all-women camp" (Campbell, 2003: 285) is noted within the literature, and at least at the theoretical level, the inclusion men into feminist research is justified. Since feminist theorization of knowledge within women's lived and shared experiences inevitably include their relationships to men, how men, individually and collectively, construct and maintain relations of oppression at ideological, discursive and material levels may be included in the feminist research (Stanley and Wise, 1990; cited in

Campbell, 2003). Moreover, feminist social science is distinctive thanks to its diversity, mindset of inclusiveness, and critical approach. Therefore, men are as crucial participants as women in the feminist research (Campbell, 2003). Supporting and extending this, Kümbetoğlu (2011), in her paper on the problems of feminist method, explains that if the researcher aims to put interacting and intertwining subject-object problems of feminist theory and method, power relations during the process of knowledge production, the importance and outcomes of using gender as an analytic unit, instead of an variable in the center of her/his research, then that research can be considered as having a feminist character (Kümbetoğlu, 2011: p. 476).

Furthermore, one focus of the growing literature of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM for short) is that the critical analysis of how men are "doing gender" in their everyday lives may help to understand social oppression experienced by women just because they are women. CSMM has been closely affected by the second wave of feminism. Scholars who focus on men and masculinities widely claim that there is no single form of masculinity, rather there is a hierarchal structure and power relations among men. Some of the most-known theorists in the field (Connell 1987, 2005; Hearn, 2004; Messner, 1997) pursue the defense of gender equality pointing out imbalanced structures and power relations within gender order in society through conceptualizations of different forms of masculinities (and femininities).

A research studying women's lived experiences does not, necessarily, have to be feminist and a research focusing on masculinities from a critical and feminist perspective may produce feminist knowledge. Women research participants may not themselves be feminists and therefore might not agree with a feminist interpretation, but the latter may still be valid in its own terms (Ribbens, 1989; cited in Webb, 1993). In line with these approaches, this research focuses on alimony debates with a specific emphasis on male self-victimization from a critical and feminist perspective, refers to gender as a unit of analysis in its methodology and theory, and, more importantly, seeks to contribute to social change and social transformation (Hesse-Biber, 2012) on behalf of women's lives and gender equality.

1.3.2 Experiencing, Observing, and Reproducing Gender Roles

The reason why I describe alimony opponents as anti-feminist is not that I had a prejudice before I entered the field, but their unfavorable comments on feminists and feminism during the interviews. Though there were many signs in their social media posts implying their anti-feminism, they were not openly anti-feminist at the beginning. Since September 2019 when I finished my interviews with alimony opponents, they have gained more and more popularity on public agenda and affiliated with other groups opposing legal regulations assuring women's rights, and they gradually raised their anti-feminist voice more openly.

Political discourse and pro-government media outlets have been targeting feminism and feminists, especially since 2016. Not long before I started my research in 2018, various social media users and national media outlets heavily attacked the posters that women carried at the March 8th Feminist Night March. In 2019, the President Erdoğan and pro-government outlets claimed that feminists whistled while azan was reciting during March 8th Feminist Night March.[24] [25] The same year, police attacked the marchers.[26] In 2020, the march was banned, but women still went out for the march and were then attacked by the police.[27] Interviewees mentioned the night marches and the posters during the interviews when I asked questions about their thoughts of women's rights activism's approach to alimony debates. One divorced man whom I interviewed in City B said: "Have you seen those posters? Those women are shameless. What is the meaning of 'my body my decision'? How could it be?" Also, a female opponent I interviewed in City C firmly said: "I cannot support people who carry those posters." This implies that alimony opponents reproduce patriarchal values not only through their attitudes towards divorce but also their daily discourses.

As I will discuss in Chapter 3, political polarization in Turkey influenced the interviewees and alimony debates. There were shared beliefs among anti-alimony

[24] Yeni Akit (2019, March 9). Bunlar kadın değil terörist! Ezanı ıslıkla protesto ettiler.Accessed December 25, 2020, *https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/bunlar-kadin-degil-terorist-ezani-islikla-protesto-ettiler-649261.html*.

[25] Yeni Şafak (2019, March 10). Erdoğan'dan Taksim'de ezanın ıslıklanmasına sert tepki. Accessed December 25, 2020, https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/erdogandan-taksimde-ezanin-isliklanmasina-sert-tepki-3450646.

[26] Bianet (2019, March 8). Polis Feminist Gece Yürüyüşü'ne saldırdı. Accessed December 25, 2020, https://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/206261-polis-feminist-gece-yuruyusu-ne-gazla-saldirdi.

[27] SoL (2020, March 8). 8 Mart Feminist Gece Yürüyüşü'ne polis saldırdı. Accessed December 25, 2020, https://haber.sol.org.tr/toplum/8-mart-feminist-gece-yuruyusune-polis-saldirdi-282163.

interviewees that feminists were anti-family; that they were puppets of the West or the Church; that they wanted to keep women in a subordinated position to get funds. In addition, there was a strong belief that feminists were collaborating with HDP, the opposition party that interviewees (and the government) perceived as traitor. As a feminist, I was aware of the "notoriety" of feminists among the majority in Turkey and that it had escalated by political discourse. To be honest, I did not expect to hear "conspiracy theories" about feminists but I avoided pushing these claims (misbeliefs to me) for I deeply wanted to understand their perspectives.

Gurney (1985), in her paper that focuses on the dilemmas experienced by female researchers in male-dominated settings, points out that methodology textbooks tend to assume that the researcher is in powerful position whereas the researched is vulnerable. However, when it comes to women interviewing men, this assumption may be reversed, since the encounter of opposite sexes in the field inevitably means the encounter of gender role performances. Furthermore, Gurney divided gender-related difficulties that women researchers have experienced into two categories: sexual hustling and sexist treatment. Sexual hustling varies "from flirtatious behavior and sexually suggestive remarks to overt sexual propositioning" whereas "sexist treatment involves statements or actions which place women researcher in an inferior or devalued position" (Gurney, 1985: 46). Similarly, Arendell (1997), in her interviewing process with divorced fathers, made a comparison with her experiences in a former research process with divorced mothers, and observed that men acted in a sexist manner from attempting to direct her how she should ask research questions to where she should put her recorder.

In my experience, alimony debates as a research field is full of sexist treatments and claims against women. I cannot say that I had an authority, for instance, in terms of asking my questions, during the interviews with men. My first and most clear observation is that divorced men tended to perceive me as an audience rather than a participant in the interview. For example, they often interrupted me when I tried to ask questions, or they corrected my questions or avoided answering the question and turned to their own "cause". Even though alimony opponents based their limitation demands on gender equality, the statements I heard during the interviews generally tended to reveal a mindset subordinating women. For instance, after an interview with a divorced man in City A,

before we said goodbye to each other, he asked me what I thought about women's "selfishness" to receive alimony, and I answered as "I think the real matter here is inequality," and he said, "Okay, men and women are of course equals and men should help women at home; but on the street, a woman should walk one step behind her man." All I could do was smile.

The questions on violence against women in Turkey and how Law No. 6284 offers protection to women revealed quite interesting examples. For example, in City B, during the interview with three divorced men, what one interviewee said was quite striking to me: "Nobody can stop a man who is determined to kill a woman. I am able to choke you here easily, I can do it, but I won't, because I am a good man." The other two interviewees agreed with him and explained that the reason why they did not beat or kill their ex-wives is that they were good men (though they had stories of violence in their marriage, but they did not see those incidents as "violence".) I was aware that he wanted to strengthen his narrative, however, what made this example possible is that I was a woman. This kind of expressions showed me how easy it was to talk about beating, killing, "choking" a woman for a man whereas it is a horrific reality to any woman who hears these words from a man.

Narratives about divorced men's thoughts and experiences about Law No. 6284 mostly led them to set examples through me. When we were talking about how a legal regulation aiming to prevent violence against women may have misused by women and damaged men, one interviewee residing in City A said "For instance, we are now sitting here, and you misunderstand something I say. If you called the police and told them Hasan insulted me, my life would be over because of this violence against woman." Similarly, another interviewee during our interview in Istanbul said, "I was so worried about coming here when I found out that you were a woman. That is why I did not come alone. I came with other victims. Because if you made a complaint about me saying that I harassed you, because of Law No. 6284, I would have to grapple with legal difficulties."

During these interviews, on the one hand, I felt that they did not trust me just because I was a woman; on the other hand, I wondered if these "fears" were a strategy to build male self-victimization as they presented themselves as vulnerable subjects who could be exposed to slander by any woman at any moment. Of course, I was not exempt from this sexist perception of woman as being self-seeker, maligner, or subordinate. When I heard this kind of statements, I did not explain that Law No. 6284 did not work in that way, that it did not lead you to prison straight away, that I was not there to accuse

them of harassment as long as they did not harass me. All I could do was to tolerate to continue my research. Gurney's description of her own experiences gave me a fine expression of my feelings: "I often wished I were a more militant feminist who could lecture the staff on their chauvinism and insensitivity and change their attitudes toward women. Instead, I was always the polite and courteous researcher who tolerated much and said little. I occasionally wondered if I was betraying my beliefs and values, but I allowed it to continue" (Gurney, 1985: 56).

One interview with four men and one woman in City A provided a fruitful area of observation how gender inequality worked among alimony opponents. Melek was interrupted and corrected so many times that, at some point, I had to emphasize that I was listening to her. Melek's story was quite interesting when considered that she was an alimony opponent. She was abandoned by her ex-husband with her 8-month-old child, and he threatened her, saying that she should not ask for alimony. He did not even pay the little amount of child support for a while. She could not get remarried even though she wanted to because nobody accepted her with her child. So, I did not understand the motivation of Melek supporting alimony opponents. She implied that she found the Platform when she was searching "divorced people" on Facebook. I heard from various opponents that some people reached them to meet someone and start a new family, her motivation reminded me of this. But Melek did not say it openly so I avoid speculating. As Melek was narrating her story, especially two other men, who defined themselves as the founder of their platform, interrupted her a lot and Melek did not resist. When I asked her "What do you think about men who do not pay their child support?" she looked at that other two interviewees, then she asked, "What do I think?" And men took the control of interview again.

Social reality is incompatible with research process. Inequalities based on gender, class, ethnicity, or sexuality run in everyday lives of the researcher and the researched, and these may be reproduced during the research process. Moreover, while gender hierarchies may appear between the researcher and the researched, the researcher may reproduce traditional gender roles. Berik (1996) shares her experiences on how she had to reproduce gender norms during her fieldwork with women carpet weavers in rural Turkey. She narrates how her husband or father accompanied her during the fieldwork, how often she emphasized her identities as a wife and/or daughter of someone, how she did not, on purpose, take the route through where coffeehouses (*kahvehane*) located on her visits to women weavers, and how she used these strategies to reach women (Berik,

1996: 61). She recalls how uncomfortable she felt because she "adhered to rules of conduct appropriate for rural women" and she could not adopt "a feminist manner" for the viability of her research, how she thus "helped to perpetuate hierarchical gender structures." (Berik, 1996: 57) Even though I conducted my research all alone, without a man accompanying me, I felt a similar dilemma about negotiating my identity in the field. First of all, I deactived my social media accounts so as to hide my feminist identity because my interviewees openly defined themselves as anti-feminists, and I wanted to seem "ordinary" to them. Secondly, even though I went to the meetings alone, I needed to emphasize that I was "engaged" (while I was not) or was the "daughter" of someone, or that I lived with my family in Istanbul (while I was living alone).

From being very careful in choosing public spaces for interviews to deal with sexist, even misogynist, comments during the interviews, the fact that I was a young, single woman living in Turkey, a patriarchal country, had reminded me by my interviewees, by my friends and family, and to be honest, by myself. The one reason why I heard the warning "Be careful!" a lot was that male interviewees of my research were men who were presented as being against women's rights, let alone complete strangers. I did not hear any warnings before I went to interview women no matter that they are alimony supporters or alimony opponents. The rising social violence against women, the rising numbers of femicides, lived experiences, and the inequality that women experience just because they are women in their everyday lives created these worried warnings and questions. This was a shared feeling even though it was not openly said. When I travelled to City B to interview three divorced men, I heard the question "Are you sure?" from four different women, including my mother. When I got there, one interviewee picked me up, and on the way, I talked to my boyfriend (I said that he was my fiancée) and my mother on the phone. It was actually a "private show" to ensure that I was not all alone, and there was someone who knew I was there. The possibility of "being in danger" is not about the characters of my interviewees at all, it did not mean they were dangerous people, it was just a precaution deriving from the prejudice caused by the sex-segregated society, and to be honest, these precautions made me feel more secure (Gurney, 1985).

As last words in this subsection, I would like to share the devastating feelings I had on my way home at the end of a day I interviewed two women. The women were living far from where I lived. The commute to their neighborhood would take almost 3 hours, so I took the bus in the early hours of that morning to meet them. On that busy day, when the time came to go home, it had already got dark. While I waited for the bus to

depart, I was texting with a friend. She warned me to be careful because it was dark, and she kept checking whether I was okay until I got home. I sent her my location on WhatsApp, so she could track where I was. I spent the whole day listening to women who experienced marriages filled with every form of violence, who were threatened, beaten, violently attacked because they wanted to divorce, who were left alone by the state, society, their families to find a way out from poverty and violence, simply because they were women. Then, on my way back to home, as a young woman, I was scared because it was dark. I went through all the possibilities, good and bad, in my mind. I made different plans for different scenarios. I checked whether my pepper gas was somewhere I could reach easily. I counted how many women there were in the bus, because other women's presence made me feel more secure. I know that I am not the only woman who does these things at once. I take these precautions whenever I am out at a late hour. It was ten minutes after the departure, I suddenly realized that a small part of the route going back home was the route of the minibus that Özgecan Aslan, a 20-year-old young woman, got on before she was sexually assaulted and brutally murdered by the minibus driver. This truth was such a slap in my face that I cried with a deep anger, desperation, and fear all along the way. That anger and fear may have crystallized on that evening, but I carry them with me every day. After that evening, after that bus ride that felt endless because of the rush of devastating emotions, I will always wonder, in Turkey where male violence killed at least four women a day, who knows which road we passed was the last road a woman passed for the last time before she was murdered. Constantly thinking of ways to protect ourselves against any possible violent act that may come from any man (not only known men, but also strangers) in the street is part of our lives as women because of our former experiences or the knowledge of male violence against other women that is endemic in Turkey. This experience and realization clearly indicates that male violence works as a continuum and affect women's lives from private spaces, homes and families, to public spaces and streets (Kelly, 1987).

1.3.3 Some Questions Left Unanswered and Productivity of Difference

Oakley's (1981) highly acclaimed article on interviewing women criticizes traditional criteria in methodology textbooks through her own interviewing experiences with women expecting children. She states that her interviews involved reciprocity

between herself and her interviewees, that is, not only she did ask questions of them, but they asked questions too. Traditional methodology textbooks suggest the interviewer to avoid the temptation to express his/her own views, even if given opportunity, since it creates a bias. She points out that "the paradigm of a 'proper' interview appeals to such values as objectivity, detachment, hierarchy, and 'science' as an important cultural activity which takes priority over people's more individualized concerns. Thus, the errors of poor interviewing compromise subjectivity, involvement, the 'fiction' of equality, and an undue concern with the ways in which people are not statistically comparable" (Oakley, 1981: 36). She defines this as the "proper" way to interview within "predominantly model of sociology and society" (p.31).

Before I started to conduct interviews, I was open to answering questions and, if asked, sharing my own experiences and opinions, and giving feedback to the responses, as Oakley suggests and because I intended to adhere to feminist principles on the democratization of interviewing process. However, it did not work in that way at the beginning. Alimony debates as a research field is deeply influenced by the political polarization in Turkey between right and left, men and women, secular and religious, and so on. Because of the sharp distinctions between alimony supporters and alimony opponents, what you say about whether alimony must be removed or not may become an implication of your political stance. As a researcher embracing feminist mindset, I knew "difference" and "detachment" might have marked interviewing process especially with divorced men. Regardless of whether they were female alimony opponents or pro-alimony divorced women, the shared and lived experiences of women arising from just being a woman was still helpful to generate the kind of empathic understanding that feminists seek. To answer questions directed to me about my opinion on the topic had not been that much easy because of my concern to maintain my research and to establish a comfortable way of interviewing.

In the case of interviews with alimony opponents, I was asked which side I took; or to express my opinion when there were some descriptions about the distinction between good women (described as those who take care of their family; find a job after divorce to feed their children, regardless of their education-level; are self-sacrificing and contented; do not "abuse" the relevant laws as asking for alimony or filing for a restraining order against their husbands) and bad women (referring to those who do not take care of their family; indulge themselves while their husbands try to make both ends meet; cannot tolerate their husbands; are impatient, self-seeker, vengeful, and so on). How I viewed

social reality in everyday life was feminist and, inevitably, when I answered questions of the interviewees that would be from a feminist perspective and I knew that they would not like my answer. Therefore, I preferred to focus on the interviewee instead of myself and follow the traditional methodology textbooks, pretend not to have opinions, during the first interview: "Your opinions are more important than mine", "I will tell you my opinion after we finish the interview", "I am here only to understand, not to judge." As Oakley explains in her piece, traditional methodology textbooks suggest this way of behavior to avoid "biasing" interview (Oakley, 1981: 36). However, Oakley claims that this way of interaction during interviews is counterproductive, and I would come to realize that she was right. My interviews were intended to be semi-structured, so many other questions arose during the first interview. However, my questions that I developed according to the interviewee's answers were inevitably from a feminist perspective and that led the interview to be more productive in terms of understanding how the male interviewee constituted his masculinity, gender role, and how he approached to violence against women. In other words, when I challenged myself to avoid following the traditional methodology textbooks, the interviewee started to share his own story and ideas, leaving the propaganda of BİAP aside.

Alimony opponents tended to behave as speaking to an audience rather than being a participant in an interview. However, another benefit of asking challenging questions from a feminist perspective broke this way of interviewing relations because the interviewees left shared declarations of BİAP and SNM aside and focused on their own experiences. I observed that they wanted to defend themselves, as a result, they expressed their own ideas rather than their platforms'.

In terms of answering the questions asked back to me, I was more comfortable with female interviewees no matter if they were alimony opponents or not. A similar turn appeared in interviewing women: The more I asked questions and made comments from feminist perspective, the more they abandoned narratives that were identical to BİAP's social media accounts and started to focus on their own life stories. In this way, I learned more about their struggles, strategies, solutions, and collaborations in a male-dominated society and culture.

When I went to City B to interview three divorced men, I was asked again which side I took at the end of the interview, and this time, I was honest: "As long as the state does not provide necessary conditions for women's empowerment, I think the implementation must be in this way." I was worried to get negative reactions, but it did not happen. When

I revealed my opinion, only one interviewee said, "Don't hold your breath" (*"Ölme eşeğim ölme"*) and that's all. As I preferred criticism and disagreement over empathy, approval, and acceptance, this developed an intersubjective understanding of "extra-feminist" worlds as Campbell (2003) experienced in her fieldwork with senior police officers. The questions, comments, and feedbacks from a feminist perspective paved the way for alimony opponents to, for example, abandon giving answers that were almost identical to other members' answers to my questions on their motivations for being alimony opponent. For female alimony opponents, the advocation of men's right to not pay alimony, or the assumptions that other women misuse Law No. 6284 to punish their ex-husbands gave way to share their own life stories and how they experienced gender inequality in the society. As I elaborated later in this chapter, women's sharing of their experiences did not come from a "feminist awareness", however, this way of interviewing provided a broader context to analyze the interviewees' motivations for being alimony opponents, how they constructed their gender roles in the society, and, in the case of divorced men, how they, "individually and collectively, construct and maintain relations of oppression" (Stanley & Wise, 1990; cited in Campbell, 2003).

In other respects, as I interviewed divorced women, I had a whole different experience, and followed Oakley's suggestions in the nature of things. During the interviews, I easily developed empathy and frequently remembered my own experiences as a child of a divorced woman and my mother's struggles that I witnessed. I should admit that sometimes I lost control and cried with my interviewees. Even though I worried about my emotional reactions affecting the course of the interview, it only led to friendship. I realized that I felt in control when asking questions, that I knew the right question to ask to have a better understanding of women's experiences. This was a feeling I could not have with the alimony opponents, because of the feeling that I was perceived as if an audience, rather than a participant in a conversation. Besides, the interviews that I conducted with alimony opponents were group interviews. Therefore, there were various answers coming from various interviewees at the same time, sometimes, I felt disorientated in asking the next question related to their answers. As another difference between interviews with divorced men and divorced women, women did not interrupt me as I asked my questions whereas men mostly tended to do so. I spent the whole two days at workplace of five women interviewees. We had breakfast and lunch together. We shared our personal stories. They asked questions about my research, life, and family, and I answered them honestly without any concern. Women did not try to convince me about

their righteousness, in contrast to alimony opponents, maybe because they did not know about alimony debates very well. Some women asked me questions about their legal rights, and I informed them as much as I could.

*1.4 **Limitations***

The difficulty in accessing the ex-wives and subsequent wives of divorced men posed a significant limitation to this research. Divorced men preferred not to share contact information of their ex-wives. Only one of them allowed me to interview his subsequent wife, but we could not manage to name a day that suits both of us. Therefore, I could not examine narratives of women alimony opponents as deeply as divorced men's narratives.

Another limitation of the study is that it may not be statistically representative of divorced men/fathers given that it only included alimony opponents who are members of *Divorced People and Family Platform* and/or *Indefinite Alimony Victims*. Since they shared other men's stories during interviews, and since I have access to what alimony opponents share on social media platform, generalizations within this research regarding motives, justifications, and workings of male self-victimization refer to alimony opponents. Moreover, since divorced men avoid sharing their monthly income and assets, the data has no transparency which could be considered as a weakness of the study.

*1.5 **Organization of the Chapters***

This research is divided into five main chapters. The second chapter mainly proposes that alimony is a result of gender inequality between women and men in social, economic, and familial relations in relation to patriarchal values in the Turkish context. It explains the politics of masculinist restoration, that is top-down and bottom-up efforts to maintain and reproduce patriarchy, since patriarchal apprehension of female subordination is not hegemonic anymore under neoliberal conditions. Hence, it argues that male self-victimization circulated in the anti-alimony discourse act as a bottom-up counterpart of the politics of masculinist restoration, and as a useful tool for the state's instrumental purposes.

To provide a broader context, the first section shows how the state's political discourse and social policies exclude women from social security system and employment as well as perceive women as primary caregivers and provider of social welfare, drawing on the literature on neoliberal restructuring of welfare regime and

neoconservative familialism in Turkey (Buğra and Yakut-Çakar, 2010; Yazıcı, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2012; Acar and Altunok, 2013; Özar and Yakut-Çakar, 2013, Lordoğlu, 2018; Öztan, 2014). It also explains the legal, discursive, and institutional changes in gender and family politics of AKP governments since 2002 positioning marriage, gender equality, procreation, and divorce as major concerns. This section includes the accounts of feminist lawyers and activists who witnessed this transformation firsthand.

The second section focuses on historical evolution of alimony regulation in the Turkish Civil Code through legal documents, including the Civil Code, and parliamentary minutes in which alimony is discussed. It examines two official researches, namely Research on Reasons for Divorce in Türkiye (TBNA 2014) and the Commission of Marital Breakdown Report in order to analyze the dramatic change in the approach of the government towards divorce and alimony in these reports. It also discusses the official emergence of alimony debates and presents various supports to anti-alimony campaign. Finally, the last section explores reactions to alimony debates from women's organizations and bar associations.

Based on the data I collected during my fieldwork, I divided the third chapter into four sections. The first section introduces two anti-alimony groups –BİAP and SNM– and explains their emergence, mobilization, demands, and political stance through their members' accounts. It explores how anti-alimony campaign can be considered a men's rights movement (Messner, 1997) in Turkey. It also briefly examines common components in the formation of "male victim" figure.

The second section presents the accounts of divorced men and female allies in anti-alimony groups in terms of their economic, social, and emotional experiences in marriage and divorce. Utilizing studies on men and masculinities and feminist literature on marriage, male dominance, and divorce, it analyzes the accounts of divorced men in terms of their perception of marital roles, ideal manhood, the difference between being married and being divorced in the eyes of Turkish society in relation to socially privileged status of the head of family. It also discloses men's experiences in divorce process and their protests on alimony, child support, compensation, and marital property distribution.

The third section deals with how women become a part of male self-victimization through the comparison between "this woman" and "that woman" that frequently appeared in the interviews with anti-alimony campaigners. This distinction that alimony opponents made mainly refers to positioning of women: women who defend men's rights and those who do not; women who are members of men's natal or established family and

those who are not; women who want to get involved with the family of divorced and alimony-paying men and those who do not want to. This section also discusses female supporters' participation in reproduction of patriarchal values and male dominance through discourse and daily practices.

The last section elaborates the alimony opponents' opinions about Law No. 6284, and their perception of violence against women and femicides. It analyzes the accounts drawing on the literature on male violence. It discusses how male self-victimization works as a justification tool for violence against women, and how violence and femicides almost turn into a threat to women in the anti-alimony discourse.

The fourth chapter presents divorced women's accounts on their experiences in marriage and divorce. The main aim of this chapter is to include women's voices into the debates, because the lack of women's experiences and struggles is a significant characteristic of alimony debates. Even though we have heard some women's stories thanks to the efforts of women's rights organizations and media outlets supporting women's rights, there is still a need for inclusion of more women's experiences. The analysis of women's stories from decision of marriage to life after divorce aims to demonstrate how male domination plays a role in women's lives and to what extent they contribute to this domination.

I divided the fourth chapter into five sections based on certain themes that frequently appeared in women's accounts. The first section discloses determinant conditions, motivations, and familial or external factors leading women to make the decision to marry. The struggles that women experience for reconciliation of paid and unpaid work are significant in terms of understanding why women are adjudged to receive alimony in most of the cases. Therefore, the first sections includes women's struggles and strategies to deal with inequalities in social, economic, and familial relations.

The second section presents how male violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, and economic violence, leaves a deep mark on women's lives in marriage, divorce, and post-divorce processes. This section also discusses the ineffectiveness and insensitivity of the law enforcers in regard to violence against women.

The third section scrutinizes women's experiences during the divorce process and their problems related to alimony, compensation, child support, child custody, and marital property distribution.

The fourth section explores women's lives after divorce in terms of social and economic pressures as well as continuity of conflicts between ex-spouses about alimony, child support, and child custody. It also focuses on women's struggles for concrete consequences of divorce–housing, employment, childcare, and security problems–and emotional consequences after divorce. The last section of the fourth chapter is about women's knowledge on alimony debates, and their comments on male self-victimization.

The conclusive chapter summarizes the main chapters of this research. It makes an overall analysis of how patriarchal values that are intrinsic to laws, norms, policies, and economic and social relations in the Turkish context perceive women as primary caregivers, exclude women from employment, and cause female poverty, resulting in women being the spouse who are adjudged as alimony claimants in divorce. Also, it analyzes how anti-alimony groups in terms of how they have become the drivers of neoliberal rationality and neoconservative familialism as bottom-up counterparts of top-down efforts in the politics of masculinist restoration.

Chapter 2:

"THE WHOLE PROBLEM OF PATRIARCHY": THE RIGHT TO ALIMONY IN THE CONTEXT OF MASCULINIST RESTORATION POLITICS

"When you address alimony just as alimony, it is like the description of an elephant by a blind person. Alimony is only a part of the whole problem of patriarchy." Ayşe, who is a feminist lawyer for more than 50 years, expressed these as final statements at the end of our two-and-a-half-hour meeting at her home in City A. Indeed, the interviews with lawyers —feminist or not— divorced women, and alimony opponents were accounts of women's status in the eyes of patriarchal state and society. Alimony was only a small part of these accounts. Male violence against women, femicides, women's limited access to education and employment, marriage at young age, anti-egalitarian, familialist and pronatalist political discourse, lack of care services dominated the interviews. Therefore, grasping the characteristics of alimony debates is not separate from "the whole problem of patriarchy".

Many studies in social sciences have already noted how patriarchy is intrinsic to norms, laws and policies, economic and social relations and how modern states' role in

administering gendered bodies, as well as their reproductive and sexual capacities, is significant and undeniable (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Walby, 1989; Orloff, 1993; Acar and Altunok, 2013; Özar and Yakut-Çakar, 2013; Lordoğlu, 2018, Kandiyoti, 2016, 2019). According to Walby (1989), patriarchy is a system composed of various social relations and the state is one of these patriarchal structures. The state affects gender relations not because of its capitalist nature, but its patriarchal nature (Walby, 1989; cited in Lordoğlu, 2018: 65). Connell (2006) defines "gender order" as a spate of principles, values, norms, and political frameworks which constitute and affect gender relations in a society at a given time in history. Gender-related interactions within certain institutions, such as family, state, education, or military, construct the "gender order".

Connell (1987) argues that there is not a singular masculinity or femininity. Instead, there are diverse and competing masculinities at any given historical moment. To explain unbalanced structure of the gender order and power relations, Connell proposes the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" which has provided an important basis for discussion in the literature of critical studies on men and masculinities. Connell borrows the concept of hegemony from Gramsci's analyses of class relations in Italy and states that "hegemonic masculinity" means "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (Connell, 1987: 184). Hegemonic masculinity is embedded in mass media content, social policies, wage structures, and religious doctrine and practice. In this sense, certain institutions such as the state, laws, companies, the family unit, and military constantly reproduce hegemonic masculinity. While the state's role in reproducing and regulating hegemonic masculinity and gender relations is undeniable, oppositional forces hold the potential to resist or transform the relations between the state and gender relations, which are inherently articulations of dynamic, multiple, and historically determined power relations (Acar and Altunok, 2013: 15). As private domain plays a significant role in producing, reproducing, and controlling womanhood particularly (Yuval-Davis, 1997), understanding masculinity in the context of labor relations and oppressive gender relations is important (Connell 1987, 1990, 1995).

The large-scale transformations in social conditions such as changes in work and family life due to urbanization, modernization, industrialization, or the rise of organized feminist movements create breaks in gender order. Men who hold (or at least *trying* to hold) hegemonic masculine ideals may perceive this as a threat to the meaning of hegemonic masculinity and men's positions of power relative to women and lower-class

men, and this is called "masculinity crisis". Kandiyoti (2014) indicates these large-scale transformations, stating that, under neoliberal conditions, the soaring rates of male unemployment and increasing precarious forms of employment coincide with women's public visibility and ambitions that are at their height. Moreover, as most states have foregone "their paternalistic functions of provision of public goods and welfare" (Kandiyoti, 2014), they seek mostly neoconservative ideological means to support their legitimacy, promoting familialism, nationalism, religiosity, or patriotism (Acar and Altunok, 2015). At the domestic level, the male provider as "the head of the family" that constitutes one of the fundamentals of male privilege is under pressure. Patriarchal apprehension of female subordination is not hegemonic anymore. This conflict between women's rising ambitions and determined male backlash creates a strong crisis in the gender order. Therefore, a new politics of masculinist restoration have emerged to maintain and reproduce patriarchy. Kandiyoti (2014) defines masculinist restoration as "a politics that requires systematic indoctrination (Islamic, nationalistic or mixtures of both), greater surveillance and higher levels of intrusion in citizens' lives". Kandiyoti (2020) points the significant indications marking masculinist restoration that the changing forms of violence that spread from private space to public space[28], the law enforcers' deliberate ineffectiveness and unresponsiveness to prevent it, and social policies and political discourse that "put the woman in her place" as mothers, wives, and obedient individuals adopted by the government and Religious Affairs. She clearly notes that the politics of masculinist restoration is not only a top-down phenomenon that the state apparatuses set to work for its own instrumental purposes, but also it has its bottom-up support groups such as men protesting their "victimization" derived from women's so-called excessive rights. Kandiyoti also notes that gender division is not enough to explain or understand these schisms or dichotomies, as traditional vs. modern or

[28] In a podcast with Alev Özkazanç, Kandiyoti indicates "the indicent of Ayşegül Terzi" as an example to explain new forms of violence that she defined as "social violence". A stranger man attacked Ayşegül Terzi in public transportation because she wore shorts. Kandiyoti interprets this as a reflection of the state's efforts in political discourse and familialist social policies to "put the woman in her place" as a part of family, a mother, a wife instead of free, equal, and demanding individuals. For the podcast: Kandiyoti, D. (Host). (2020, February 26). Deniz Kandiyoti ile Söyleşi -1: Erkek şiddetinin yeni biçimleri, AKP ve Diyanet'in tutmayan aile politikaları [Audio podcast episode]. In *Alev Özkazanç – Arka Pencere*. kısa dalga. Accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.kisadalga.net/podcast/detay/deniz-kandiyoti-ile-soylesi-1-eril-restorasyon-ve-toplumsal-cinsiyet-krizinin-keskinlesmesi_307. For the newspaper report about the male violence against Ayşegül Terzi in a public transportation and her legal lawsuit process: CNN Türk (2018, November 11). Ayşegül Terzi'ye otobüste saldıran kişi hakkında istinaf kararı çıktı. Accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/aysegul-terziye-otobuste-saldiran-kisi-hakkinda-istinaf-karari-cikti.

religious vs. secular, because there are both women and men on opposite sides of these debates (Kandiyoti, 2020).

In the case of anti-alimony groups including both men and women, standing among prominent examples of these counterparts, the coalition of top-down and bottom-up masculinist restoration manifests itself clearly. On the one hand, anti-alimony groups formed their demands and protests based on how women's supposedly excessive rights are a threat to family, and how their socially privileged status as the head of the family is under pressure because of alimony regulation and Law No. 6284. Their discourse, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, implies a yearning for traditional family structure. On the other hand, the government's political discourse and social policies towards gender equality, family, and "women's rightful place" influence anti-alimony discourse, and the government shapes its policies according to demands of anti-women's rights groups. These attacks to women's rights and gender equality can be considered as economic and psychological violence against women, because limiting or eliminating alimony may cause to discourage them from ending their marriage involving various forms of violence or due to economic reasons. Moreover, any interference to Law No. 6284 and the Istanbul Convention would preclude the most effective legal methods to combat violence against women and gender inequality. Due to misinformative and provocative news on media outlets portraying the woman who receives alimony in a way to show that she is violating her ex-husband's and his new family's rights in many ways, and that she lives an immoral life or work informally to keep receiving alimony, a collective rage against women who want to divorce and receive alimony has been increasing on social media and conventional media.[29]

In the light of this information, this chapter explores the characteristics of alimony debates, aiming to shed light on how the contents of alimony debates are part of the

[29] The newspaper report titled "She asked for alimony increase and came to the court with her fiancée!" that circulated on social media and conventional media in 2018 was one of the most striking examples of how the media creates the image of "immoral woman" and the aggressive attitude towards divorced women who receive alimony in general. According to the report, the woman's ex-husband shared that his ex-wife told him "Raise the alimony, we cannot get married." However, during the interview with feminist lawyer Hale, she said that the woman who went to the court with her fiancée actually asked for raise in child support. But this fact remained as a "detail" that one could learn only when one intended to learn the truth about this news. Apparently, most people were not interested in the truth and tended to believe without questioning. The misogyny rooted in patriarchal Turkish society must have catalyzed this way of approach. For the relevant newspaper report: Haber Türk (2018, September 14). "Nafaka artırımı istedi, duruşmaya nişanlısıyla geldi!" Accessed June 1, 2019. http://www.sanalbasin.com/mobil/duvardibi-sayi-23-nafaka-30967633.

"masculinist restoration", and how alimony is *the result* of gender inequality produced and reproduced by the gender order in state policies and the society, rather than *the reason* behind gender inequality. In the first section, it discloses gender equality, women's rights in economic, political, and familial relations in the context of neoliberal restructuring of highly gendered welfare regime (Buğra and Yakut-Çakar, 2010) in connection with neoconservative familialism. In line with this, it explains the gender politics of the AKP governments with an emphasis on how AKP has discursively established marriage, procreation, and divorce as major concerns when addressing women as its primary audience (Öztan, 2014). The second section focuses on historical evolution of alimony in the Turkish Civil Code through legal documents, including the Civil Code, parliamentary minutes in which amendment in alimony regulation in 1988 is discussed, and two official research reports on marriage and divorce in Turkey. Finally, it explains reactions to alimony debates from women's organizations and bar associations. To demonstrate the background of political and social realm is essential to grasp the characteristics of alimony debates and "alimony victims", and to illustrate how this male self-victimization act as a significant tool for bottom-up masculine restoration as well as how cross-party and cross-class alliances among men "when the question of curtailing women's rights or blocking reformist moves entailing their expansion are on the agenda" (Kandiyoti, 2014).

The discussion of alimony debates in this historical, social, and political context demonstrates the state's contribution to the woman's poverty in marriage and divorce and increasing conservatism towards the woman's role as primary caregiver through political discourse and familialist social policies, and its effects on society in return. Furthermore, in the context of alimony debates, the state's affirmative response to men protesting their victimization due to women's so-called excessive rights and its insistence on exclusion of women's rights organizations from the process of decision-making on any proposed amendments in the existing regulation clearly show how the state appeal to male self-victimization in order to serve its instrumental goals.

2.1 Women's Economic Dependency in the Context of Neoliberal Welfare and Neoconservative Familialism

Starnes (2014) defines the history of alimony as part of "a larger story of gender roles within the family, a story with roots in the ideology of separate spheres, the notion that women are better suited for the private sphere of home and hearth and men for the

public sphere of the market place" (p. 15). In such economic conditions when one salary is not enough to maintain a household or when retirement provisions get worse, marital property distribution has become a useless tool because divorcing couples have few assets or not at all. Thus, income sharing, i.e., alimony, has often become the only useful economic support for primary caretaker in divorce cases in which divorcing couples have disparate earning capacities due to gendered marital roles. But what is the rationale for alimony? Why should anyone have to share their income with a former spouse? This is one of the burning questions of alimony debates.

Starnes remarks that in the past, the answer to this question was the husband's lifetime obligation to economically support his wife at marriage, and alimony was the judicial tool for enforcement of this obligation when the spouses separated. In the contemporary context, one pragmatic justification for alimony is that "alimony protects the state from the job of supporting a divorced spouse who, without alimony, would be thrust into poverty" (Starnes, 2011: 271) To be "in need" is the most determinant criterion to be judged as "alimony creditor" and in most cases, not only in Turkey but also in other parts of the world, alimony creditors are women. In other words, those "who face a decline in standard of living short of poverty" in the wake of divorce are women. From a feminist perspective, considering the man's power of decision derived from the privileged status of the head of the family as money holder (Sancar, 2013), it may be argued that alimony is a way to continue the husband's control over the wife after divorce and the state's withdrawal from its responsibility for the woman's poverty through its gendered policies that position the woman in private sphere as primary caregiver, and the man as primary provider in family relations.

Family relations have a critical role in organization of unpaid care work and responsibilities as well as analysis of relationship between private and public spheres. These relations are directly related to paid work and employment, hence to welfare regimes. The common claim is that the emergence of modern welfare states is a transition from "private" to "public" patriarchy (Orloff, 1993). Welfare regimes constitute gender hierarchy through gendered division of labor, with men responsible for families' economic maintenance and women responsible for caring and domestic labor; the family wage system; the exclusion of women from the paid labor force or from favored positions within; and traditional marriage. Women's unpaid caring/domestic labor on behalf of societal welfare has a key role for the sustainability of the welfare regime. Esping-Andersen's (1990) well-known three-world typology–liberal, conservative-corporatist,

and social democratic (Nordic)–has been criticized as being gender-blind, because it commonly takes class as a unit of analysis excluding how gender relations and welfare states mutually influence each other (Orloff, 1993; Lewis, 1992). Ferrera (1996) added a fourth regime type in Esping-Andersen's typology: Southern European welfare regimes. He originally included Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal in this type. Grütjen (2008) points that Turkey can be included in this category because of the family's important role in providing social services as well as the perception of marriage as the real social security mechanism for women due to the dependency of wives and daughters on the husbands and fathers if they do not work (Grütjen 2008: cited in Ermiş-Mert, 2018). Gal (2010) suggests the concept of extended family in Southern European welfare states (Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, Malta, Israel, and Turkey). Alongside with the centrality of family and clientelism, the religion has an influence on the formation of welfare regime. Even though Turkey differs from the other countries by virtue of not being a European Union (EU) member and the mainstream religion being Islam, Grütjen (2008) underlines that Turkey is still a part of Southern European regimes because of the family's role as a fundamental institution of welfare, and of the lack of emphasis on civil society (Grütjen, 2008; cited in Ermiş-Mert, 2018).

In Turkey, a historical basis shaped by values and traditions that prioritize family and religion determines the role of women in society and work life (Buğra and Özkan, 2012: 19). Arat's study (2009) focusing on political party programs between 1923 and 2007 shows that political parties have tended to accept the family institution as sacred and avoided from criticizing it (Arat, 2009: cited in Öztan, 2014). The modern family model introduced by the reformists in the early Republican period was composed of male breadwinner and modern, educated, and devoted housewife (Sancar, 2012; Arat, 1997). Eventually the family model based on male breadwinner formed the basis of formal social security system of 1940s: This corporatist system defined women as dependents of their male relatives in accessing health, old age, and orphan/widow benefits (Buğra and Özkan, 2014), rather than a fundamental component of labor force. Since the 1980s, spatial transformations associated with Turkey's process of integration into global economy have led to an erosion of the informal qualities of the welfare regime, including the convenience provided by the extended family in the care labor. The disengagement of women from the agricultural workforce did not turn into an increase in female participation, particularly among married women, in the urban workforce, and a process of housewifery occurred. Buğra and Keyder (2003, 2006), therefore, remark that

women's unpaid work within nuclear family and conservative familialist dimension of welfare has become crucial in the process of neoliberal transformation.

The neoliberal restructuring of welfare and employment with an emphasis on the importance of family for the state in Turkey has been a popular topic for social scientists. A good number of researchers (Buğra and Yakut-Çakar, 2010; Yazıcı, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2012; Acar and Altunok, 2013; Özar and Yakut-Çakar, 2013, Lordoğlu, 2018) have pointed to the consolidation of the dependent status of women, informed by women's perceived role as primary caregivers, in tandem with neoliberal restructuring of welfare and employment, and neoconservative familialism. Familialism, used with a pejorative connotation, refers to a view of family as "a pre-modern patriarchal institution where men exercised a discretionary power over family members" (Moreno, 2002: 2). Öztan (2014) notes that familialism implies a system of ideology and values in which normative family patterns are central; as an ideology, it involves not only normalization of marriage, marginalization of divorce, gender-based division of labor, and certain reproduction behaviors, but also justification of specific political frameworks such as organization of welfare. Familialism involves practical and material dynamics as well as cultural construction and intervention processes in which religious, conservative, moral, national, and modern norms intertwine with neoliberal rationalities (Öztan, 2014: 177-178).

Even though familialism has been one of the most prominent characteristics of politics in Turkey, family came to the forefront on both ideological and institutional levels ever since AKP first came to power in 2002. Familialism, for AKP governments, is primarily important in terms of legitimizing their political power. The family is important for AKP not only for socio-economic reasons, but also for being an ideological legitimization tool based on moral and religious values (Öztan, 2014). The discussion of legal, political, and institutional transformation towards gender equality and family under AKP governments, drawing on sociological and anthropological researches on neoliberal restructuring of welfare regime and employment bringing along neoconservative familialism, provides the broader context for demonstrating how divorce–adjunctly, alimony regulation–has become a social problem in the quest of "saving the family."

2.1.1 Legal, Discursive, and Institutional Transformation Towards Gender Equality, Family, and Divorce Under the AKP Governments

Following Turkey's EU candidacy, the early 2000s witnessed the introduction of a spate of progressive legislations aiming for gender equality in social, economic, and familial relations, and gender equality concerns gained visibility in policies. In this historical period, women's movement protested the existing policies and norms and formulated new policy demands (Acar and Altunok, 2012: 16). More than 120 women's NGOs across the country started a major campaign leading to a new Turkish Civil Code, ratified in November 2001. The new Civil Code abolished the concept of husband as "the head of the family"; established the equality of men and women in the conjugal union with respect to divorce, child custody, marital property; recognized women's unpaid labor in the family by equally dividing property acquired during marriage upon divorce.[30] The new Labor Law, passed in 2003, regulates the principles of equal pay for work of equal value; protection for women who are breastfeeding, pregnant, or who have recently given birth. For the first time, sexual harassment at the workplace is recognized. A three-year campaign led by women's groups between 2002 and 2004 (The Platform for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code) brought more than 40 new amendments to prevent sentence reduction for so-called honor killings and to criminalize marital rape. The article allowing the reduction or suspension of the sentence of rapists and abductors marrying their victims was abolished. The discrimination between virgins and non-virgins, married and unmarried women in sexual crimes was annulled.

Elveren (2013) argues that even though progressive legislations set the legal base for equal citizenship, the social security system with its gender-blind structure that does

[30] The wife's obligation to take permission from her husband to work regulated by Article 159 of the Civil Code was annulled by Constitutional Court decision in 1990. (29.11.1990, E. 1990/30, K. 1990/31, https://normkararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/Dosyalar/Kararlar/KararPDF/1990-31-nrm.pdf). A woman residing in İzmir worked as a folk singer by her husband's permission. When woman filed a lawsuit on the grounds that her husband abused her, her husband canceled the permission to work that he gave to her. Thereupon, the woman filed a lawsuit on April 14, 1990 on the grounds that obtaining a work permission from the court and that Article 159 which obliges husband's permission to work for the wife is against the principle of equality in the Constitution. In the petition of lawsuit, she claimed that men were privileged due to this article and that the woman was considered as a slave to the husband because of her gender. Fourth Civil Court of Peace in Izmir evaluated these arguments seriously and applied to the Constitutional Court for the annulment of Article 159 of the Civil Code. Feminists in Istanbul started a petition in August 1990. In three days, they collected 2500 signatures and sent the signed petition to the Constitutional Court on September 16, 1990. The Constitutional Court abolished Article 159 on November 29, 1990. (Çatlak Zemin (2020, August 23). 23 Ağustos 1990: Evli kadınların çalışması için koca izni kaldırılsın. Accessed April 5, 2021, https://www.catlakzemin.com/23-agustos-1990-evli-kadinlarin-calismasi-icin-koca-izni-kaldirilsin/).

not take gender inequalities in the labor market into account, "fails to create equal conditions for women, which in turn do not allow for the realization of equalizing and improving the effects these new laws have brought" (Elveren, 2013: 39). In a context in which the social security system does not provide opportunities for women to participate in formal labor force or does not prevent the so-called natural primary caregiver role of women in the private sphere, it only keeps women dependent on male members of their families by reproducing the male breadwinner model and consolidating the notion of familialism. In addition, Sancar (2013) remarks that the amendments aiming equality in Turkish Civil Code enacted in 2002 legally annulled the husband's privilege as the head of the family and power of decision derived from being money earner. But because those who have financial power are still predominantly are men, power relations have not easily changed (Sancar, 2013).

In 2011, Turkey was among the first signatories[31] of the "Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence" (Istanbul Convention) that came into effect in 2014. As part of the Convention and in the wake of efforts of women's movement, Law No. 6284 to protect family and prevent violence against women was introduced. The law was enacted to protect women, children, family members, and those who are victims of unilateral stalking and to sanction violence against people who are subjected to violence or protect those who are in danger of being subjected to violence. As these progressive legislations was introduced one after another, in the background, the growing numbers of femicides, violence against women, and harassment of women unabatedly continued. Daily reports of femicide cases and other crimes of violence shows that "perceived female disobedience and insubordination act as primary triggers" (Kandiyoti, 2019: 36). In femicides, women's demand for divorce seems to stand out as an excuse for murders. According to data of We Will Stop Femicide Platform, since 2013, 557 out of 1162 women were murdered just because they wanted to divorce: 30% in 2013; %47 in 2014; %50 in 2015; and %66 in 2016 of women were murdered just because they wanted to divorce.[32]

[31] There was a reason behind this "leading" role. In 2009, after the decision of European Court of Human Rights on the Nahide Opuz Case, Turkey became the first convicted country because of the violation of obligations to protect women from domestic violence. The decision emphasized that women are exposed to discrimination due to the ill-treatment of women who file a report about domestic violence at the police station and the passive attitude of the judicial bodies that should provide effective protection for women. The decision on Nahide Opuz Case formed the basis of the Istanbul Convention. For more details *see.* Interights (2008, October 7). Opuz v Turkey. https://www.interights.org/opuz/index.html

[32] Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu [We Will Stop Femicides Platform] (2017, May 18). Boşanmaları Değil, Kadın Cinayetlerini Durdurun. Accessed November 14, 2020,

In this context, Acar and Altunok (2013) explain that while neoliberal policies of AKP governments had led to legal regulations on violence against women and domestic violence, it is important to underline the government's policy-making strategy is gender-blind, because it does not recognize the crucial relationship between gender inequality and sex-based violence against women. While women exposed to physical violence are offered protection within the family institution, other more complex forms of violence against women such as psychological, economic, or sexual violence are not considered by the public policy agenda. In other words, women are increasingly placed within boundaries of private sphere of family institution rather than social, economic, or political equality in society.

The various twists in changing discourse and policy in the domains of gender equality and family started to manifest itself in 2010. At a meeting with women's organizations, then Prime Minister, Erdoğan declared that "I do not believe in the equality of women and men. Therefore, I prefer saying equality of opportunity. Women and men are different from each other, they are complementary".[33] In the meeting of the First Women and Justice Summit organized by the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM), an association headed by Sümeyye Erdoğan who is daughter of Erdoğan, he declared that men and women are different with their divinely ordained nature (*fitrat*), therefore, they cannot be equated. Equality between men and men, between women and women separately, is right and "what women need is not being equal but being equivalent".[34] At the opening of Women and Democracy Association (KADEM)[35] in 2015, Erdoğan said, "A woman who reject motherhood, give up looking after her home is deficient, a half-woman–no matter how she is successful at work life".[36] In the same year, he openly attacked feminists and said, "I said women are resigned to men by God. These feminists… They say, 'This is a defamation'. You [feminists] have no concern with

http://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/aciklamalar/2816/bosanmalari-degil-kadin-cinayetlerini-durdurun.

[33] Gazete Vatan (2010, July 20). Kadınla erkek eşit olamaz! Accessed November 15, 2020, http://www.gazetevatan.com/-kadinla-erkek-esit-olamaz---318006-siyaset/.

[34] BBC News Türkçe (2014, November 24). Erdoğan: Kadın-erkek eşitliği fıtrata ters. Accessed November 14, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/11/141124_kadininfitrati_erdogan.

[35] Diken (2016, June 6). Erdoğan, "kadınlığın tanımını" da yaptı: Anneliği reddeden kadın eksiktir, yarımdır. Accessed November 14, 2020, http://www.diken.com.tr/erdogan-kadinligin-tanimini-da-yapti-anneligi-reddeden-kadin-eksiktir-yarimdir/.

[36] BBC News Türkçe (2016, June 5). Erdoğan: Anneliği reddeden kadın, eksiktir, yarımdır. Accessed November 14, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2016/06/160605_erdogan_kadin.

our religion, our civilization". [37] On May 26, 2012, at a meeting of AKP's women branches in Ankara, Erdoğan announced that he considered abortion to be murder.[38] Similar declarations and a pronatalist insistence on "at least three children"[39] per woman have become regular.

Hale, a feminist lawyer and activist for more than 30 years, was one of those women who attended to the meeting in 2010 and personally witnessed Erdoğan's declaration not believing equality between men and women. We met at a café in City A, our interview lasted more than two hours. I asked her, "You have been in women's rights struggle in Turkey for a long time, what is your opinion about the starting point of this change in the discourse against women's rights leading to alimony debates today?" and she directly referred to that meeting and revealed how political discourse affected institutional change:

> Hale: He [Erdoğan] spilled the beans for the first time in that meeting at Dolmabahçe. He said that he did not believe in gender equality. He said one more thing, it is extremely important, and it is related to alimony. He said, 'Sow the kindergarten and reap the retirement house (*Kreş eken huzurevi biçer*). A conservative woman formed this sentence and Erdoğan confirmed her. After this statement, the state did not make any investment in free daycare institutions. I checked the state budget after 2010, and it was written that even if repairs are required, not even a penny would be allocated to daycare services. Then, they closed free daycare institutions one by one as well as retirement houses. This is the state policy. The relation of this with alimony is that women with child get divorced, and you do not give any of these services, and you would limit the duration of alimony. How could this woman work, who could take care of the child?

Yazıcı (2012) in her ethnographic research on the transformation of the Turkish state's social work policy within the context of welfare restructuring and neoliberalism, argues that the discursive shift to "strengthening the family" serves the transition of social protection from state to familial source and implicitly of women to primary caregivers. The state's explicit or implicit support for the male breadwinner causes to reproduction of gendered division of labor in the household. While assumed weakness of familial ties

[37] Hürriyet (2015, February 12). Erdoğan: Bu feministler filan var ya… Accessed February 10, 2020, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/erdogan-bu-feministler-filan-var-ya-28224810.

[38] Milliyet (2012, May 26). Erdoğan: Kürtaj cinayettir. Accessed November 14, 2020. https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/erdogan-kurtaj-bir-cinayettir-1545254.

[39] BirGün (2019, February 20). Erdoğan: Gençlerimize en az üç çocuk, mümkünse daha fazlasını tavsiye ediyorum. Accessed February 10, 2021, https://www.birgun.net/haber/erdogan-genclerimize-en-az-3-cocuk-mumkunse-daha-fazlasini-tavsiye-ediyorum-247686.

in “the West” is virtually insulted, the emphasis on “strong Turkish family” promotes three-generational extended family as the best agent for social protection and care of children, the elderly, and the disabled. This discourse and policy change corresponds to the social work system’s exclusion of the need of urban poor women and children, and “the reinforcement of their socio-economic marginalization” (Yazıcı, 2012: 129). Similarly, Acar and Altunok (2015) illustrate that the state withdraws itself from the role of facilitator for welfare provisions, such as education, social security, and health care services through neoliberal political rationality, resulting in a functional gap in the definition of the state. Neoconservatism comes to this functional gap’s rescue by rebuilding and reinforcing the state’s entity in the political realm through giving the state a moral mission by emphasizing discourses such as patriotism, nationalism, culture, traditions, and familialism. Altunok (2016) makes a helpful distinction between conservatism and neoconservatism pointing that neoconservatism does not aim at preserving the existing system, values, or institution but reinventing and rebuilding the social-cultural fabric in the axis of values and symbols selected from the past–sometimes even redefined. As an explicit example of this neoconservative imagination, Yazıcı (2012) notes that even though three-generational extended family as a family form is not prevalent, it is praised and even encouraged in the political discourse.

The critics of nuclear family, divorces, and promotion of extended family have increasingly gained visibility in political discourse, particularly since 2016. In the session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations, Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, Minister of Family, Work, and Social Policies, said in her speech relating to proposed amendment to the existing alimony regulation, “What we mainly desire is that there would be no divorces. Of course, divorces can happen in some cases and when these divorces occur, we are in favor of finding a solution in a way that will not harm any party”.[40] In the official discourse, introduction of time limitation to alimony payments as part of the project of “preventing divorces” and “saving family” has associated with

[40] Gazete Duvar (2019, March 14). Aile Bakanı’ndan BM’de nafaka açıklaması: Boşanmaların önüne geçmeye çalışıyoruz. Accessed November 13, 2020, https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/politika/2019/03/14/aile-bakaninda-bmda-nafaka-aciklamasi-bosanmalarin-onune-gecmeye-calisiyoruz.

"fairness"[41], "torture for one of the parties"[42], and sources of "victimizations".[43] In the 7th Family Council meeting, Erdoğan said, "Strong families constitute strong nations. We are going through a period in which marriage contract is devalued, extramarital relationships are considered normal, and divorce is virtually encouraged". At the same meeting, Erdoğan declared that "Increase in conflicts and divorce rates are a result of the loss of protection shield provided by family elders".[44] [45]

For the Istanbul Convention, in 2019, the head of government auditor Şeref Malkoç said, "When spouses quarrel, wife calls the police station and file a complaint, resulting in the husband getting suspended from the family house. This fuels anger and violence against women. It seems that we passed a legislation so that the spouses should be separated instead of reconciling".[46] In August 2020, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appealed to the same discourse and said, "No regulation that lay dynamite under family is humane and legitimate,"[47] targeting the Istanbul Convention. And he reportedly announced in a meeting that it could be "annulled" in case of public's demand.[48] Most recently, President defined Turkish society as "family-archal", rather than "patriarchal" or "matriarchal" at the meeting for "86th Anniversary of Suffrage of Women".[49] These discursive shifts brought along extensive institutional changes. In 2011, the General Directorate of

[41] Yeni Akit (2018, March 8). Mağdurlara müjde! 100 günlük icraat programında "çocuk haczi" ve "süresiz nafaka" da var. Accessed November 14, 2020, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/magdurlara-mujde-100-gunluk-icraat-programinda-cocuk-haczi-ve-suresiz-nafaka-da-var-501047.html.

[42] Independent Türkçe (2020, November 11). Adalet Bakanı Gül'den "nafaka" açıklaması. Accessed November 14, 2020, https://bit.ly/3uAbPQO.

[43] Hürriyet (2019, March 14). Aile Bakanı Selçuk'dan "nafaka" açıklaması. Accessed November 14, 2020, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/aile-bakani-selcuktan-nafaka-aciklamasi-41148757.

[44] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanlığı [The Presidency of the Republic of Turkey] (2019, May 2). 7. Aile Şûrasında Yaptığı Konuşma. Accessed November 13, 2020, https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/105228/7-aile-s-rasinda-yaptigi-konusma.

[45] For the recent data on divorce rates in Turkey *see*. Chapter 1.

[46] doğruhaber (2019, November 19). İstanbul Sözleşmesi mağdur ediyor: Tepki çok çözüm yok. Accessed November 13, 2020, https://dogruhaber.com.tr/haber/625952-istanbul-sozlesmesi-magdur-ediyor-tepki-cok-cozum-yok/.

[47] a3haber. Erdoğan, İstanbul Sözleşmesi'ni hedef aldı: "Ailenin temeline dinamit koyan hiçbir düzenleme insanı ve meşru değildir". Accessed September 12, 2020, https://www.a3haber.com/2020/08/13/erdogan-istanbul-sozlesmesini-hedef-aldi-ailenin-temeline-dinamit-koyan-hicbir-duzenleme-insani-ve-mesru-degildir/.

[48] İnternet Haber (2020, July 3). Erdoğan'dan İstanbul Sözleşmesi talimatı: "Halk istiyorsa kaldırın". Accessed November 14, 2020, https://www.internethaber.com/erdogandan-istanbul-sozlesmesi-talimati-halk-istiyorsa-kaldirin-2111953h.htm.

[49] SoL (2020, December 3). Erdoğan: Bizim milletimiz aile erkil. Accessed December 3, 2020, https://sol.org.tr/haber/erdogan-bizim-milletimiz-aile-erkil-20713.

Women's Status and Problems[50] was abolished and replaced by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies.[51]

With anti-divorce stance of the state rising as a part of the project of "strengthening the family", the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Policies announced that the Ministry would grant 10,000 TL loan to university students aged between 18-24 to encourage them for marriage in 2013.[52] This incentive called "dowry account" (*çeyiz hesabı*) was raised to 22,000 TL in 2020 and now included those who are under 18 on condition that their families' applications.[53] In addition, university students who were married were provided with dormitory opportunities.[54] Familialist and pro-natalist policies of Turkey was evaluated and criticized by GREVIO's Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of Istanbul Convention, published on October 15, 2018, evaluates the data provided by the state authorities, legal representatives, representatives of NGOs, and the state reports. In the report, GREVIO "notes the parallel tendency in current policies in Turkey to focus on strongly on strengthening the institution of family. Within the 10th Development Plan, this aim is supported by specific targets including the reduction of the divorce ratio, and the increase in the marriage ratio and in women's fertility rates. … GREVIO warn against promoting policies which look at women exclusively through the prism of marriage and motherhood or which channel a preferred societal model of a woman as a married fertile woman." The report emphasized that these policies "undermine the country's endevaours to enhance women's rights and equality, social status, autonomy, educational opportunities, equal participation in politics and public life, as well as in the labour market, and ultimately, Turkey's efforts to effectively prevent violence against women" (p.42).

[50] The General Directorate of Women's Status and Problems was established in 1991 as a requirement of the CEDAW process. Its aim was to monitor gender equality in Turkey. This replacement in 2011 added protecting children, the disabled, and the elderly to discrimination against women. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 as an international convention for women's rights. Turkey is among the countries that have ratified CEDAW.

[51] Now the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services.

[52] Milliyet (2013, November 2). 18-24 yaş arası çiftlere 10 bin TL evlilik kredisi. Accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.milliyet.com.tr/ekonomi/18-24-yas-arasi-ciftlere-10-bin-tl-evlilik-kredisi-1785905.

[53] haber7 (2020, January 29). Evleneceklere 22 bin TL Devlet Desteği Veriliyor! Nasıl başvuru yapılır? Accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/2938178-evleneceklere-22-bin-tl-devlet-destegi-veriliyor-nasil-basvuru-yapilir.

[54] Milliyet (2013, November 1). Evli öğrencilere burs ve yurt müjdesi! Accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.posta.com.tr/evli-ogrencilere-burs-ve-yurt-mujdesi-202841.

The Gender Equality Project, initiated in 2015 following the murder of Özgecan Aslan,[55] that had been running in universities and schools was canceled by the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education. The head of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) announced that "the document of stance" was annulled because the project was "not suitable for our social values" and "not accepted by the society".[56] The contents of courses relating to women's studies changed from "gender equality" to "justice-based women's studies".[57] In the case of abortion rights of women, even though it is legal on paper, abortion is *de facto* forbidden, because public hospitals do not provide this service.[58] The regulations on maternity leave, part-time employment of women, private employment agencies and rental work brought to the agenda of parliamentary as draft laws foresees the fundamental exclusion of women from social and economic life. Women have been cast primarily as objects of "protection" instead of civic subjects. The coalitions of NGOs, which have been struggling for the reforms of abovementioned Civil and Penal Codes, the Istanbul Convention and Law No. 6284, have been marginalized as it can be clearly seen in the official statements mentioned earlier, targeting particularly feminists. The government-approved NGOs gathering under the umbrella organization of the Turkish Family Platform (TÜRAP) have become the new address for state funds. The mission statement of TÜRAP includes the protection and elevation of the family and general morality. Their definition of family defends traditional gender roles in which the woman is responsible for care and domestic labor whereas the man is provider.[59]

The Commission of Marital Breakdown in 2016 was one of the most solid outcomes of this discursive transformation, because after the report with recommendations of neutralization of three of the legislations in question–TPC 103, Law

[55] Özgecan Aslan, a 20-year-old student from Mersin, was found in a riverbed as partly burnt, sexually assaulted, and tortured. Özgecan took the minibus to return home after she met with her friend. The perpetrator was the minibus driver, Ahmet Suphi Altındöken. This femicide caused a nationwide outrage. For further information please *see.* Wikipedia. "Murder of Özgecan Aslan". Accessed February 15, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Özgecan_Aslan.

[56] Bianet (2019, February 20). YÖK, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği Tutum Belgesini Sitesinden Kaldırdı. Accessed November 14, 2020, https://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/205668-yok-toplumsal-cinsiyet-esitligi-tutum-belgesini-sitesinden-kaldirdi.

[57] Bianet (2019, February 19). Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği" Yerine "Adalet Temelli Kadın Çalışmaları". Accessed November 14, 2020, https://m.bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/205597-toplumsal-cinsiyet-esitligi-yerine-adalet-temelli-kadin-calismalari.

[58] For a recent and comprehensive research on abortion and services in public hospitals *see.* O'Neil L., Altuntaş, D., & Keskin, A.Ş. (November 2020). *Yasal Ancak Ulaşılabilir Değil: Türkiye'deki Kamu Hastanelerinde Kürtaj Hizmetleri 2020*). Kadir Has Üniversitesi Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Araştırma Merkezi. İstanbul.

[59] Türkiye Aile Platformu (TÜRAP). Biz kimiz. Accessed November 14, 2020, http://turkiyeaileplatformu.com/index.php/hakkimizda/.

No. 6284, and alimony regulation–was published in 2016, possible amendments or annulments in legislation to prevent violence against women or to aim at gender equality in the name of "the protection of family" and of "preventing divorces" have become an integral part of the political and social agenda. I shall expand on the Commission of Marital Breakdown Report in the discussion of historical evolution of alimony regulation below.

On the one hand, state-funded NGOs, the political discourse, and social policies highlight the woman's role as wife, mother, and caregiver. On the other hand, various consequences of welfare reforms, pronatalist and familialist biopolitics influence the employment trends and policies relating to exclusion of the woman from the job market. According to the research of Buğra and Yakut-Çakar (2010), employers are not inclined to employ female workers, particularly because of the obligation of sharing burdens of maternity leave proposed by the government. There is also a determined resistance to offer public preschool and childcare services. In this labor market, reconciliation of work and family life for women is practically impossible. In the highly gendered characteristic of the Turkish welfare regime, women are perceived among the potentially poor in terms of social provisions. Social assistance that women acquired due to this vulnerable position is crucial for poor families. However, women's contribution to the household is defined through this social assistance rather than paid work (Buğra and Yakut-Çakar, 2010; cited in Ermiş-Mert, 2018).

How do these trends and policies affect the lives of "women without men", then? Özar and Yakut-Çakar (2013) focus on state's distinction of "women without men", illustrating that in this setting "the majority of women are either totally excluded or included in the system by means of their husbands or fathers (a male member of their family), primarily as dependents of men reflecting the gender roles attributed to men and women within the society" As a result, "women who are not under the protection of any form of social security face increased vulnerability when divorced, deserted or widowed" (p. 25). The social assistance programs for *women without men* have its familialist dynamics as distinguishing between poor women who divorced and those who are widowed (p. 24). In this political framework, divorced women are perceived as not citizens deserving social assistance because they are subjects threatening "ideal family" (Yılmaz, 2012; Özar and Yakut-Çakar, 2013). As Kandiyoti (1988) emphasizes and Buğra (2014) notes that, in this setting where the labor market makes it impossible to reconcile home and work life for women, cultural trends are against female labor, and

social security system that institutionally appoints men as the head of the family, "patriarchal bargain" including the acceptance of gender-based division of labor may be more rational for women than to change their positions in the economy and society. However, this bargain is broken nowadays (Kandiyoti, 2020).

2.1.2 Bottom-Up Counterparts of Masculinist Restoration: "Victim" Groups

On the street-level, simultaneously with these developments on the official level, there has been a bottom-up discourse building around "male victimization" and a burgeoning men's rights movement mobilizing around divorce, alimony regulation, child custody, the Istanbul Convention, and Law No. 6284. Various "victim groups" consisting of mainly conservative men and women are remarkable actors in the bottom-up masculinist restoration.

"Early marriage victims" are a group of people who get married at an early age and, because of complaints based on relevant articles on the Penal Code (resulting in official attempts of the introduction of new amendments on Article 103 regulating the punishment of major crime of child sexual abuse), where the husband has been put in prison. Even though "early marriage victims" claim that both spouses are underage in their cases, the marriage of girls under 18 is a social problem in Turkey. According to TurkStat statistics, marriage and childbirth at early age decreased in Turkey in 2019. However, women's rights activists drew attention that these data did not reflect the truth. First of all, TurkStat's data in 2020 did not include girls aged under 15, whereas this data was included in previous years. Moreover, while showing that girls are not married to their peers, the data did not include information about these age groups that girls married off to. According to the data, the number of girls married in the 16-17 age group is 20 times the number of boys in the same age group.[60]

Since 2016, the draft amendment of amnesty for those who are in prison due to TCP Article 103 has been on the agenda of AKP and on July 15, 2020 it was brought into question during the discussion of Law of Execution of Sentences in the parliament. Women's Platform Against Amnesty for Child Sexual Abusers (*TCK 103 Çocuk İstismarı Affına Karşı Kadın Platformu*) organized a nationwide protest against these attempts.

[60] Ünker, P. (2020, July 6). Türkiye'de çocuk yaşta evlilikler ve gebelikler azalıyor mu? *DW*. Accessed February 10, 2021, https://www.dw.com/tr/türkiyede-çocuk-yaşta-evlilik-ve-gebelikler-azalıyor-mu/a-54070465.

They explained the contents of the draft amendment of amnesty for sexual abusers as follows:

> "According to the recent draft amendment, a man who has been charged, tried, and convicted of child abuse will be released if he marries the victim provided that:
>
> - the victim was at least 13 years old at the time of the incident,
> - the age difference between the victim and the perpetrator is not more than 15 years,
> - the marriage was officiated before the date the law is enacted, and
> - the marriage continues for a period of at least five years.
>
> The rationale of the draft amendment is that a one-time amnesty for men who are prosecuted for sexual abuse of a minor under the guise of "religious marriage" and/or the tacit consent of the girl's parents, which was subsequently endorsed officially when the girl came of age, would solve the problems encountered by such families. Whitewashing child sexual abuse under the label of marriage as proposed in this draft amendment would attest to a failure to protect children–the girl child in particular.
>
> The most important and likely danger posed by the draft amendment is that, if and once it passes in the Parliament, Turkey's Constitutional Court can later annul any of the above 'specifying' criteria, as they may be seen to counter to the constitutional guarantee of 'equality'. This would turn a "one-time" amnesty into a general practice that would pressure all female survivors of rape to marry their abusers."[61]

Thanks to women's rights organizations' efforts, the legal proposal fell off the agenda.

In 2016, "alimony victims" and "Law No. 6284 victims" *officially* emerged and their demands and protests will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. How women's rights organizations and bar associations reacted to the proposed draft amendment in alimony regulation will be discussed in detail under the fourth section of this chapter.

"Istanbul Convention victims" mainly claim that this legislation clashes with the existing societal structure; that femicide and violence against women cases have increased after its introduction; and that it promotes homosexuality. According to them, feminists as "some men-looking women" who provokes women to "rise against their husbands in

[61] For further information on press release of Women's Platform Against Amnesty for Child Sexual Abusers *see.* TCK 103 Çocuk Cinsel İstismarı Affına Karşı Kadın Platformu [Women's Platform Against Amnesty for Child Sexual Abusers] (2020, July 6). "Women's organizations in Turkey say 'no' to amnesty for perpetrators of sexual abuse of children and to child marriage". Accessed February 10, 2021, https://tck103kadinplatformu.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/tcp103_20200706_press_release.pdf.

such a way that our religion forbids"[62] caused these legislations to be introduced. These bottom-up claims got affirmative responds from top-down discourse and actions, which, in turn, shows how state policies affect gender relations and are shaped by gender relations. The common ground of this polyphonic, cross-class and cross-party alliance which opposes these legislations all aiming at gender equality and prevention of violence against women is to protect *sacred family*. As shown through the chapter until now, women's dependent status in society is an outcome of gender order intrinsic to political, economic, and social realms. The government's rush to propose a draft for amendments foreseeing limitation of alimony payments period does not come with any attempts to remove this dependent status of women. In this sense, alimony debates has become a tool for the government to reinforce its politics of masculinist restoration.

2.2 The Historical Evolution of Alimony in the Turkish Civil Code

The article related to alimony in the Turkish Civil Code has changed three times to date. Decision-making processes and prevalent concerns among politicians can be observed through parliamentary minutes of National Assembly of Turkey. These discussions in the parliament involve similar arguments voiced in the current alimony debates and reflect the dominant cultural and social approach to the family, divorce, and women.

The first Civil Code, numbered 743 and modeled the after Swiss Civil Code, was ratified on February 17, 1926 and enacted on October 4, 1926. According to the Article 144 of Law No. 743, "If wife or husband, without fault, falls into major poverty as a result of divorce, the other party, even though they does not cause divorce, might be sentenced to pay alimony in proportion to financial power for a period of one year". Today, since it regulates alimony payment for a limited period, Article 144 emerges as one of the most frequently voiced examples by alimony opponents.

The first significant change in the relevant article was made in 1988. After the new Civil Code was enacted in Switzerland in January 1988, some amendments adopting principle of gender equality was introduced to certain articles of the Civil Code with Law No. 3444 on May 4, 1988. The new version of the article related to alimony says, "The spouse who will be in need after divorce, under the condition that being without gross

[62] Kara, V. (2019, August 31). İstanbul Sözleşmesi ve Aileyi Yok Etmek İçin Alınan Kararlar. *Yeni Akit*. Accessed November 10, 2020, https://bit.ly/3uzYlEI..

fault, may ask a spousal support from the other for an indefinite time for living costs in proportion to their financial power of. However, man may ask woman for alimony, provided that woman is well-situated". This amendment caused some discussions between two parties (supporters and opponents of the amendment) in the parliament at the drafting stage.

Hasan Namal, deputy of DP (True Path Party), was on the side supporting amendment in the elimination of time limitation in alimony regulation. In the parliamentary session on May 4, 1988, Namal criticized approximate amounts of alimony:

> Hasan Namal: "(…) alimony amounts judged by the courts are pitifully small. Let's assign an amount of alimony to a woman who has no fault in the disruption of the family order; an amount that would help the woman not rely on anyone, and would strengthen her economically, so that she would preserve her dignity in society and would not be led astray (*kötü yola düşmez*)" (p. 413)

Ali Şahin, a deputy of CHP (Republican People's Party), is against any amendments in the existing regulation. This speech of Şahin is frequently referred by alimony opponents on social media.[63]

> Ali Şahin: "Though it is understandable that indefinite alimony has brought to the agenda to strike a balance in favor of women, this implementation would turn into a tool for only aiming to gain benefit and to guarantee one's future. (…) This alimony system would destroy family, because there would be those who would want to divorce in order to receive alimony. (…) It would prevent [the woman] from starting a new family after divorce, because [she] wouldn't get married just to continue receiving alimony, she would have extramarital relationships. Though the article says alimony shall be cut in case of extramarital relationship, it is extremely hard to prove that. (…) Therefore, to introduce a limitation on the period of alimony payment would be better, I believe. Unlimited alimony would destroy family order" (p. 395).

Though both arguments came from the opposite sides, and they look different than each another, they actually share a common ground. Hasan Namal argues that an increase in alimony amount is needed to keep women away being led astray (implying prostitution). Moreover, he sets conditions for deserving alimony: women "who has no fault in the disruption of the family order" may have the right to receive alimony, which

[63] For an example: https://twitter.com/AhlakManeviyat/status/1057340195694145545

means a woman who fulfills her "duties" in full but still gets divorced, probably upon her husband's wish. The other argument is based on a prevalent idea in the current alimony debates which is that if there was no limit on the period of alimony payments, this would cause women to stay away from the family institution and encourage them to live extramarital relationships (in other words, *immoral* relationships). None of both arguments consider any scenario where the woman would participate in labor force or not need financial support from her ex-husband, or even the fact that the state's responsibility to provide resources to maintain their lives for its citizen is not mentioned. As elected representatives, they reflect the prevalent perception of women in society: A woman's *dignity*, a dignity closely related to financial capacity, hangs by the eyelids and a possible solution for this does not seem to be providing facilitating services and equal opportunities by the state.

In the Turkish Civil Code, numbered 4271, ratified in January 2002, the amendment introduced in 1988 with Article 175 on alimony remained valid to date with a slight difference. This new Civil Code adopted the principle of equality within marriage. As Işılay Saygun, a deputy of ANAP (Motherland Party), stated during the parliamentary session held on October 24, 2001, "(…) [The new Civil Code], within the framework of the principle of equality, allows the elimination of discrimination against women while it also ends the privilege granted to women… For instance, in the current law, while the woman is required to be well-situated for the man to be able to demand alimony from her, it has been accepted in the draft that each of the spouses can request alimony from the other party, as long as they do not have gross fault" (2001, p. 41). The Article 175 of Civil Code took its present gender-neutral form: "The spouse who will be in need after the divorce, under the condition that being without gross fault, may ask a spousal support indefinitely from the other spouse for living costs in proportion to their financial power."

The report released by Center for Gender Studies in Koç University (E. Mert, 2019), focusing on gender equality in Turkey with 2018 data, explains that because the Turkish Civil Code regulates the right to alimony and compensation based on the degree of fault, the court has to adjudge personal faults of divorced parties in divorce.

> "The determination of fault essentially reflects an assessment of the behavior expected of women and men in family life. Indeed, attributing certain behavior to the man or the woman as faults within the framework of the divorce case is linked to the accusation that the woman or the man failed to display the behavior expected of them in the marital union and therefore

> indicates whether courts adopt the understanding of gender-based division of labor. This understanding reduces women to the role of doing housework and fulfilling childcare duties and men to the role of meeting material needs. Court decisions issued in 2018 stated that the 'deficiency of women in fulfilling duties such as maintaining the house, cooking, or cleaning' may be attributed as a fault to women if proven and that "women's refusal to undergo fertility treatment" is also considered a fault. However, the fact that the Supreme Court attributed "bringing one's hunting companions home and making one's wife serve them" as a fault of men constitutes a step in re-examining women's traditional role of serving men. The court also considers men's failure to pay bills after abandoning the house and the marital union to be a failure of their duties arising from the marital union. Other faults ascribed to men include failing to provide an independent dwelling to their wives or 'pressuring them to work'. In other words, material duties are imposed upon men." (E. Mert, 2019: 36)

In other words, even though the article seems gender-neutral, evaluation of "fault" is gendered. The analysis of gender-neutrality in the Civil Code from a feminist perspective is a whole another topic, but to briefly address feminist criticism on gender-neutrality at law shows that this praised gender-neutrality in the Civil Code does not correspond to the social reality that keeps women "in second place" and perceives them as primary caregivers. MacKinnon (1989) criticizes gender-neutrality in the context of divorce and child custody, saying that "the sameness standard has mostly gotten men the benefit of those few things women have historically had for all the good they did" (MacKinnon, 1989: 221). While women lose their financial security and children, they keep living in a society in which women cannot gain equal pay, equal work, or equal opportunities with men.

Certainly, there are men who are in need after divorce, who are dependent on their wives, or who are primary caregivers, but "to occupy these positions is consistent with female gender norms; most women share them". Gender-neutral approach to alimony or offering the limitation as solution to so-called alimony *injustice* conceals "the fact that women's poverty and consequent financial dependence on men (whether in marriage, welfare, the workplace, or prostitution), forced motherhood, and sexual vulnerability substantively constitute their social status as women, as members of their gender" whereas these social facts are obvious in alimony debates today. "That some men at times find themselves in similar situations does not mean that they occupy that status as men, as members of their gender. They do so as exceptions, both in norms and in numbers. Unlike women, men are not poor or primary caretakers of children on the basis of sex" (Mackinnon, 1989: 228). Gender-neutral, equal approach to men and women in

lawmaking does not address the ongoing sexual division of labor and other social and economic disadvantages that women and mothers experience (Boyd and Young, 2007). As seen in the emergence of alimony debates, even though the article is gender-neutral, women have been the party who receive alimony in most of the cases because of this social reality.

2.3 The Official Emergence of Alimony Debates: The Marital Breakdown Commission's Report

Until 2011, when the alimony regulation was brought to public agenda as a legal discussion for the first time, there had not been an attempt to change or regulate this article. The only research on alimony regulation in Turkey (Akçabay, 2019) shows Turkish Constitutional Court's justification for alimony in the case of an objection:

> "Kestel Court Instance made an appeal to the Constitutional Court in 2011, claiming that the alimony regulation in unconstitutional. The reason for the objection was explained as 'The fact that alimony is unlimited puts the creditor under a lifetime financial obligation and makes people whose joint life ends with divorce constantly dependent on each other. Marriage establishes a union between two people by contract and establishes an unnatural kinship like blood tie. Despite the end of this union with divorce, people are made dependent on each other with a lifetime obligation.' The Constitutional Court, on the other hand, has decided that the regulation is not contrary to the Constitution, by qualifying the alimony as the continuation of the obligation of solidarity and cooperation between spouses in the marriage union." (p. 10)

Alimony as one of the consequences of divorce had not been considered as "a social problem damaging family institution" until the Commission of Marital Breakdown Report in 2016. In fact, only two years before then, in 2014, in the report "Research on Reasons for Divorce in Türkiye" (TBNA 2014) of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies General Directorate of Family and Community Services, alimony was perceived from a dramatically different perspective. According to the report, "The majority of the interviewees indicated that the legal issues including the division of marital property, parental authority, compensation and maintenance [alimony] had not affected their decision to divorce" (p. 98) and it goes on as follows:

> "As expected, maintenance was brought up mostly by women and individuals with children. It was observed that the maintenance claimed by women was mostly for meeting the children's needs and rarely for their own livelihood. (…) Maintenance is one of the most challenging legal

> issues for the divorcees. The fact that the assigned maintenance mostly remains unpaid is the most major issue emphasized by women. This problem occurring in maintenance payments can be mostly attributed to the insufficient financial capacity of divorced males. On the other hand, within bureaucracy, maintenance payments are not subject to any control mechanisms and the fact that no sanction is imposed on the party responsible of paying the maintenance when s/he does not can be considered among the factors causing this problem to persist." (p. 145)

The report emphasizes insufficiency of the amount of alimony:

> "In addition, the amount of maintenance ruled by the court usually seems far from meeting the needs. In the case women have the parental authority, the maintenance paid for the children usually covers very limited portion of their monthly expenses of clothing, school and food." (p. 146)

It is stated that there are two sides of the main problem in alimony amounts:

> "Socioeconomically conditions of both parties –maintenance payer and receiver– are not taken into consideration when determining maintenance amounts. Economic capacity is generally considered to be the main reason for not paying the maintenance money."

Another reason stated in relation to problems with determination of alimony amount and not to paying alimony is that

> "Spouses who leave their insured jobs, understate or hide their income just to not pay maintenance cause the system to malfunction." (p. 169)

Despite the data of this large-scale research involving individuals over the age of 18 who were divorced since 2002, the Commission of Marital Breakdown report described alimony as a problem damaging family. The legislations and legal practices in the USA, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, England, Germany, and Switzerland are presented as examples to justify the recommendation of time limitation. In the report, even though alimony is not seen as a reason for divorce, it is referred as "a disproportionate punishment for the alimony creditor" and "an obstacle for women's empowerment" (p. 83). The recommendation is to bring an amendment to the existing alimony regulation and determine an upper limit for the duration of alimony payments, and if the alimony creditor is still in need at the end of this specified period, the financial support will be provided through state funds.

The research published by Foundation of Women's Solidarity (Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı) (Akçabay, 2019) examines "field research" that is claimed as the resource of this

recommendation in the Marital Breakdown Commission Report. This "field research" includes the investigations conducted in only 11 provinces from different regions and the opinions of the people who were invited to the Commission. However, in the dissenting annotation of the report shows that the representatives of the opposition parties were not taken into account in the determination of the experts interviewed (p. 12). The examination of the report and the Commission minutes reveals that the complaints regarding alimony were generally expressed by the "alimony victims" or "victim fathers" and the report does not include women who receive alimony or child support. The judges interviewed living in Düzce, Ordu, Trabzon, and Giresun (all conservative cities) claim that the regulation does not vest them discretion rights despite the decision of the Constitutional Court, although it is clear that the eligibility and amount of alimony is determined through judges' discretion.

The Commission's recommendation on Law No. 6284 got negative reactions from women's organizations. Even though the relevant article in Law No. 6284 says that it is not necessary to show evidence or an official document for restraining order, the Commission recommends that the relevant article in the law should be changed, and restraining order that are longer than 15 days should be conditioned on evidence and official document to prove violence. In addition, it is recommended to make a regulation in legislation to provide shelters for those who are suspended due to restraining order, just like the practice for battered women.

During our interview with Hale, I asked if she could provide a legal explanation for this recommendation for someone like me, who did not know what this and its possible consequences for women in case of its implementation would entail. She answered:

> Hale: It means that if a woman did not have any document, the restraining order would be limited to 15 days. They link violence with documentation. The most important task of the law [Law No. 6284] is to prevent violence because the definition of violence includes threatening. Violence does not have to happen. The law must prevent it. They want to remove the law's function as prevention.

Afterwards, before me having to ask about shelters, she herself jumped to that topic. She took some documents from her purse and showed me the total number of shelters, in the meantime, she explained:

> Hale: This is the total number of shelters. KGSM [The General Directorate of Women's Status] provides 110 shelters; for Immigration Authority, this

> number is 1; municipalities provide 32; and Purple Roof [Women's Shelter Foundation] provides 1 shelter: there are 144 in total. This is the total capacity. They say that the state launches a fund for alimony and takes care of women–the state does not provide shelters for women. Women's safety is in question. If they want to do something sincere for women, they must increase the numbers of shelters. In a country where at least three women are murdered a day, the number of shelters is 144.

The gender blindness of recommendations manifest itself one more time. As the number of shelters is not sufficient to provide a safe place for women who are victims of violence, however, what report recommends related to Law No. 6284 does not seem to recognize this social problem; instead, the only recommendation on shelters is connected to those who are suspended because of perpetrating violence or having the potential to resort to violence.

As emphasized in the research conducted by the Foundation of Women's Solidarity (Akçabay, 2019), the purpose for the establishment of this commission was to reveal the factors which negatively affect the family integrity, to investigate the reason for divorces, and to strengthen the family institution. The recommendation regarding alimony regulation and Law No. 6284 needs to be understood in this context.

GREVIO's Baseline Evaluation Report, published in 2018, refers to the Commission of Marital Breakdown as an example of "how the goal to preserve family at all costs can lead to lowering the guard against violence against women" The part regarding parliamentary commission goes as follows:

> "… the parliamentary report issued in May 2016 put forth a series of legislative proposals which carry the potential for hampering a married woman's rights to live a life free from violence. GREVIO is extremely concerned that policy makers in Turkey might be willing to turn a blind eye to violence against women out of their desire to promote family unity. GREVIO reiterates its strong belief that respect for individual family members' right to live a life free from violence is instrumental in allowing families to thrive. It warns against any approach which justifies domestic violence or otherwise downplays its seriousness, thereby undermining and ultimately destroying families. To counter this alarming tendency, more should be done to raise awareness among politicians, civil servants and society at large about the prevalence of violence affecting women in their families, as well as to promote their adherence to the principle of unacceptability of domestic violence under any pretext whatsoever." (p. 25)

After the Commission of Marital Breakdown Report was published, alimony debates became a hot topic. At a meeting held by Karabük Bar on February 16, 2019, Ömer Uğur Gençcan gave a speech.

> "You [women] took away men's vested rights after 80 years. I am a judge; I will tell the truth. I will adjudge according to my conscience. They made it [the alimony payment period] indefinite out of blue. Now there are those who publish some statements: 'It's not true that it is indefinite." As if we were to trick you! Of course, there are examples where it's not indefinite. 'When the man dies, she cannot receive it.' Of course, you cannot. Will the heirs of the deceased pay your alimony? See? It's definite… 'It ends when he dies.' For sure, it will end. It ends when you remarry. You marry a strange man, and I will continue to pay you… You live illegitimately with a strange man and I will send you money so that you can drink every evening. Could it be such a thing? Is it possible to say 'It's definite, by giving examples like these? Of course, it will end in this kind of situations. If you do not get into this kind of situations, if your husband does not die, if you are not led astray (*kötü yola düşmezsen*), if you do not remarry, you will receive it until you die. Since 1988… I could not accept this indefinite alimony. I slept with someone and you slept with someone. But I pay you alimony for a lifetime… I spat, you spat. But alimony for a lifetime. Can such thing happen?"[64]

This speech is significant in two senses. First, Ömer Uğur Gençcan is the head of Supreme Court's Second Civil Department and this puts him on a decision-making position, especially in divorce cases. Thus, it clearly shows that even though the family law is gender-neutral and adopts the principle of gender equality, those who implement the law may not be objective and egalitarian as seen in this example. Second, I encountered his name many times during the interviews with members of anti-alimony groups. One divorced man described him as "He is our father" and this was the proof that they were right because someone who was a judge was on their side. Women's rights organizations keenly criticized this speech and they urged Ömer Uğur Gençcan to resign.[65]

In pursuit of President Erdoğan's announcement of a legal reform package included in the first 100-day action plan, "Fair Solution to Indefinite Alimony Symposium" held on May 25, 2019 was organized in cooperation with Istanbul Aydin University and the Platform for Divorced People and Family (BİAP). Prof. Dr. Erol Ulusoy, Dean of Istanbul Aydin University Faculty of Law, stated that they wanted to contribute to the solution announced in the first 100-day action plan. One of the speakers

[64] Yargıtay 2'inci Hukuk Dairesi Başkanı Ömer Uğur Gençcan'dan tepki çeken sözler (2019) [Video]. *dailymotion*. Accessed February 15, 2021, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x72lm3s.

[65] Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı [Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation] (2019, February 20). "Kadınların Nafaka Hakkını Yok Sayan Yargıtay 2. Hukuk Dairesi Başkanı Ömer Uğur Gençcan Derhal İstifa Etmelidir; Etmiyorsa Görevden Alınmalıdır!" Accessed February 5, 2021, https://morcati.org.tr/haberler/kadinlarin-nafaka-hakkini-yok-sayan-yargitay-2-hukuk-dairesi-baskani-omer-ugur-genccan-derhal-istifa-etmelidir-etmiyorsa-gorevden-alinmalidir/.

at the symposium, a lawyer who was a deputy candidate of AKP in 2015 general elections, made a comparison between the term of imprisonment of someone who committed murder and the term of alimony payment. According to her, while someone who commits murder does not have to pay anything to anyone from victim's family or does not have to spend their life in prison for life in most of the cases, why does someone who "softly beats" another person or who says, "how scruffy (*pasaklı*) you are!" to his wife have to pay a price throughout his life?

The Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services held a workshop called "Agenda Meetings: Alimony System" on October 10, 2018. This workshop also raised eyebrows because Turkish Women's Union (Türk Kadınlar Birliği), the Federation of the Women's Associations of Turkey (Türkiye Kadın Dernekleri Federasyonu), and women's organizations working independently in the area for years did not receive an invitation. Even though they were not invited, only one women's organization, Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, was invited to the workshop as a result of persistent demands of independent women's organizations, stating that they wanted to participate in the workshop via various communication tools such as phone call and e-mails.[66]

KADEM published a legal evaluation on alimony debates and five recommendations in 2019.[67] The first recommendation was compulsory mediation for divorce cases except those including domestic violence incidents to help the spouses exercising their legal rights in divorce process and to ease wearing process of divorce. They secondly recommended a lump sum payment for alimony and compensations, which implied limiting the time period of alimony payments. The third recommendation was, instead of any amendment in the existing alimony regulation, the change in Supreme Court's jurisprudence and the judge's assignment of time limitation for alimony payments. Fourthly, they recommended the facilitation of decreasing and abolishing alimony in the event that alimony creditor's need diminish or disappear. The last recommendation was to limit alimony payment period to the duration of marriage. For instance, in a 10-year marriage, alimony would be paid to the creditor for 10 years at most. KADEM's recommendations evoke the discrepancy between legal and *de facto*

[66] Ekmek ve Gül (2018, October 10). Kadın örgütleri: Kadınların nafaka hakkına dokunmayın! accessed December 4, 2020, https://ekmekvegul.net/gundem/kadin-orgutleri-kadinlarin-nafaka-hakkina-dokunmayin.

[67] Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği (KADEM) [Women and Democracy Association] (2019, April 23). Nafaka Tartışmalarına İlişkin Hukuki Değerlendirme. Accessed February 15, 2021, https://kadem.org.tr/nafaka-tartismalarina-iliskin-hukuki-degerlendirme/

regulations regarding abortion mentioned earlier. That is, while alimony payment period remains indefinite in the law, the demands of anti-alimony groups will be implemented, and the payment period will be limited in practice. In 2019, Istanbul Regional Court, 11th Civil Chamber adjudged 2-year alimony payment for 2-year marriage.[68] This shows that KADEM's recommendations has started to carry into effect.

The Commission of Marital Breakdown was part of my interviews with particularly feminist lawyers, because one of them attended to the investigation process, and women's organizations declared that the report was a "regression in women's rights." In this sense, when I asked Hale to evaluate the Commission and its report, her evaluation was as follows:

> Hale: They [AKP] found supporters from various political parties at the Commission. That is why their demands were included in the report as they were. When we look at these demands, what we actually see is that they wish to remove minimum one-third of amendments that we [feminists] brought to three fundamental legislations: TPC, Civil Code, and Law No. 6284. But articles they wish to remove form the spirit of these legislations. The priority of recommended amendments in the Civil Code is to weaken women economically. They attack the rights that would make a woman feel economically strong in marriage and that would keep her away from poverty in the wake of a divorce, including alimony, family abode, sharing marital property. Secondly, in this way, they recommend regulations that would deter a woman from divorce if the man does not want to go along. They make recommendations that lead to the appointment of family mediators. Even religious workers may become family mediators. Thirdly, in the cases where the man is the one who wants to divorce, even if woman does not want to divorce, they want to make it happen in the fastest and cheapest way. Therefore, demanded amendments for the Civil Code are based on prevention of divorce for women, conviction of women to the family where she is subjected to violence, and ensuring that a man divorces a woman quickly without paying a penny.

My interviews with lawyers correspond to the outcomes of the TBNA 2014, rather than the report published in 2016. The real problem with alimony regulation is the difficulty in collecting or the use of alimony by men as a tool for threating their ex-wives. Ahmet has been a lawyer for over 15 years, and the last 7-8 years he only tries divorce cases. We met at a café in City A and our interview lasted more on 90 minutes. When I asked him "What are your observations about general tendency to ask for alimony in the cases that you have taken?", he simply answered, "In most of the cases, women do not

[68] Hürriyet (2019, June 14). İstinaftan 2 yıl evliliğe 2 yıl nafaka. Accessed February 16, 2021, https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/istinaftan-2-yil-evlilige-2-yil-nafaka-41243601.

ask for alimony for themselves, they do so for their children. It becomes an issue of bargain. If the [paying] party does not accept the amount, he doesn't divorce, and the case is extended."

Hale answered the same question as follows: "We try to convince women to ask for alimony. Do not ask it for yourself, all right, but at least ask for 50 or 100 liras for your children. But women are so fed up that they do not want to ask for alimony even though this is their legal right. They say they would get money from their mothers. These are not rich women. They say that they would work as housekeepers, that they would not eat too much, or that they only wished their ex-husbands are far from them."

The insufficiency of alimony amount was also uttered by lawyers. Ayşe who has been working as a lawyer for over 50 years explained how alimony amounts have changed over time, when I asked her if alimony amounts created any unjust treatment towards men:

> Ayşe: Long ago, the alimony amount was adjudged in a way to maintain economic situation in the marriage before divorce and the Supreme Court approved those decisions. But this has changed over time. In fact, it has changed so much that, with women's empowerment, male violence against women has increased and is still increasing. Now, they set their eyes on two-bit alimony amount, just because they want to weaken women economically. Nowadays, alimony amounts are approximately 100, 150, 200 TL, maximum 300 TL. Women cannot collect even that amount. The men do not pay even that amount. On top of this, men cause quite a stir spreading lies, saying "We were married only for a day, and now we pay alimony for the rest of our lives". Anyway, what I want to say is that, first of all, alimony amounts are not sufficient. Secondly, alimony is almost non-collectible. The implementation needs to be executed properly. But Ministry of Justice does not investigate these things, they do not provide any data. Because the only thing this government cares about is "to protect family", whatever family means for them.

As Ayşe expressed, the lack of data is a significant problem in alimony debates. Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services does not provide any data on the number of people who pay alimony, the average amount of alimony, the number of requests for increase in alimony amount, the number of people subjected to preventive detention (*tazyik hapsi*) because of alimony-related debts, the number of people identifying themselves as alimony victims. The anti-alimony newspaper articles typically involve numbers or data given by members of BİAP or SNM. As one article

claims that there are two million alimony victims[69], another one tells that there are 25 thousand men in prison due to their alimony debts[70], and according to another article, there are over 100 thousand execution files due for alimony debts for men who cannot even go to polls in fear of being arrested[71]. However, these numbers seem arbitrary because the Ministry of Family, Ministry of Justice, or TurkStat have not share any official data on any of these topics. When I asked the head of BİAP, Serpil, if they had any official sources to obtain this data and how did they know the total number of alimony victim men, she said, "We simply guess based on people consulting us". However, the current number of signatories in BİAP's petition on change.org is 17.475[72] and the number of members on their Facebook account is 5.500[73] despite of the popularity of alimony debates.

Since 2016, when these debates started to escalate, none of relevant ministries have provided any data. Filiz Kerestecioğlu, an HDP MP, submitted a parliamentary question regarding the investigation on alimony, requesting written answer from the Zehra Zümrüt Selçuk, Minister of Family, Labor, and Social Services. But this question was left without an answer. Hale mentioned the Alimony Workshop organized by the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services during our interview, therefore, I asked her this data problem and she said that women's rights organizations brought this data problem into question during the workshop:

> Hale: Under normal circumstances, the state should have this data and provide it to us. Failure to keep this data is against all international conventions, particularly the Istanbul Convention. In the alimony workshop, when our lawyer friends asked based on which data, they would like to make this change; they said that they did not have such data. The Minister said that they do not have records before the UYAP system (National Judicial Network Information System). They suggested that since there is no disaggregated data on this subject in UYAP, they do not have such a data. But they could give examples of singled-out alimony cases.

[69] Yeni Akit (2019, January 12). İki milyon nafaka mağduru. Accessed December 7, 2020, https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/2-milyon-nafaka-magduru-3430598.
[70] Şahin, Ö. F. (2019, March 14). 25 bin mağdur hapiste çürüyor. *Yeni Akit.* Accessed December 7, 2020, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/25-bin-magdur-hapiste-curuyor-656492.html.
[71] T24 (2019, April 9). Ortadoğu Gazetesi: Sandığa nafaka darbesi, 100 bin kişi tutuklanma korkusuyla oy kullanamadı. Accessed November 14, 2020, https://t24.com.tr/haber/ortadogu-gazetesi-sandiga-nafaka-darbesi-100-bin-kisi-tutuklanma-korkusuyla-oy-kullanamadi,815992.
[72] BİAP's petition on change.org: change.org petition. Süresiz ibaresinin olmadığı, kriterlere göre 1-5 yıl nafaka adildir (2014). *change.org*. Accessed September 12, 2018, https://bit.ly/3pWsXgh.
[73] Facebook page of BİAP: https://www.facebook.com/groups/biaplatformu, accessed February 21, 2021.

The research of Foundation of Women's Solidarity (Akçabay, 2019) investigating 140 alimony and divorce cases demanding alimony in 11 provinces supports the TBNA report published in 2014. Average alimony amounts uttered by lawyers during our interviews are also consistent with the results of this research. According to that, the average alimony amount ruled by the courts is 370 TL, and the average of more than 66% is 262 TL. The problem of collecting payments is also shown in the research: 50.7% of the alimony adjudged are not paid by the debtor. The rate of applying for enforcement for the collection of payment is 44.3%, but in some cases even enforcement does not help to collect payments. In addition, the fact that the minimum wage and poverty limits are not applied in court cases as a standard and the socioeconomic status investigation are not carried out adequately are among other reasons for the low alimony amounts.

2.4 Reactions to Proposed Time Limitation to Alimony

When alimony debates were no longer just debates but led a possibility of new legal amendment, this caused reactions from women's organizations and bar associations. Women's organizations, including Filmmor Women's Cooperative, Women's Human Rights Association (KİH), Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV), Women's Group for Monitoring Equality (EŞİTİZ), Women's Law Support Center (KAHDEM), and Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation, published a common text titled "do not touch women's alimony right".[74] The text pointed that news on alimony right misled the public, and emphasized that alimony is a right, not a favor. Alimony is defined as a precaution taken by the state, as many other states do in the world, aiming at women's empowerment and ensuring gender equality. According to women's organizations, alimony is a legal right that enables women to maintain their lives in the wake of divorce and is necessary because women are impoverished due to gender inequality. It is stated that in the existing regulation, alimony payment period is not unlimited: If conditions of the alimony debtor change, they can request the alimony to be cut. Moreover, the amounts ruled by the course for alimony is not enough to eliminate poverty. They emphasize that limiting the right to receive alimony of women who have never been able to participate in work life, have prevented from participating in work life or who have had to leave work life due to burden of care labor including care of children, the disabled, and the elderly, will further deepen

[74] Ekmek ve Gül (2018, October 10). Kadın örgütleri: Kadınların nafaka hakkına dokunmayın! Accessed December 4, 2020, https://ekmekvegul.net/gundem/kadin-orgutleri-kadinlarin-nafaka-hakkina-dokunmayin

the growing gender inequality in Turkey. They further state that this proposed regulation will increase economic, psychological, sexual, and physical violence against women, and make it difficult for women to make a divorce decision, causing great violations of rights. The solution of grievances due to gender equality will be achieved by establishing gender equality, not by taking back the rights women have gained through years of struggle. The statement reminds that the duty of the state is not to make regulations that will further weaken women's status, reinforce gender inequality, and neglect gender; on the contrary, it is to produce social policies aiming for gender equality and to work for providing free care services. For women to participate in the labor market, it is necessary to provide free, high-quality care services, to remove barriers to women's participation in education, and to create quality education and job opportunities that will enable women without higher education to work in paid jobs where they meet at least their basic needs.

This notice was followed by a working group on alimony called "Platform for Alimony Right" (Nafaka Hakkı Platformu) including 161 women's organizations from every city in Turkey. They started a campaign summoning the public and political parties to defend alimony right of women. More than a thousand women became signatories of "Do No Touch Alimony Right" (Nafaka Hakkına Dokunma) notice in 10 days.[75] This platform have collected the stories of divorced women whose voices have not been considered by the authorities on a Medium account named "Alimony Story" (Nafaka Hikayesi).[76]

Hazar Association, an association that has been carrying out research on women, conducted an alimony research supported by 21 NGOs, and shared the results with public in 2019. The report, based on sociological, psychological, and legal background, appeals to views of representatives of NGOs, lawyers, members of the parliament, and social service experts. It mainly draws attention to the position of women in family and society as individuals and women's economic weakness. Besides, the report points to the ambivalent stance of the state in terms of the proposal that women should work and stand on their own feet after divorce, voiced in alimony debates, is not advocated when the marriage is still intact. The report concludes that Hazar Association does not approve any

[75] Nafaka Hakkı Kadın Platformu [Women's Platform for the Right to Alimony]. Kadınların Nafaka Hakkına Dokunmayın!" https://nafakahakkinadokunma.com/.
[76] .Nafaka Hikayesi. *medium.* https://medium.com/@NafakaHikayesi

amendments regarding the existing alimony regulation without correcting the disadvantaged position of women.[77]

Again, in 2019, Ankara[78], Izmir[79], Istanbul[80], and many other bar associations organized workshops on alimony regulations. I had the chance to personally participate in the workshop organized in Istanbul and contributed to the working group focusing on history of alimony in Turkey. All bar associations expressed in their final declarations on the topic that they did not support any amendment in the existing alimony regulation, drawing attention to the difficulties women experience due to gender inequality, the inadequacy of women's employment and childcare services, and the low amount of alimony. The workshops organized by bar associations also shared concrete information on alimony, revealing the general situation in society, to prevent information pollution on the topic. According to that, the public is misinformed about Article 175 of Turkish Civil Code and alimony is deliberately amalgamated with child support. Moreover, the duration of alimony, as it is in the Civil Code, is neither strictly regulated as indefinite nor is alimony given to every creditor upon request, as reflected to the public. The law text clearly determines the proper conditions for alimony and is arranged in a way that is convenient to solve problems encountered in practice. Article 176 of the Civil Code regulates conditions to abolish alimony, and alimony is mostly abolished by the judges with a broad interpretation upon request and when necessary conditions are met. The bars highlighted that publicly voiced "victimhood" claims can be resolved even with the existing legislation. To reinforce their explanation, the bars shared 2017 data of TÜİK. According to that, female participation in labor force is 33.3% whereas male participation is 71.5%. Time Use research of TÜİK shows that the time women devote to household and chores in a day is 4 hours and 35 minutes whereas men spend only 53 minutes. The rate of women who have been subjected to violence in their marriage is 97%.

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[77] Milliyet (2019, February 20). Hazar Derneği'nden süresiz nafaka araştırması. Accessed December 4, 2020, https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/hazar-derneginden-suresiz-nafaka-arastirmasi-2830781.

[78] Ankara Barosu Kadın Hakları Merkezi. [Ankara Bar Association Center for Women's Rights] (2019). Tüm yönleriyle nafaka çalıştayı sonuç bildirgesi. Accessed February 19, 2020, http://www.ankarabarosu.org.tr/HaberDuyuru.aspx?DUYURU&=2361.

[79] İzmir Barosu Kadın Hakları Danışma ve Hukuk Araştırmaları Merkezi. [İzmir Bar Association, Center for Counselling and Legal Studies on Women's Rights] (2019, Mart 7). Nafaka çalıştayı sonuç bildirgesi. accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.izmirbarosu.org.tr/HaberDetay/1484/nafaka-calistayi-sonuc-bildirgesi.

[80] İstanbul Barosu Kadın Hakları Merkezi. [Istanbul Bar Association, Center for Women's Rights] (2019). Accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.istanbulbarosu.org.tr/HaberDetay.aspx?ID=14590&Desc=Yoksulluk-Nafakas%C4%B1nda-Yeni-Bir-Yasal-D%C3%BCzenlemeye-%C4%B0htiya%C3%A7-Yoktur.

Another point that bar associations emphasized is that comparisons with mainly European countries in the debates is wrong because rankings in the index measuring gender equality regarding the discrimination results reveals that Turkey is not in a comparable position with Switzerland or Germany that countries are given as examples. Because these countries are in a much more advanced position than Turkey in terms of female labor force participation rates, social welfare, socialization of care services, kindergartens, retirement houses, and supports given in terms of social rights. Therefore, these comparisons are not objective and do not include exact information. Comparisons made without considering specificity and status of countries in terms of gender equality, gender policies, female unemployment, and women's poverty are not scientific. Furthermore, bar associations highlighted that this kind of manipulative declarations made by authorities, even the representatives of high judicial organs take sides through directive comments. Bar associations remarked that the issue that needs to be discussed is not the right to receive alimony, but "non-collectability of alimony". In the final declarations of bar associations and in the statements of lawyers, poverty of women who are entitled to receive alimony and the difficulties they face when collecting alimony payments are emphasized. The data problem was also noted. Alimony debates brought to the public attention through singular "male victim" stories of paying lifetime alimony because of one-day marriage, but bar associations highlighted that these claims are far from being a legal base for any amendment because there are no scientific study, research, or data.

The final declarations conclude that the proposed legal amendment is against all international conventions signed or accepted by the state, including Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in general (Istanbul Convention). The Union of Turkish Bar Associations Women's Law Committee (TÜBAKKOM)[81] organized a workshop on alimony on July 30, 2019 and the final declaration published supported the declarations of all other bar associations abovementioned, adding that alimony liability is not based on social state principle, but only on the solidarity liability existing due to the previous conjugal union. Thus, establishing funds or providing social assistance is not an alternative to alimony.

[81] Türkiye Barolar Birliği (TÜBAKKOM) [Union of Turkish Bar Association]. Nafaka Çalıştayı Sonuç Bildirgesi. Accessed February 19, 2020, https://www.barobirlik.org.tr/Haberler/tubakkom-nafaka-calistayi-sonuc-bildirgesi-80777.

The workshop's declaration also answers to alimony opponents' claim of women's misuse of legislation. It is stated that solutions of problems regarding implementation is available in the Civil Code. Abuse of right is forbidden under Article 2 and, in case of proof, the judge has authority to annul alimony. Again, the inability to collect child support and alimony because the alimony debtor avoids paying is pointed as the main problem. Finally, it is mentioned that leading an undignified life, which is one reason for abolition of alimony by judicial decision, may be interpreted by Second Civil Department of Supreme Court in sexist moral patterns.

So far, any amendments have not been brought to alimony legislation. Most recently, AKP has reconsidered the issue of alimony in 2020. Presidential and party group meetings were held, and the Ministry of Justice made a proposal limiting period of alimony to 6 years at most. The lower limit is also foreseen as 2 years.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

The first main argument of this chapter is the reason why women are overwhelmingly entitled to alimony is women's disadvantaged positions in an inegalitarian society. Thus, alimony is closely related to the state's policies towards women's rights, family, and divorce and to the highly gendered welfare regime in terms of women's dependency on the husbands or the fathers, unemployment, unpaid care, and domestic labor due to patriarchal familial norms of society.

The first section discussed the dramatic transformation in political discourse and social policies towards family, divorce, and women's rights which came with institutional changes. Though the first decade of 2000s witnessed the introduction of progressive legislations aiming for gender equality in social, economic, and familial relations, the existing literature on neoliberal restructuring and neoconservative familialism shows that political discourse and social policies did not accord with progressive legislations and kept reproducing gender inequality in practice. Since 2016, the government's concerns about divorce rates in Turkey and top-down and bottom-up attacks to women's vested rights have been increasing in the name of "saving the family". The main reason of it is that familialist policies consider divorce as a potential threat because women's unpaid care labor is a fundamental cog in the wheel.

The second section focused on the historical evaluation of alimony in the Turkish Civil Code and state-led research reports on divorces and alimony. Particularly, the

Commission of Marital Breakdown report, released in 2016, ignited alimony debates until today. While alimony was considered as a problem damaging family, women's inability to collect alimony and child support or domestic violence against women was not mentioned. Anti-alimony groups have officially appeared in this report and the report had a significant role in developing anti-alimony discourse, attacking women's existing rights. Not only alimony, but also Law No. 6284 on preventing violence against women and the Istanbul Convention are integral parts of this discourse. This chapter also showed those who acted as spokesperson in the alimony debates and their roles in circulation of anti-alimony discourse.

The last section disclosed reactions to anti-alimony campaign and proposed draft amendment in the existing alimony regulation from women's rights organizations and bar associations. The declarations of bar associations and women's organizations commonly summoned authorities and public to defend women's right to alimony (even though article 175 of Civil Code regulating alimony is gender-neutral, women are overwhelmingly alimony creditors because of gender inequality in society, and that is why women's organizations called it "women's right"). Moreover, they revealed that alimony is misrepresented to the public as "indefinite" and the state's insistence on introducing amendment into alimony regulation without correcting women's disadvantaged position by providing care services for children, the disabled, and the elderly; equal opportunities for women in work life and education will only deepen the existing gender equality in society.

Why do the state and groups which consist of mainly men as well as conservative women attack women's rights all together? The answer to this question is the second main argument of this chapter: Anti-alimony campaigns as a part of anti-women's rights movement in Turkey that gained momentum since 2016 are a bottom-up counterpart of the new politics of masculinist restoration (Kandiyoti, 2016) aiming to maintain and reproduce patriarchy. The neoliberal conditions brought along increasing rates of male unemployment and soaring precarious forms of employment, and that coincided with women's ambitions and their growing public presence. As a result of these developments, the male provider as "the head of the family" that constitutes one of the fundamentals of male privilege is under pressure at the domestic level. At the state level and in the neoliberal restructuring of welfare, the state withdrew itself from the role of facilitator for welfare provisions, and neoconservative discourse including familialism, nationalism, or religion and tradition help filling the functional gap in the definition of the state that is

result of this withdrawal. For those in power, as Kandiyoti (2020) notes, "the idiom of patriarch" is a useful tool "to legitimize their regulation of citizens' lives, to suppress dissent and to elicit consent." In the case of AKP, traditional family has been a useful tool for maintaining its rulership and the state includes men as part of its patriarchal ruling through encouraging male privilege over control of women. The cases of femicides and violence against women receive lighter punishments (if any), women marching to protest femicides are attacked by the police[82] (whereas men protesting the Istanbul Convention remain untouched[83]) and restraining and protection orders through Law No. 6284 are not properly followed.

Women's perceived disobedience and insubordination act as a primary trigger in all these incidents. In this sense, I argued that as marching women are considered as disobeying the state, divorced women are considered as disobeying their husbands, thus, women's individualization and empowerment perceived as "disobedience" is one of the common grounds binding this bottom-up and top-down counterparts of masculinist restoration together. The rising of anti-women's rights movement in Turkey indicates that patriarchal apprehension of female subordination is not hegemonic anymore. What is taken for granted in the gender order is not safe. In this context, the proposed time limitation for alimony payments without any attempts to eliminate gender inequality in education, employment, and care labor may be considered as economic and psychological violence against women who have already divorced or who wish to divorce, and an attempt to discourage women from ending their marriages full of violence and abandoning the violent environment of these marriages. To bring the Istanbul Convention and Law No. 6284 into question carries possibility to eliminate effective legal tools for combating violence against women, femicides, and gender inequality. Male self-victimization is pointed as "justification" for these possible amendments and annulments, therefore, it needs to be examined. In the next chapter, I will focus on the components of male self-victimization discourse through interviews with members of two anti-alimony groups, namely BİAP and SNM. The response that they obtained from media and the state shows the cooperation of street-level and state-level of masculinist restoration politics.

[82] Gazete Duvar (2020, July 21). Pınar Gültekin için yürüyen kadınlara polis saldırısı: Darp edilip yerlerde sürüklendiler. Accessed December 4, 2020, https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2020/07/21/pinar-gultekin-icin-yuruyen-kadinlara-polis-saldirisi-darp-edilip-yerlerde-suruklendiler.

[83] doğruhaber (2020, February 16). Yeniden Refah Partisi: İstanbul Sözleşmesi ile ilgili önlem almaya davet ediyoruz. Accessed December 4, 2020, https://dogruhaber.com.tr/haber/642465-yeniden-refah-partisi-istanbul-sozlesmesi-ile-ilgili-onlem-almaya-davet-ediyoruz/.

Chapter 3:

ANTI-ALIMONY CAMPAIGNERS: MOBILIZATION, DEMANDS, EXPERIENCES

This chapter aims to explore the dynamics of anti-alimony campaign as a bottom-up counterpart of the politics of masculinist restoration in Turkey and to scrutinize anti-alimony discourse, especially in terms of formation and workings of male self-victimization in relation to women's subordination and "costs of masculinity" (Messner, 1997). It presents experiences, protests, and demands in the anti-alimony campaign through interviews with 9 divorced men and 3 female allies from lower- and middle-class, all members of Platform for Divorced People and Family (BİAP) and Indefinite Alimony Victims (SNM). I conducted interviews with the campaigners in three different cities, renamed as City A, City B, and City C. The duration of interviews varied from 1.5 hours to 9 hours. I preferred to meet with divorced men in public spaces and they did not propose otherwise.

I aimed to understand the interviewees' perception of masculinity that is dominant today in terms of socially privileged (and fragile, at the same time,) status as the head of the family, gendered division of labor, and economic, social, and emotional struggles that men may experience, as well as this perception's relation to male self-victimization. Therefore, I designed my interview questions with divorced men to probe into their thoughts on the decision to marry, economic struggles in marriage and divorce, gendered marital roles, men's perception of violence against women and femicides, their experiences during the divorce process, amounts of alimony and/or child support, compensation and marital property distribution if adjudged, and differences between their experiences as married and divorced in society (including their perception of themselves). The interviews with their female allies mainly involved similar questions. But since my interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended, female allies' experiences as women in male-dominated Turkish society sometimes carried the course of interviews to different directions such as sexist treatments they experienced in anti-alimony groups and in society. In addition, to understand how female allies contribute to male domination, I asked questions about their perception about gender roles in family and society. To analyze the accounts of interviewees in a broader context, I utilize studies on men and masculinities and feminist literature on marriage, male dominance, men's movements,

and divorce. I also appeal to TBNA 2014 Report's results, TurkStat's statistical data, and accounts of lawyers whom I interviewed on men's common behavior at divorce, domestic and care labor, violence against women, and femicides.

I divided this chapter into four main sections. The first section focuses on discourse, mobilization, lobbying, demands, and political stance of anti-alimony campaigns. It also discusses why I needed a distinction between victimization and self-victimization. The second section elaborates anti-alimony campaigners' experiences on marriage, divorce, and post-divorce with a focus on gendered marital roles, division of domestic responsibilities, economic and emotional struggles, men's strategies to walk away with the least economic damage as well as to justify these strategies in divorce, and loss of socially privileged status as the head of the family. The answers of female campaigners on gender roles are also important to show the role of women in reproducing and consolidating male dominance, and the construction of power relations between women and men.

Moving from that, the third section analyzes the accounts of anti-alimony campaigners on violence against women and femicides in relation to Law No. 6284 and alimony regulation. It discusses how anti-alimony discourse normalize and even encourage violence against women and femicides through using male self-victimization as a justification tool. This section also discusses the role of male violence against women in the formation of dominant and overt form of masculinity. The fourth chapter investigates how anti-alimony campaigners position fragmenting "this woman" and "that woman" in the formation of their self-victimization. Anti-alimony discourse on "true" women's rights is also briefly discussed in the fourth section.

3.1 Framing the Anti-Alimony Campaign: The Discourse, Mobilization, Political Stance, and Demands

Anti-alimony discourse adopts liberal legal frames that have become dominant in the civil rights struggles such as antidiscrimination, formal equal treatment, gender equality, and neutrality. They define the right to alimony for an indefinite period as "lifelong punishment"[84], "economic and psychological violence"[85], "human rights

[84] Vatan Gazetesi (2019, November 2). Nafaka düzenlemesi! En az 2, en fazla 5 yıl… Accessed September 15, 2020. http://www.gazetevatan.com/suresiz-nakafa-kalkacak-mi--1282840-gundem/.

[85] The Platform for Divorced People and Family, Facebook page. Accessed September 15, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/groups/biaplatformu/permalink/903775819758235/.

violation"[86], or "nightmare of thousands of men".[87] They use these frames to undermine what they perceive as women's allegedly excessive legal rights in marriage and divorce. According to them, alimony, property distribution, and pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages in family law and Law No. 6284 enacted because of women's rights organizations (feminists) discriminate against men simply because they are men. Therefore, these legislations damage gender equality. As many interviewees emphasized, they claim that they do not distinguish women's rights from men's rights, they defend human rights. From a feminist perspective, gender-neutrality is a male standard (MacKinnon, 1989). "Sex inequality is the true name for women's social condition" (MacKinnon, 1989: 242) and "sexual difference is political difference; sexual difference is the difference between freedom and subjection" (Pateman, 1988: 6). Gender-neutral approach to civil and legal rights conceals the inequalities women face based on their sex in terms of their poverty, financial dependence on men in marriage, workplace, or welfare, and every form of male violence against them in everyday life. The discourse of "human" rights in the context of alimony debates mainly makes invisible of socially, politically, and economically constructed gender inequality between women and men.

Anti-alimony campaigners deem alimony regulation "encouragement for divorced women to cohabit without being legally married"[88] (creating an "immoral" woman figure), and "fetters for the sacred institution of family"[89]. Even in cases of violence against women, campaigners tend to place divorced men/fathers in "victim" position. According to the campaigners, since laws discriminate against and aggrieve men, they are obliged to commit these crimes as a result of psychological, emotional, and economic difficulties that they have to face. They claim that these legislations are the *reason* behind domestic violence against women and femicides. Because of these legislations, men are suspended from their homes, hostility between ex-spouses does not end for a long time after divorce, and men cannot be happy in their new families when they remarry–all these leading men to depression (they name it as "the down-trodden syndrome [*haksızlığa*

[86] The Platform for Divorced People and Family, Facebook page. Accessed September 15, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/groups/biaplatformu/permalink/903775819758235/.

[87] Yeni Akit (2019, January 11). Nafaka kalkacak mı? Süresiz nafakaya Erdoğan'dan ayar geldi! Accessed September 15, 2020, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/nafaka-kalkacak-mi-suresiz-nafakaya-erdogandan-ayar-geldi-492223.html.

[88] Yeni Akit (2018, August 12). Süresiz nafaka boşanmış kadınları nikahsız yaşamaya teşvik ediyor. Accessed August 12, 2020, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/suresiz-nafaka-bosanmis-kadinlari-nikahsiz-yasamaya-tesvik-ediyor-561532.html.

[89] Yeni Akit (2019, March 15). Vekil bugünü 30 yıl önceden görmüş! Süresiz nafaka felaketimiz olur. Accessed September 15, 2020. https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/2-vekil-bugunu-30-yil-onceden-gormus-suresiz-nafaka-felaketimiz-olur-658608.html.

uğramışlık sendromu]) and to resort to violence against their wives or ex-wives.[90] They even started a hashtag campaign on Twitter: #NafakaCinayetSebebidir (#AlimonyIsTheCauseOfFemicides).[91] This hashtag seems to serve both as a justification for femicides and a threat addressing women who receive alimony.

In their defense of time limitation to alimony, they frequently claim that their demands are designed in a way that would not aggrieve neither men nor women.[92] However, they mostly tend to underline "costs of masculinity" and "men's oppression" in their daily posts as well as in the interviews we had. Men's health problems in relation to problems in marriage and divorce and inability to work, psychological problems due to emotional and physical violence against men at home, inability to get remarried due to alimony debts, and inability to take care of subsequent wife and children in the case of remarriage are emphasized as evidence of men's oppression (and male victimization).[93] In this sense, Messner (1997) offers a useful distinction in understanding anti-alimony discourse on that men are oppressed as much as (even more than) women. He argues that,

> "(…) the view that 'everyone oppressed by sexism' strips the concept of 'oppression' of its political meaning and obscures the social relations of domination and subordination. (…) Men tend to pay a price for their power. They are often emotionally limited and commonly suffer poor health and a short life expectancy than women. These problems, however, are best viewed not as gender oppression but as the 'costs of being on top"' (Kann, 1986) – or at least of *trying* to be on top. These shifts indicate that these men would like to stop paying these costs but not that they desire to cease being 'on top'". (Messner, 1997: 22)

This distinction between "oppression" and "costs of being on top" helps understanding why this victimization needs to be defined as *self-victimization*, since it lacks any questioning or criticism on gendered arrangements in work and family relations in the male-dominated Turkish society. The laws that anti-alimony campaigners point as sources of their victimization adopt gender equality or aim to combat violence against

[90] change.org petition (2014). Nafaka Zulmüne Son Verin. Accessed September 15, 2020. https://www.change.org/p/süresiz-nafaka-zulmüne-son-verin-30-yildir-uygulamada-olan-bu-çağdişi-yasayi-lütfen-güncelleyin-süresiz-yoksulluk-nafakasi-zulmüne-son-verin.

[91] https://twitter.com/search?q=%23NafakaCinayetSebebidir&src=typed_query

[92] Erdem, A.K. (2020, November 12). Kadın dernekleri Bakan Gül'ün "nafaka açıklamasından" memnun… Düzenleme isteyenler tepkili: Bakan feministleirn provokasyonuna geldi. Accessed February 15, 2021. https://www.indyturk.com/node/271326/haber/kadın-dernekleri-bakan-gülün-nafaka-açıklamasından-memnun…-düzenleme-isteyenler.

[93] Yeni Akit (2019, January 12). 2 milyon nafaka mağduru. Accessed December 25, 2020. https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/2-milyon-nafaka-magduru-3430598.

women, and they offer ways to eliminate possible wrongdoings. Therefore, the main reason underlying the request for amendment or annulment in the relevant laws is not the elimination of "victimhood", but the legal establishment of male privilege. "Victimhood" here is stems from a subjective feeling of "entitlement".

Chapter 2 has explored how breaks in the gender order *to the detriment of* male privilege and domination due to large-scale social transformations such as modernization or the rise of organized feminist movements resulting in changes in work and family life create a "masculinity crisis" closely related to hegemonic masculine ideals, and the state's response to it. Kandiyoti (2016) locates reflections of this crisis in politics of masculinist restoration which has bottom-up and top-down counterparts. Kimmel (1987a) argues that men's organized responses to masculinity crises vary and proposes a categorization as "masculinist", "antifeminist", and "profeminist" responses (Kimmel, 1987a; cited in Messner, 1997). In this context, based on their antifeminist arguments, this research categorizes anti-alimony campaign as antifeminist response to masculinity crisis in contemporary Turkey.

3.1.1 The Mobilization of BİAP and SNM

BİAP[94] and SNM[95] first appeared as a Facebook page; the former in 2014, the latter in 2018. Both groups are still active on social media. BİAP's emergence involves SNM's emergence too. I visited Serpil, the founder and head of the Platform, where she lived in City C, and we spent the whole day together. She explained in detail the establishment of the Platform, the participation of its members, their standards in admittance of members to the Platform, how they contacted deputies from the ruling and opposition parties, and how they were called to the Marital Breakdown Commission in 2016. Serpil confidently said, "The government did not attempt to make amendment in this regulation out of blue, all by itself. They did it because we set out to realize our demand for fairness in the regulation."

The story of creating this Facebook page started with Serpil's son Suat's divorce after a 4-month marriage in 2013. The court adjudged 150 TL alimony for Suat's ex-wife.

[94] BİAP's Facebook page has 5,4K followers by February 25, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/groups/biaplatformu.

[95] SNM's Facebook page has 3,3K followers by February 25, 2020. https://www.facebook.com/groups/1239969499490532.

However, because he did not pay it for a year, Suat received a notice that he would get preventive detention if he did not pay his debt, upon his ex-wife's appeal to enforcement and bankruptcy office. With his mother's help, he paid his debt and did not go to jail. After a while, Suat's ex-wife filed a case for increasing the amount of alimony and it was raised to 200 TL. Upon these incidents, Serpil wondered whether his son was the only one who had to deal with this kind of legal issues and searched on the Internet. According to her account, she discovered some groups on social media that mostly consisted of men. She described these groups as being "terribly misogynist" and defined them as "composed of men who were victims because of their ex-wives". After she received misogynist reactions, she decided to create the BİAP Facebook page. A lawyer followed her posts and encouraged her through direct messages. Serpil also met women from various women's rights organizations, but she complained that they were not interested in her problems, and they did not defend her rights as a woman. Then, she had a meeting with KADEM (Women and Democracy Association):

> Q: How was your meetings with them?
>
> Serpil: They were against any amendment at the beginning; but after I told them victims' stories, they were convinced. They said, "Bring 6 male victims. We want to listen to them." They formed a jury. (…) Those in KADEM was shocked when they heard victims' stories. They told us, "You fight for a just cause. We will prepare a report for March 8".

As it is understood from Serpil's account, BİAP had an influence on KADEM's legal evaluation discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 54). KADEM's stance in the debates caused a conflict in BİAP. A couple of members published a post targeting KADEM, believing that KADEM used them to reinforce its own popularity. Serpil got angry at their post, because she did not want to provoke women's rights organizations. But she had a strong authority on BİAP and ordered other members to take back their retweets in private direct message groups. Upon that, BİAP split up and these members in conflict with Serpil formed Indefinite Alimony Victims (SNM).

As far as I understand from Serpil's account, men who left BİAP expected Serpil to have their demands for alimony accepted as soon as possible. When KADEM's evaluation did not accept all of their demands as they desired, they suspected that Serpil did not sufficiently fight for their rights. This was not the first time Serpil had problems with men in BİAP. At the beginning, men questioned how they could count on a woman

to stand up for men's rights. She described how the men she met through BİAP were misogynist most of the time, but she did not consider men that she admitted as members to BİAP as misogynists, probably because they did not turn against her yet. She felt empathy towards them and interpreted their misogynist reactions appeared time to time as being "angry at all women because they had bad experiences."

Serpil's account on how BİAP became popular reveals media's and certain lawyers' guidance and influence, their standards for admitting people to BİAP, and the strategy they followed to be invited to the Commission of Marital Breakdown:

> Serpil: We weeded out useless people and formed a group consisting of informed people. I prepared some texts about the failures of the existing law and posted them on our Facebook page. We taught people in our group how to use Twitter, most of them did not know about it. We tried to call papers' attention between 2014 and 2016 and randomly sent out articles. Some local papers published our writings. In the meantime, the petition on change.org started to draw attention.[96] A columnist from *Yeni Akit* reached me after he saw our petition. After that, we built a long-lasting connection. How were we invited to the Family Commission[97]? It was December 2015. That lawyer who followed my posts told me, "The Assembly established a commission on marriage and divorce in January. Your writings are influential, send some e-mails to people in the Commission." We waited until January. The Commission was formed, and then I started to write and share with other people in our group. At certain hours in the evenings, we searched for e-mail contacts of all deputies in the Commission. We sent countless e-mails to them, the e-mail started with "Father State, Mother State" to avoid any distinction between the two genders. One day, I had a call and they invited me to the Commission to talk about alimony. (…) I was told to inform Ministry of Family about BİAP, that they tracked and investigated groups like ours. They then gave me an e-mail address. We sent posts on social media pages of deputies in the Ministry of Family. (…) The state authorities think that various unfavorable ideologies may infiltrate most of social organizations; therefore, they care a lot about the groups that are not influenced by any ideology. Put this in your notes, it is very important. We blocked people who came to our page to insult Kılıçdaroğlu or Erdoğan. They frazzled me the most. I reached everywhere from the state authorities to workshops, they endorsed me everywhere, but these men in our group frazzled me the most.

[96] The total number in the petition on change.org by February 25, 2020 is 17,452. Considering efforts of pro-government media outlets, and the government's frequent announcements on the topic, this number can be viewed quite few. Moreover, it contradicts with the claim of alimony opponents on approximate number of "alimony victims" is 2 million. https://www.change.org/p/süresiz-nafaka-zulmüne-son-verin-30-yildir-uygulamada-olan-bu-çağdişi-yasayi-lütfen-güncelleyin-süresiz-yoksulluk-nafakasi-zulmüne-son-verin.

[97] Serpil named what women's rights organizations (and I, in this research) name as "the Commission of Marital Breakdown" as Family Commission. The way of her expression is interesting to understand how the anti-alimony campaigners and women's rights organizations perceive it in different ways.

Q: How was your experience in the Commission?

Serpil: I made a presentation and all deputies paid attention to what I said. Nobody argued with me.

The Marital Breakdown Commission and increasing visibility in pro-government media outlets such as *Yeni Akit* brought new members to BİAP. Serpil and other members also stated that people who wanted to find someone to get married came to their Facebook page too, but they did not allow this kind of things and blocked people who have such intentions.

Serpil emphasized how the state attached importance to the social media groups which did not adopt any specific ideology. The heads of SNM had the same claim. It seems that these specific ideologies refer to ideologies that the government disapproves of, because BİAP does represent an ideology intertwined with nationalist, patriotic, and familialist ideas which can be considered under right-wing ideology. For instance, the usernames of Serpil and many other members of BİAP and SNM on their social media accounts include the hashtag #ToProtectTheFamilyIsToProtectTheNation (#AileyiKorumakVatanıKorumaktır). Even though she claimed that she did not adopt a specific ideology at the beginning, it seems that she actually adopted the dominant ideology approved by the AKP government in order to fulfill BİAP's demands. Their preferences on who to meet to discuss their demands are informative about their political stance, too.[98] Furthermore, sometimes, these preferences may involve contradictions. For instance, even though members of SNM had nationalist statements in their interviews, they held a meeting with HÜDAPAR, a Kurdish and Islamist political party to discuss their demands.[99]

3.1.2 Anti-Alimony Campaigners' Political Stance and Anti-Feminism

Kandiyoti (2016) remarks that gender constitutes one central node of ideology and practice in gender politics in Turkey. Gender, a key pillar of populist discourse, is used

[98] Anti-alimony campaigners' preferences of political parties to discuss their demands were briefly introduced in Chapter 1. (p. 5).

[99] İLKHA (2021, January 30). Süresiz nafaka mağdurları sorunlarının çözülmesini istiyor. Accessed February 5, 2021, https://ilkha.com/guncel/suresiz-nafaka-magdurlari-sorunlarinin-cozulmesini-istiyor-151151.

to make a sharp distinction between genuinely national "us" and anti-national "them". She elaborates this argument as follows:

> "Gender norms and specifically women's conduct and propriety play a key role in delineating the boundaries between "us" (God-fearing, Sunni, AKP supporters) and a "them" consisting of all political detractors and minorities, cast as potentially treasonous and immoral. (…) These modes of 'othering' inevitably expose many sections of the citizenry –not to mention women and sexual minorities– who fail to meet government-decreed norms of propriety to potential intimidation, harassment and violence. (Kandiyoti, 2016: 105-106.)

The accounts of anti-alimony campaigner interviewees on their approaches to women's rights activists, certain political parties, and ex-wives clearly show the influence of this populist discourse. Feminists are the most prominent "anti-national them" in the anti-alimony discourse. In terms of political parties, they sometimes oppose CHP (Republican People's Party) which has often been targeted by President Erdoğan. But anti-alimony campaigners' main "anti-national them" is HDP (People's Democratic Party), a left-wing, Kurdish political party heavily criminalized by the AKP government with accusation of being in cooperation with PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party).[100] Another "them" is divorce lawyers with other reasons than political ones: Alimony opponents strongly believe that divorce lawyers are against any amendment in the existing alimony regulation because they receive unearned income through attorney fees as the alimony amount increases.

As Serpil talked about her attempts to contact political parties about complaints and claims of the members of BİAP, she listed almost all political parties in the Assembly of Turkey, except for HDP. That engaged my attention, and I asked her if she had contacted HDP too, and she answered as follows:

> Serpil: No. Because HDP has been aggressive towards this issue from the very beginning, I cannot find anything to talk to them about. Also, I don't like that party. I liked Demirtaş at the beginning. He looked so democratic, played *saz* and so on. But then, the trenches thing[101] happened–what is the

[100] As an example: Cumhuriyet (2019, March 2). Erdoğan'dan HDP'lilere: Sizin bu ülkede yeriniz yok. Accessed September 20, 2020. https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/erdogandan-hdplilere-sizin-bu-ulkede-yeriniz-yok-1274348.

[101] In December 2015, after the summer saw a peace process between the Turkish government and Kurdish insurgents failed and the decades-long conflict flared up again, Turkey declared open-ended curfews in several Kurdish towns and cities as part of their operations against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party). In these strongholds of the Kurdish political movement, young people who were not officially PKK militants but often had sympathies self-organized to unilaterally declare autonomy, leading to months-long intense clashes with Turkish troops. These clashes came to be known as the incidents or the resistance of

meaning of a declaration of autonomy by a municipality from the Republic of Turkey? That really opened up my eyes. I lost my trust in that party. *Purple Roof* is that party's extension, HPD has infiltrated there. Wherever HDP gets into, problems arise. They work for something else.

Q: What do you think about their "real intention"?

Serpil: Probably to cause a chaos and establish a Kurdish state.

Q: How could they do it through women's rights?

Serpil: They all are connected to Europe. They receive funds, money from the Netherlands, here and there. A poster saying, 'All women to the streets!' came from abroad to Turkey. They aim to cause chaos and cause civil war.

The assumption that Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation is an extension of HDP sets an example of misinformation circulated among anti-alimony campaigners. Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation is an NGO established by feminists in 1990 for the purpose of combatting violence against women[102], decades before the foundation of HDP in 2012. Interviewees associated women's rights organizations with HDP (by also referring feminists as "feminazis" or "femifascist viruses" on their social media accounts[103]) so they criminalize feminists and women's rights organizations. The comments implying that women's rights organizations are puppets of "the West" and "backyard of HDP" became much clearer in interviews with two groups of divorced men in City A and City B. These comments also show how much AKP governments' political discourse on divorce, marriage, and procreation has influence on the campaigners. During the interview with three divorced men–Fuat, Davut, and Selim–in City B, while we were talking about legal regulations on alimony and prevention of violence against women, Fuat suddenly carried the course of the interview to another direction:

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the trenches, depending on one's position towards them, named after the canals, that dug around the perimeter of neighborhoods to mark territory and stop armored vehicles from getting in. The PKK wasn't directly involved, however, there is evidence that it did support the youth militia that coordinated the efforts. The former co-party leader of HDP, Selahattin Demirtaş, made a speech about these incidents in his defense in the case where he was tried on accusation of "leading a terrorist organization". He told that they, as deputies of HDP, solved conflicts through convincing dialogues in 2014. However, he did not aware of how trenches were more common, referring to incidents in 2015. For further information about defense and self-criticism of Demirtaş: Sputnik Türkiye (2018, April 12). Demirtaş'tan hendek ve barikat özeleştirisi: Yanıldım. Accessed September 20, 2020. https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/201804121033008279-selahattin-demirtas-hendek-barikat-ozelestiri/.

[102] Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı [Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation]. Who We Are? Accessed September 20, 2020. https://en.morcati.org.tr/about-us/who-we-are/.

[103] For some examples, https://twitter.com/trbiaplatformu/status/1241303896766779392, received December 25, 2020.

> Fuat: Do you know how things are? All these are tricks. They enacted this law [on alimony] in 1988, but they did not consider just that period, they had plans for 8-10 years after. (…) They ("the West") caused rightist-leftist conflict in the 80s. After the 80s, there was the Alevi-Sunni conflict, but they couldn't achieve their goals. Now, there is the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, but they cannot achieve their goals. Secular vs. anti-secular. Muslim vs. anti-Muslim. The core unit of society is family. They say let's destroy the family structure through either TV series or laws, they say we can achieve our goals in this way. Their goal is to create broken families, children addicted to drugs.
>
> Q: What do you mean by destroying the family structure?
>
> Fuat: In the simplest term, this alimony issue. The second marriage is destroyed. Erdoğan said "have 3 or 4 children". But people cannot get married, how can they have children?
>
> Davut: According to the last data from TurkStat, there is a decrease in birth rates. Divorces increased and marriages decreased. As our President said, our family structure is under attack. (…) There are groups that are against the new law [on alimony]. HDP is against it already. Feminist NGOs, Women's Councils (*Kadın Meclisleri*), We Will Stop Femicide, Purple Roof, I know all of them. (…) The darkest moment in history is 1988. We learned the truth behind it. There was a group called Daisies (*Papatyalar*). Due to their pressure, the Law No. 3444 was enacted in 1988. Then, in 2002, another amendment on sharing marital property was introduced, which is another scandal. In 2012, the Law No. 6284 was passed. I don't think there would be any improvement to the nuclear family structure in this country unless these legislations are corrected.

Yasin, residing in City A with other four campaigners–Melek, Emrah, Mehmet, and Hamit– old that, in his opinion, feminists were related to "the Church" and wanted to destroy family.

> Yasin: There is a sister of ours (*bacımız*). She's a true feminist and she supports us. She said that she saw in person that feminists received a lot of cash from the Church. They gave money to them so as to help feminists destroy family structure. When she witnessed that moment, she decided that these feminists were ill-intentioned and decided to support us.

What Yasin said sounds almost like a conspiracy theory, but AKP governments have normalized this kind of expressions that some "the West", "external powers" and

"inner enemies" conspire against Turkey "to destroy family and country's existence" in its populist discourse.[104]

As seen in Yasin's account too, "the true feminist" was another topic in the interviews. Serpil told how important it was for women to have an occupation, how families should not only steer their daughters towards marriage and instead should attach importance to their daughters' education. I commented that she sounded like a feminist. Upon that, she said "I am a true feminist", because she argued that women should find a job or apply to receive social aid to eliminate their need for alimony after divorce. According to her, she was the one who wanted divorced women to be free from their ex-husbands whereas feminists wanted to keep women in touch with their ex-husbands, and, accordingly, put women's lives in danger, because ex-husbands who experienced a mental breakdown due to alimony debts would commit violence or murder. This was an unusual perspective to me, because as a feminist activist who has spent many years in women's movement in Turkey, I was quite sure that feminists did not want women to be murdered by their ex-husbands, or to become needy. I pushed a little more and asked about the role of the state, its policies, social and cultural structure of the Turkish society, and the subordination of women. Though she accepted these factors affected women's lives deeply and radically, she tended to find mothers responsible in their wrong ways of childrearing, and to lay the burden of "standing on their own feet" on women alone.

Indeed, some statements of the campaigners show similarity with what feminists defend, such as girls' education or access to employment and childcare services. At what point then do they separate from women's rights defenders? Feminists want equality for every woman no matter their marital status or age whereas anti-alimony campaigners' statements refer to women who are not within their families yet or anymore. For instance, in their accounts, divorced men did not particularly demand their subsequent or future wives achieve these equal opportunities. They did not ask for these opportunities to make

[104] For instance, the President Erdoğan's in his speech in 2020, at the meeting of 86th Anniversary of Suffrage of Women declared that they consider any attacks to family institution as an attack to their existence as the party. Gündoğmuş, Y.N., Yıldızalp Özmen, M. & Kaplan, E. (2020, December 3). Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Aileye yönelik her saldırıyı, varlığımıza yapılmış kabul ediyoruz. *AA.* Accessed February 7, 2021. https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-aileye-yonelik-her-saldiriyi-varligimiza-yapilmis-kabul-ediyoruz/2064314. In his another speech, among many similar others, the President Erdoğan emphasized that internal and external powers constantly try to divide Turkey. Samsun Kent Haber (2019, May 19). Cumhurbaşkanı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 19 Mayıs'ın 100. yılında Samsun'da konuştu. Accessed December 26, 2020. http://www.samsunkenthaber.com.tr/haber/guncel/cumhurbaskani-recep-tayyip-erdogan-19-mayisin-100-yilinda-samsunda-konustu/8061.html.

women their equals, they wanted these so as avoid paying alimony and compensation or sharing their marital property. Furthermore, feminists mainly criticize male privilege in gendered arrangements in work, family, and social relations whereas anti-alimony campaigners are gender-blind in terms of inequalities faced by women in society. They tend to ignore institutionalized male domination in state, society, family, and work life completely–all criticized by feminists. Serpil's perspective also shows how she normalizes and justifies violence against women and femicides on the grounds of psychological struggles that men face. This way of thinking is far from feminist criticism of male violence and femicides, which points to gender inequality as one of the main reasons.

Besides, these distinctions in anti-alimony discourse may be considered as a useful tool for campaigners in the construction of male self-victimization since this sort of discourse guides public opinion to make moral calculations, decide on who is "good (us)" and "evil (them)" (Bouris, 2007: 4). At first glance, it may seem that anti-alimony campaigners mainly put people into "good us" and "evil them" clusters depending on people's positions towards anti-alimony campaigners' goals. But the campaigners' accounts on feminists, women's rights organizations, and certain political parties as well as their distinction between being "pro-family" and "anti-family" also reveals that political and ideological polarizations reinforced in populist discourse of the AKP government have an impact on the anti- alimony campaigners in their way of grouping people. This indicates that anti-alimony campaigners construct "male victimization" in the framework that is approved by the dominant political atmosphere.

3.1.3 Demands of Anti-Alimony Groups

There are some differences between demands of BİAP and SNM. The members of BİAP explained their main demands as *1) Alimony payments should be limited to one year at least, and five years at most.* The last proposed amendment in alimony regulation announced by the Minister of Justice in 2020[105] seems to be inspired by the BİAP version of this demand (as maximum limit is 6 years, minimum limit is 2 year). *2) If the woman*

[105] Independent Türkçe (2020, November 11). Accessed January 10, 2021. https://www.indyturk.com/node/270711/adalet-bakanı-gül'den-"nafaka"-açıklaması-değişiklik-için-yasal-düzenleme-gerekiyor.

who receives alimony is still in poverty after 5 years, the Republic of Turkey should fulfill its duty as a social state and create a social aid fund, then provide financial assistance to the woman through this fund. They have a suggestion for how this fund could be created: Couples would make a small payment to the municipalities when applying for civil marriage.

As I investigated their Facebook page[106], I realized that there were slight differences between what they told me in the interviews and their demands on social media:

1) *Alimony must be in proportion to the duration of marriage.*

This simply means that the duration of alimony payment must be determined according to how long a couple was married for. For instance, if a couple was married for 5 years, the duration for alimony payment would be limited to 5 years. This demand may be shaped after KADEM's legal evaluation of alimony, because they proposed the same recommendation.

2) *For alimony debtor men who work for minimum wage, the state must create a fund and the alimony for the woman must be paid through this fund.*
3) *The waiting period for rejected divorce cases must be reduced from 3 years to 1 year.*
4) *Joint custody.*
5) *The current implementation of seeing children must be removed. Child delivery units must be established in the provincial directorates of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Policies*.

I need to briefly discuss the fourth and the fifth demands. First of all, joint custody means elimination of child support, the economic support paid by the parent who does not have child custody. Arrendell's (1992, 1995) study on divorced fathers in the US suggests that fathers' rights discourse lacks a discussion of their responsibilities towards children *before* the divorce (Arrendell, 1992, 1995: cited in Messner, 1997). But they passionately argue for the right to joint custody *after*. This observation is true for "victim fathers" who demand joint custody in Turkey. According to AÇEV's (Mother Child Education Foundation) survey on fatherhood in Turkey in 2017, the majority (91%) of fathers with children aged 0-10 states that the primary caregiver to their children is their wives. On an ordinary weekday, fathers spend approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes with

[106] Boşanmış İnsanlar ve Aile Platformu [The Platform for Divorced People and Family]. "About". Accessed January 10, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/groups/biaplatformu/about.

their children, 9 hours and 20 minutes at work, and 1 hour and 20 minutes with their friends.[107] TurkStat's statistics on children in 2019 show that mothers are entrusted with child custody with a rate of 76% whereas this rate is 24% for fathers.[108] It seems that the common legal assumption after divorce is that children should spend the majority of their time with mother for their best interest. In their analysis of interviews with father's rights activists in the US, Bertoia and Drakich (1995) conclude that "the rhetoric of fathers' rights gives the illusion of equality, but in essence, the demands are to continue the practice of inequality in postdivorce but not with legal sanction" (Bertoia and Drakich, 1995: 252; quoted in Messner, 1997: 47). This is true for demands of "victim fathers", because they mainly want to support their children economically however and whenever they want without any legal sanction (this pattern will be seen in the interviews with divorced men in the second section and with women in Chapter 4). Furthermore, as it will be discussed in Chapter 4 focusing on women's accounts, child custody may be a tool to threaten women in the divorce process and to continue harassing women after divorce. Therefore, joint custody would probably pave the way to "legalize" these harassments over children and lay child's economic needs solely on women. In addition, even though anti-alimony campaigners frequently underline that they are only against indefinite alimony and not child support, this demand indicates the opposite.

1) The payment term should be limited to 1 year at most for short-term marriages and, 3 years at most for long-term marriages.

The problem with this demand is that it does not specify the duration determining "long-term" and "short-term" marriages. For instance, a 25-year marriage could be long-term, and limiting alimony to 3 years may mean leaving the woman without any financial support or opportunity to work at an old age. Moreover, considering the absence of any proposed improvement in average amounts in the proposed amendment, approximate amounts of alimony[109] would not be enough to sustain a person.

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[107] For further information about the research on fatherhood in Turkey: Akçınar, B. (2017, June.) *Involved Fatherhood and its Determinants in Turkey; Executive Summary.* Mother Child Education Foundation. https://www.acev.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1_involved-fatherhood-and-its-determinants-in-turkey.pdf.

[108] Turkish Statistical Institution (TurkStat). *İstatistiklerle Çocuk 2019* [Statistics on Children 2019]. Press release numbered 33733 (April 17, 2020). Accessed January 15, 2021. https://tuikweb.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=33733.

[109] According to the results of the research conducted by The Foundation of Women's Solidarity (Akçabay, 2019), the average amount of alimony adjudged by courts is 370 TL, and the average amount for over 66% is 262 TL. Akçabay, C. (2019). *Yoksulluk Nafakası Araştırması (Sosyo-Hukuki Bir İnceleme)*, Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı, Ankara. https://www.stgm.org.tr/sites/default/files/2020-09/kadin-dayanisma-vakfindan-yoksulluk-nafakasi-arastirmasi-raporu.pdf.

2) When determining the duration of alimony payment, criteria such as age, education, socioeconomic status, alimony creditor's ability to work, and length of marriage should be taken into account.

This demand arises from the false assumption among anti-alimony campaigners that women are entitled to alimony without any criteria and simply because they are women. Yet there are criteria in adjudgment of alimony: risk of falling into poverty due to divorce, written or verbal request of the person requesting alimony, condition of not having fault or gross fault and financial capability of the debtor (Akçabay, 2019). Considering TurkStat's statistics on women and discussion in this research in terms of gender inequality in social, economic, and familial relations, alimony is already provided for women in most of the cases because of the unequal conditions women face in education, socioeconomic status, ability/opportunity to work, heavy burden of caregiving.

3) The duration of alimony payment should be based on the start date of the case.

This demand actually targets temporary alimony. Temporary alimony is an amount adjudged as a precaution during the divorce case. The ultimate amount of alimony may be higher than temporary alimony according to the alimony debtor's level of income. What SNM demands is both introduction of time limitation into alimony and involvement of temporary alimony into this duration. That is, if a divorce case lasts a year (as will be seen more clearly in Chapter 4 in detail, the case is extended in case of contested divorces, if one of the parties does not accept to get divorced) and if the duration of alimony payment adjudged as one year, there would not be a need for alimony at all at the end of the case.

4) The decision of Supreme Court dated 2012, "The minimum wage does not save the woman from poverty" should be declared null and avoid.

The Foundation of Women's Solidarity's research (Akçabay, 2019) on alimony discusses the decisions of Supreme Court[110] in relation to hunger and poverty thresholds

[110] The report explains that because of the legal definition on what should be understood from the concept of "falling into poverty" mentioned in the Article 175, it is determined through rules in judicial practice (YHGK, 4.4.2018, E. 2017/1579, K. 2018/673). Indeed, in the decisions of the General Assembly of the Supreme Court (YHGK, 7.10.1998, E. 1998/2-656, K.688; YHGK, 16.05.2007, E.2007/2-275, K.275; YHGK, 11.03.2009, 2009/2-73-188), it has been adopted that those who do not have an income sufficient to meet the compulsory and necessary expenditures in order to improve the material existence of the individual such as "eating, clothing, housing, health, transportation, culture, education" should be considered as "poor". In the settled decisions of the Supreme Court, "having an income at level of minimum wage" is not considered as a phenomenon that makes it impossible to pay alimony. (YHGK, 07.10.1998, E. 1998/2-656, K.688; 26.12.2001, E. 2001/2-1158, K. 1185; 01.08.2002, E. 2002/2- 397, K. 339; 28.02.2007, E. 2007/3-84, K. 95; 16.05.2007, E. 2007/2-275, K. 275; 11.03.2009, E. 2009/2-73, K. 118;

in Turkey.[111] The Supreme Court have various decisions adjudging that minimum wage is not enough to eliminate poverty, therefore, it cannot be evaluated as an obstacle to receive alimony. But minimum wage is considered while determining the alimony amount (Akçabay, 2019). That is, courts do not adjudge the amount disproportionately to the alimony debtor's financial power.

By October 2020, the hunger threshold for a family of four is 2,482 TL; and poverty threshold is 8,086 TL.[112] The net minimum wage in Turkey in 2021 is 2,825.90 TL, which is slightly higher than the hunger threshold for a household with one provider. The Foundation of Women's Solidarity's report (Akçabay, 2019) states that "considering that majority of women have a low level of education, are excluded from workforce, and are not even covered by social security, it is observed that, under difficult economic conditions, women become increasingly vulnerable to economic violence and then psychological and physical violence" (Akçabay, 2019: 37; translation is mine). As of February 2021, the rate of unemployment in Turkey is 28.8%; however, this rate is 37.7% for women.[113] Moreover, as of September 2020, gender wage gap in Turkey is 15.6% and this gap widens as age increases and educational level decreases.[114] Women are affected by the rise of poverty more than men. However, the newspaper reports about men who committed suicide because of depression due to unemployment show that the rise of poverty and unemployment seriously affect men as well.[115] But what lacks in anti-alimony discourse and demands is that there is not any calls to the state to fulfill its responsibility towards its citizens' welfare. Instead, anti-alimony campaigners associate poverty with alimony debts while the average amount of alimony adjudged by courts is as low as 370 TL in average (Akçabay, 2019). Anti-alimony discourse focuses on men's

13.05.2009, E. 2009/3-165, K. 186; 04.05.2011, E. 2011/2-155, K. 2011/278). (Akçabay, 2019: p. 29; footnote numbered 39).

[112] Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions. *Ekim 2020 Açlık ve Yoksulluk Sınırı* [Limits of Hunger and Poverty by October 2020]. Accessed February 15, 2021. http://www.turkis.org.tr/EKIM-2020-ACLIK-VE-YOKSULLUK-SINIRI-d451750.

[113] The Research Center for Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (2021, February 10). *DİSK-AR İşsizlik ve İstihdamın Görünümü Raporu.* Accessed February 15, 2021. http://arastirma.disk.org.tr/?p=4894.

[114] International Labor Organization & Turkish Statistical Institute (2020, September 30). *Measuring the Gender Wage Gap: Turkey Case.* https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/publication/wcms_756660.pdf.

[115] For instance, one citizen wrote "work and food" in his hand and suicided in 2020. Sputnik Türkiye (2020, December 1). Eline 'iş, aş' yazan şahıs intihar etti. Accessed February 10, 2021. https://tr.sputniknews.com/turkiye/202012111043380695-eline-as-is-yazan-sahis-intihar-etti/. Another man who was a geophysics engineer suicided because he was depressed due to unemployment in 2017. Evrensel (2017, September 9). İşsizlik bir can daha aldı. Accessed February 10, 2021. https://www.evrensel.net/haber/331885/issizlik-bir-can-daha-aldi.

oppression by legislations aiming gender equality. As will be presented in the accounts of men in the second section, the number of men who would not allow their new wives to work in case of remarriage is also noteworthy. In this context, this is an indicator that anti-alimony discourse is a demand for privilege for men rather than a demand for civil rights and welfare for citizens.

5) The state should create a Social Aid Fund for alimony payments to the woman who is unable to work due to old age, and health problems at the end of the alimony payment period.

6) A Marriage Fund should be created.

These two demands are similar with BİAP's demand for a social aid fund which would be collected through payments made by newlywed couples as a part of their application of marriage to municipalities. However, SNM repeats its conditions they put forward for alimony in their second demand. Gender-blindness can be observed here as well, and the common misbelief among anti-alimony campaigners that women do not work so they can continue receiving alimony underlines this demand. For women, "being unable to work" is not related to personal choices for most of the time but to the state's policies, patriarchal social norms, and inegalitarian job market as discussed in Chapter 2. What makes the struggle for gender equality is so important is its struggle to eliminate these structural obstacles for women's empowerment in family and work life. What the state should do is to provide for women equal opportunities in education, employment, and free daycare services for the child, the elderly, and the disabled.

7) At the end of the period of alimony payment, support alimony (yardım nafakası) from descendants and ascendants should be provided for women (Turkish Civil Code Article No. 364).

Article no. 364 of TCC says "Everyone is obliged to give alimony to their descendants and siblings who would fall into poverty if they did not provide help. Siblings' alimony obligations depend on their welfare." Descendants refer to the person's children, grandchildren, and grand grandchildren, while ascendants refer to the person's parents, grandparents, and grand grandparents. The person may also ask for alimony from their siblings. This demand simply says that at the end of limited alimony payment period, the woman's family members should take care of her.

8) Preventive detention for those who cannot fulfill their responsibility for paying alimony should be abolished.

Alimony is a debt necessitating preventive detention in case of default. As will be seen in Chapter 4 focusing on women's experiences and problems in collecting alimony and/or child support, preventive detention is an effective tool to prevent alimony debtors from not paying alimony and/or child support. In this sense, SNM demands not only time limitation to alimony payments but also the annulment of legal sanctions if alimony debtors (men) does not pay alimony even in that limited time.

9) *As of the date of enactment of the limited alimony regulation, alimony debtors who complete or exceed their duration of payment should stop paying.*

This is a retrospective demand. It basically means that those who have divorced under the existing family law should be exempt from its requirements.

10) The duration of de facto separations must be reduced from 3 years to 1 year.

11) All the demands above should be valid for both consensual and contested divorces.

This is an interesting demand, because consensual divorce is sort of an agreement between the couple. This agreement may vary depending on couples' specific conditions and needs. These conditions and needs may require alimony payment to last longer than 3 years. This demand may indicate the regret that men feel after they accepted the conditions that they have determined together with their ex-wives.

Lastly, it is unclear that these demands address only poor men as anti-alimony campaigners claim. Interviewees were men who received pension, had rental income, or owned small businesses. Only one of them was a subcontracted worker. Most of them had their own real estates. In addition, it seems that campaigners consider even wealthy celebrities as "alimony victims". During the interviews, they referred to Acun Ilıcalı many times, saying "he could be a victim one day under this law." Acun Ilıcalı is a TV producer who was the 43rd among the top taxpayers in 2018.[116] His consensual divorce with Şeyma Subaşı created a stir because of the total amount alimony and child support, a whopping 125,000 TL.[117] Once more, this indicates that being a man underlies being a victim in the anti-alimony discourse regardless of class inequalities. Besides, melting all men from various social classes in the same pot in terms of being "alimony victim" ignores poor

[116] NTV (2018, November 2). Acun Ilıcalı ve Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ vergi rekortmenleri listesinde. Accessed February 10, 2021. https://www.ntv.com.tr/yasam/acun-ilicali-ve-kivanc-tatlitug-vergi-rekortmenleri-listesinde,EqXoddeciUWX-cwzG2fwGg.

[117] Haber Türk (2018, November 28). Acun Ilıcalı eski eşlerine ne kadar nafaka ödüyor? Accessed February 10, 2021. https://www.haberturk.com/acun-ilicali-eski-eslerine-ne-kadar-nafaka-oduyor-2239096-magazin.

and unemployed women and men and their financial problems. In the interviews or news reports on pro-government media outlets, I did not observe any discussion or criticism on the rise of unemployment and poverty in Turkey.

3.2 Anti-Alimony Campaigners' Experiences on Marriage and Divorce

Before I present the accounts of anti-alimony campaigners, I would like to explain conditions during the interviews. I had on-one interview with only one of the divorced men. Other interviews were in groups of 3 and 5 people. I believe that this was an obstacle to delve into the details that would allow us to see the nuances in the personal stories. In any case, I asked my interview questions that were designed as specific to divorced men. But interviewees tended to avoid many questions. During the interviews with groups, I frequently had a feeling that interviewees may have perceived me as an audience who had to make a decision about which side was right and which side was wrong in alimony debates. Because there were various answers coming from various interviewees at the same time, sometimes, I felt disorientated in asking the next question related to their answers. On the bright side, how anti-alimony campaigners interacted with one another made it possible to see common grounds that they agreed on. Moreover, these interactions made it easier to understand how misinformation about alimony and Law No. 6284 circulated among anti-alimony campaigners.

When I asked, "How did you decide to get married?", the answers were short and clear, only describing how they started a new family and how this marriage was broken. Interviewees tended to jump to the divorce process and its aftermath. Even though divorced men did not give details about their experiences within the marriage, their brief accounts on the path leading to divorce give an insight into their general apprehension of having a family, division of domestic responsibilities, marriage, and divorce.

How interviewees described their marriage types can be seen in Table 3.1. While two cases were consensual, seven divorces were contested. The ground for divorce case on paper in general is irreconcilable difference. The data in TBNA Report 2014 shows that the top five reasons for men to divorce are inner circle/relatives, emotional relationship, economic problems, adultery, and domestic duties and responsibilities (p. 73). Divorced men's accounts were coherent with this data, especially in terms of a strong belief that the effect of "inner circle" had on their divorce. Inner circle mainly refers to

the people around the couple such as family members, relatives, co-workers, and friends. Divorced men tend to seek out the reason that ended their marriages.

	Level of Education	Type of Marital Union	Age of Marriage
Mehmet	Middle School Graduate	Love Marriage	25
Yasin	Bachelor's Degree	N/A	31
Hamit	Bachelor's Degree	Love Marriage	32
Emrah	Primary School Graduate	Arranged Marriaged	29
Davut	High School Graduate	Arranged Marriaged/Elopement	40
Selim	Bachelor's Degree	Love Marriage	42
Hasan	High School Graduate	Arranged Marriaged	25
Fuat	Primary School Graduate	Arranged Marriaged/Elopement	32
Osman	N/A	Arranged Marriaged	21
Melek	Bachelor's Degree	Arranged Marriaged	26
Serpil	Bachelor's Degree	Love Marriage	N/A
Emel	Primary School Graduate	Arranged Marriaged	15

Table 3.1 Level of education, type of marital union, and age of marriage for interviewee group consisting of anti-alimony campaigners

Fuat was 39 years old, a primary school graduate. He was a worker and, according to his account, he made good money. I visited Fuat, Davut, and Selim in City B. We met in Selim's café and the interview lasted almost 4 hours. How these three interviewees interacted with one another will be seen in some quotations. Fuat was married when he was 32, and after a 2- or 3-month marriage he got divorced. His ex-wife was pregnant when she wanted to get divorced and gave birth during the divorce process. The child passed away due to a heart disease, known as the blue baby syndrome. Fuat explained how they got to the point of divorce as follows:

> Fuat: They [his family-in-law] wanted me to move somewhere close to them. I said "She's pregnant. Our home is close to my workplace." They insisted. I knew why they wanted it. They looked for a man to control. Would I allow them to control me? I started a new family for myself. If I beat your daughter, if I let her down, come and knock my head off. (…) We had an argument with my mother-in-law once more, they took my wife to their home. After 6 months, I received a notification for divorce. They got this stubborn because I did not accept to move somewhere near them. I thought that now that she was pregnant, everything would be alright; so, I did not submit any documents.

According to Fuat, his family-in-law's involvement in his marriage had influence on his marriage ending, which can be considered as the "inner circle" effect as showed in TBNA 2014 Report. One common response by men to the decision of divorce, if they were not the party who filed for divorce, was that they did not sense it before their ex-wives announced their decision or they have refused to accept it. This common "shock" and "denial" against the divorce decision among men is also discussed in Chapter 4.

Davut was 52 years old, recently retired. Two years after his former wife's death, he got remarried. According to his account, his ex-wife filed for divorce case after 8-year marriage but then withdrew it. After a while, Davut filed for divorce, and they got divorced. Davut had 2 children, one disabled. He explained how he decided to get remarried as follows:

> Davut: I was a widower for two years. My mother looked after my children. My relatives found a divorced woman for me. She made her ex-husband sell their apartments and then gave the custody of their two children to him. We saw each other, talked. At first, her older brother tried to convince her not to get married with me. So, we eloped. We were on the edge of divorce because of her child. His father did not look after him and she wanted to bring him to our home.
>
> Q: Did not you think about bringing her children to your home?
>
> Davut: I have a daughter and both of her [his ex-wife] children are boys. That would be improper. She agreed to this from the beginning.

While he was a widower, Davut got help from his family members for childcare and domestic labor. As he shared details about how his new wife "gave the custody of her children to their father", the tone of his voice actually implied an image of a woman who did not fulfill her motherhood performance. Even though he emphasized on how she "made her ex-husband sell their marital property" as if she forced him to do so; division of marital property is a legal process upon divorce according to family law that regulates sharing property obtained in the marriage. This kind of details shared by divorced men actually serves the purpose of creating a "victimizer", who is the *greedy*, immoral, and ill-intentioned ex-wife. Davut decided to file for divorce after he received a restraining order upon an argument with his ex-wife and his mother.

> Davut: Later, I learned that she said to our neighbors "I would have a surprise for Davut". She waited for me to retire to file for divorce. (…) One

> day, my mother visited us to ask her about all this gossip. (…) She told her "What's going on? You have already broken up a family, now will you break up another one? What's wrong with you?" They had a fight. I held my ex-wife by her shoulders, and my daughter held my mother to calm her down. Maybe I held her very strongly, because she was a strong woman; *she had beaten her ex-husband*. Upon that, I kicked her out of my home, and she left. She went to the lawyer, saying that we had beaten her; she reported that she was beaten. My mother had beating marks too, so I filed for a report of being beaten for her. There were some marks on her shoulders because I held her, that's all. Then, she called my daughter to say that she had gotten a restraining order for 6 months. She said, "Your father cannot touch me. I will stay at home until we divorce." We were living in the same house while she had a restraining order. It was a psychological war. If she had gone to her family home, everything would have been different. There was no such thing as a restraining order in the past. In the past, you bought chocolate and flowers, and visited your wife's family home, the elderly intervened, and you made peace and brought your wife home back. Now, there is no such thing. I felt degraded because of this restraining order. I was virtually sentenced because of violence against woman even when I did not resort to violence. I filed for divorce after that order. I would have not done it, if she had not filed for any order.

Davut depicted an ex-wife who suddenly began to sneakily scheme and turn against him in order to screw him out of money (as if waiting for his retirement grant) while everything was going well. The experiences leading to divorce is not clear. He added his ex-wife's violence against her ex-husband to portray her as a "victimizer". Moreover, living in the same house while there was a restraining order indicates how loosely the law enforcement officers implemented policies following a restraining order and whether requirements were fulfilled. Davut's ex-wife filed a complaint against Davut and his mother. In return, Davut's mother filed a complaint against her daughter-in-law. After they had a quarrel at home, Davut's ex-wife called the police. Then, he received restraining order for another month. His ex-wife filed for divorce case as well, then the court joined both cases. According to his account, his ex-wife tried to make peace with him during the case process, and she said that she would withdraw her complaint. She and Davut's mother withdrew their complaints against each other, but Davut's ex-wife did not cancel her complaint against Davut. Subsequently, the complaint against Davut was referred as a case to the criminal court. Davut said, "Nobody listened my witnesses. I was released on 5-year probation just because I was a man. Despite of 4 witnesses, evidences, and other statements, I was considered as the party with gross fault because of the decision of probation, I was sentenced to compensation, I was sentenced to alimony."

This dramatic way of expression that equates alimony with prison sentence was common among the interviewees.

Davut's cherishment of the past in terms of how things were different when a couple had a fight and that there was no legal sanction was common among interviewees. As will be observed through the accounts, this is a past where there were not legislations regulating gender equality in marriage or divorce, as well as prevention of violence against women. In other words, this is a past where the power of men over their families and wives was not regulated or limited by laws.

Osman believed that his ex-wife planned for divorce from the very beginning. He was 52 years old, living in City A with his subsequent wife and two children. Osman is the most prominent "alimony victim" on media outlets, because he claimed that he had been paying alimony for 29 years for 10-day marriage. His story is complicated to understand, because of the contradictory information he shared on media outlets and with me. For instance, his profession: Osman declared three different professions to different TV channels. We had a short conversation on the phone, and he told me that he was working as a security employee. One other interviewee from BİAP told me that he was a policeman. Osman declared that he's a lawyer on a TV program. In various media outlets he stated his occupation was associate professor, however, when I checked the Council of Higher Education database to confirm this information, I could not find any record. Due to this confusion, it is not possible to specify which one is his actual profession, or what his education level is. A similar confusion dominates his story about his marriage and divorce too:

> Osman: I got married when I was 21. It was an arranged marriage. 10 days after the wedding, I left for my military service as sergeant. During that time, my ex-wife had a fight with my mother and beat her. She and her family set my mother's home on fire. My mother said that a cow at the farm kicked her in the eye, because she did not want my marriage to end. We did not even sleep together more than three times. I filed for divorce in 1992, but it lasted 11 years.

The story that Osman told is shocking, however, the motivation behind this violence that his ex-wife and her natal family perpetrated is not clear. I could not arrange another interview with him, even though I called him a couple of times, because he was busy. I followed his various interviews online, and tried to figure out the whole story, but I could not manage to do it, because every other piece of information, except that he has

been paying alimony for 29 years for 10-day marriage frequently, varies. Therefore, I only included what he told me on the phone for this research. According to his account, "10-day marriage" actually includes the days he had sexual relationship with his ex-wife, not what is on legal documents.

Hasan believed that his ex-wife and her natal family planned for divorce from the very beginning. Considering it was a 16-year marriage with 2 children, this belief is interesting. Hasan was 46 years old, a high school graduate. He got married at his parents request when he was 25. It was an arranged marriage. He explained that even though there were problems in the marriage, they waited for children to grow up before divorcing. One of his children was 20 years old, and the other 17. He ran his own small business in City A, where I met him. He mentioned his health issues many times during the interview. He had an operation because of vasodilation ascribed this disease to his unhappy marriage. He repeated having to deal with a divorce case while he was ill more than once. He filed for divorce after the operation. His 16-year marriage ended in 2014. In 2018, he got remarried. His family paid "mother's milk money" (*ana sütü parası*), a sort of dowry, to get married with his wife.

> Hasan: Before we got married, they brought a paper for me to sign. The paper said that I would give household goods to my wife in the event of divorce. A newlywed person would not think of that kind of things. My relatives were shocked as well. They planned it to be this way from the very beginning. (…) If it had been up to me, I would have broken up with her at that moment. But I had a well-established family, so I could not say anything. (…) For us, divorce is bad even for men, it was like that at that time. Now, divorce became fashionable. Now, it is like "We don't go well together, let's divorce." As Ömer Uğur Gençcan said, "I spat, you spat, let's divorce." He's like our father, you know. There is no patience, no toleration, no respect. The woman says that the law is in favor of her. Is marriage this simple? (…) I saved her from poverty.

Hasan shared the same longing for the past with all other interviewees. He described his in-laws as uneducated, poor people living in a small village in the East of Turkey. The money which Hasan's family-in-law asked under the name of "mother's milk money" seems a sort of "trade" for the bride between two families. Moreover, I realized that divorced men casted themselves as the "savior" while they talked about how they had saved their ex-wives from difficult life conditions. For instance, Davut described his role in his ex-wife's life as follows:

> Davut: (…) She's a primary school graduate, she had never worked before. She got a driver's license thanks to me. She was wearing headscarf. She went to holiday for the first time in her life thanks to me. We were in the lap of luxury. To be honest, I believe that she got spoiled.

He was not the only one. Selim was 52 years old. He held a bachelor's degree and was retired from a well-paid occupation. He had multiple properties and ran his own small business in City B. This was his second marriage, and his divorce case was still going on when we interviewed. Therefore, he did not yet pay alimony. Selim stayed at his workplace because his ex-wife lived in their marital property, and Selim had obtained a restraining order. Selim also saw himself as the savior in his ex-wife's *miserable* life.

> Selim: I loved my ex-wife and married her. She was a primary school graduate. I saved her from outskirts of the city. (…) I took her and her child. I was a father to her child for 10 years. (…) His father was barely able to feed himself. I provided supplies for her family throughout our marriage. I have all of the receipts in my case file.

What divorced men narrated about their ex-wives' lives before them is actually how these women started to face inequalities in their natal families in terms of access to education, individual choice of marriage, or employment, but interviewees did not perceive it as an inequality. It seems that their ex-wives were socioeconomically inferior and younger than them in general. Divorced men's accounts sounded like a profit and loss statement because they focused on how much they spent during and after the marriage. This pattern continued through all the interviews. This shows how society's perception becomes one with men's perception of themselves, which is being the provider, the breadwinner. As they see themselves as the primary money handler, and the one who increases the welfare level of their ex-wives' lives, they also strongly believe that their ex-wives and families-in-law see them as a "cash cow."

According to his account, Selim's ex-wife blamed him for being a penny pincher. He strongly believed that his ex-wife decided to divorce him because she envied divorced women around her who received compensation and property after divorce and wanted to screw him out of money.

> Selim: She told me for 10 years, "Give me a car and a home", but I resisted. I fell in love with my new wife. She's 13-year younger than me. But she left me out of the blue. She stabbed me in the back. I could have never imagined that she could do something like this. There was a woman at her workplace.

> That woman screwed her ex-husband out of 5 trillion. She [his wife from second marriage] envied her, she envied properties that that woman got after divorce, I guess. I looked after her child for 10 years, and she said "I want him to be punished" at the courthouse. I am unable to understand this. How could a woman do this to me? I begged her. I told her, "If we are going to divorce, let's do it civilly, we have a 10-year past." I bought flowers, made a special cake for her birthday. (…) Three years earlier, she was going to divorce, but I bribed to her just to make her put it off. I deposited money in her bank account. I could not understand why she wanted to divorce. She blamed me to be a penny pincher. Can this be a ground for divorce? (…) She turned them all down. I told her, "Don't do it, I will take you to Paris, I will buy you a solitaire ring. I will give the house to you. I will give you all." But I think she could not turn down the lawyer, because of that 15% cut of the lawyer. After that, I swore I would not pass by her house again. It's been 12 months now since I haven't seen her face.

To my surprise, I heard "offering money" to make the woman abandon the idea of divorce when she declared her decision for divorce more than one time during the interviews with both divorced women and divorced men. I will briefly discuss this response from men to the decision of divorce in Chapter 4.

Hamit experienced two divorces. I met him in City A at a café with other four members of SNM (Mehmet, Yasin, Emrah, and Melek). Hamit and Mehmet made the decision to separate from BİAP together and then formed Indefinite Alimony Victims together. Hamit was 42 years old, he held a bachelor's degree, and worked as an accountant in City A. According to his account, he was defrauded in his first marriage. After he got married, his then wife and family-in-law took fled with all of the jewelries given to the couple at the wedding. He married for a second time with another woman who worked in a nearby workplace after a short flirtation period. After a 10-month marriage, he got divorced in 2014.

Mehmet was 39 years old. He was a middle school graduate and had his own workplace in City A. He got married when he was 27. After a 2-year marriage, he got divorced in 2009. Two years after the divorce, he got remarried. He and Hamit were quite active in arranging meetings with political parties and various groups.

Emrah was 35 years old. He got married in 2013 and after a 3-year marriage, he got divorced in 2016. Emrah was a primary school graduate and a subcontracted worker, so he did not have a regular income. He emphasized that his ex-wife was 3 years older than him and marrying for a second time.

Yasin, the fourth participant of the interview with members of SNM, was 32 years old. As we conducted the interview at the end of 2019, his divorce case was still in

process. He held a bachelor's degree and worked as an engineer. After a 10-month marriage, his ex-wife filed for divorce, and he had been paying temporary alimony since then. His ex-wife is 2 years younger than him and a high school graduate.

As I shared in Chapter 1, considering her support to anti-alimony groups while she herself experienced a severe divorce and a post-divorce process, Melek's story was striking. Melek got married when she was 26 (she is now 39) and after a 7.5-year marriage, she got divorced upon her ex-husband's request while she did not want to do so. At that time, her child was only an 11 month–old baby. She was bullied into not asking for alimony during divorce process and received only 250 TL as child support. For the last 2 or 3 years, her ex-husband did not pay that amount either. After their divorce, Melek started living with her family, got into university, and graduated just a couple of years ago. According to her account, even though Melek wanted to get remarried, nobody wanted to get married with her, some suitors hesitated because Melek already had a child. I met Melek together with other 4 members of SNM, all divorced men, at a café in City A. Her voice was suppressed through the interview; therefore, I could not find a chance to understand her motivation to become a supporter of the anti-alimony campaign.

I visited Serpil, the founder and head of BİAP, in City C where she lived. We spent the whole day together. Even though she mostly tended to share her opinions on alimony debates and BİAP, at some point, she shared her own story too. Serpil was divorced a long time ago when she already had two children. After the divorce, she moved to City C to stay away from her ex-husband. Even there, she faced difficulties imposed by the society, such as gossiping and social exclusion, just because she was a divorced woman. However, people gradually accepted her "respectability" thanks to her reputable occupation. Years after her divorce, she met someone and decided to marry him. However, the natal family of the man did not accept Serpil as a suitable wife for him since she was divorced and suspected that she wanted to marry because he was wealthy. Finally, the couple managed to convince the family. Serpil tended to ascribe this "success" to herself and, even though she was aware of gender inequality against women in society, she strongly believed that a woman could overcome all of it if she wanted to.

What Emel become an alimony opponent is her ex-husband. Emel did not tell her own story until the end of our 2-hour interview. We met at a café in City A. She got married when she was 15 upon her family's request, regardless of her own opinion. Her ex-husband was a businessman. At the first year of their marriage, when she was 16, Emel attempted suicide. She explained that her conversation with the doctor who saw her after

the attempt changed her perspective radically. The doctor gave her some books and advised her to improve herself through reading and learning. She worked for the company of her ex-husband. She had four children with him. After they got divorced, her ex-husband covered the expenses of the children, and accorded their home and some rental income for Emel and children. Then, Emel's ex-husband remarried with another woman, Feride, who was 15-20 years younger than him. After an 8-month marriage, they divorced, and the court adjudged 500 TL as alimony for Feride. Emel was somehow a part of this second marriage, too. She opened her doors to Feride whenever she needed. Her ex-husband looked for ways to get rid of the alimony liability and found BİAP on Facebook. Upon that and what he told Emel about how alimony was unjust and how Feride tried to screw him out of money, Emel decided to support BİAP. She participated in some interviews on media outlets as a "female ally" in BİAP.

Divorced men's accounts on their former marriages indicate that they do not want any familial, financial, or legal control over men while they want to control their ex-wives lives and choices. This pattern will be seen clearer in the following sections. They commonly do not accept any responsibility about internal conflicts or problems leading to divorce in their marriages whereas they blame the effect of "inner circle" on their ex-wives' decision of divorce. As also will be discussed in Chapter 4, Delaney (1991) observes that men *have* their own families as women become *a part* a man's family. This lack in feeling of responsibility as well as their protests about any familial, financial, and legal control over them in divorced men's accounts may reveal that men do not perceive themselves as part of their families but "owner" of their families. The female allies are women who has experiences patriarchal oppression and gender inequality in their own lives in various ways, but as will be seen in the following sections as well, they did not relate their experiences with gender inequality or patriarchal structure of society and family, instead, with "the nature of things". Even though they are also divorced women and "ex-wives", it seems that they make a distinction between themselves and ex-wives who are portrayed as "self-seeker victimizers" that is also a prevalent theme in the accounts. The common ground of divorced men and female allies is their claim that they defend family institution. This perception of family where the power of men over their families and wives is not regulated or limited by laws as in the past which they commonly cherished actually serves to construct, nurture, and support the man's power and hegemony.

3.2.1 Division of Domestic Responsibilities in Marriage

As Carbone (2015) emphasizes, investigation of the impact of divorce starts with examination of gendered division of labor due to women's invisible unpaid domestic work that may cause them to fall in poverty upon divorce. Even though they are working women, gendered division of labor poses a risk for women because it may disrupt their career. According to the data of TurkStat on time use based on gender in 2014-2015 with women and men aged between 15 and 64, women spend 3 hours and 31 minutes a day on unpaid work whereas men spend only 46 minutes.[118] According to OECD's data, women spend 5 hours and 8 minutes a day on unpaid work, whereas men spend 68 minutes.[119] Unpaid work includes housework, shopping, child and adult care, volunteering, and other kinds of unpaid work. Since understanding gendered division of domestic labor is inseparable from understanding the underlying reasons of alimony and prevailing gender inequality within family, I included questions about the division of labor at home during their marriages. Most of the time, I did not need to even actually pose these questions since women's marital experiences were intertwined with their overwhelming domestic responsibilities.

Adams and Coltrane (2004), in their research on how men and boys have trouble with being "in" a family while they "have" or "come from" a family in terms of emotional intimacy or taking care of themselves explain that,

> "Moreover, even though in recent decades women have increasingly entered the paid labor force and share, more than ever, the burden of providing financially for the family, men continue to do significantly less than their equal share of housework, claiming disinterest, disinclination, or general lack of aptitude (Deutsch, 1999). Along this line, doing household labor has been equated with doing gender; women do it and men don't, and disruptions in this pattern can be threatening to a family's gender order" (Adams and Coltrane, 2004: 240).

In this context, I asked questions to divorced men about how domestic responsibilities were shared at home. However, what they understood from division of labor did not involve unpaid domestic labor such as cleaning, childcare, or even cooking. In some interviews, I had the chance to elaborate on my questions and specify domestic

[118] Turkish Statistical Institution (TurkStat). *Zaman Kullanımı Araştırması* [Research on Time Use]. Press release numbered 18627 (December 17, 2015). Accessed December 15, 2021.

[119] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *Time Use*. Accessed December 15, 2021. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TIME_USE.

responsibilities; but in others I couldn't because interviewees may have treated me as an audience, rather than a person they had a conversation. Instead, they preferred to jump to another topic that they wanted to talk about. Nonetheless, I managed to determine an outline of an answer to these questions from their comments on questions different than division of domestic responsibilities.

As we talk about division of domestic labor, I asked interviewees about their opinions on the relationship between unpaid domestic/care labor and alimony. Hamit gave an example to ridicule feminists' argument on exploitation of women's domestic labor. I would like to share it, because I run across similar expressions in interviews with and posts on social media from various men regardless of their membership of BİAP or SNM. I think that it is a clear example on how some men consider exemption from domestic labor as their *natural* right.

> Hamit: Think of an air hostess. She serves tea on a plane for other people, other men. Or the woman serves for her boss at her workplace. But you cannot ask for a cup of tea from her at home. She doesn't want to serve her husband.

Serving on a plane as a part of a profession provides money, another line in her CV, and another evidence of experience in her career for the woman. Contrary to this, domestic labor is unpaid, considered as a "female duty" in any given male-dominated society, and, in most of the cases, creates difficulties for career advancement for women. Besides, Hamit actually implied that the man is *the boss at home*.

During our interview with Selim, Davut, and Fuat in City B, the topic was division of labor at home. Selim's and Fuat's ex-wives were working during their marriage, but Davut was the only provider.

> Selim: How was the division of labor at home… She was spending what she earned for her child or natal family. She expected me to give her money. She said things like, "My salary is 1500 TL and I spend it all, you have no right to touch my money. But why don't you give me money?" Why would I do that? She had a job. I did not ask for a penny from her. If you ask for money, then, don't work. I was the one who paid the price for her working. There was no breakfast in the mornings, no lunch, no dinner. But she was doing the cleaning, I cannot say anything bad about it.

> Davut: The division of labor… She did not work anyway. I gave her everything that she could not get from her former husband. She got a driver's license thanks to me. She went on holiday thanks to me.

Q: How was her relationship with your children?

Davut: She looked after my disabled kid very well. I cannot say she did not.

Q: How was your relationship with her children?

Davut: I was blackmailed. She was sorry for her kids, so I sent them pocket-money time to time. But not every month, because their father was alive and working. After I retired, she told me, "I look after your children, you will send 500 TL as pocket-money for my children." Moreover, she said that I were to increase this pocket-money every year. For the rest of my life. Look at that blackmailing. Okay, I could support them until they were done with their military service, or got married, or found a job. But how could I send money for the rest of my life? I paid 3,000 TL for 6 months, then this divorce and arguments started. She blackmailed me.

After remarrying, care and housework became the responsibility of Davut's subsequent wife, but it seems that Davut did not see this as any sort of labor. He defined his ex-wife's request from him to send money to her children every month as "blackmailing." He did not undertake any responsibilities to take care of them and, at the same time, did not let them live with him because of his concerns about his own children. At this point, the invisibility of woman's unpaid labor is clear. While Davut could show how much he spent for his ex-wife's children refuse to look after them for the rest of his life; he expected his ex-wife to take care of his own children, and what she had done to care for a child with special needs cannot be expressed in currency. The topic of division of domestic responsibilities was invisible in divorced men's accounts in general, except these brief accounts of Selim and Davut above. However, they mentioned how money was spent in the marriage many times, and they held a double standard of gender bias. As seen in Selim's account above, he complained about how his ex-wife did not fulfill her domestic responsibilities such as cooking because she was working and how she spent what she earned for her natal family. Fuat had a similar complaint.

Fuat: She was working while we were married. She gave the money she earned to her mother. I could not accept it. I said, "I am responsible for taking care of you, but if you work you have to contribute to home economics."

As Fuat and Selim demanded contribution to home economics, they did not see themselves responsible for domestic work. As Davut described the process of their

marriage leading to divorce, he mentioned some money-related problems and it was interesting, considering how Fuat and Selim complained about their ex-wives' behaviors.

> Davut: (…) Then, my father and my sister got ill one after another. Because I had a car, I had to take care of their commute. At every argument, my ex-wife told me that you and your family never go better. After I got retired, she taunted me at every chance. She was against me spending money for my family.

It seems that in Davut's marriage the money he spent for his natal family was a problem. Considering accounts of Fuat and Selim who complained about how their ex-wives spent what they earned for their natal family and deemed it a reprehensible behavior, this may imply that the control of money, no matter who earns it, belongs to men. Moreover, the fact that they did not express any sense of responsibility regarding domestic work shows how unpaid domestic labor of women is considered taken-for-granted, like a *natural* vocation.

3.2.2 Grounds and Bargains during and after Divorce

Table 3.2 shows the financial aftermath of the interviewees' divorces. Selim's divorce case was still in process when I interviewed him; therefore, there was not a determined amount yet. As he expressed, he fought for sparing his property and savings from his ex-wife, as will be seen in his accounts later. Hasan declared that he paid 900 TL as alimony on media outlets. But during the interview, he explained that 600 TL of this amount was child support and, after one of his children turned 18, he filed a case to stop paying for him; therefore, he only pays 620 TL in total. But in his interviews published on media outlets, Hasan gives false information about the total amount of alimony, saying he has been paying 900 TL. Besides, his was a consensual divorce, which means that he defined the alimony and child support amount on paper together with his ex-wife. He includes child support in the alimony while these two types of financial support are different from each other. Misinformation on alimony regulation reciprocally influences members in these groups and spreads fear among campaigners, making them believe that they would pay alimony for the rest of their lives. For instance, Yasin expressed a deep fear about this possibility during the interview. Yasin's divorce case was still in process when we had the interview, and he had been paying temporary

alimony for a few months. This amount could be decreased or increased when their divorce finalizes, but it is not the ultimate amount. Furthermore, Article 176 of TCC regulates very strictly the conditions for continuity of alimony payments. I need to admit that I hesitated to include information on Osman in the Table 3.2 because of the constant contradictions in his accounts on his occupation and education level and because these are solid indicators of a person's average income, which would explain why the amount of alimony that he pays is that high.

Regularity in paying alimony is pointed as a major problem in the TBNA Report 2014, as well as Chapter 4 of this research focusing on accounts of divorced women. I could not obtain exact data on how regularly they paid alimony during my interviews with divorced men. Because, except two men (Hasan and Osman), I conducted interviews with divorced men as groups. Therefore, most of the time, I lost control of the interviews since their comments became a propaganda for their ideology rather than a conversation on personal experiences. The same problem is valid for monthly income. The monthly income is a significant information in evaluating whether the alimony amount is in disproportionate to alimony debtor's financial power.

	Alimony	Child Support	Number of Children	Child Custody
Emrah	250 TL	N/A	N/A	N/A
Davut	500 TL	N/A	N/A	N/A
Selim	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hasan	320 TL	300 TL	2	No
Fuat	400 TL	N/A	N/A	N/A
Osman	2500 TL	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mehmet	250 TL	N/A	N/A	N/A
Yasin	1250 TL	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hamit	150 TL	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3.2 The amounts of alimony and child support with status of custody

I did not include compensation amounts in Table 3.2, because I could not gather concrete information. For instance, Davut said "I was sentenced to compensation"; but he did not specify how much the amount was and actually appealed against this decision, as far as I can understand, and did not yet pay any compensation.

After getting divorced, Fuat paid 200 TL as alimony and 200 TL as child support. After his child passed away, his ex-wife filed a case to increase the alimony amount to 500 TL. But the judge's decision was 400 TL. Fuat appealed against the amount of compensation adjudged at divorce, which was 30 thousand TL, and the Supreme Court decreased it to 7.5 thousand TL.

I asked interviewees whether they had financial problems due to alimony. I defined financial problems as the inability to meet even their basic needs. Interviewees mostly put forward emotional and psychological problems more than financial problems.

> Q: As far as I understand, alimony did not affect you economically but emotionally, is that true?
>
> Fuat: I am able to pay it, thank God.
>
> Davut: My retirement pension was 3,500 TL at that time, and the court adjudged 500 TL as alimony. Maybe it was because I had a child with special needs. The diapers that the state gave me were not enough, I had many expenses. If I had a child with her, agreed, I would pay child support. She received orphan pension, she worked, she received compensation from me. Is she poor now? She turned divorce into an art.
>
> Q: Can't you apply for reduction?
>
> Davut: They did not decrease it. They say, "If you are a man, you have to pay it."

It was evident that his ex-wife's care and domestic labor was invisible for Davut in his previous accounts. It is understood from his account that he receives state support for his child with special needs. Even though he mentioned that it was not enough, he did not criticize state's failure to fulfill its responsibility to ensure its citizens' welfare. I later found out that Davut did not receive financial support for childcare from the state because his income was high.

TBNA Report in 2014 mentions men's tendency to avoid agreeing on the alimony amount to determine and pay, to hide their marital property and other assets, or to register their assets on someone else before divorce. This general attitude of men in divorce was stated almost as a norm during the interviews with lawyers because they encountered this kind of incidents countless times. According to anti-alimony campaigners, the existing

legal regulations force men to try every trick in the book. Therefore, men do not have any choice but to appeal to these illegal strategies to avoid financial consequences.

> Serpil: If you shackle someone for his entire life, of course he hides his assets, he works informally. The problem is that there is no time limit [on alimony]. The underlying problem is that you are punished with a lifelong debt. You don't have any children with *that woman,* but you have to take care of her; this is a human rights violation. Women work informally, they do not get married at all or prefer Islamic nikkah when they do[120]. Men say that enough is enough and also start to work informally.

Although Serpil pointed out alimony without time limitation as the reason behind hiding assets, assets are not a matter in question when determining the alimony amount. Marital property distribution is related to the assets obtained during marriage. The amendment in Turkish Civil Code, enacted in 2002, introduced the equality principle and recognized women's unpaid domestic work as a ground for equal division of marital property. The legislation did not assign a gender to the asset owner; that is, if the woman is the party who obtains assets during marriage, she will have to share them too.

When I asked divorced men about men's strategies to decrease the alimony amount such as hiding assets and working informally, they admitted that these were common phenomena, but they tended to also justify the reasoning behind this.

> Selim: Legislation articles regarding marital property distribution lead to various kinds of victimization. There is a lien on my properties, motorcycle, and car, without notice. I have my own business, I engage in trade. I have 2 billion TL cash in my bank account. If I did not hide my money from the court, what would have happened? I would go bankrupt. I bought my house with my own money that I have earned before I got married. But I was only able to get the title deed 15 days after I got married. Would it be fair if I gave half of my house to *that woman*[121]?"

The anti-alimony campaigners have double standards for men and women in terms of working informally. They are tolerant towards men. They claim that men are obliged to do it, because they are sentenced to "imprisonment" of paying alimony for their entire life. But they denounce women for working informally. They claim that women prefer to work informally because they want to continue receiving alimony. Men's illegal

[120] Nikkah is a religious ceremony that is common among Muslims to be married under Islamic law. It does not bring along with any legal liability. Only four witness and one imam is enough to be accepted as married before God.

[121] I will discuss this expression "that woman" in the fourth section. To avoid falling into repetition, I emphasized two examples in italics in this page.

strategies for avoiding alimony are represented as a part of male self-victimization. Men's agency is rendered invisible whereas women's alleged influence is put forward. Acts such as hiding assets or hiding income are not questioned. If men mostly hide their assets or income, this means that it is them who mostly have assets and income whereas women don't, and this only indicates the impact gender inequality has on financial power. Nonetheless, as discussed in Chapter 2, the conditions that impel women to work illegally or flexibly are a part of the gendered social security system and job market. Therefore, it is not possible to generate data on if the woman works illegally because she wants to continue receiving alimony or simply because she has no other choice.

Hasan's experience with his ex-wife shows that his ex-wife appealed to "tricks" after divorce in a different way.

> Hasan: They [his ex-wife and children] got in wrong with me. They abused my goodwill. I gave them my debit card, they spent from my retirement salary for 9 months. One day, the card was stuck in the ATM. I told them, "Give the card back then, you don't know how to use it." Normally, I should deposit alimony and child support into the bank account determined by the court so that I would not have to deal with the enforcement and bankruptcy office. The total amount of what they took from my debit card and what I handed to them is 3 thousand TL. They applied to the enforcement and bankruptcy office asserting that I did not pay my alimony and child support debt. Her lawyer sent me a writ of execution for 14,400 TL. This is revenge, she [his ex-wife] wants to payback, because I was the one who filed for divorce. I proved that I paid my debt and did not pay anything more. My daughter encourages her too. After she turned 18, I applied to annul the child support. At that time, I had just started a business, I was in debt. I gave them what I earned. How could they apply to the enforcement and bankruptcy office, just because I did not pay the full amount for only 4 months?

It was hard to follow the whole story. While Hasan said that he did not pay the full amount for only 4 months, he also said he gave extra money to his ex-wife and children. However, Hasan and other interviewees commonly claimed that women tend to take alimony debtors to the court, even when they received money through different channels than the formal bank account determined by the court. The resistance to deposit alimony and/or child support in the formal bank account is interesting, because it protects alimony debtors from this kind of issues, proving that the amount is paid.

3.2.3 Control over Money and Ex-wife's Life

Hasan was the only interviewee who had children and paid child support. During our conversations about his relationship with his children, he said that his son left his mother and moved to his home after his mother started a new relationship. Upon that, he got custody of his son with an interim decision. However, at the time when we had the interview, his son did not live with him anymore.

> Hasan: I told her, "Why do you do that in front of your children? Of course, you will see other people, you will start a new life, but you cannot do it this way. My son wanted to stay with me, we visited a child psychologist, and, with an interim decision, I got the custody of my son. Her [ex-wife's] father called her and said, "Your husband left you, your son left you, why do you still stay there? Send your daughter to her father." My daughter intervened but she will regret it, I know that.

From the perspective of the woman, it seems that there were three men in Hasan's ex-wife's life who claim to have a say about her life: her son, her ex-husband, and her father. Hasan did not associate his comments on how his ex-wife should have had a relationship "the proper way" with the alimony he paid. He associated it with his fatherhood. He shared what his ex-wife's father said in order to reinforce his argument, but I could not have any answer to my questions about how he knew what his ex-father-in-law said to her. This may indicate that he was still in contact with his ex-family-in-law. In fact, Hasan was not the only interviewee who knew about his ex-wife's life in detail even after divorce. During the interviews, interviewees frequently mentioned whether their ex-wives had a relationship, where they worked, how much they earned. Hasan said that he resented that his daughter took her mother's side and, because she does not want to talk to him, he did not give child support or extra money to her, which can be considered as a "punishment".

Another prominent statement appeared in the interviews was that they did not want to send money to a woman whom they did not even want to see. Emel summarized the thoughts of men in BİAP and those around her as "Men think that she [the ex-wife] spends the money they gave with other men, that she cohabitates with another man." Ahmet, as a divorce lawyer, and Hale and Ayşe, as feminist lawyers, also mentioned that in some cases they witnessed men reluctant to even pay child support because they suspected that their ex-wives spent that money with another man. In this sense, it can be argued that another underlying reason behind this backlash for divorced men who do not

actually have financial difficulties due to alimony is that they do not have the power to influence how women spend the money they give as alimony and/or child support. It also indicates how disturbed men feel about another man's presence in their ex-wives' life. But would this wish to have control over women end if alimony was removed? Considering women's accounts in Chapter 4 on their ex-husband's constant harassment after divorce even when they did not pay alimony and/or child support together with some other interviewees' accounts in the third section of this chapter on men's violent reactions during the divorce process, it seems that the answer is mostly no.

During our interview with Selim, Davut, and Fuat, we talked about their claim about women working informally and cohabitating without being legally married to continue receiving alimony. The conversation evolved into the woman's duty to be loyal.

> Fuat: The state must fulfill its duties as a social state. The woman takes 300-500 TL alimony from me, but she's still a victim. Of course, the state is not a donator. It should provide a job for the woman and if she doesn't work, the state will not help her. My ex-wife works informally now, she lives a dishonorable life.
>
> Q: What do you mean by "dishonorable life"?
>
> Fuat: She cohabitates [with a man] without being legally married.
>
> Selim: As long as the woman receives alimony, she has a duty to be loyal [to her ex-husband].
>
> Davut: No. Only until the divorce case is finalized.
>
> Selim: No, she has. That's why when you can prove immoral cohabitation, alimony payment stops.
>
> Davut: No. Until divorce case is finalized.

Fuat's account on how the state can help women who are in poverty is actually a definition of employment, rather than help. Selim's insistence on the duty to be loyal as a condition to continue receiving alimony was not surprising since I heard how men were right to expect something in return from their ex-wives for the money they paid.[122]

[122] When I was following the discussions on alimony on social media before I decided to conduct a research on this topic, I saw a tweet from a woman who actively participated to the discussion in favor of men. She is an author and "family counselor". She said that "Those who give money expect goods and services [in return]" referring to alimony (https://twitter.com/inciyesilyurt/status/1001775731712708608?s=20). To be honest, I was shocked, because "goods and services" was quite dehumanizing. Then, I encountered this kind of expression on

According to the Civil Code, cohabitation without being legally married is a reason for termination of alimony payments for alimony claimants. Because cohabitation means that alimony claimant has someone else in their life who could take care of them financially.

Another double standard that interviewees had towards men and women was "the duty to be loyal", alongside with working informally. Osman got remarried while his divorce case was still in progress. His subsequent wife was his relative and it was not a civil marriage but an Islamic nikkah (*imam nikahı*) because, according to the law, one person cannot be legally married with two different people at the same time. Four months after Osman got legally divorced, he had a child with his subsequent wife. According to the Turkish Civil Code, spouses are equally obliged to stay loyal to one another until the conjugal union ends for good, according to Turkish Civil Code. While anti-alimony campaigners widely accuse women of cohabitation without being legally married in order to continue receiving alimony, they are tolerant towards men. Many interviewees mentioned Osman during their interviews, referring to him as a "true victim" due to being *forced* to have an illegal marriage. Interviewees are also tolerant towards women–as long as they are *on their side*. I will discuss this distinction in detail in the fourth section.

3.2.4 Socially Privileged (and Fragile) Status as the Head of the Family: The Meaning of Marriage and Divorce for Divorced Men

Anti-alimony campaigners claim that the existing legislation prevents men from starting a new family or taking care of their new family if they remarry. Among interviewees, three men had remarried after divorce. Other interviewees had not remarried yet, but when I asked them about their thoughts of marrying for a second time, they found it favorable. Two interviewees' divorce cases were still in progress, and other two got divorced a short while ago. I did not encounter this willingness to remarry during interviews with divorced women, detailed in Chapter 4. On the contrary, women were reluctant to remarry as long as they managed to keep working, because they did not want to experience similar difficulties that they had to face in their previous marriages. Could this difference between willingness and reluctance be thus related to gendered relations in family? If so, how? How does alimony pose an obstacle for getting remarried? In what

different levels of openness on social media and in the interviews. As will be seen in the fourth section, feminist lawyer Hale mentioned that she received this kind of statements on Twitter.

sense do divorced men attach an importance to being married? How do they position themselves as victims in relation to marriage and divorce?

When I asked his observations on general tendencies of women and men during the divorce process, Ahmet (who has been a divorce lawyer for over 15 years and resides in City A) provided a rich and illuminating answer supporting these arguments on relationship between hegemonic masculine ideals and marriage.

> Ahmet: I don't say this as a lawyer, but as a man. I believe that being married is a very important status for a man. There are many advantages. You become more "reliable" in business life and society and more likely to be successful in your career because you have a steady family life. And because you are married, you are not a "dangerous" man in your social circle or when communicating with a woman. As a man, you lose so many things as a result of divorce. So, marriage is not something that men can give up very easily. That's why men do not file for divorce that much, but women do.

The interviews with divorced men also provided similar implications. For instance, during our interview with 5 members of SNM in City A, the conversation went on as follows when I asked interviewees "How does being a divorced man affect your lives?":

> Hamit: When you get divorced, people stop inviting you to their gatherings. They see you as a threat, as someone who could harm them.
>
> Yasin: If you are not married, they don't deem you suitable of a management position.
>
> Hamit: People suspect that you have a problem… I mean… problem with your virility. They say, "Why don't you get married, do you have a problem?" What can you do? How can you prove that you don't have a problem? They see you as [sexually] insufficient.

What Hamit's account revealed was interesting. I tried to ask him whether he actually heard anything like that and he answered no, but it must be taken into consideration that he was among five other people, mostly men, and he might have hesitated to share such private information. However, even though interviewees shared that they had not heard such claims about their virility, they emphasized that it is a possibility. This possibility shows how their virility being questioned poses a problem for men. Marriage is a sign for men to prove that they are heterosexual and have a regular

sexual life. This issue of cutting off a divorced person is also true for divorced women, as it will be seen in Chapter 4.

Hamit continued to share more on the difference between being married and being divorced. This time, he actually expressed how this difference influence his perception about himself.

> Hamit: A single man can just quit his job. Being married means you have a responsibility to your family. I am single now, who can make me stay at a job [that I don't want]? If I had a family, I would know that I need to take care of them, that I couldn't act however I wanted. Employers are aware of this.

All the campaigners whom I interviewed still have their jobs, and their marital status did not seem to influence their positions at the workplace; therefore, these career-related reasons that they mentioned may be considered as only a speculation.

When I asked about in what sense being married is different from being divorced in order to understand the meaning of family for the interviewees, two certain concepts became prominent as both are closely related to the domestic role traditionally ascribed to women as wives and mothers: "empty house" and "being welcomed at the door".

During our five-people interview, Hamit was the first one to answer this question. It was a short answer, but it triggered a response from the others.

> Hamit: I now live alone. I come home, it's empty. I don't like it. Wouldn't it be nice to be welcomed at the door?

Yasin, as the youngest one among other members, agreed with him and said:

> Yasin: I am still young. I want to continue my bloodline. I want a home filled with children and my wife instead of being alone in an empty house. I am a religious person. I want to fulfill my needs [implying sexual relationship] in accordance with my religion.

The idea that "being welcomed at the door" points to a certain perspective. Interviewees expect women to be at home when they come back from work. Even when the woman works, it seems that she is supposed to come home earlier than her husband. This expectation seems to contradict anti-alimony campaigners' argument that women have to work and stand on their own feet. But when considered who are expected to do this, it becomes clear that the woman who "has to" work is not those in the man's family,

but the man's ex-wife so that he does not have to pay alimony. I claim this because of the answers I got to my question "Would you prefer to get married with a working woman now?" Most of divorced men answered yes, except Emrah who was a subcontracted worker (he was the interviewee with the most unstable financial status). In addition, the new wives of two interviewees who got remarried were unemployed even though they were working before their marriage. Interviewees said that this was the women's choice.

During our interview in City A, Emel expressed similar sentiments which show that this ideal of a "full house with a woman and children" is not peculiar to divorced men. When we talked about a new life after divorce for men and women, she made a comparison and concluded that:

> Emel: The woman will have someone new in her life for sure, if her children are young. Of course, there are women who do not prefer that. But she has to build a new life.
>
> Q: Statistically, it seems that men who get remarried are higher in number than women. What do you think that is?
>
> Emel: Because women can survive on their own. But if the man is all alone in an empty house, he cannot cook. He cannot do the dishes. Do you know what is the reason behind it? It's all because of mothers. (…) It's us, mothers, who raise good and bad people.

The accounts of divorced men on their experiences regarding how they got help from women around them for childcare or domestic responsibilities after divorce made me realize that Emel's empathy towards divorced men in terms of their incapability to take care of themselves is more common that I originally thought. Hasan started to stay at his workplace after the divorce. He told that, during the first 6 months, his neighbors, friends, and some customers brought him food. When he found a place to live, his daughter came to help him with cleaning. As another example of how women around divorced men support them in domestic responsibilities after divorce, Davut proudly told how his daughter was represented as the "little mother" in a newspaper report because she took care of the housework and her sibling with special needs.[123] The interviewees' accounts

[123] In order to protect anonymity of the interviewee, I avoided sharing the relevant newspaper report.

on how they were unable to sort out their personal or household care while they were single, and how their ex-wives did not take care of the house or them because they worked were expressed as a sign of victimization. Considering all of these, women around men have a role in reproducing this traditional gender order in which women are considered as the primary caregiver whereas men are responsible for being the provider. Furthermore, the father's role in teaching their sons self-care and domestic responsibilities was not even mentioned during the interviews. This responsibility (or unfulfilled responsibility) was perceived as "mothers' business".

Interviewees saw alimony as an obstacle to remarry, because they believe that a woman would not accept a man who was still in contact with his ex-wife and paid her alimony, even though there were many examples of men who got remarried in BİAP and SNM. As he told how alimony causes difficulties for remarrying, Davut equated marriage with life, which showed the significance of marriage for him.

> Davut: Alimony is an obstacle for a second or third marriage. I already have a disabled child, it's hard for me to find a wife. Moreover, I pay alimony. Would any woman come to me? One in a thousand, maybe one in a million. Our lives are over.

Other interviewees who had not yet remarried shared Davut's concerns about being unable to marry again.

Many (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell, 2005; Nock, 1998) have shown that marriage offers men an area to perform hegemonic masculine ideals. The ideals of masculinity are sustained when men are fathers to their wives' children, are providers of their families, and act as protectors of their families (Nock, 1998). Connell (2005) argues that conventional marriage is closely related to heterosexuality which is the most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity, because being married with a woman is a way for a man to prove his heterosexuality to the society (p. 187).

Sancar (2013) discusses how being the head of a family is significant for achieving hegemonic masculine ideals in the context of social transformations in family and work life. She states that industrial capitalistic manufacturing is concentrated in heavy industry with muscle power of the male worker whereas female workers work in lower-paid jobs without social security. This industrial distinction has accompanied a new family model in which women provide unpaid domestic service and men are responsible for attending

to their family as the head of the family. This may become the only way to achieve "successful" masculine ideals, especially for men from lower-middle class without property. Only young men's personal efforts and accomplishments may lead them to a prestigious status of manhood in society, and family plays a crucial role in this sense. "Having a family" and managing to sustain it means having their own "area of power" for men (Sancar, 2013: 124).

However, this privileged status of being head of the family is vulnerable. Any shifts in marital roles, for instance the man losing his role as the sole provider, may cause the loss of this privilege. (Boratav, Fişek, and Ziya, 2014; cited in Yıldırım, 2017). When men are excluded from conjugal union, they lose this fundamental means to prove their masculinity. Since "masculinity is not an ascribed but achieved status, one that is never permanently achieved because the danger of being unmanned is ever-present" (Kandiyoti, 1987: 327), divorce is a significant loss accompanied with economic, social, and emotional consequences for men. In addition to society's perception of men, Collier (1995) argues that, historically, being married indicates becoming a "respectable family man" and is "set against and constructed in relation to what were perceived to be the extra-familial and 'dangerous' masculinities of the undomesticated male" (Collier, 1995: 220; quoted in Adams & Coltrane, 2005: 239).

Considering the arguments on the privileged status of being a married man and divorced men's accounts on the differences between being married and divorced, these concerns may disclose a yearning for regaining their privileged status in society through affirming that they hold hegemonic masculine ideals as well as for benefits of marriage in terms of sexual properties and domestic and care labor of the woman. Nock (1998) argues that conventional family may work for the man as long as he has a wife willing to care for him. Given the fact that the woman is the party who usually files for divorce[124], divorce is an indicator of a woman who is not willing to care for her husband anymore. In that case, divorce means losing the privilege that comes along with "having a family" against the man's will. Then, it can be argued that another underlying reason behind the feeling of "being victimized" is that the woman who wishes to divorce or who does not

[124] According to the data in the TBNA Report 2014, women are the party who mostly demanded divorce. *Research on Reasons for Divorce in Turkey 2014 (TBNA 2014),* The Ministry of Family and Social Policies, General Directorate of Family and Community Services. https://ailevecalisma.gov.tr/uploads/athgm/uploads/pages/indirilebilir-yayinlar/research-on-reasons-for-divorce-in-turkiye-2014.pdf.

accept getting married with a man who pays alimony *deprives* a man of the socially privileged status as the head of the family. Furthermore, alimony is a solid sign of divorce and divorce is perceived as failure, loss of the area of power. By preventing men from starting a new family, as alimony opponents claim, alimony actually prevents men from having a new area of power. Lastly, in the case of remarriage, alimony as an expense from the family budget may shake the man's area of power, because he would not be considered as a sufficient provider for his family. Accordingly, the patriarchal bargain between the man and woman in which woman is the primary caregiver and man the primary provider may be broken.

3.3 Male Self-Victimization in the Justification of Violence against Women and Femicides

> "Knowing that I am going to pay her alimony for my entire life makes me her enemy and provokes me against her for my entire life. Nobody can figure out when I could flare up. The laws make me a potential killer. Just like alimony. There are those who think 'If I could catch her one day, I would kill her in some way, she would kick the bucket–at least I would get rid of alimony." (Selim)

This understanding that women provoke men into resorting to violence was common among interviewees, and it is not new. Behind this understanding, "there is the idea that the head of the family is the boss, and he reserves the right to resort to violence against or kill his wife if he deems necessary" (Jacobson and Gottman, 1998; cited in Yıldırım, 2017; translation is mine). This widely familiar "victim-blaming", especially from sexual assault cases (Bouris, 2007), turns into a different form of victimization in the anti-alimony discourse: According to them, men are the true victims of their violent actions because legislations force them to act so.

The report of Human Rights Watch in 2020[125] refers violence against women in Turkey as "endemic". According to the report in 2011, even when women report that they are subjected to violence, they are still forced to reconcile with their abusive husbands in the name of protecting the family. The report explains this failure in implementation as follows:

[125] Human Rights Watch (2019). World Report 2020: Türkiye. Accessed January 2, 2021. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/turkey#.

> Survivors of abuse who are referred to family courts for protection orders face yet more barriers. Prosecutors are sometimes reluctant to forward a request to a judge or to start the process of their own accord; judges may take too long to decide whether to grant an order or may require medical or other forms of evidence that is not required for an emergency protection order by national law. This causes delays and may even end the process if a woman is unable to obtain a medical record or witness statements.[126]

According to TBNA 2014, the most reported problem by women is violence with a rate of 56.6%, among the problems encountered in marriages resulted in divorce. The widespread research conducted in both 2008 and 2014 on "Domestic Violence Against Women in Turkey"[127] shows that women who were subjected to physical violence by their husbands or ex-husbands in any period of their lives across the country is 36% (8% in the last 12 months). It is seen that this rate is 39% in the research dated 2008. The rate for women who have experienced emotional violence in any period of their lives is 44%. The rate for sexual violence is 12% (%5 in the last 12 months).

According to the Shadow Report of KADEM[128], dated 2016 and submitted to CEDAW, women between the ages 15-24 are at a higher risk of being subjected to violence than women in other age groups. Approximately half of the women who married before the age of 18 were subjected to physical violence and one fifth to sexual violence. This report, referring to the TBNA 2014, notes that the proportion of women subjected to physical or sexual violence is probably higher than what has been reported or known. The rate of women who stated that they did not apply anywhere to report physical or sexual violence is 88.5% in urban areas, whereas this rate is 92.5% in rural areas. Again, 92.9% of women whose education level is below primary school and 81.1% of women with a bachelor's or higher degrees do not apply anywhere in case of physical or sexual violence.

The report also states that women who go to the police encounter various problems. These problems are rooted in the sexist perspective predominant in the police force. In some cases, the police remain insensitive to violence against women or send women back to her family where she was subjected to violence. According to the information provided

[126] Human Rights Watch (2011, May 4). "He Loves You, He Beats You": Family Violence in Turkey and Access to Protection. Accessed January 2, 2021. https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/04/he-loves-you-he-beats-you/family-violence-turkey-and-access-protection.

[127] Turkish Republic Prime Ministry, Directorate General on the Status of Women (2009). *Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey*. http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/siddet2008/rapor/2008-TDVAW_Main_Report.pdf.

[128] Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği [Women and Democracy Association] (2016, July). Türkiye'nin CEDAW Komitesi'ne Sunduğu Yedinci Periyodik Rapor İçin STK Gölge Raporu. Accessed January 2, 2021, http://www.ceidizleme.org/ekutuphaneresim/dosya/74_1.pdf.

by women who have been subjected to domestic violence, 80.3% of women living in urban areas and 92.7% of women living in rural areas did not even have their statements taken by the police. This is a factor which prevents women subjected to violence from officially reporting their problems.

Law No. 6284, enacted in 2012 and the Istanbul Convention, signed in 2011, are two important legislations to combat and prevent violence against women, and to improve gender equality in Turkey. Both legislations were the fruits of women's rights organizations' consistent and remarkable efforts, and their negotiations with the governments.[129] Conservatives and Islamists have attacked Law No. 6284 and the Istanbul Convention ever since they were introduced. Today, these legislations are represented as a "homewrecker"[130], "disgraceful threat"[131] or "project of destruction"[132] by media outlets known as pro-government, conservative, and Islamist. According to right-wing Islamist camp, Law No. 6284 is inappropriate for the traditional family structure in Turkey, and the Istanbul Convention is imposed by the European Union so as to destroy religion, culture, morals, tradition, and national values under the name of equality.[133] But how can these legislations be the reason of male violence while they intend to combat male violence? How can they be "homewreckers" while they seek for gender equality in family and society?

Anti-alimony campaigners claim that there are three main reasons for their "victimization" due to Law No. 6284. The first one is related to the temporary alimony which may be adjudged if the perpetrator's suspension through restraining order under Law No. 6284 would create poverty for the victim.[134] Secondly, they claim that men who

[129] For GREVIO's comprehensive evaluation report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of Istanbul Convention and Law No. 6284, published in 2018, see. GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Turkey (October 15, 2018). Accessed April 4, 2021, https://rm.coe.int/eng-grevio-report-turquie/16808e5283. The report

[130] Arslan, F. (2017, September 11). 6284 Yuva Yıkıyor. *Yeni Akit*. Accessed July 15, 2019), https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/6284-yuva-yikiyor-393091.html

[131] Tanrım, Ş. (2019, May 7). Rezil Tehlike: İstanbul Sözleşmesi. *Milli Gazete*. Accessed July 15, 2019, https://www.milligazete.com.tr/makale/2492739/sakir-tarim/rezil-tehlike-istanbul-sozlesmesi

[132] Tarım, Ş. (2019, July 2). Yıkım Projesi: İstanbul Sözleşmesi. *Milli Gazete.* Accessed July 15, 2019, https://www.milligazete.com.tr/makale/2809262/sakir-tarim/yikim-projesi-istanbul-sozlesmesi

[133] Saygılı, S. (2019, June 8). İstanbul Sözleşmesi zehirli meyvedir! *Yeni Akit*. Accessed July 15, 2019, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/yazarlar/sefa-saygili/istanbul-sozlesmesi-zehirli-meyvedir-28725.html

[134] GREVIO's Baseline Evaluation Report states that "There are various forms of economic aid available for victims. Apart from the allowances for victims and children staying in shelters, these comprise temporary financial aid awarded under Law No. 6284 and financial assistance which can be granted under the Social Assistance and Solidarity Law No. 3294. Data provided by the authorities indicate that only a small proportion of victims benefit from the latter, while the former is hardly ever distributed. Such a situation raises serious concern. GREVIO notes that outside the framework of Law No. 6284, victims of violence are not given any priority access to mechanisms of financial aid. GREVIO was furthermore

are suspended from home with a restraining order have trouble in finding a place to live and experience emotional and psychological problems. Therefore, they demand shelters for men who are suspended thusly, as discussed in Chapter 2. Thirdly, according to the Turkish Civil Code, if the alimony claimant lives an immoral life (cohabitation with another man without being legally married) or works informally, alimony will be terminated if these claims are proven. However, according to the interviewees' accounts, the law gives the responsibility for proving these violations to alimony debtor. Anti-alimony campaigners claim that, since the restraining order forbids any encounters between husband and wife, they cannot prove that the woman works informally by going to her workplace, or they cannot prove that she leads an immoral life, because it is considered as a violation of private life. The first problem in anti-alimony discourse is that interviewees did not problematize violent actions or threats causing the restraining order in the first place. The second problem is that the only condition to prove whether the woman actually lives with a man or works informally is not to secretly photograph the woman's life; this could be done with producing a witness.

The majority of interviewees associated men's violent actions to women's provocation and to their inability to control their anger. Selim received a restraining order for 6 months three times. He violated the order by attacking the house where his ex-wife lived.

> Selim: She (his ex-wife) and her lawyer provoked me and said that I would have to share my property because of the legal regulation. What did I do? As a 50-year-old person, I went back home and crashed two televisions. I said, 'This is my property!' It is impossible for anyone to resist this kind of provocation. Upon that, I was sentenced for 5-month in prison. (…) They made complaints to the police station constantly with excuses such as "He texted me", "he called me", "he threatened my boss". (…) I was so depressed.
>
> Q: Have you ever consider receiving psychological support?
>
> Davut: I saw a doctor, he gave me medicine, but I used it for a week.
>
> Selim: I also saw a doctor.
>
> Fuat: I receive psychological support, but not a psychiatric one. A woman gave me a Turkish translation of Quran. I believe in God. Whenever I feel suffocated, I read Quran. May God bless Atatürk, he asked Elmalılı Hamdi

apprised of difficulties which victims commonly face in covering the expenses for rearing their children owing to insufficient alimony payments" (p. 58).

Yazır to translate it. To be honest, after what happened, I thought about suicide. I thought about killing my ex-wife. Quran answered the questions in my mind.

Selim: Those who cannot overcome this process commit murder. They go off their heads.

Davut: My daughter helped me a lot. She read me religious books. She comforts me psychologically.

Even though they claimed that they suffered from psychological problems due to legal regulations, most interviewees did not consider receiving psychological support or, as seen in Fuat's account, they found different ways to heal themselves. Fuat also received a restraining order. According to his account, when he insisted on seeing his child after divorce with a legal order from enforcement and bankruptcy office, his ex-wife and family-in-law applied for a restraining order. Davut also received a restraining order, as can be seen in the first section.

Another interviewee who was sentenced to prison due to violence was Hasan.

Hasan: We had an argument with my ex-wife. It was a case of domestic violence. In fact, I just pushed the door on purpose, and she banged into a door.[135] I was imprisoned for 16 months and 7 days. Since it was my first prison sentence, I did not do my time. But I did it because of she insulted me. She said unmentionable words. I don't approve it, but in my hometown, people commit murder because of that kind of language. I could not explain why that incident happened at the courthouse, it's because I am a man. Can you imagine that you are in front of a male judge? The prosecutor, who reads the accusation, is a man. The bailiff is a man. How could I say these words aloud? I need to be a dishonorable person to say these aloud. If I had said those words, I would have been acquitted.

Q: Did your ex-wife apply for Law No. 6284?

Hasan: Yes, she did. I don't want the annulment of Law No. 6284. I only want the annulment of that principle, "the woman's testimony is fundamental".

[135] I heard the excuse that "She banged into a door" twice in the interviews. As will be seen in Chapter 4, Yaprak, a divorced woman, was subjected to violence by her ex-husband's natal family, and her nose was broken. When she went to see a doctor, her family-in-law told the doctor that she banged into door. It seems that to make domestic violence against women look like an accident is common. According to the research of Şefkat-Der based in Konya, Turkey with women who are violence victims living in a Women's Shelter shows that "banging into a door" is a common excuse asserted by men in domestic violence cases. For more information, Cumhuriyet (2011, December 9). Kadın döven erkeklerin bahaneleri hazır! Accessed January 27, 2021, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/kadin-doven-erkeklerin-bahaneleri-hazir-304268. A PhD research on violence victims in Women's Shelters also shows similar results. For more information, Cumhuriyet (2011, August 17). Şiddeti Uygulayan Değil, Gören Utanıyor. Accessed January 27, 2021, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siddeti-uygulayan-degil-goren-utaniyor-275052.

> Women should prove their accusations with evidence. Because the principle based on the woman's statements means… For instance, we are now sitting here, and you misunderstand something I say. If you called the police and told them Hasan insulted me, my life would be over because of this violence against woman.

Article 4(1) of Law No. 6284 rules that "In the event that a person is subjected to violence or is in danger of being subjected to violence, everyone can report the situation to the relevant authorities as a written or verbal statement."[136] The law does not specify the gender of the complainant. Even though this principle has circulated as "the woman's testimony is fundamental", it should be understood as "The testimony of the survivor of a sexual assault is fundamental".[137] Taking the testimony as fundamental does not lead to any judgment based on that declaration; it only leads to an investigation. In other words, if I called the police and told them Hasan insulted me without any proof, his life would not be over, he would not be judged, or he would not be expected to prove my testimony otherwise. Furthermore, in case of proof of false statement, legal sanction is applied for those who make the false statement. This misinformation was quite common among interviewees, and they gave hypothetical examples over me.[138]

During our interview with five members of SNM, Hamit and Mehmet gave similar examples. Mehmet told me that,

> Mehmet: I was so worried about coming here when I found out that you were a woman. That is why I did not come alone. I came with other victims. Because if you made a complaint about me saying that I harassed you, because of Law No. 6284, I would have to grapple with legal difficulties.
>
> When I said that the law did not work in that way, Hamit interrupted.
>
> Hamit: I am afraid of getting on elevator with a woman. For instance, so many women sent me private messages on Facebook. I do not answer them. Because feminist could show them as an evidence.

[136] 6284 Sayılı Ailenin Korunması ve Kadına Karşı Şiddetin Önlenmesine Dair Kanuna İlişkin Uygulama Yönetmeliği. https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/File/GeneratePdf?mevzuatNo=17030&mevzuatTur=KurumVeKurulusYonetmeligi&mevzuatTertip=5.

[137] For a detailed explanation on the meaning of "The woman's testimony is fundamental": Öztürk, F. (2019, February 5). "Kadının beyanı esastır" ilkesi nedir, ne değildir? *BBC*. Accessed February 20, 2021. https://web.archive.org/web/20190308222845/https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-47129398.

[138] I briefly discussed how they set examples through me in relation to their fear of Law No. 6284 in Chapter 1. (p. 19)

When I asked whether he had too many messages, Mehmet laughed and stroked Hamit in his back, saying, “He’s a handsome man! Women saw him on TV, liked him, and sent messages to him!” This is a whole another topic, but I would like to remark that other interviewees also mentioned that there were people who join SNM’s and BİAP’s Facebook page with intent of meeting divorced people as they are.

During our interview with Davut, Fuat, and Selim on Law No. 6284, I underlined that the law does not specify gender, and a man may also make a complaint. Upon that, they shared a BİAP member’s story.

> Fuat: We have a friend in our group. He’s an engineer. His ex-wife used violence against him, she drew out a knife. He left home. He said, “If I wanted to use violence against her, I would do it for sure, but people like us would not beat women.” He went to the police station, complained that he was exposed to violence. The police made fun of him, they said “Don’t go home then.”
>
> Selim: The police officers make fun of men exposed to violence by saying “How could you be beaten up by your wife?” Men cannot even make a complaint because of this reason.
>
> Davut: A man can make a complaint of domestic violence through Law No. 6284, but they do not prefer to do it. They do it rarely. Manhood psychology…

It seems that the fear of being ridiculed, especially by other men, prevents men from making a complaint in case of being subjected to violence. Moreover, what is perceived as causes of act of violence used by men against women and what prevents men from making a complaint about the act of violence used by women against then have a common point: masculine pride.

Serpil’s account revealing how she showed empathy towards violent man, instead of the woman as a victim of violence was interesting. It indicates how she has normalized violence against women.

> Serpil: This law [6284] does not protect women. Even though it provides a restraining order, women are not protected. If a man is to be a maniac, he would hate his wife more. There’s no police force protecting home at night. In any case, he would catch the woman on the street or somewhere else if he were a maniac. (…) Unless this problem of alimony is resolved, femicides and suicides will increase. Osman is in a very bad situation. The other day, he told me that he would go to the court and either kill his ex-wife or himself to

> make them an example to Turkish society. If that woman has enjoyed herself or has been cohabitating with another man with Islamic nikkah, God damn *that woman*, I don't care what will happen to her. She cannot be an individual, she did not get on her feet, she exploits men as if she receives salary. No offense, but I don't care whatever happens to her.

A couple of days after the interview with Serpil, I talked to Osman on the phone. What he said was different than what Serpil told.

> Osman: I saw a newspaper report the other day. A father shot his two children first, then committed suicide. He did it because he was sentenced to prison. due to non-payment of alimony. Why do you kill yourself? I would tell him 'Kill the woman!'"[139]

In both Serpil's and Osman's accounts, there is a victim-blaming, an idea that "some women deserve violence". Particularly alimony has started to emerge as a simulated reason for violence against women and femicides on media outlets too. Headlines such as "Alimony Murder!"[140], "Another Alimony Murder!"[141], "Insanity Caused by Alimony"[142] have become more and more visible. However, the actual body of these reports usually shows that women were being subjected to violence before divorce and alimony. The economic, emotional, or psychological problems resulting directly from paying alimony has nothing to do with femicides.

Sancar (2013) explains that, according to popular feminist approaches to the relationship between manhood and violence, the use of violence is a male privilege which lies behind the modern male dominant society. Even though men do not use violence individually, every man benefit from male violence. Through male violence, women are suppressed, subordinated, excluded, discriminated against, and thus, "all" women's

[139] The incident that Osman referred here took place on January 6, 2018 in Istanbul. According to this newspaper report, Ali Yardım who killed his children and himself received 3-month restraining order because he threatened his wife, Dilek, with murder. Four days after the notification of a restraining order, he put a knife on Dilek's throat, and was then sentenced with imprisonment for violation of the restraining order. He violated the second order because he did not receive the notification. The whole incident had nothing to do with any conflicts about alimony payment. The circulation of misinformation as such is common among anti-alimony campaigner. For further information about the incident: Milliyet (2018, January 6). Maltepe'de 2 çocuğunu öldüren baba hakkında yeni gelişme. Accessed July 15, 2019, http://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/maltepe-de-2-cocugunu-olduren-baba-hakkinda-yeni-gelisme-2586207.

[140] Haber Türk (2011, March 4). Nafaka cinayeti! Accessed July 15, 2019, https://www.haberturk.com/yasam/haber/607306-nafaka-cinayeti

[141] Yeni Akit (2018, May 11). Bir "nafaka" cinayeti daha! 2 ölü. Accessed July 15, 2019, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/bir-nafaka-cinayeti-daha-2-olu-463206.html

[142] Takvim (2018, May 12). Nafaka cinayeti! Accessed July 15, 2019, https://www.takvim.com.tr/guncel/2018/05/12/nafaka-cinneti.

obedience is made possible. The "patriarchal pie" (Connell, 2005) that any man can benefit due to male violence includes virginity, heterosexual marriage, and the opportunity to confiscate women's domestic and care labor for free (Sancar, 2013: 218).

Hearn (1999) suggests that men's violence against women should be considered in the context of specific social patterns of gendered power relations. He reminds that men in government agencies are men as well, therefore, "their definitions, understandings, excuses, and justifications for violence may mirror or sometimes contradict those of men who have been violent; they may of course themselves be violent. These connections make up a part of what may be called 'patriarchy'" (Hearn, 1999: 17).

In this historical period in Turkey, normalization of violence in political discourse and practice is undeniable. Kandiyoti (2016) defines normalization of violence as one key pillar of the politics of masculinist restoration. She points to the huge gap between legislations aiming to safeguard women's rights and to prevent violence against women and their implementation in practice, which is also clear in the Shadow Report of KADEM.

In most of the accounts, interviewees do not talk about violence from a critical perspective. The accounts of violence reveal that the relationship between men and violence is considered as "normal" without questioning. Even though most of the interviewees claimed that they were not the perpetrator of any act of violence, they emphasized that they did not do it not because they were unable to do it, but because they were decent men. Most of them emphasized that Law No. 6284 could not protect women from men's violence because if a man was determined to commit a crime, nobody could stop him. So, should women's fate be left to men's will in a society where femicides and violence against women is endemic? Apparently, interviewees believed so.

3.4 The "Differentiation" of Women and "True" Women's Rights in the Anti-Alimony Discourse

> "The man gets remarried and has children. He thinks "Why do I have to provide for *that* woman; we don't have a child together. If women don't get remarried, and they can receive alimony for 5, 10, 15 years." He thinks that this is not fair. He gives his children's livelihood to *that* woman. He gives his subsequent wife's, his family's livelihood to *that* woman. What about *this* woman's rights?" (Serpil)

> "Let's say I got remarried. *That* woman is protected, why is *this* woman not protected? What about the child's right to livelihood (*rızık*)? I will keep

paying alimony to my ex-wife. There must be a time limit, we are making a case for time limit." (Davut)

The distinction between "this woman" and "that woman" was frequently mentioned in the interviews in relation to women's rights, therefore, I will briefly discuss it. To develop a better understanding of divorced men's approach to "that woman", I searched their profiles on social media platforms, including Twitter and Facebook, since I believed that being in their present as a woman researcher might have influenced how interviewees expressed themselves. Indeed, they expressed their thoughts more openly on social media. Images and statements that they used on social media under the hashtags such as #SüresizNafaka #SüresizNafakayaAdilDüzenleme (#IndefiniteAlimony #FairAmendmentToIndefiniteAlimony) differ from what they chose to narrate during interviews. For instance, while they stated that they were not against the protection of women and that they were not misogynists, what they shared on social media told another story. They shared posts portraying divorced women who received alimony as greedy, self-seeker, immoral or lazy. Visual posts portrayed women screaming at their desperate husbands or stealing money from their husbands' pockets.[143] Through demonizing visual representations and accusations of immorality without any proof, alimony opponents develop a systematic anger and hatred towards their ex-wives. Moreover, as also discussed in this chapter, women's rights activists are portrayed as self-seeker, immoral and greedy as well. According to alimony opponents, women's rights activists have another agenda aiming to destroy family institution, to receive EU funds, and even to serve to cause chaos and establish Kurdish state. In other words, according to alimony opponents, women's rights activists are threats not only to family institution, but also to nation.

In the interviews, many of them talked about mothers and sisters who were also members of their groups and who helped men financially so as to they could pay alimony. But divorced men's fathers were mostly invisible in their accounts. Their portrait of "this woman" on social media refers to women who refuse to receive alimony, who care for their sick husbands, who sacrifice themselves to protect their families, who work to contribute to home economics, or who support alimony opponents and they are all praised by the campaigners. "This woman" is a victim, because "that woman" entrenches upon

[143] For some examples of mostly misognyst visual representations of "that woman" on BİAP's Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/biaplatformu/media; for examples on SNM's Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1239969499490532/media.

her rights. “This woman” is always honorable, moral, and valuable whereas “that woman” is dishonorable, immoral, and worthless. Osman made a sharp distinction between two types of women that I frequently encountered in the anti-alimony discourse:

> Osman: My divorce case was still in progress. It lasted 10 years. My current wife accepted to marry me. We had an Islamic nikkah and, only 40 days after my divorce case was over, my first child was born. Can you imagine that? My wife is so honorable, such a perfect woman that she accepted to marry me before my divorce case was over. But that other woman, all she thinks about is to rob my family’s livelihood.

This distinction was mentioned by other interviewees repeating Osman’s story as well. Anti-alimony campaigners mostly target women accusing them of being immoral based on their claim that women cohabitate with other men without being legally married to receive alimony. However, it seems that if the woman in question is “this woman” (a member of the man’s family), this accusation turns into an acclamation.

The differentiation of women is put forward as another reason behind “male victimization” in the anti-alimony discourse. “That woman”, in fact, implies the “discarded wife” and every woman who develops arguments against alimony opponents’ claims and “male victimization”. “This woman” implies men’s subsequent wives, future wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and women who support anti-alimony campaign. Alimony opponents make a distinction between women and pit “this woman” against “that woman”. They marginalize a group of women to create an “acceptable” woman. This distinction is mainly made between women who recognize, nurture, and support the man’s power and hegemony and those who oppose and shake it. In this sense, anti-alimony discourse adopt same perception with the government in terms of “woman’s rightful place”. The government also create an “acceptable” woman emphasizing the woman’s role as wife, mother, daughter, or caregiver whereas women as independent individuals who are divorced, single, childfree by choice are marginalized and frequently condemned. Therefore, the line between being acceptable and unacceptable woman is drawn between positions that cooperate and do not cooperate with ultimate male domination in family and society, the primary goal of bottom-up and top-down masculinist restoration politics.

Another distinct claim of campaigners is that the current implementation of alimony and other legislations to which women resort in divorce are against women’s

rights. Because of these legislations, "that woman" damages legal and economic rights of "this woman".

During our interview, I asked Hale "What do you think about alimony opponents' claim that alimony is against gender equality and women's rights for the women in their families?", she gave an illuminating and comprehensive answer about the prevalent perception of the concept of civil rights in alimony debates.

> Hale: How these people perceive the concept of "right" must be analyzed first. They [implying both the government and alimony opponents] hate the concept of right. This hatred includes workers' rights and children's rights. The concept of right is reproduced by the Western society, which is based on class conflicts. In our culture, we only have our rightful due (*kul hakkı*). Being against equality or replacing the concept of equality with justice is a solid indicator of this perception. There is no right or equality, instead, there is only justice, rightful due. Both justice and rightful due consist of hierarchy. It implies the mercy which the one who is on the upper level of the hierarchy shows for those who are on lower levels. In return, they expect praise, recognition, and unconditional obedience. The alimony opponents' main idea is that relations between two people in social life should not include the concept of right. If you take a glance at antifeminist arguments, you will see that they claim that feminists mislead women by defending rights. Today, there are two main discussion topics in Turkey. First, who gets to make a claim on women's bodies? Who gets to make a claim on labor that women's bodies produce and reproduce? Alimony is about women's unpaid labor and bodies. I get mentions on Twitter every day. One in tenth asked "What will she give me in return?" It is obvious what they imply.

Hale's distinction between the right and the rightful due answers the question of how legal rights treating all women equally can violate some women's rights. Rightful due is an Islamic term. According to explanation in the Turkish Religious Foundation's Encyclopedia of Islam, rightful due includes the rights of subjects (of Allah) in matters such as their lives, bodies, chastity, honor, religious beliefs as well as their rights regarding their properties and family members.[144] However, when a woman exercises her legal right to divorce, to sue for alimony extension, or to ask for compensation, she does not withhold other women's legal rights: other women's rights remain untouched. Moreover, even though anti-alimony discourse refers to rightful due as "right", what harms a woman's or child's rightful due is not the legislations aiming gender equality, prevention of violence against women, and women's empowerment. On the contrary,

[144] Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi. "kul hakkı". Accessed February 25, 2020. https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/kul-hakki.

both ex-wives and subsequent wives are economically dependent on male members of their families (fathers or husbands) because of gender inequality, underlying the need for these legislations; therefore, they are directly affected by any shift in men's financial power.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter unpacked dynamics of the anti-alimony campaign in the context of bottom-up politics of masculinist restoration. Based on the accounts of 9 divorced men and 3 women who are members of BİAP and SNM, it discussed the relation between male self-victimization and masculine ideals dominant in this historical period in Turkey.

The first section analyzed anti-alimony campaign's discourse, mobilization, demands, and political stance. It explored that, even though anti-alimony campaigners adopt liberal legal frames that have become dominant in the civil rights struggles, their discourse is antifeminist and anti-women's rights. The anti-alimony discourse tend to circulate "male victimization" in relation to their claim on "men's oppression" by laws discriminating against them simply because they are men. However, based on the clear distinction between "oppression" and "costs of being on top" in a male-dominated society as Turkey, this is self-victimization rather than victimization because the anti-alimony discourse lacks a discussion on gendered arrangements in professional and domestic life. Anti-alimony campaigners' demands showed this gender-blindness and an absence of recognition of gender inequality as the main reason behind why women are mostly awarded alimony (in other words, why women are mostly the party who fall into poverty) more clearly. The story of BİAP's mobilization and strategies to be visible on public agenda showed the mutual influence between the discourse and demands of anti-alimony groups' and the government's political discourse and policies. The political polarization and antifeminism which create "national us" and "anti-national them" in the anti-alimony campaign support this argument of mutual influence, representing similarities between the populist discourse of the AKP government and anti-alimony campaigners' discourses towards certain political parties and feminism, both targeted by the government.

The second section presented the anti-alimony campaigners' accounts on their experiences in marriage and divorce, as well as their perception of gendered marital roles, sharing domestic responsibilities, and the difference between being married and being divorced. This section discussed how the loss of socially privileged status as the head of

a family, which is an inseparable part of hegemonic masculine ideals, is closely related to this backlash to legislations aiming gender equality in marriage and divorce as well as combatting violence against women. Any discussion on gender inequality in familial, economic, and social relations was absent in the interviews. The accounts clearly indicated divorced men's expectations from their subsequent or future wives to fulfil their domestic responsibilities. The accounts justifying men's strategies to dodge with least economic damage in after divorce through hiding assets or informal working revealed the double standards towards men and women for alimony opponents, because one main argument in the anti-alimony discourse is that women do these things to continue receiving alimony and that this makes these women immoral and opportunistic. According to the answers to my question on whether they had experienced any economic difficulties in relation to alimony payments, interviewees' problems were mostly emotional and psychological since they did not want to send money to a woman who became a stranger for them. The accounts on difference between being married and being divorced showed that divorce came along with loss of the prestigious status as the head of a family in society.

The third section analyzed the interviewees' experiences and perceptions on violence against women and femicides. It discussed how anti-alimony discourse normalizes and even encourages violence against women and femicides through male self-victimization as a justification tool. The common claim among interviewees was that their ex-wives and the legislations provoked them to resort to violence, and they were the true victims of Law No. 6284 designed to combat violence against women. This section also revealed that there was a prevalent misinformation on Law No. 6284 circulated among interviewees. They depicted the Law No. 6284 as having an implementation which would put the man in prison upon any woman's (false) testimony against him.

The fourth chapter focused on how anti-alimony campaigners positioned the fragmentation between "this woman" and "that woman" in the formation of their self-victimization. As "this woman" referred to the women in these men's families and the women who supported them, "that woman" referred to the "discarded wife" and women who refused to accept men's oppression and defend men's rights. The anti-alimony discourse on "true" women's rights was also briefly discussed in the fourth section. Women's rights apply to every woman. When one woman uses her legal rights, this does not infringe on another woman's rights. Therefore, anti-alimony campaigners' claims on women's rights excluding or harming some women actually indicate that legal rights are

confused with rightful due (*kul hakkı)*. Besides, what harms one's "rightful due" is still not women's legal rights, but gender inequality that made women economically dependent on men in the first place.

Chapter 4:

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND POSTDIVORCE PROCESS

The lack of divorced women's voices is a significant characteristic of the alimony debates. Thanks to the efforts of organizations and media outlets supporting women's rights, we have heard some women's stories, but not in detail. While this research mainly focuses on the debates, it would fall short without women's experiences in marriage and divorce. Therefore, this chapter focuses on ten women's accounts on their experiences in marriage, divorce, and postdivorce process. Female interviewees were divorced women from different social classes –lower and middle class– however, the similar patterns in their accounts were striking. The interviews have common themes gathering around the exploitation of women's domestic labor, various forms of violence–physical, psychological, sexual, and economic–in the marriage, being cheated on, and subjection to threats–particularly death and child custody–during and after divorce. Women's concern for their children's welfare, as well as psychological and physical health, was common beyond their socioeconomic class.

Even though my main focus points are divorce processes and bargaining on alimony, child support, and marital property, as Carbone (2015) notes: "for women, assessing the impact of divorce starts with an examination of the gendered division of responsibility within the family" (p. 184). Therefore, I designed my questions to address the decision to marry; time spent in marriage, with a focus on domestic violence, including physical, psychological, economic, and sexual forms; unpaid work; economic self-sufficiency; opportunity to work while married (whether they were suppressed); the process that led them to take or accept the decision to divorce; experiences during the divorce process; amounts of alimony and/or child support, if adjudged, as well as regularity in alimony and/or child support payments; and experiences as divorced women in society. One common claim in alimony debates is that women avoid remarrying to continue receiving alimony or tend to live an "immoral life" with other men without a

civil marriage. Therefore, I asked questions about their private lives after divorce, such as if they ever thought about remarrying or if they had an intimate relationship after divorce.

I benefit from previous the TBNA Report 2014, unfolded in Chapter 2, with a focus on women's declared reasons for divorce, statistical data on gendered division of domestic responsibilities, and feminist criticism on marriage and divorce to analyze women's accounts in a broader context. This chapter aims to show women's experiences intertwined with difficulties from deciding to marry to building a new life after divorce in the male-dominated Turkish society. As women's accounts support previous research on these certain topics, putting bargains in alimony, child support, marital property, and child custody in the center of discussion reveals how power relations work within and through family and divorce in women's everyday lives; what kind of an approach the judiciary and law enforcement have adopted during the cases of interviewees; and how women's experienced difficulties regarding divorce are actually only one of the results that male-dominated structure of the state and society have produced and reproduced in terms of women's poverty, lack of access to education, employment, and knowledge of legal rights. Moreover, it is evident that the concept of honor (*namus*) have played a crucial role in life stories of most of the interviewees.

I divided this chapter into five sections aiming to disclose certain themes in women's accounts. The first section elaborates on women's decision-making processes for marriage. Understanding this process is important since it reveals determinant conditions, motivations, and familial or external factors leading women to make the decision to marry. Moving from that, it discloses marital conditions in terms of exploitation of women's unpaid care work, financial inequalities, and how marriage itself paves the long way to divorce. I present a full section on domestic violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, and economic violence. Women's accounts reveal how widespread various forms of violence in marriage is, as well as how law enforcement stays ineffective and insensitive to violence against women. Women's experiences emphasize the importance of preventive and transformative legislations, namely Law No. 6284 and the Istanbul Convention. The third section gets to the bottom of this research: divorce process and bargains in alimony, compensation, child support, child custody, and marital property distribution. The fourth section's focus is women's lives after divorce. Not only social and economic pressure on divorced women, but also continuity of conflicts between ex-spouses about alimony, child support, and child

custody will be discussed. Moreover, women's struggles against the concrete consequences of divorce–housing, employment, childcare, and security, and emotional consequences will constitute the core of this section. The last section will be about women's knowledge on alimony debates, and their comments on male self-victimization.

4.1 Entering into Matrimony (or Slavery?): Reconciliation of Paid and Unpaid Work

As women illustrated their path to the decision of marriage, their accounts started with their relationships with their natal families, including fathers, mothers, and siblings. This difference in ways of narrating their decision to marry between women and men engaged my attention. While women included their natal families into their accounts as a starting point, men started with their "established" families. As men *have* their own families, women become *a part* of *his* (father's or husband's) family (Delaney, 1991: 113). Through the chapter, women's accounts will show how male members of their natal families have a direct or indirect effect on their lives from time to time. The form of this effect varies from preventing violence to keeping women silent against violence.

According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's (Turkstat's) Family Structure Research carried out in 2016, across Turkey, 47.8% of first marriages were arranged marriages based on individuals' consents. 12.1% of marriages were arranged by natal families without asking future spouses' opinion. The rate of those who chose their spouses on their own with their families' consent was 30.2%, and the rate of those who got married against their decision was 2.5%. The rate of those who got married by eloping or after they were abducted was 7%. The level of education seems to play a significant role when selecting one's spouse. It was observed that as the educational status increased, the proportion of those who got married with their own choice also increased and the rate of arrange marriages decreased. The rate of those who did not graduate from any school who chose their spouse on their own and with their families' consent was 10.6%, whereas this rate was 67.1% for those with college, university, master, or PhD degrees.[145]

Interviewees followed different paths and had different reasons for making the decision to marry as seen in Table 4.1, I also remarked women's level of education to

[145] Turkish Statistical Institution (TurkStat) (2017, January 18). *Aile Yapısı Araştırması, 2016*. [Research on Family Structure]. Press Release numbered 21869. Accessed December 20, 2020, https://tuikweb.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=21869.

show to what extent that the data in my research was compatible with TurkStat's data. I used terms such as "love marriage", "elopement/love marriage", "marriage of convenience", and "marriage due to need" on the basis of women's own definition of their sort of marriage.

	Level of Education	Type of Marital Union	Age of Marriage
Aysu	Bachelor's Degree	Love Marriage	24
İdil	Bachelor's Degree	Marriage of Convenience	26
Kader	Primary School Graduate	Elopement/Love Marriage	16
Nevin	High School Graduate	Elopement/Love Marriage	19
Pınar	Master's Degree	Love Marriage	21
Robin	Master's Degree	Love Marriage	31
Sevgi	Primary School Graduate	Elopement/Love Marriage	16
Suna	High School Graduate	Marriage due to Need	19
Yaprak	High School Dropout	Elopement/Love Marriage	18
Zehra	Primary School Graduate	Arranged Marriage	23

Table 4.1 Level of education, type of marital union, and age of first marriage for interviewee group consisting of divorced women

From a feminist perspective, marriage has been criticized in terms of subordination of women, gender inequality, and the exploitation of women's domestic labor and sexual properties. For Carole Pateman (1988), marriage is not a proper contract, because women are not "brought into civil life on exactly the same footing as their husbands", therefore, as long as few women can earn as much as men, only a few middle-class and professional women can have the chance to "be in a position to negotiate an intimate contract" (p. 155). A proper contract is an agreement between two equal parties who negotiate until they agree on terms for their mutual advantage. Women and men are not equal parties as a result of social and economic inequalities between them. However, women who earn as much as men and who belong to a higher class in society have the chance to set the terms of marriage contract. Otherwise, marriage gives one party, the husband, the "power of a slave-owner" (Pateman, 1988: 154) in terms of use of his partner's sexual properties, unpaid caring/domestic labor, and body through laws.

Since marriage is not a proper contract between two equal parties, inequality within marriage, particularly in terms of gendered division of labor even when the woman is employed, inevitably leads to inequal consequences for women and men when this

contract is broken with a divorce. How men, female allies of the anti-alimony campaign, and the state consider the unpaid work of unemployed women, "housewives", as a *natural* vocation has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Women's, particularly housewives', unpaid care and domestic labor is a significant part of the alimony debates. While their domestic labor is considered as invisible and worthless, it is an important reason dragging women to poverty after divorce since they were not able to gain any experience in the job market. However, employed women cannot escape from domestic responsibilities. As a result of the gendered division of domestic labor and other interruptions such as maternal leave, "women experience more labor market interruptions than men do" (Carbone, 2015: 185). This creates difficulties for women who want to advance in their careers and, as a result, condemns them to lower pay rates than men.

Because understanding the gendered division of domestic labor is inseparable from understanding the underlying reasons of alimony and the prevalent gender inequality within family, I included questions on how domestic responsibilities were shared during the marriage.[146] Most of the time, I did not need to even utter these questions to get an answer, because women's marital experiences were intertwined with their overwhelming domestic responsibilities.

As quoted from Pateman above, traditional marriage contract gives husband the power of a slave-owner. During the interviews, two women defined their situation within marriage as "akin to a slave". Sevgi and Kader shared similar experiences. In both accounts, women were taunted because they did not have a child for the first years of their marriage, and they both described themselves as a slave while they were married.

Sevgi was a primary school graduate 49-year-old and worked as a janitor for 10 years. She had been living in City D for more than 20 years. She had two grown-up children and divorced 8 years ago. I went to her workplace to meet her. After we spent some time with other women (some were interviewees as well) working there, we went to an empty room to be alone, and talked. Our interview lasted almost 2 hours. Sevgi had eloped with her now ex-husband when she was 16. He was a relative of hers, who was 3 or 4 years older. Her family was dead set against this marriage, and she mentioned how some of her relatives opened gunfire after her when she was fleeing. Sevgi did not want

[146] As also mentioned in Chapter 3, according to TurkStat data from 2017, the research with women and men aged between 15 and 64, women spend 3 hours and 21 minutes a day on unpaid work, whereas men spend only 46 minutes. The OECD data shows that women spend 5 hours and 8 minutes a day on unpaid work, whereas men spend only 68 minutes. Unpaid work includes housework, shopping, child and adult care, volunteering, and other kinds of unpaid work.

to elope at first. After her older brother heard some gossip that Sevgi was about to elope, he beat and taunted her. However, the last straw for her was that her father's changing attitude towards her. When she could not bear the humiliation and beatings at her family home, she decided to elope. Yıldırım (2017) aptly notes that, in a society expecting protection of their virginity until marriage from women, love marriages may point to an intimate relationship before marriage and families may not approve it because they find this sort of marriage damaging the family honor. In this sense, family plays a significant role in reproduction of the concept of honor. It seems that Sevgi's attempt to have a relationship with a man meant for her natal family that she had dishonored her family. While the female members of her family did not play a determining role in leading Sevgi to elope, the male members, from her father to her cousins, punished her for her so-called culpability. The path that led Sevgi to get married sheds light on the powerful effect the male members of the woman's family on her life. After eloping, Sevgi lived with her family-in-law:

> Sevgi: I lived with 15 people in that house. I was just a child. You know Slave Isaura? I was just like her. They ruined my life. I did not have any children for the first three or four years. They taunted me all the time. Then, after I finally had a child, my husband left me and went abroad, emigrated when the baby was just four months old. (…) He turned his phone off for a year, sometimes for two years. He did not call; he did not ask if we needed anything. I went to work in the fields for instance, I worked at hospitals, I worked at factories. I earned my livelihood in that way.
>
> Q: Could you describe this "slavery" for me please? What were you doing mostly?
>
> Sevgi: I was serving them like a slave. There was no washing machine, I washed their jeans and clothes with my hands, lots of clothes. There were many children at home, I raised them all. (…) I expected from his mother, my own relative, to say, "I will look after your children, you go and work, make your living". My children were so young. I worked at a factory when I was living with them. I worked until morning, my son was so little, I went to work without sleeping. I came home, her [mother-in-law's] own daughter was sleeping, and I cleaned the whole house. She handed my son over to me and went out. (…) I was working when we lived in separate homes too. My children was playing in the street when I was at work.

Sevgi's ex-husband got married with a woman, who was a citizen of the country to where he had emigrated to be a legal worker and had one child from that marriage. As it is evident, Sevgi and his then husband's marriage was not a civil marriage at the

beginning. Sevgi started to work to escape poverty; however, she was still expected to handle domestic responsibilities. As discussed in Chapter 2, one significant reason which keeps women away from paid work is the absence of free childcare services. Through this section, the absence of childcare services will reveal to be a prevailing factor in women's lives. However, women have come up with various solutions to continue working. After six years of living with her family-in-law, Sevgi could not bear it anymore and moved. When she mentioned that her children were playing in the street, I asked:

> Q: Did you leave your children home alone when you went to work while you were living somewhere else?
>
> Sevgi: I left them home alone.
>
> Q: How old were they then?
>
> Sevgi: My daughter had grown up a bit, and she was able to look after her brother when she was 12-13. She was deaf but she could take care of him very well and, in any case, I was working.

Kader also described her experiences in the first years of her marriage as "being like a slave". Kader was 38 years old and had two children from her former marriage. She is a primary school graduate, but now attends middle school through the adult education program and intends to continue her education. I found out that she was related to Sevgi during the interviews. Kader also got married when she was 16 and also eloped with her now ex-husband who was three years older. She experienced two divorces–the first one was 8, the second one was 5 years ago. However, she referred to her first husband as her ex-husband and mainly talked about her marriage with him. She eloped out of fear that her family would not let her marry man whom she loved. Moreover, as a common point in the accounts of Sevgi and Kader, both women did not go to school even though they were 16. To put it simply, elopement refers to the loss of virginity; therefore, it is understood from Kader's account that she chose this way to make her natal family accept her decision of marriage. When she eloped, Kader lived with her family-in-laws for five years:

> Q: Did you go to his family house after you eloped?
>
> Kader: Yes, we went to his family house. We lived with them for 5 years. I could not have a child for the first 4 years. He did not have a stable job.

> Hardship all the time. (…) I had very hard times of course. Because, how do you say, there was no humanity there. I was like a slave in that house. I served them all the time. After 5 years, we had a quarrel with my in-laws and left that home.

Even though other women did not describe what they have experienced as "being a slave", their accounts show how domestic labor is taken for granted within marriage on different levels. Accounts of Robin, a 45-year-old woman holding a master's degree in psychology, for instance. We met her in a café in City A and our interview lasted 1.5 hours. During our interview, the divorce process had not yet finalized. Her marriage with her ex-husband who was 2 years older than her was a "love marriage", in her own words. After a year of flirtation, they decided to get married. She had a child from that marriage and lives together with him now. When I asked her, "Did your ex-husband share the domestic responsibilities? Or did you get any help?" she explained that,

> Robin: We had a babysitter. She worked for us for 8 years. She helped me a lot. (…) However, after she quit, I could not get help on a regular basis. We enrolled our child in a private school. Only then he helped with the ironing, that's all. On one hand, I worked hard to pay the tuition fee, on the other hand, I cleaned the house, I cooked – I did almost everything. Even while I was pregnant, like, there were only 20 days to delivery, I still did all the grocery shopping and cooking.

İdil, a 41-year-old woman, had a bachelor's degree and grew up in a middle-class family. I went to her workplace to meet her in City A. We had the interview during her break, which lasted 45 minutes. She was married for 8 years and divorced 8 years ago. She had one child and lives alone with her son now. Her family, particularly her mother, however, still helps her take care of her child. When I asked, "Was there a division of domestic responsibilities at home?", she answered,

> İdil: Although he was an educated man, I guess this is male mindset (*erkek kafası*), like, he had that usual mindset, "As a woman, you are responsible for cooking". Despite the fact that I also worked and contributed to home economics. He did not want to engage in cooking as a man, he rarely even prepared a salad. We hired a domestic worker for cleaning. I don't know if it was typical male mindset, like, you know, "I already work outside".

Middle-class women may have the chance to get help for domestic labor, however, as accounts of İdil and Robin show, responsibilities of childcare, cooking, and small-scale cleaning are still on them.

Yaprak was a 27-year-old high school dropout who had divorced not too long ago. She had two children but did not have their custody and has been trying to it back. I met her at the headquarters of the trade union in City D. She had asked for financial help from the union before and I had a personal contact who had connections with those working there; that's how we heard of each other and came together for an interview. Yaprak had also eloped with now her ex-husband to get married when she was 18, since both of their families did not let them marry, saying that they were too young. At first, they lived in a separate house from her husband's family. However, Yaprak, pregnant with her first child, moved into her in-law's house in the fourth month of their marriage, after her husband went into the service. Yaprak's account shows that when a woman does not *fulfill* the domestic duties expected of her, she may be severely criticized.

> Yaprak: I was pregnant with my first child then. Oh, the insults.... You must go to work, you have to send money to your husband –they did not send money to him. (…) When your husband is not around, you are scorned. (…) They found a fault in everything I did. They said things like "You are not a woman".
>
> Q: What did they mean by saying "You are not a woman?"
>
> Yaprak: You are not a woman in their eyes. Like, you cannot take care of your children, your home. If your son [her husband] brought money, I would stay at home, I would cook. I went home every evening, I looked after my child, I cooked. Their son made mistakes, but they always found me as the one with fault. If debts were not paid, they put it on my shoulders. I did everything on my child's birthday, on special occasions, I found a better school for my child. If I were a bad mother, why would I do that? I worked for my children. If I could not buy anything for my children because of that man [her ex-husband], was this my fault?

During interviews, I realized that women resented their ex-husbands if they did not work or bring home money the "head of the family". As explained in Chapter 3, sustaining a family is an acceptable way for men to obtain authority and a prestigious status in society and, accordingly, an acceptable way to construct masculinity. However, because masculinity is a status which must be constantly earned (Kandiyoti, 1987), the privilege coming from being the head of a family can be quite fragile (Yıldırım, 2017). A

husband who refuses to work or who cannot support his family can be perceived as a man who does not fulfill his one and only responsibility.

For Suna, absent parents had a role in her decision-making process to marry. Suna was a 39-year-old high school graduate. She worked as a security employee in City D. I visited to her workplace to meet her. She got married when she was 19, had a child from that marriage, and divorced 12 years ago. Suna's parents got a divorce when she was little, and she was practically raised by her older siblings. When she was 17, she took both the university entrance exam and the civil service exam and passed both. However, she could not afford her education expenses. She waited for an assignment as a civil servant, but it did not happen. As a last resort, she got married. It was an arranged marriage.

Suna's husband objected to her working outside home; therefore, she was the one who took care of the domestic responsibilities. He, however, quit his job while their daughter was only 6 months. After that, he could not hold down a regular job throughout their 7-year marriage and did not share the domestic responsibilities either. During the first six months of his unemployment, they lived on the money they got in exchange of the jewelries from their wedding, which Suna was planning to use to buy an apartment for her daughter. After the savings run out, their financial situation went worse. Throughout our interview, Suna mentioned many financial problems she had to face during their marriage. They had to move many times because of their rental debts. Suna's older brother and her ex-husband's family helped them with supplies. What she complained most about was that her ex-husband shirked his duties as a provider. She described her marriage simply as "constant poverty." Moreover, even though she wanted to work to "look after her daughter above all", her ex-husband did not allow her. In Suna's words, the possible explanation of his objection might be "his jealousy." When Suna argued with him about his choice to stay unemployed, her ex-husband said, "What can you do? You don't have a mother or father, you have a child, where could you go?". That moment, in Suna's words, was "like a milestone for me. I can't say that I decided to divorce at that moment, no, but marriage was over for me." This confidence of men in not being the one to be abandoned was mentioned in other women's accounts as well.

Throughout their marriage, Sevgi's ex-husband was abroad. However, he refused to divorce Sevgi for a long time while he did not even call her or his children nor did he support them economically. During his rare visits, he forced Sevgi to quit her job. This came up when Sevgi mentioned that she could not even go out of the house for fear of landlord because of her debts:

> Q: Didn't you work? Wasn't the money you earned sufficient to make a living?
>
> Sevgi: When he came here, he told me, "You won't work". I was working at a hospital then, he made me quit my job. Okay, I won't work, but I don't have any income. You don't take care of me. What else can I do other than work? I worked at many different jobs. I earned 60-65 TL a week, just so that my children did not go hungry.

While Suna's and Sevgi's ex-husbands did not allow them to work, three women–Pınar, Robin, and Zehra–were forced to work harder to pay off loans and debts.

Pınar described her marriage as "a result of manipulation efforts and daddy issues". Her ex-husband was 20 years older than her, and she was only 21. Pınar was a 34-year-old academic, residing in City E, a relatively small city. I knew her from feminist circles, and we had the interview on Zoom for 1.5 hours. She had a 9-year-old child from her marriage. She got divorced 8 years ago.

> Q: Did he share the domestic responsibilities?
>
> Pınar: He only cooked twice a week. Because he forced me to give night lectures. He said, "We have to pay the mortgage, you will go to night lectures." My daughter was a 6-month-old at that time. I went to school both day and night.

Zehra was 48 years old and worked as a janitor in City D. She had a grown-up son from her marriage. We met at her workplace and our interview lasted 45 minutes. The reason why Zehra chose to get married with her now ex-husband was because she liked his family, who were her neighbors. Even though she had second thoughts about marrying her fiancé, she could not break up with him because, in her words, "There was no such thing as breaking up at that time. Even breaking up with your fiancée was considered shameful." Being forced to work harder had become one of reasons for Zehra to make the decision to get divorced. Even though she worked before and during her marriage, the responsibility of domestic works was also on her.

> Zehra: After we had a child, of course, responsibilities were on me, childcare, domestic work, at the same time I was working. Her mother came to help for childcare, she lived with us. I did not have any problem with her. (…) My only inner struggle was that I worked but didn't have economic freedom. I couldn't spend what I earned freely, you see? I know some

> women may swallow this, but I fought for it. If I'm working, I should have the freedom to spend my money however I want.
>
> Q: Were you saving money?
>
> Zehra: He invested in real estate. I did not approve it that much. He talked to me in a disrespectful way. After a while, I started to pull away from him. "You will work, you have to work, I won't allow you to live with me if you don't work," he said that kind of things. (…) We had our first big fight because he threatened me with sending me back to my father's home because I did not work 2 hours of overtime.

Robin quit her job for a while because she wanted to get a master's in her field of study after a traumatic experience she had.

> Robin: I decided to get a Master's and had to quit my job to do it. But my severance pay was high enough. I translated a book. I kept seeing clients, working for the school where I used to be employed. I mean, I brought home lots of money. But Sinan [her ex-husband] told me, "I don't have to take care of you, go find a job." (…) In fact, we kept paying debts throughout our marriage. Debt for his passion for cars. He changed his car every two years. (…) I could not fulfill my own wishes for a long time. While I was doing my Master's, I lied to go to trainings. I said, "The university says it's mandatory." Because he did not take care of the child. I did not have anyone around me to whom I could leave my son. He used Mert [her son] against me in this sense. I mean, how does a person not want to spend time with his own child? It was not because he's unable to do it, he did not want to do it. He did not want to bother himself. He wanted me to be at home when he came home, he wanted to see his meal was ready.

Women's accounts reveal that they had difficulties to reconciliate between paid and unpaid work. Even though they worked during marriage, they were also expected to fulfill domestic responsibilities. The lack of free childcare services led women to develop different strategies to find a way to continue working. For most of the interviewees, working was not an option which they happened to choose, but an obligation to survive. In the case of voluntary interruptions in paid work, as in the case of Robin, the woman may be judged because of the fact that she does not work anymore. However, their ex-husbands' were never judged when they did not share domestic responsibilities. In case of divorce, not having a regular job with a social security is an important factor in the decision of awarding alimony. As discussed later in this chapter, only two interviewees were awarded alimony even though most of them did not have a regular job. With child custody, the responsibility of childcare could cause problems in terms of their careers if

they could not get any help from family members or any of the essential public services for childcare.

4.2 Domestic Violence: In Different Forms but Prevalent[147]

I included questions regarding domestic violence in marriage not just to understand how often it occurs but also to see whether women know the legislations on prevention of violence against women and what kind of experiences they had when they contacted the police or sought legal remedies. However, in most cases, before I even asked the question, women told me about their experiences by themselves. This goes to show how women's marital lives are intertwined with violence. In some cases, upon my question on violence, with an emphasis on its various forms including economic, sexual, physical, psychological, and physical, interviewees recalled experiences which they did not consider as violence in the marriage. Saying "violence" may be misleading because it usually evokes physical violence.

Nevin had been cheated on many times throughout her marriage. After they married, Nevin's now ex-husband found a job in a small business; however, what he earned was not enough to live on. Nevin inherited some money from his father after his death in the sixth month of her marriage. When her husband decided to start a business, Nevin offered that money to him, thinking that it would guarantee her son's future. So, they set up a café. When I asked her if the café's ownership belonged to her ex-husband, she nodded. She first realized that she first found out about her husband's infidelity at that café during her regular visits. Upon her reaction, she was subjected to physical violence. This became almost like a pattern: cheating and physical violence gradually increased and psychological violence followed.

> Nevin: He did the same thing to me twice. The first time, I left him for a month or so, and he forced me to go back home, hitting my back, I cannot forget that. I was pregnant. You know, verbal bullying at first, then he hit me because I did not want to go. I was fooled you know, I told you, he was like, "I love you, I cannot do without you, will our child grow up with separated parents?" (…) That second time, I stayed with my mom for 8 months, then we made up.
>
> Q: Did you go back because you were scared?

[147] For the statistical data on violence against women and ineffectiveness of law enforcement forces in detail, please see Chapter 3, the section titled "Male Self-Victimization as a Tool for Justification of Violence".

Nevin: I had a brother; he was still young and ignorant. I did not want this dispute to get bigger. I was also emotional, I still loved him, he could trick me. My brother was so young, I did not want them to have a fight.

Q: Where did he find that rifle?

Nevin: It was my father's. We kept it at home. (…) After I found out that he was cheating on me, I got more and more jealous and uneasy. We had arguments. But at some point, he started to beat me. I was beaten at the workplace, in public. I ended up in the police station, at the hospital. But I had nothing.

Q: What happened when you went to the police station?

Nevin: I went to the hospital to get a medical report for being beaten. There, police asked me why, then they took us to the station. I filed a complaint. I don't know if it's true, but they said that he was in custody for one night.

Q: Did he get out because you withdrew your complaint?

Nevin: No, I did not withdraw my complaint that time. I guess the police found a middle way in their own way. He knew the police; the station was near our workplace.

Q: Did you get a restraining order?

Nevin: No. He beat me because I didn't want to make up. (…) Consecutive cheatings, troubles, beatings… He blocked my way, he fought with me, followed me and shoved me in his car to beat me. I was beaten in the workplace constantly. (…) If I told my family one incident, I couldn't tell nine of them. I was scared.

Q: Why were you scared?

Nevin: I was scared that my family would do something to him. I was living with my family, but I didn't want to harm their dignity. Because I was wrong, I did not want them to tell me that I did this to myself. I was so fed up.

What Nevin's ex-husband actually expected from her was the unquestioned obedience, because he did not even consider cease all the beating, cheating, and grief. Nevin left him because of his actions, but her ex-husband resorted to violence against her because she did not want to make up and accept his domination as it is. As mentioned before, male members of women's natal families had various effects on women's decision-making process. In the case of Nevin, keeping her brother from out of trouble was one reason for her to keep her silence. Another reason was that her feeling of shame

because she eloped, she was the one who choose her ex-husband as opposed to her family. Nevin's story also provides an insight into the attitude of the police about violence against women.

The same pattern in which the police remain insensitive and ineffective about violence against women also appears in Yaprak's experiences:

> Yaprak: He didn't want to divorce. He started quarrels during hearings. I kept escaping from backdoor of courthouse, I always escaped from him.
>
> Q: Did he threaten you or attack you?
>
> Yaprak: He did it all. He did it in front of the police. He came to kill me when the police were next to me. He said to them "I will kill her". The police witnessed that. Earlier that day, he broke my arm, I was in the police station, I went out to go back home, and he came to kill me.
>
> Q: Was there a restraining order?
>
> Yaprak: Yes, in spite of that, he came to kill me. Everything is in our [case] files.

This was not the first time that Yaprak was beaten in front of the police. At that time, she was still living with her family-in-law. When she decided to stay with her family because of the unbearable maltreatment in that house, her family-in-law members beat her, and took her child away to prevent her from leaving. She called the police, tried to tell them about the problem.

> Yaprak: You know what, the police actually take their side. Because they were a big, powerful family, the police know them and beware of them. They said that they did not do anything wrong. They told me that I was insane. Nothing happened. (…) He beat me a lot. He broke my arm, my nose. I lost my ability to hear on my right ear. When I went to the doctor, he asked me how I broke my nose. They said to the doctor, "She banged into a door".[148]

[148] I heard the excuse "She banged into a door" twice in the interviews. As seen in Chapter 3, Hasan who was imprisoned for 16 months and 7 days because of domestic violence, explained that his ex-wife "banged into a door". It seems that making domestic violence against women look like an accident is common. According to the research of Şefkat-Der based in Konya, Turkey with women who are violence victims living in a Women's Shelter shows that "banging into a door" is a common excuse claimed by men in domestic violence cases. For more information, Cumhuriyet (2011, December 9). Kadın döven erkeklerin bahaneleri hazır! Accessed January 27, 2021, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/kadin-doven-erkeklerin-bahaneleri-hazir-304268. A PhD research on violence victims in Women's Shelters also shows the similar results. For more information, Cumhuriyet (2011, August 17). Şiddeti Uygulayan Değil, Gören Utanıyor. Accessed January 27, 2021, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siddeti-uygulayan-degil-goren-utaniyor-275052.

Women who were exposed to physical violence and made a complaint to the police had a shared disappointment and belief that the police actually takes the man's side. Their witnessing the ineffectiveness of the mechanisms that should provide protection for women seems to keep them away from pursuing their legal rights, because, according to their accounts, neither Nevin nor Yaprak did not try to make any complaint to the police again.

Another form of violence that manifested itself in women's accounts was psychological violence. After repeated physical violence, cheating, and being unable to convince anyone, Nevin was on the brick of suicide:

> Nevin: My husband was a shameless person. He slept with another person, then he came to me to sleep with me. Sometimes he told me what he did with other women. Everything was so terrible. We had my father's rifle at home. One day, we argued again, he beat me. I ran to the bedroom, locked the door, I put the rifle right here (beneath her chin). But I couldn't, I couldn't manage to fire it. If I could have, I would have killed myself. My mental health was that bad at that time.

Gaslighting is defined as a form of emotional abuse and psychological manipulation causing the targeted individual question their sanity and judgment. It is considered as a form of psychological violence. Sweet (2019) argues that gaslighting is a sociological rather than psychological phenomenon. It should be considered as embedded in social inequalities, including gender, and it is performed in power-laden intimate relationships. According to Nevin's account, her ex-husband's answer to her questions about infidelity was "I did not do it", but then, he told what he did with other women to her. Besides, Nevin could not make her ex-mother-in-law about his infidelities. At some point, Nevin started to suspect her own sanity, she started to wonder if she was delusional. Pınar had described her decision to marry as a result of manipulation before. She was exposed to gaslighting as well.

> Q: I include all kinds of violence, such as physical, psychological, sexual, and economic. Were you ever subjected to any kind of violence in marriage?
>
> Pınar: I was subjected to almost all of them. It started with psychological violence and it reached abnormal levels. Sometimes, he would not talk to me for days, he didn't even look at my face while at home. (…) I was also subjected to sexual violence. He didn't dare to do the other one, physical

> one. He tried once or twice but he couldn't beat me because I am somewhat burly. Besides, physical violence leaves marks on your body, and I was in an academic environment. So, he resorted to all kinds of violence that he knows that I could not prove. In every sense.

According to her account, Pınar found excuses for her ex-husband's behaviors. Pınar and her ex-husband was both educated people with their own incomes. However, Pınar was still subjected to violence in her marriage. As mentioned before, Pateman (1988) argues that women who earn as much as men and who belong to a higher class can have the change to set the terms of marriage contact, that gives the husband the "power of slave-owner". But Pınar's account requires reconsidering Pateman's argument. She earned *more than* her ex-husband and she was an academic while her ex-husband was a teacher (that is, professionally, she was in a higher position than her ex-husband), yet she was subjected to violence in various forms that are *invisible* to others.

While she related how she decided to divorce, she said, "But I had been subjected to every kind of violence until that day. However, I didn't know that it was called violence then, I was so ignorant."

> Q: How did you consider that at that time, do you remember?
>
> Pınar: I didn't experience mutual love was when I was growing up. So, I always thought that I had to work hard to win someone's affection. Therefore, I thought, "Yes, he loves me, but I must have done something wrong". (…) He was a clever man; he saw my deficiency in this regard, and he manipulated me. On time, I had set the table, a perfect table–and I worked, I had a child at the same time. He looked over and said, "There is no saltshaker on this table". I felt terribly sorry, and I went to bring salt. I felt an overwhelming fear and pressure, so I thought that this kind of things was perfectly normal, and I blamed myself, saying "How could you forget to bring salt?".

Pınar's account reveals how she blamed herself on a daily basis in her marriage even for the smallest things such as not bringing saltshaker. She then did not realize that this was a way of manipulation imposed on her by her ex-husband, according to her, it was because she did not grow up in a family in which mutual love was available and she did not know how to recognize difference between love and manipulation. The normalization of "fear and pressure" in romantic, familial, or social relationships accompanied with self-blaming and guilt feeling can be seen in other women's accounts as well.

The accounts on how women dealt with various forms of violence in their marriages or in divorce and postdivorce process reveals the lack of awareness on the relevant legal regulation which prevents domestic violence, namely Law No. 6284. For Robin, her ex-husband did not perpetrate violence against her, but against the child. It occurred in the form of physical, psychological, and verbal violence.

> Q: Had you heard of Law No. 6284 and thought about issuing a restraining order?
>
> Robin: No. Maybe it was because of my psychological state, I couldn't pull away my son from that violence. Taking any legal step didn't occur to me. In fact, that kind of abuse is quite subtle. I knew that I would leave that home one day, I would take my child and leave. But I didn't think of taking legal steps. Even during the divorce process, I tried to do it in a peaceful way. Because my son needs a father. (…) At some point, I was so desperate that I added antidepressants to his meals. Then, of course, I felt guilty and thought that it was unethical, professionally, so I stopped doing that. I confessed to it later. But he left me without a way out, and I couldn't think of anything else. I thought maybe he would become more mild-mannered toward our child.

Robin's account shows that she did not take any legal steps to protect herself and her child from her ex-husband. The only reason of this is not that she did not aware of the existing legal rights, but she did not even think about taking any legal steps because the marriage process consumed her psychologically as well as she because she felt that doing so could damage the relationship between her ex-husband and her son in the process. Moreover, even during the divorce process, Robin primarily concerned about keeping things in a peaceful way.

According to the definition by European Institute for Gender Equality, economic violence is "any act or behavior which causes economic harm to an individual. Economic violence can take the form of, for example, property damage, restricting access to financial resources, education or the labor market, or not complying with economic responsibilities, such as alimony".[149] Until now, economic violence emerged many times in women's accounts under different questions. What Suna experienced when her husband refused to work but did not allow her either was economic violence, for instance. When Zehra could not spend her hard-earned money as she desired, since her husband

[149] European Institute for Gender Equality. "economic violence". Accessed December 25, 2020, https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1096

invested in real estate, she was actually exposed to economic violence. As discussed later, not paying alimony is another form of economic violence and, at this point, it must be emphasized that what the state does by bringing limitation of alimony into public agenda, without any regulation improving women's status in society in terms of access to education, employment, and free care services, is also economic violence against women.

Interviews revealed that even in cases where the men were not the only money holders, economic violence still emerged. The similarity in Pınar's and İdil's accounts is notable. Both women are well-educated. Pınar earned more than her ex-husband, and even though İdil did not know how much her ex-husband earned because he did not share this information, she assumed that she earned as much as he did. However, in both cases, their ex-husbands took their debit cards and gave them pocket money.

> Q: Had he put pressure on you economically?
>
> Pınar: He took my debit card. His excuse was, "I bought a house that we can live in together, I pay loans". (…) He said, "You cannot make payments, but I can, I will give you some pocket money." I had like 50 or 100 TL in my pocket.
>
> Q: So, you did not determine the amount of "pocket money" that you needed?
>
> Pınar: Of course not, he determined it. Besides, I always earned more than he did. For instance, I wanted to buy something for myself every 2-3 months, but I could have never bought anything for myself.

İdil narrated her marriage and divorce process very briefly. She described the way leading to divorce for her was "the end of mutual love." However, when I asked her if she was subjected to economic violence, she suddenly remembered her experiences, and she changed her mind, saying that what she experienced was a significant factor in her decision to divorce:

> İdil: Throughout marriage, we had problems when it came to sharing financial income. He took my debit card and he used it himself. (…) He paid bills, other things with that money. He did not let me take care of anything financial. I accepted this throughout our marriage, but I now understand that it was a mistake. (…) He gave me pocket money.
>
> Q: Did you determine the amount of "pocket money" that you needed?

> İdil: Of course not. He just gave the amount he wished. (…) I always said, "Please, at least give my card back. Leave 300-500 TL in the account or leave some money inside a book on the bookcase for states of emergency". Besides, I earned that money. I didn't see what I earned for years. I saw it on the payroll, that's how I knew how much I earned that month. (…) It seems to me that he thought, "You don't understand finances, you go work and give your money to me, I will pay rent, bills, other things with that." When it comes to him, everything is permitted, but when I wanted to buy something, we were always in debt.

Both examples of Pınar and İdil reflect not only economic violence that they were subjected to, but also how male power and hegemony is produced and maintained in marriage. While their ex-husbands controlled how women spent money which they earned, they refused to be controlled by women, to even share amounts of their incomes.

Kader and her now ex-husband moved to their own place after 5 years living together with his family. She related that they had a happy marriage without violence for 10 years, until she caught her husband cheating on her.

> Kader: He regretted it lot, he made an effort to redeem himself. I forgave him, I had to. (…) 3 or 4 years later, he cheated on me again. He was drinking. He drank more and more over years, he started to drink every day. I didn't want him to drink. We had arguments when he came home drunk. He finally resorted to violence, beat me. In the last years, he committed violence more frequently, because he became an alcoholic. I couldn't recognize him when he was drunk.
>
> Q: Did he ever resort to violence towards your children?
>
> Kader: No, he didn't raise his hand to children, not even once. But my daughter witnessed our fights, the violence to which he subjected me.

Adultery is defined as a binding reason to resolve conjugal union in Civil Code. Nevin, Kader, and Sevgi were cheated on by their ex-husbands while they were married. One common point in their accounts was interesting: The man's natal family tries to cast a veil over his adultery. In Nevin's case, her mother-in-law insistently refused to accept her son's successive infidelities and being discredited almost led Nevin to lose her reasoning. In Sevgi's case, her ex-husband started a new life in another country, and had a child, but his natal family stayed silent and took his side against Sevgi. In Kader's case, her ex-husband had a long-term girlfriend, and his family accommodated them in their own home. None of these women's divorce cases included adultery as a reason for divorce, but only irreconcilable differences were presented as the reason. The family

tolerated man's adultery, implying the flexibility of "morality" when it comes to men. The same family threatened the woman if she decided to remarry, as in the cases of Kader and Sevgi claiming that what those women did was immoral. Considering this "privilege" of the man in adultery in particular with the concept of "honor" (that manifests itself as control over female sexuality, "linking female sexual purity to male honor" (Kandiyoti, 1987: 334)), this double standard of sexuality of women and men reveals the support mechanism nurturing men's hegemony and power in familial and social relations. While "men flaunt their masculine prowess, men are intensely preoccupied with possible loss of sexual identity" (Kandiyoti, 1987: 327), female sexuality is firmly controlled by family, society, and even women themselves. When Sevgi and Kader were not married to these men anymore, they were still expected to be "sexually pure" and not to marry another man so as to "protect" honor of their former in-laws and ex-husbands. The fact that women did not include their ex-husbands' adultery into their divorce cases may indicate that women also may normalize and swallow men's infidelities as "masculine prowess" just as men's natal families and society.

Among the interviewees, only Yaprak and Nevin reported domestic violence to the police, and they could not get any sufficient results. In fact, Yaprak was subjected to violence in front of the police. As seen in the accounts of women, even though it seems that violence changed form according to the socioeconomic class, it was always present in the marriage. As middle-class women were subjected to psychological, economic, or sexual forms of violence, physical violence is more common in lower class women's lives. Maybe the underlying reason is that "physical violence leaves marks on your body", as Pınar said, and the social circles of these couples do not tolerate "visible violence". Still, a generalization does not seem possible at this point, because physical violence is also true for middle- or upper-class women. This prevalence of various forms of violence demonstrates the importance of legislations on preventing violence against women, such as the Istanbul Convention and Law No. 6284. Moreover, naming economic, sexual, and psychological violence as violence still seems foreign for women, and this must be evaluated together with cultural and social doctrines on marital roles, gender equality, and toleration of male violence.

*4.3 **Divorce: The Last Straw, Threats, Bargains, and "Tricks"***

According to the data in the TBNA Report 2014, women are the party who mostly demand divorce. The top five reasons for women to divorce are violence, bad habits, adultery, emotional relationship, and economic problems. As discussed in Chapter 2, the report states that men tend to avoid paying alimony, hide their marital property, or register the property under somebody else's name before divorce. Violence is also noted as a factor that "creates ground for divorce and that can appear upon making the decision" (p. 107). What I learned from our interviews with women was coherent with the data in TBNA 2014. All women I interviewed were the party who decided to divorce. It was not a sudden decision for none of them. Women waited patiently for their own reasons, particularly for their children. Their first concerns could have been maintaining their family in spite of everything they suffered, but when everything became unbearable, they made this *hard* decision.

Until now, this chapter showed how women's choices in life regarding marriage is commonly affected by the patriarchal structure of society, providing very limited, unequal opportunities for women in terms of their own bodies, choices, and lives. Moreover, how women are still perceived and perceive themselves as the primary caregivers has been quite clear. Now, this chapter turns to the heart of alimony debates: decision to divorce, common conflicts in divorce process, financial consequences, and women's new lives after divorce.

4.3.2 The Last Straw: Decision of Divorce

The interview question seemed easy: "How did you decide to divorce?" But answers were long and complicated. One common point in their accounts is that when they let their now ex-husbands know that they wanted to divorce, the first reaction they received from men was shock and denial. Each woman clearly remembered the final straw and the path leading them to that point. This difference is also visible in this research. During the interviews with men, their focus tended to be on the divorce and its aftermath.

The shock and denial of men were prevalently followed by threats. Most of the interviewees heard threats at least once from their husbands during the litigation process. Only four interviewees, all middle-class women, did not receive death threats. Only two women remarried, and they received death threats when it was heard that they were going

to marry. Threats came not only from their ex-husbands but also from their families-in-law.

When I met with Sevgi first, we were having coffee with several divorced women in the yard of their workplace. We were talking about my research topic. Sevgi smiled and said, "You know what, I remember the day in the courthouse very clearly. I was waiting for my turn, there was a list of names on something like a signboard, you know. I realized how many divorce cases are waiting to be tried. I felt a huge relief. I said to myself, 'I am not the only one". I asked her to elaborate and, even though she did not say it directly, I understood that the fear of "being the only one" was about "being a failure". Arıkan (1992) emphasizes that divorced women are perceived as being unable to keep hold of their husbands by the society. This may be another reason why women cannot make the decision to divorce easily.

Sevgi decided to divorce twice. She kept waiting her ex-husband to change because whenever he visited her in Turkey, he promised her that he would. Sevgi said that her husband claimed getting ill or going to jail whenever she found a chance to question him about why he treated her and their children in that way. In other words, he used illness as a source of victimization to be forgiven. When she decided to divorce first, their relatives and friends intervened, and Sevgi stepped back. At her first attempt, her ex-husband promised her that he would change and asked for another chance:

> Sevgi: I told everyone what he did to me, he said, "whatever she says, she's right." He told me, "I promise that I will change, give me another chance." I told him, "Come back to Turkey, we will let bygones be bygones, as if you had never gone abroad. Let's take care of our children and work here together." He said, "No. I stay abroad for a year, then I will come back. I will send you money every month." He went and… The same old, same old.

Kader followed his ex-husband when he was away for work. She felt that he was cheating on her again, and she turned out to be right. Upon that, she refused to see him for three months, but then, she decided to forgive him for the sake of their children.

> Kader: I forgave him for my children, they were too young. My younger child was only 4 years old. I was unable to work. I wasn't shrewd. I did not have the self-confidence, honestly, I was just a housewife, I had never worked before. After I forgave him, he did not change a bit. He started to see that woman again. (…) I was so alone. My kids could not see their fathers on Father's Day. They couldn't share their joy with their father when they got their report cards. I moved house by myself; I did everything alone.

> I was sick of that life; I couldn't bare it anymore. I told him that I would divorce. He couldn't believe it. I hadn't seen him for a whole month, and he sent me 1,000 TL. I took that money and went to the courthouse to file a divorce case. He could not believe that I filed the case. (…) I had started working at that time. My family supported me; we started a small business with a partner. I had gained confidence, felt much better when I started working. I said, "I won't back down".

As seen in Kader's and Sevgi's accounts, "offering money" seems to be a way to delay the divorce or even save the marriage. I have heard from some interviewees that after they declared their decision to divorce, particularly because of financial problems, men's most common first reaction was to offer money. Some male interviewees also mentioned that they had gave money when they heard that their ex-husbands wanted to divorce in Chapter 3. Of course, this is not an offering which openly says, "Take this money and stay with me". This may imply that men's commonly accepted role as providers may create a self-perception closely related to financial resources. Hence, in case of conflicts such as divorce, they may rely upon their financial power instead of thinking their problems over and attempting to develop affiliation and mutual understanding in order to solve them as fast as possible.

Suna's main problem in her marriage was poverty. After 6 years, Suna decided to look for a job. When Suna's sister-in-law let her know about a training program to become a security employee, Suna decided to apply in order to find a job with social security. At that time, her husband had gone abroad to work. At a recess during the training, a young girl who worked as a tea-maker there told her and her classmates, "Is there anyone you know who want to work here as a tea-maker? I have to quit my job because my husband doesn't let me work." Ironically, one woman who quit her job on her husband's request paved the way for another woman to find a job. Suna immediately offered herself as a candidate. She insisted to get the job and started to work after her training was completed.

> Suna: I worked there for one and a half year. My neighbor took care of my daughter. It was the end of my first week, when he [her ex-husband] learned about it, quit his job, and returned home. He said, "You won't work". I said, "I will". I had run out of my patience. I said, "I want to buy milk for my child, I don't want to expect anyone else to provide it." He said, "Okay, I will work", but he didn't. Even when he tried, he didn't stay employed even for a month and thus couldn't get his money. In the morning, I woke up, got myself and my daughter ready, and head to the door. He stood in front of the door, saying, "You cannot go." We had a little argument. I said okay, then I took my child and went to the bedroom. The apartment was on the

> ground floor. I opened the window and jumped down with the child. I escaped to go to work. He ran after me. Before I managed to reach the bus stop, he caught me and pulled me by my arm, and I fell. The neighbor looking after my daughter when I was at work saw what happened and called my older brother. They knew my brother; he frequently visited us, brought supplies for us. Thank God, my brother was in another city at that time. They called the police. Police asked what's wrong, and I told them, I said "I want to work." I was crying. "I want to work, I want to buy milk for my daughter. Go to that house, go and see it with your own eyes. Go in and see how we live." Police said, "Let the woman work, what do you want from her?" So, I went to work, and we separated on that day. Sure, there were some conflicts to stop us divorcing. But it was the last straw. My family came and picked my stuff up from home. Then elders of the families tried to mediate to get us together again, but it didn't work.

After the decision to divorce, Suna's husband couldn't accept it for a while and, until divorce case ended, he tried different ways to reach her:

> Suna: My husband once appeared at my workplace, out of the blue, furious. I was working, and he believed that I wanted to break up with him because of that. (…) I didn't see it in person, I was busy. As my colleagues told, he shouted, "Give my wife back!". Like they forced me to work. He attacked one colleague and he got beaten. My older brother talked to his [her ex-husband] father and said, "If he goes too far, we will too." (…) He constantly called me on the phone after I filed a divorce case. He knew that I was keen on my daughter, he said things like "I will kidnap that child, I will give her to another family, neither you nor I will see her". I heard stuff like this a lot. I heard a lot, I was exhausted. He was calling my workplace, and harassing people working there. I didn't answer his calls and I changed my number many times, but he managed to find that new number every time. Once, he called me to say, "I met someone from your workplace. You have a relationship with your director. You are very close they say."

Suna's husband looked for reasons leading Suna to decide to divorce outside their marriage. This seems a common assumption among men, as also discussed in Chapter 3. Additionally, as shown in the TBNA Report 2014, "inner circle" is placed on the top among main reasons for divorce for men, which suggests that external effects on women in their decision to divorce are a prevalent assumption among men.

Nevin's last straw was related to her husband's never-ending affairs and violence. She did not immediately file for divorce but waited for 4 or 5 years and stayed with her mother in the meantime. She explained, "I could not file a divorce case, I couldn't pull myself together, I was not psychologically ready." One day, she and her family went to the school for his son's reading festival. She said, "My mother never left me alone. She

was scared that he would come and beat me." They met eyes at the school gates and her husband wanted to talk to her. On families' request, Nevin accepted it, and together they went to a nearby park.

> Nevin: He told me, "We have to make up; we cannot break up." I said, "I don't want it anymore." When I left home, my son was 2 years old. At that time when we made had that conversation, he was 6 or 7. When I said that I did not want to go back to him, he told me, "If you break up with me, I will kill you". I was in such a bad mental state. I said, "Will you kill me? Don't bother, I will kill myself". All of a sudden, I dashed to the main street from the park. I wanted a car to hit me. I wanted to die. Then I had a nervous breakdown, they took me to the hospital. My younger brother was a grown-up man then. He said to my mother-in-law, "If I see your son around my sister again, if I see that he tries to harm her, I will get even with him, one of us would be dead." Upon that, my mother-in-law was scared, and tried to restrain her son. After that incident in the park, I decided to file a case. But it lasted 2 or 3 years because he did not want to divorce.

There is a common thread in the accounts of Suna and Nevin: the intervention in the form of a threat from a male member of their natal families. The powerful effects of male members of the woman's natal family may sometimes provide *protection* for them. This was one prevalent pattern I encountered during the interviews. However, this protection may also bring strict restrictions, as discussed later.

Pınar's last straw made her laugh when we talked about the starting point of her divorce process. While her ex-husband begged her not to leave him as his first reaction to her decision of divorce, this attitude changed in divorce and postdivorce process. Pınar experienced an easy divorce, but her ex-husband started to make her life harder after divorce. During the marriage, Pınar's ex-husband resorted to psychological, sexual, and economic violence against her. After divorce, his violent actions continued in the forms of psychological and digital violence.

> Q: What happened after you decided to divorce? What was your ex-husband's reaction?
>
> Pınar: I divorced because of an ashtray. I was so fed up. One day, he said, "So you didn't clear the ashtray? Again?" I then threw the ashtray on the floor and said, "You will clean it yourself from now on". I had been subjected to all kinds of violence to that day, I was at the end of my rope. Ashtray was only the trigger. (…) After I roared at him, saying that I was going to get divorced, he was the best person in the world–for about 2 weeks. He said things like, "I will never upset you; I want you to stay home". I

wanted to leave that house, because I knew that if I stayed, he would never leave me alone. He said, "You stay here, you can have everything I have, please don't leave me. If you want to get divorced, we will get a consensual divorce." I was shocked that everything was going to be so easy. It's like a joke but we managed to make the divorce consensual. However, I later realized that he only accepted it so that he could hide away the marital property. (…) But you know, you unconsciously say, "enough is enough". If he divorced this way, he could keep the house, the car, everything. I left home and moved to live with my mother. The only thing I took was my clothes and my child's clothes. Consensual divorce is so easy, it's over in 15 minutes. But everything started a week later than divorce, and it had not stopped for 4 years.

Q: Did he threaten or harass you?

Pınar: Every kind of thing you can imagine. He posted my photo on Facebook and wrote "slut" on it. And there were my students following him there. If it was only his relatives, I wouldn't care. I am ashamed explaining this, but I didn't do anything to provoke him, like having a relationship with another man. (…) We went boating with my friends, and I shared a photo with them, that's all. He wrote "slut" on that photo. Then, the threats started to come. He threatened me for 4 years with everything, everyone in my life. He told me once, "I will get to a point where you will come back to me". I lost the car, I had nothing left in the financial sense. I left home only with some clothes. Then, one day, my father had a heart attack. He called me and said, "We need to meet", I said okay. I thought he would say something about the child. And he told me that "Are you ready for your father's second heart attack?" I was going to lose my mind. A part of his family is like a clan (*aşiret*). If they want to get something done, they will. I know that. He then started to threaten me with my mother. My mother was alone at home when I was at work. He told me, "If you don't give me custody in one month, I will abduct that child at all costs, you will not be able to find her". That was my biggest stupidity. I accepted what he wanted upon his threats, and I gave up custody. I asked, "Do you promise that nothing will change in her life, that she'll stay with me?"

Pınar's ex-husband attacked her *respectability* in society first. Even after he got the child custody, he continued harassing her and Pınar finally applied to get a restraining order through Law No. 6284. However, she had to withdraw her complaint because her ex-husband threatened her with her daughter this time:

Q: Have you ever tried to issue a restraining order?

Pınar: Not in the marriage. He was obsessive, but he received psychological treatment later. Besides, I didn't know that I could apply, where to apply, I didn't know about legislation. I was so ignorant. I didn't have that courage. I was living alone at that time. I didn't have anyone from my family here,

not a sibling, not an older brother, it was only me. (…) I was oppressed, a lot, for the sake of my daughter. One day… I cannot forget that pain I felt. After he got child custody, he didn't allow me to see my daughter for 2 months. Then my daughter called me and told me, "Mom, I miss you so much, I want to see you." I told her, "Dear, I want to see you too, of course, but you have to talk to your dad." She said, "Dad allows it." How happy I was. "Can you pick me up from school tomorrow?" she said. The next day, I was so excited, like a young girl who was going on a date with her boyfriend for the first time. All of a sudden, I got a call from him. He told me, "Pınar, you sued me." That was when the restraining order was issued. He said, "Withdraw the order or you cannot see Sıla [her daughter] today." I couldn't believe what I was hearing. My daughter called me while her father was next to her, he told her that she would see her mother. He said, "Don't worry, I have a solution for that. I will pick her up from school today and I will tell her, 'Your mother and grandmother don't love you anymore, they don't want to see you anymore.'" I called my lawyer, and she told me that I could not do anything, it would be considered as kidnapping if I tried to take her. I asked her if it was okay that I still went to my daughter's school. She said, "It's okay, go and explain everything." Until then, I had tried so hard not to reflect all these things to Sıla. But that day, I explained everything. She only said "Okay, mom.". It was the moment when I felt the most desperate.

Q: So, he did keep harassing you while there was a restraining order?

Pınar: If he couldn't do anything, he would create a new fake account on social media and threaten me from there. He then deactivated those accounts. He was smart and evil, you know. He left some evidence behind, I did not have any evidence in written. They were mostly verbal threats, how could I prove them? Every night, I was done with my lectures and went home in the dark. I didn't have a car. He threatened me because I was walking home alone in the dark. I kept calling my mother to ask her if she's okay. She did not know that he was threatening me with her. I was about to go mad. I was worried all the time, worrying if there would be any news of death, if my daughter was abducted from nursery.

Even though Pınar tried so hard to get back the custody of her daughter, she could not do it because of her ex-husband's "strong links":

Pınar: He knew people in high places. His relatives are so powerful, they have close relations with AKP. I couldn't express myself in the court. The case lasted for almost three years. I gave my all to that case. I moved to a separate house from my mother, the lawyer told me that they would ask that. Even a child psychologist presented a report saying that the daughter should stay with her father. The lawyer told me that if we were in a big city, under normal conditions, I would get the custody with one hearing. We had reports on his drinking, his psychiatric treatment, but I couldn't get the custody back. There was nothing bad on me, I was clean. I have a good occupation,

> I have a house, I have good social circle. Sıla's teachers made statements in favor of me and against her father. I could not get custody back. At last, one of my friends, a psychologist, told me, "Don't get me wrong, but could you just let it go? Just let it go. You have nothing left." I then said to my ex-husband, "Okay, take the child and take care of her on your own." I know it is not about the child for him, it is about me.

MacKinnon (1989) criticizes so-called equality and gender-neutrality in terms of child custody in family law. According to her, the law "which purports gender neutrality while applying a standard of adequacy of parenting based on male-controlled resources and male defined norms, sometimes taking children away from women but more generally controlling women through the threat and fear of loss of their children" (p. 245). As seen in the accounts of divorced women, this equal access to child custody and alimony is actually a tool used by men to threaten and frighten women who want to divorce. Moreover, Pınar's experience shows how legal processes are open to be manipulated through "knowing the right people in high places". Just as the ineffectiveness of the police in other women's accounts, personal relationships with those who have authority may leave legislations useless and create injustice. Using or harming the child or the parents of the woman to hurt her seems a common pattern in women's accounts. Even though the ex-husband does not threaten woman with death, he tends to threaten with the woman's children.

Yaprak's marriage was full of violence, perpetuated by her ex-husband and her family-in-law; and the divorce process was not different. Yaprak's ex-husband was a drug addict and unemployed by choice. His bad habits caused them to get into debt many times and Yaprak had to clear them each time. Her ex-husband's violent attacks did not end even after divorce.

> Yaprak: He used drugs; he did not support the expenses. He was on probation. He kept saying, "I will change, I love you." (…) He didn't change, he went out every night, used drugs, gambled, and came back home. He was deep in debt. Some men would come to our doorstep sometimes. If I had had money to clear that debt, I would have been still married with him, I don't know. That was my last straw. I was sick of paying debts. (…) I couldn't go. For 8 years, he kept telling me, "Go to your father's home." He threatened me with my father. He called my father and told him, "Come and get your daughter." I was mortified in front of my family because I had eloped. I didn't want to embarrass them again by divorcing. That's why I couldn't leave him for 8 years. After I got my father's consent, I took my children and left, moved into my family home. My in-laws came and took my children with a court decision. There was a one-hour distance between

> where I lived and where I worked. Because I couldn't make it home in time, they took away my children.

In keeping with the accounts of women and men (see. Chapter 3), it seems that men were not aware of the internal problems leading to divorce as much as women were during marriage. There is an expression in Turkey: "If I can't have you, then only the earth will" (*Ya benimsin ya kara toprağın*). As I listened to women describe how they received death threats, this expression kept echoing in my mind, because it also involves a death threat. What men feel which can be seen as a feeling of rejection can also be considered as "a matter of honor". The woman has the responsibility to protect her family's honor by properly following patriarchal social rules. When she gets married, she becomes the keeper of her husband's honor, and any disobedience may dishonor her husband. As quoted from Pateman before, the law and society give the man the power of slave-owner, in this sense, a divorce demand coming from the woman is like a "slave rebellion".

4.3.3 Bargains and "Tricks" at Divorce

While four divorce cases were consensual, the other six were contested. Most men tended to prolong litigation process by not showing up in the court or declaring that they did not want to divorce. Alimony, compensation, marital property, and child support were important matters of negotiation. The accounts of women show that alimony and child support led to bargains between spouses. Men were not willing to determine the alimony amount on paper and tended to solve the "money problem" on an interpersonal level. Moreover, because their husbands caused difficulties by not showing up for trials or by declaring that they did not want to divorce, it seemed that women wanted to give up alimony or other marital rights, just to finalize the divorce case as soon as possible.

Table 4.2 shows the financial results of women's divorce cases. Because Zehra could not remember how much the court determined the child support to be, the relevant data is not available. Marital property is quite a controversial topic, therefore, instead of including it in the table, I will relay women's accounts.

	Alimony	Child Support	Numbers of Children	Custody
Aysu	N/A	N/A	One child	Yes
İdil	N/A	1200 TL	One child	Yes
Kader	N/A	300 TL	Two children	Yes
Nevin	150 TL	250 TL	One child	Yes
Pınar	N/A	N/A	One child	No
Robin	N/A	N/A	One child	Yes
Sevgi	N/A	N/A	One child	Yes
Suna	N/A	200 TL	One child	Yes
Yaprak	N/A	N/A	Two children	No
Zehra	N/A		One child	Yes

Table 4.2 The amounts of alimony and child support with status of custody

> Suna: I couldn't hire a lawyer. I didn't have the money. I went to the lawyer who was also employed where I worked as a tea-maker. I asked him how to do it. He showed me how to write a petition for divorce. He said, "The state will determine child support for your child anyway, you don't want alimony and compensation. You can make the application on your own, you don't have to pay for a lawyer to do it." I didn't ask for alimony or compensation, because I heard that when you received alimony or compensation, your ex-husband didn't want to leave you and said that he didn't want to divorce, and that extends the divorce process. That's why I did not ask for it. (…) He didn't accept to divorce at first. He didn't attend the hearings. I said, "I don't want alimony or compensation, please let's just get divorced". When he heard that I did not ask for alimony or compensation, he said okay. "If you don't want me, I don't want you either," he said. He consented after he heard that I wouldn't ask for money. The judge asked me if I demanded alimony, I said no. I mean, it seemed that I had the right to receive it. But judge ruled 200 TL per month for my daughter. It was 2007 or 2008.

As seen in Suna's account, not asking for alimony may have a significant role in accelerating the divorce process. Financial consequences of divorce for men may lead them to avoid divorcing or to compel the other spouse to find other solutions. When she was divorced, Suna was working as a tea-maker and she didn't even make the minimum wage. She lived with her family and had the custody of her child. Her husband was unemployed during that time. Because they did not have any marital property with her ex-husband, there was no division of property in their divorce case.

After Kader's husband left home, convinced that he did not have a place at home anymore, the divorce process started. However, the process was extended because he did not show up to the hearings. Kader finally convinced him to have a consensual divorce. Her ex-husband refused to include alimony or child support in the agreement:

Kader: He did not show up to two hearings. I was going to receive orphan's pension if I divorced. I said that "I need money, let's divorce already." He did not send me a penny that year.

Q: Did he not show up to the hearings to extend the divorce period?

Kader: Yes. He didn't accept to divorce. One day, I called him, "Let's go to the lawyer together, make an agreement.". The bar assigned me a lawyer. Before going, I called him again. I still didn't want my family to break up, you know, my kids were too young. I told him, "If you wish to come home, we may have breakfast as a family for the last time. Then, we'll go to the court." He didn't accept it. If he would have come, I might have forgiven him. That day, we got divorced.

Q: Was there any agreement between you two in terms of alimony or child support?

Kader: He didn't want to put child support or alimony in the agreement. He said, "You won't ask for alimony or child support."

Q: Did he say why?

Kader: He said, "I will give it anyway, but I don't want to determine it on paper, don't add alimony or child support to the agreement." He knows the consequences. If he doesn't pay, he will have to deal with the execution office, he will go to jail. That's why he didn't want to determine any amount in the agreement. He said, "Don't ask for it, I will fulfill my duties." I accepted it and didn't ask for anything. Anyway, one month later we got divorced, I filed another case for child support. Because the lawyer told me that "Even if you don't ask for it now, you are entitled to file a case later. Divorce now, then ask for child support."

Q: How old were your children?

Kader: My youngest was 5. Do you know how much the judge assigned as child support? 150 TL per child. 8 years ago.

Q: Do you know how much your ex-husband earned?

Kader: He worked informally, he didn't have a regular salary, he was paid an hourly wage. I was going to object to the amount of child support, but the judge told me that if I had an objection, I had to go and file another case. That means money, filing a new case would mean money. What is 150 TL enough for? How could 150 TL be enough for a child? I was going to say to the judge, "Is 150 TL enough for your child?" Is this justice?". They were little kids. They were going to school. One stationary purchase cost more than 150 TL.

Q: Did he pay child support regularly?

Kader: No. If he worked, he gave money children by hand. If he didn't work, he didn't give anything.

Q: What was that amount he gave, in general?

Kader: Not much. 200 or 300 TL.

Pınar's was a consensual divorce with no alimony or child support. Pınar had the child custody for almost two years but didn't receive child support during that time. Moreover, they had a joint marital property, as seen in Pınar's accounts before, and she was forced to work harder to pay the mortgage of that property in the marriage. However, she could not claim half of it just because she wanted to divorce as soon as possible; she was in a situation where she would accept anything if it would accelerate the process:

Q: What happened with marital property then?

Pınar: Three lawyers reviewed it, none of them managed to understand how he managed to hide it. He deeded the house to one of his relatives. We couldn't find that person. Then, that person sold the house. We didn't understand how all of this happened in just two weeks. The only thing I could do was to appeal to this transaction, but I was so ignorant.

Q: Did he pay any child support during the time you had the custody?

Pınar: Sometimes he gave 300 TL, sometimes 100 TL, then he didn't give anything for 3 months.

Q: Did you have it written down on the agreement?

Pınar: No.

Q: Did you or he not want to write it down?

Pınar: He didn't want it either. I wanted to end it [the divorce] right away, that's why I didn't ask for anything.

Aysu was the party who decided to divorce because of her ex-husband's adultery. However, she did not want to be the one who filed the case, because she did not want to be the one to explain how her parents got divorced to her daughter. Upon her request, her husband filed the case. She had the custody, but she did not ask for alimony or child support. Her ex-husband attempted to "do tricks" on marital property but Aysu had the financial power to consult lawyers.

Q: Did you receive alimony or child support?

Aysu: Never. He wasn't working when we divorced, there wasn't anything to get [from him]. He was unemployed. He had in so much debt. If we tried to do something like that, he would probably receive alimony from me. (…) But his family supported me a lot, they deeded two real estates to him. They asked him to give those to my daughter. (…) In that process, I was granted usufruct over those. My daughter had the deeds. On the agreement, I accepted that I wouldn't file any lawsuit to ask for child support for my daughter.

Q: Did you have any problems regarding the deeds?

Aysu: He [ex-husband] said, "I will hand these real estates over to you but on condition that you won't get married. If you get remarried, I will reclaim them." I didn't understand at the beginning. Then I received consultation. (…) At last, we got divorced on my own conditions, confirming that I would keep the real estates without any condition."

Q: Does he support your daughter? Do they have a good relationship?

Aysu: He comes to see my daughter very rarely, once or twice a month. I cover all her expenses. My in-laws are like, "We gave you real estates, it's all you can get." Her education, tuition fees, I cover them all. He never asks if she needs anything, he doesn't care what's happening in her life.

İdil had a consensual divorce and got child support. When we talked about sharing marital property, she mentioned her suspicions.

Q: Did you receive alimony or child support? Did you share your marital property?

İdil: I received child support and we shared the property. I believe that there was a ruse in there, but I didn't scrutinize it.

Q: What kind of a ruse?

İdil: We had joint property. There was still mortgage on it left to be paid. I asked for the property as a whole, I was going to clear the loan. In fact, I wanted it to be a guarantee for my son's future. But he thought about it and said, "I have debts. I have rights." Fathers can be selfish about these kinds of things. He said, "I will put the house on the market." After he cleared the loan, we divided the rest of the money between us. According to him, we shared it fifty-fifty.

Q: Did not you see the price of the house on the market?

İdil: I believe that those papers were fake. (…) I believe that he still has the house, it's possible. I guess he had a rental income, he had a very laid-back lifestyle.

Q: How did you determine the amount of child support?

İdil: I wanted to determine the amount as 1,200 TL. I told him "I will cover his other expenses, just give me the amount that I need for paid daycare." I paid 1,200 TL to the babysitter at that time, my son was 15 months old. No matter that my mother or a babysitter looked after my son, I needed that amount for childcare. Now we raised that amount a little bit. (…) We agreed upon the amount, we raised it by mutual consent. I still want it to be higher but, because of his circumstances, it's not possible to demand more for now.

Robin has also experienced consensual divorce after a 13-year marriage, ending in 2019. When she decided to divorce, she left home and found a new place with the support of her family. She said that all she could take from her house were her son, two cats and porcelain plates inherited from her grandmother. Their divorce agreement conditions were as follows:

Q: Will you receive alimony, child support, or compensation?

Robin: He bought the cat food and litter for our cats. (…) We said that he would undertake the needs of my son, his education expenses particularly. I cover his other needs, such as his therapy, groceries, and outfits. I worked 3 different jobs at the same time. Yet, it's still so difficult, barely sufficient. I worked 6 days a week. Then I came home and worked on translations to make more money. I don't have any time to rest. On the agreement, we decided that he would cover education expenses of my son, and I didn't ask for anything more.

Q: Did you not have joint property?

Robin: No. I couldn't save up. We couldn't buy anything. Only the car for me–I kept it. If he asked the car back, I would give it to him.

As seen in the accounts, in some cases, ex-couples came up with personal solutions in consensual divorces. This, in turn, brings suspicions of "tricks". The contested divorces are more complicated. First of all, both parties must accept to divorce, otherwise the courts tend to extend the cases with a hope of reconciliation. For women I interviewed, this common approach of the courts only made it harder for them to divorce, because their ex-husbands refused to divorce.

When Zehra got divorced in 2000, the new Civil Code bringing gender equality in the marriage had not yet passed. However, she received child support and took the half of title deed of marital property.

Q: What was the amount of child support?

Zehra: I don't remember very well. It's been 20 years. But it was as much as it was required at that time. At first, he didn't want to pay it. He thought he could just skip it. I said, "Okay, suit yourself, I will go to the execution office". He didn't pay it once; he took his chance. After my application to the execution office, he started to pay without protest. I once asked for an increase. Because my son was 4.5 years old when we got divorced, and now 7. When my son started primary school, he wanted to go to the school where his uncle [from his father side] worked as a teacher. My son wanted to stay at his father's house. At the beginning, I didn't want to accept this, but I eventually did, upon my son's request. He stayed in his father on weekdays and with me on weekends. At that point, he wanted to have the custody. I asked why, but I knew why: not to pay child support. I told him and his family, "Don't worry, you don't have to pay child support anymore" and I never received child support after that.

One demand of alimony opponents, as discussed in Chapter 3, is to remove preventive detention, which occurs when alimony or child support is not paid, to be removed. According to them, this implementation aggrieves men. However, sometimes preventive detention seems to be the only solution for women to receive child support and/or alimony. As Zehra expressed, the possibility of having to deal with the execution office made her ex-husband pay child support regularly. This was not the only example emerged during the interviews.

Nevin is the only interviewee who received alimony for a while. The court also awarded child support and compensation. Theirs was a contested divorce, and it lasted 2 years because her husband didn't verbally accept to divorce during hearings.

Nevin: The judge ruled 250 TL for me as alimony and 150 TL for my son as child support. I was not working at the time.

Q: What about the workplace for which you gave money to buy?

Nevin: He kept that. We didn't share it. Because they knew about the workplace in the court, they claimed pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages, 15 thousand TL in total. I was unemployed. I accepted it and we divorced. He sent me that 400 TL as 100 TL per week, and he didn't pay it to the bank. He then stopped paying for a while, then hardly even gave that 100 TL. (…) My family-in-law always saw me as the ungrateful money-grubber, whereas

> I only asked for the money that I was entitled to. I needed that money to support myself. Okay, I didn't pay rent, and my mother took care of the groceries. But I had my own needs, and I gave the money to set up that workplace. He didn't pay compensation either. He gave alimony and child support one week, but the other week he didn't. One day, he left and went abroad, he didn't give any money. I was so angry, I took it to the execution office. After receiving a warning from the court, he started to pay again.

Suna told a similar story. She could not receive child support judged by the court for a long time, and she did not ask for it until she was in need. At last, she had to take it to the execution office and her ex-husband received preventive detention:

> Suna: I started working at a factory as a dishwasher. I had a herniated disc when I was pregnant. It happened while I was carrying furniture because my husband wasn't around. After this dishwashing job, since I was naturally working with water a lot, and my disc got worse. Sometimes I had to lift heavy things. I went to the doctor and they told me that I needed to have an operation immediately. So, I quit my job. He had never paid alimony until that time. I called him and said that I was going to have an operation in 3 months. "At least send my daughter's pocket money," I said. She was in second grade at that time. I had the operation, and it took around 1.5 months for me to recover. I couldn't work. I don't care if I work as tea-maker, dishwasher, I can clean toilets, it doesn't matter. What is important to me is taking care of my daughter. But it was not like that anymore, because my body wasn't healthy enough.
>
> Q: Did he send money?
>
> Suna: Of course not. I talked to my brother-in-law. I was looking for a lawyer and found out that my neighbor's son was one. He [ex-husband] started to work at somewhere, they found him from his social security information. After 3 or 4 months, they found him and put him in jail because he didn't pay child support. The total debt was 10 thousand TL or so. My brother-in-law came to me and said, "Suna, this is all we could find and collect. All we have is 7 thousand TL. We are publicly disgraced. People can divorce but they do not go in jail because they don't pay child support. We cannot leave our house out of shame". I called the lawyer, and he told me "Don't accept it". I felt guilty. His family was not bad, they were good people, they supported me. I remember the times when my brother-in-law gave me pocket money. I accepted it [his proposal] and took the money. His family told me, "If he doesn't send child support, let us know and we will force him to pay". After he got out of jail, he paid it regularly for a couple of months, then he stopped paying it again.
>
> Q: Was he still paying 200 TL per month?

> Suna: Yes, still 200. I didn't want to go and beg for it. Why would I bother for money that I wouldn't receive? After he stopped paying for a couple of months, I called his family as if to complain. They pressured him and he paid for a month. Then nothing. I called his family again. (…) At some point, my ex-husband told her family that "What kind of relationship do you have with her? You support her and criticize me. Am I not your son, brother?" My sister-in-law then called me and asked me not to call them anymore. And I didn't.

As accounts of Nevin, Suna, and Zehra show, warnings from the court and the possibility of preventive detention are efficient tools to ensure alimony and child support are paid. In case of Suna, the debtor's family had an active role in ensuring that the child support was paid. Besides, except for İdil's case, the amount of child support had not increased after divorce, because to file a new case to demand increase in the amount itself would require money.

Nevin found the power in herself to work only a long time after she got divorced. She could not find a well-paid job with social security at first. She changed many jobs, worked as a janitor, a babysitter. According to her account, she spent all she earned for her son's education and other needs. She spent 400 TL she received as alimony and child support in total for private lessons for her son, because he was not that successful at school after his parents' divorce.

> Nevin: One day, a notice came from the court. He wanted to terminate the alimony. I took that notice and went to school where I worked as a janitor at that time. I was crying, I felt so offended. Yes, I was working, I made money, but what he did offended my feelings. Not because he wouldn't give me money. I gave him years, I gave him a child, what would 400 TL mean besides those things? (…) I asked for day off to go to the court. I needed to write a petition against his request. At that time, you needed to give 100 TL to make someone write the petition. I didn't want to spend that 100 TL. He wouldn't give me 250 TL; but I would have to spend 100 TL. On that day, I wrote that petition together with a teacher at the school. I cried a lot, I prayed to God, "Please God, give me a good job, so that I won't have to receive money from that man". Next day, I went to a job interview first, it was a job just like in my prayers, then I went to the courthouse and gave my petition, I refused his request. I thought that 400 TL was mine, he earned that money from the café we set up with the money I inherited from my father. I didn't see it as alimony or child support, I saw that money as my right. After I left the courthouse, they called me from the workplace where I went into the job interviewer that morning. I was hired. I was so happy that I cannot express my feelings with words. At the court. I said, "I don't want this man's money", because I that was my prayer, you know. "I don't want alimony, but he has to give child support," I said.

Q: What about the amount for child support? Have you ever raised it?

Nevin: No. He didn't pay compensation either. The judge asked if he paid it. I said he didn't. 15 thousand TL… After I gave up my alimony, the judge concluded that he would pay the compensation fully. He didn't pay alimony or child support for a year. The judge included those in his debt and prepared an installment plan. Now I received 650-750 per month. 150 TL of this amount is child support. The rest is his debts to me.

Q: For how long have you received it?

Nevin: For 2 years. The café is gone now. The amount is deducted from his salary regularly, otherwise he wouldn't pay. I know that 150 TL is not enough for a young man–my son is a young man now. But my ex-husband started a new life for himself, he remarried, has a child now. He needs money too. So, I don't ask anymore.

Financial consequences of the divorce process mostly concern the man, because usually he has more financial power. The reasons why the man knows more about legal regulations at divorce are related to his financial power to receive legal consultancy or to hire a lawyer. In addition, in the case of alimony opponents, social media platforms mobilizing against regulations in family law provided a large network of information exchange to share know-how on different issues in divorce process. Except for Nevin, none of the interviewees received alimony after divorce, even though they had no financial resources. As emphasized in the TBNA Report 2014 and by women's rights organizations and lawyers I interviewed, women's accounts also show that the main problem with alimony and child support is that debtors do not make payments regularly or not at all. Even though consensual divorce seems faster and easier, bargains, "tricks", and threats during the preparation of the agreement may lead women to lose the joint marital property that they have financially contributed and to lose the right to receive alimony or child support. Even the few middle-class and professional women, who earned as much as men, may not have an equal position in negotiating a proper agreement at divorce. As women's accounts show, the woman's desire for the divorce to be over as soon as possible may lead her to easily accepting many things that work against her during the preparation process of the divorce agreement in consensual divorce.

4.4 A New Life after Divorce: Freedom Under Constant Surveillance, Survival Under Unequal Conditions

Marriage is an unequal legal contract between a couple, though the accounts of women and men have shown that their natal families' prevalent involvement makes marriage about more than two individuals. Divorce is a new invisible social contract between women and society. Kohen, Brown, and Feldberg (1979) underlines that, for the woman, divorce does not only mean the loss of most of the resources that the man provides, but also the freedom from her dependence and obligations of service. After divorce, the woman becomes the head of the family and has a direct connection with society. However, a male-dominated society does not accept divorced woman's right to lead a family nor provides her with the necessary resources. The divorced mother's direct dependency on one man is replaced by a general dependency on the male-dominated society. In her ethnographic research based on interviews with divorced women, Yıldırım (2017) notes that this exchange of dependency corresponds to the shift of patriarchy from private to public. While it is evident who oppresses the woman in marriage, the woman is dominated by anonymous people when she steps out of the marriage. In this sense, divorce is a new contract that the woman signs with the society as a whole, including their relatives. (p. 17).

In the line with the discussion of patriarchal state policies and society in Chapter 2, these arguments correspond to Orloff's theorizing of the modern welfare states: a transition from "private" to "public". They also correspond to Walby's theorization of patriarchy emerging in two forms: private and public. When the woman steps out of the conjugal union, society becomes the observer of her performance of respectability, motherhood, and womanhood. As seen through this chapter, this surveillance does not start when she enters into the conjugal union. The woman's agency on her body, her decisions, her actions, and her respectability has been under surveillance from the very beginning of her life. Divorce brings along multilayered consequences and difficulties for women. Kohen, Brown, and Feldberg (1979), in their research on divorced mothers, state that,

> "Whether divorce brings relief or unhappiness, it is only the beginning of a new situation that has both problems and rewards. The problems are immediately obvious, for example, lack of money: the rewards may be noticeable only after. This is tied to the nature of change introduced by

> divorce. The change is not merely a legal or a personal one. It involves a shift from marriage to divorce, from a culturally supported life arrangement to a resource-deprived limbo." (Kohen, Brown, and Feldberg, 1979: 230)

Alimony, child support, and compensation is more about post-divorce. Divorce brings emotional consequences, the feeling of freedom or devastation, but very concrete problems come first: Housing, employment, childcare, and security were among common problems that women I interviewed mentioned. None of the interviewees regretted getting divorced. Various support mechanisms in terms of providing housing and childcare, particularly from their natal families, makes a crucial difference in women's living conditions after divorce. This section shed lights on women's struggles to meet these concrete needs as well as "divorced women's experiences" in society intertwined with their concrete struggles through their accounts.

Among ten interviewees, 7 of them live alone; 3 of them live with their family; and one of them has remarried, so she lives with her "established" family. After Robin got divorced, she started to live with her son in a gated community. Her older sister bought the apartment they lived:

> Robin: I was so lucky. I had many people from my social circle, my family to support me. My siblings provided me with economic support. But I wanted to be alone spiritually. I did everything on my own. It was like a mental preparation for me. The support that a woman gets from people around her is so essential in her divorce process. Every woman cannot get that support. (…) Because men have the money, they have economic power. When they get divorced, they actually don't lose anything.

As Robin expressed, the support that women get particularly from their families has quite an effect on the whole divorce process and afterwards. Robin was already working when she got divorced and she did not need help for childcare, because her son was 13 years old. One main problem that keeps the woman away from employment is the absence of free public childcare services. Many interviewees got help from their mothers or other female members of their families for childcare to be able to continue working.

Only Aysu sent her child to paid day care. Except her, all interviewees got help from their families or their children were not that young to need childcare. Aysu introduced me to İdil. Just as we were about to end our interview, İdil came and Aysu said "She's the lucky one. She got help from her mother with childcare". İdil told me, "I could not have gone this far without my mother. She helped me a lot."

Having economic power helps women who did not work during marriage gain confidence. As discussed in Chapter 2, the state and society tend to consider women's "natural vocations" as being mothers, good housewives, or primary caregivers. Therefore, employment seems sort of "secondary choice" for women in even social security system. This male-dominated structure in social, familial, and economic relations reproduces women's economic dependency on male members of their families (husbands or fathers). For the interviewees who started to work for the first time in their lives only after divorce, the common theme was gaining self-confidence even though some had guilt feelings because they thought that they could not spend enough time with their children as mothers. Many of them started to work to survive, but some of them started to work to go out of the house. For instance, Nevin did not work for a long time after she got divorced. She has been living with her mother since then. She decided to start working later but not mainly for economic reasons.

Q: When did you decide to work?

Nevin: I did not work at the beginning. For years. I did not need money that much because lived with my mother. But I needed to get out of that home, I needed that psychologically. I needed go out and meet new people. I could not go out, go anywhere. Because my brother didn't let me. "You can't go there. You won't do that." He was afraid of my ex-husband, as well as other people around. "You are a divorced lady now, if you talk to someone, they gossip about you." You know our people in Turkey. That's why I didn't go out.

It was Nevin's brother who threatened her ex-husband's family to stop them from disturbing Nevin, in other words, he provided protection for Nevin. During her marriage, Nevin was afraid that her brother would attempt to attack her ex-husband; therefore, she covered up the violence to which she was exposed. Here, after her divorce, her brother opposed to Nevin working or even going out. Nevin did not complain about any of this. These seemed to be ordinary things in the ordinary course of life. So, according to her, her brother was not inhibiting her right to work or to go out, but he was only trying to protect her from other people and society. Once she started to work, Nevin's opinion dramatically changed.

Q: How do you feel now that you are a working woman?

Nevin: I have already started to provide a better life to my son. (…) Once I started working, the way I thought about things changed, and my family's perception of me changed too. For instance, my mother didn't do anything without me anymore. I am so strong, so powerful now. Financially and mentally. At the beginning, I was not taken seriously. I was silent, I was guilty, I was lowly. But once I started working, I also started to see things in a whole different way. (…) I first bought a car and sold it. Then I took out loan and bought a country house. I try to buy as many tangible things as I can. I want to invest in my son's future.

When I asked Zehra about the feeling that working invokes, she mentioned self-confidence as well:

Q: What kind of power being a working woman gives you?

Zehra: I have self-confidence. Because I don't need anyone. If I want to have something, I don't think if I should have it or not. That decision to have it or not is yours. For instance, when you ask your husband, your father, your mother if you might have it and they don't let you have it, that frustration you have… Nobody should experience that feeling, I believe.

After divorce, Suna changed many jobs. Except for the 1.5 years when she could not work because of her health problems, she continued working.

Suna: I worked as a tea-maker at that company after I got divorced for almost 2 years. If they were short of personnel, I made presentations for students. Sometimes I answered phones like a secretary. But after what my ex-husband told me, I was afraid of being a secretary.

Q: You mean what he told about your so-called relationship with the manager?

Suna: Yes. Just because that fear, I didn't become a secretary. (…) I had my identity as a security employee, but nobody gave me a job. I worked there because I dreaded unemployment. During that period, my sister bought a country house, and they took my daughter too when they were going there that summer. My daughter's health got better and better. I couldn't take good care of her when I was married, and she was always sick. Because I couldn't feed my child very well, I told you, we didn't have money to buy even milk. (…) My sister took care of her nutrition, she started to have regular meals, then her health got better. (…) My purpose was to earn money and take care of my daughter. I could fulfill my purpose. (…) After the 1.5-year interruption because of my health problems, I attended public education courses and learned accounting. I worked as accountant for a year without social security. (…) I managed to take care of myself and my daughter. I have never lived in a separate house [from my family] together with my daughter. (…) I had many illnesses, because I worked too hard. And you

know what, I feel guilty when it comes to my daughter. I was so tired all the time, because I was working tooth and nail, because I knew that I had to work to survive. How should I put it… Whenever I think about whether I left her all alone or whether I take care of her well enough, my conscience pricks me. When I asked her, "Do you ever feel alone," she said yes. That hurt me so much. I remember that sometimes I was so tired out that I couldn't even talk to her. But we now have begun to talk. I had no choice. It had to be that way. It was the best of my options. Now, we talk, and she even revolts against me, she's a teenager after all. I want her to have self-confidence. I didn't have that. I want her to defend herself. I want to raise quite a cultured daughter.

I heard about this feeling of guilt from different interviewees. On the one hand, they have to work to survive and to take care of themselves and of their children and, at the same time, they feel empowered through paid work and economic independence. On the other hand, they bear the conscientious burden of not being able to spend enough time with their children. This is closely related to the cultural meaning attributed to motherhood. The inability to fully meet their children's emotional needs while meeting their financial needs seems to create a feeling of not being able to fulfill their performance of motherhood in full. This was an approach that I did not encounter in male interviewees. Moreover, it seems that their former marriage continues to affect women's choices in employment or in housing, just as Suna avoids working as a secretary after her husband accused her with a so-called relationship she had with her manager. Similarly, in Yaprak's case, her ex-husband's violent interventions disrupted her work life and housing.

Yaprak: After we finally got divorced, he attacked my home. He attacked my workplace, I got fired because of him. He came and announced that I was a whore. I was kicked out of my apartment. My landlord said, "This is not the first or second time, it's enough." He smashed the windows of the apartment.

Q: Was there a restraining order at that time?

Yaprak: Yes, the restraining order is useless. The last time he came, the restraining order's duration had ended. It's for 2 months. They told me that this was his last chance. After that, he would be put in jail. Nothing happened when I went to the police station, ever. I thought that after the last incident he would finally end up in prison. I hope he goes to jail, and I will be freed of him. At the beginning, I withdrew the order a couple of times. Because my mother-in-law called and said, "He cannot work, and he cannot take care of the children if he doesn't work." I told them to give my children back to me, but they did not.

Yaprak's case clearly shows the inefficiency of the police force once again. This inefficiency does not result from a lack of power to stop violence against women, it is rooted in sexist working ways of the institutions. The news shows many femicide cases in which the man had a restraining order.[150] Besides, society is not look helpful either. Yaprak was fired from her workplace and kicked out of her apartment not because of her own doings, but of her ex-husband's violent actions.

Only two women whom I interviewed got remarried after divorce and their reasons seemed as attempts to solve concrete problems. In some cases, the woman may prefer to narrow the area that patriarchy dominates over her in public and private by getting married or by pretending to be married. Because the feelings of freedom and surveillance as well as their strategies to make themselves seen respectable in society are intertwined with one another in women's accounts, I will share their accounts in this context.

While we were having a casual conversation with women in the yard of their workplace during lunchtime, one of them pointed to Sevgi and said, "She's the lucky one among us. She got remarried." During our interview, Sevgi did not talk about her remarrying as being lucky.

> Q: How did you decide to get remarried?
>
> Sevgi: I knew him, we lived in the same neighborhood. He was my landlord. He was stopping by, we were talking. He was a good person. I cannot say he's a bad person. We (she and her children) had bad times, he supported us. Before I found a job, we had nothing to eat. I cannot forget his favors. (…) He protected us, took care of us. A drowning person will clutch at any straw. I clutched at him like he's the straw. He was single, not married before, a couple of years younger than me. (…) My ex-husband started to call everyone in my extended family after he heard of my remarriage. Before

[150] For example, in 2020, Mehmet P. murdered Emine P. while he had a restraining order: Cumhuriyet (2020, November 12). Malatya'da kadın cinayeti: Hakkında uzaklaştırma kararı bulunan eşi tarafından öldürüldü. Accessed January 27, 2021, https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/malatyada-kadin-cinayeti-hakkinda-uzaklastirma-karari-bulunan-esi-tarafindan-olduruldu-1790391. Again, in 2020, a woman living in Kaş was murdered by her husband who had a restraining order: a3haber (2020, September 12). Kadın cinayeti: Uzaklaştırma kararı aldırdığı eşi tarafından öldürüldü. Accessed January 27, 2021, https://www.a3haber.com/2020/12/09/kadin-cinayeti-uzaklastirma-karari-aldirdigi-esi-tarafindan-olduruldu/; a brief search on Google with the keywords "Kadın Cinayeti, Uzaklaştırma Kararı", brings countless results. The monthly reports by We Will Stop Femicide Platform share the status of restraining order with femicides as well. For the last report published in November 2020: Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu [We Will Stop Femicides Platform] (2020, December 1). Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu Kasım Raporu. Accessed in January 3, 2021, http://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/veriler/2943/kadin-cinayetlerini-durduracagiz-platformu-kasim-2020-raporu.

that, nobody would even hear from him for sometimes 2 years. He wanted to see my children again.

Sevgi got remarried just after divorce. She has been married for 7 years now. Her statements about the decision to remarriage imply gratefulness to her subsequent husband. Because her husband had not married before and Sevgi was divorced, his family did not accept their marriage decision at first, but her husband insisted. It seems that there is a common tendency among interviewees not to have a relationship with a man who has never gotten married before. They usually preferred divorced man because they are also divorced, as will be elaborated later in the next section. Sevgi's ex-husband and his family threatened her and her new husband with death when they heard of the marriage. Sevgi accepted to get remarried after her older brother gave his consent. Her ex-husband began to call their children and relatives, so, he tried to remind his existence as Sevgi's ex-husband to everyone.

When she decided to get remarried, Kader also experienced similar things. Her motivation in remarriage was not romantic love. One year after her divorce, she got remarried. After a 2-year marriage, she divorced again.

Kader: He was a friend of my older brother. Four months after I got divorced, he proposed to me. He was also divorced. (…) You feel so alone; you are in such a difficult situation that you look for a safe harbor. I found this marriage to be rational. It was not a love marriage but a convenience marriage. I thought that his financial situation was good, he could take good care of my children.

Q: Did your ex-husband bother you after you got divorced?

Kader: Not at the beginning. When he heard that I was going to remarry, he called to threaten me. His sisters threatened me a lot too.

Q: What did they say?

Kader: "We will kill you, you got remarried just after you divorced." I am divorced now, what I do is none of your business. They cursed at me. They said that I was a whore, that I broke up with my husband because I found someone else. Nobody saw what he did, his faults. (…) Anyway, I remarried. When we returned from our honeymoon, my husband lost his job. He could not find a job as he wished after that. My ex-husband started to send money for the children then. He bought children's school supplies, he sent money from time to time. He did not pay child support regularly, but I did not care. Because I was married, I did not need money. He told children, "You won't ask anything from that man, I will meet your needs." (…) After

> 2 years, we decided that we couldn't get along anymore, and we got divorced. It was a very easy divorce, he just left, did not ask for anything. Actually, I felt so strong at that time. I told myself that "I am able to stand on my feet now, I don't need anyone." I had that self-confidence. (…) My family opposed my second divorce. They refused to see me for 6 months. They were concerned about what people would say. I told them, "Who cares what people say? This is my life, my children's life. (…) Whether you accept it or not, I don't want him, I want to divorce." Since then, I have been all alone. I worked as cleaner for two years, I earned very well. I did not need anyone. My first husband started to send more money for the children, he started to call me every day, crying, when he heard that I divorced. He wanted to make up. I said no. (…) Did I live through all this to go back to the same shit? My children didn't want me to make up with their father either. (…) After he lost all hope, he stopped sending money to children. He hasn't sent a penny for 2 years now.

Her transformation from the first divorce to the second is remarkable. She decided to remarry to provide a more comfortable life for herself and for her children and wanted to get rid of the feelings of loneliness and despair. The divorce decision for the second time was easier. Starting working after her first divorce enhanced her self-confidence. However, I have since learned that Kader has been unemployed for a while because of the pandemic and that she could not go to houses to work as a domestic worker. She lives on orphan's pension and receives social aid. She was the only woman who received social aid among the interviewees. The ex-husband's involvement in her new life through meeting the children's financial needs and his withdrawal upon Kader's second divorce is interesting. It seems that he also wanted to let Kader's subsequent husband know about his existence, just as Sevgi's ex-husband did. Again, threats she received from her first husband and his natal family are also similar with what Sevgi experienced. Kader's family-in-law saw her remarriage as the reason for her divorce decision. It seems that they did not see the difficulties she had in her marriage with her ex-husband as main reason in her decision. Men's families' tolerance to their violent acts, mistakes, or cheatings in marriage work against women as seen in the accounts of many women. This reveals the support system nurturing men's hegemony and power in familial and social relations while women are blamed for even for their ex-husbands wrongdoings.

4.4.1 Everyday Life as a Divorced Woman: "The Society is Watching You"

When I asked women how they felt just after they got divorced, the word "freedom" became prominent. However, it was not a "happy freedom", it brought many stressful

factors derived from the society and the job market. Being a divorced woman in society may be perceived as "being an open door". Some interviewees used this expression when referring to men's perception of the divorced woman. Being an open door simply means "not being virgin", "not having hymen" anymore. As the marriage contract entitles the woman's sexual properties to the husband, the woman's sexual properties may be seen as "open to the public" after they divorce.

Kandiyoti (1987) argues that the large number of individuals "who see themselves as responsible for ensuring women's appropriate sexual conduct" strikingly shows how the corporate control over female sexuality works in society (Kandiyoti, 1987: 325). Parents, siblings, relatives, and even neighbors *feel themselves responsible* for monitoring women's behaviors particularly starting from pubescence. Divorced women's accounts on their experiences in natal families before marriage and after divorce, especially their conflicts with their fathers, brothers, and/or male relatives proves this argument. Kandiyoti (1987) further argues that femininity becomes an *essential,* permanent status for women as a result of rigorous and continuous control over female sexuality. On the contrary to masculinity as an achieved status rather than ascribed, femininity "is an ascribed status rather than something to strive for" (Kandiyoti, 1987: 327). In other words, women exist with their sexuality in public sphere. In this context, Tuncer (2018) notes that,

> "…transgressions of accepted social behaviours and values by women were thought of in terms of sexuality, and thus were judged as immoral, and this has resulted in overwhelming efforts to control the presence of women in public, particularly through codes of dress, bodily presentation and conduct, as well as contact with the opposite sex." (Tuncer, 2018: 29).

Divorced women's accounts in this research correspond to these arguments. Many interviewees described how disturbed they felt after the divorce when they attempted to socialize again. They also shared their strategies to prevent or avoid the daily disturbances coming from mostly men, but from women as well. Their accounts on how they "watch their behaviors" also evokes Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of patriarchal bargain which includes how the woman feels the need to resort to other ways to make them appear modest in society.

Both Yaprak and Kader emphasized how they watch their behaviors to protect themselves from gossips about them and men's attention around them. As other interviewees, they also uttered how people's attitude and perception towards them

changed after they divorced. They also shared their strategies in everyday life. Yaprak used the phrase "open door" during the interview, and she explained how people's perception of her has changed with divorce as follows:

> Yaprak: Hah, men! All man wants to do is to trick you and sleep with you. Even your father's friend looks at you inappropriately just because you are divorced.
>
> Q: Have you ever experienced something like that?
>
> Yaprak: It is impossible not to experience something like that. My boss, those men I thought as my friends, men you call brother… Your friends don't do anything wrong to you for 10 years, but once you divorce, even those friends start to look at you in a wrong way. You have to keep your distance. For instance, the man who is currently my landlord is a friend of my father. He knows me since I was a child. He told me, "You don't have to pay the rent." I asked why, he said they don't need money for now. It seemed was shady. He insists on visiting me to have a cup of tea. I found excuses countless time, but he is obsessed. He keeps asking, "Don't you have any free time?" You feel his real intention, you know that he is hitting on you. That kind of things happen all the time. I did not realize it while I was married. Divorced woman is an open door, she would consort with anyone, people think of you in that way.

During our interview, when we were talking about how she felt after her first divorce, Kader showed me her wedding ring that she was still wearing. It was her strategy to protect herself from any general negative approach towards divorced women in society.

> Q: How did you feel after you got divorced?
>
> Kader: I felt so bad. I cried for two days. (…) It was like somebody died, and I was mourning. After two days, I went to the shop that I had just set up. I cannot forget that day. I woke up in the morning, I took a shower, I got dressed, and I went out. I looked at the sky, the sun was up. I said, "God, I feel like a new person, like, reborn." Because there was a new life ahead of me. I would be a divorced woman, maybe people would gossip about me, I didn't know what kind of life was ahead of me. I prayed, "God, give me what is good for me." That day was so unusual, I cannot forget it. Even the weather, the sky was different.
>
> Q: Did your fears come true? Did you have any trouble because you are divorced?
>
> Kader: Thankfully no, because I watch how I act carefully. Even when I was married, when my sibling would come to visit me, I would sit with them at the balcony so that the neighbors could see who's visiting. I won't let people

talk about me. I say that I am married in general, if asked. When I go to work, for instance. I say that I am married.

Q: Why do you say that?

Kader: Because I am afraid. I am scared that men will look at me in the wrong way. I am still wearing my wedding ring on my finger. I don't want people to gossip about me, about my children. One day, I will get remarried, but not now. Because I have a daughter, I cannot let her live with a strange man. (…) Because they get used to a home without men. They have a very easy life. After my daughter gets married, I will think of getting remarried.

Q: So, home without man is comfortable?

Kader: Yes, a lot. You know what, everyone envies me. They tell me that "Your life looks so easy." All I need is a job. Except for financial problems, everything is good… I see married couples around, and I still have fears. There are people who want to marry me. When things get serious, fear gets hold of me. I fear that, if I get remarried, I will have similar problems. I cannot bear the burden of a man anymore. I have been alone for a long time. I live as I wish now, I spend as much as I want, I don't owe any explanation to anybody. If I get tired of being alone, then, maybe I could think of it.

Continuously watching her own behavior did not seem enough for Kader, so she found this solution to keep her wedding ring on her finger.

Suna have been living with her family since she got divorced because, according to her, it's safer for her and her daughter. She depicted the society's surveillance on the divorced woman that she have also experienced as follows:

Suna: I was working in shifts. Besides, people's glances... You cannot laugh at something while everybody else can. Or you cannot react to something as easily as they can. How people perceive you changes immediately. This is what I have observed for ten years. Not here at my workplace, however. Maybe, at the beginning, they also had that kind of an opinion until they got to know me well, but now they don't hold such opinions, I know.

Q: Because you are divorced?

Suna: Yes, of course, because I am divorced. (…) When you laugh at something as others do, when you go back to work, a man comes to you on the way and tries to talk with you some more. (…) I didn't see anything like that from single people. I had trouble with generally married men and women. Look, women do that too. Men already do that. Women harm one another. Even though you don't have that kind of attitude, that kind of intention, I don't know why women do that. If the woman did not do it, maybe the man couldn't dare to do it. The society encourages men, so they behave loosely.

Suna emphasized women's role in her negative experiences in everyday life as a divorced woman. As more clearly seen in the accounts of female anti-alimony campaigners, women are not passive subjects in the production of male domination in society. In this sense, what Suna pointed out is important to understand in which ways women may be collaborators in the production and reproduction of patriarchy. Nevin's working life also intertwined with the *invisible* pressure she felt on herself as a divorced woman. But the difference in the way how Suna and Nevin mentioned about the presence and role of women is notable. Suna uttered other women's contribution to her discomfort in workplace. During our interview, Nevin also mentioned how other women made her feel uncomfortable in her previous workplace. In both workplaces in which they worked, men and women were working together. But their new workplace in which the staff is predominantly women provided them a safe space.

> Nevin: I really love my workplace. I feel myself more secure here. I changed jobs a lot after divorce. But I feel psychologically much better here, because I am with other women. Before I worked at factories, there were men there too. I worked there with my head down.
>
> Q: Why was that?
>
> Nevin: Because you are divorced, men look at you, I was so uncomfortable. (…) Maybe it was not just me, maybe they look at all women, you know how men are. But I felt so bad, because I was divorced. You watch how you sit, how you laugh. You don't want people to misunderstand you. You watch what you say, because you think that people may misunderstand and talk behind you, they may look at you in an inappropriate way. (…) I lived that way for 3 years while I was working at factories. When I wasn't working, I didn't think of that kind of things. Your experiences teach you to watch your behavior. For instance, I really like wearing make-up, but I did not do it while working at the factory. You give up things you like to protect yourself. (…) But here, I am surrounded with women. I don't feel like I would suffer harm. (…) Ever since I started working here, I feel more powerful.

The negative changes in the worldviews of divorced women seem to be a common problem. Women feel that they have to constantly control how they act, talk, wear, and so on. To watch how they laugh was the first thing that both women mentioned. That reminds me of the speech that Bülent Arınç, vice prime minister and government spokesman at the time, gave on modesty at the celebration ceremony held by the AKP Bursa Provincial Directorate. He said, "Modest is not just a word, but enrichment for both

men and women. The woman should be modest. She should know what is private and not. She should not laugh in public; her behaviors should not be alluring."[151] Political discourse mobilized around morality has produced many statements on women's behaviors, lifestyles, and bodies. The reason for the problems that women face in everyday life based on their sex was attributed to women's own behavior, instead of the sexist social norms and gender inequality in society. It seems that interviewees internalize this mentality. Even though they do not mind society's perception of divorced woman, society finds its way to remind them that they are divorced, and that this is something to feel uncomfortable about. As in the case of Robin, people around a divorced woman could cut off communication after divorce.

> Q: How did you feel now, while your divorce case is about to end?
>
> Robin: It's so good. I mean, freedom is great. I have a hilarious story. At first times after I left home, Mert stayed with his father on that night. I cooked pastry filled with spinach for myself. How I was crying while I prepared it. Because he [ex-husband] hates spinach and I could not buy spinach, just because he does not like it. I cooked it crying, I ate it crying. (…) Life is harder, it is exhausting, but worth it for freedom. (…) Women experienced many losses. Not only economic, but also spiritual. The view about that woman immediately changes. You may expect that that would not happen in my sociocultural segment, but it happens. For instance, Mert [her son] has good friends and we saw each other as families. Some families cut off communication with me. Because they see you as a threat. This is so interesting. What could you do, I mean? Would you seduce their husbands? But the fact that you are a divorced woman ruins some friendships. They actually say you that you cannot exist among us, they give you that anxiety. Another incident, it was interesting as well. While I was moving to my apartment, my neighbor asked me that "Did you break up with your husband?" I said "It is none of your business. This is private." The neighbor told me "How is it private? Did you abandon your husband?" Such a stupid conversation. You experienced many losses like that. On the one hand, you feel so free. On the other hand, you partly lose your freedom. Because society may take some privileges from you because you are a divorced woman.

According to the results of research on "Social and Political Trends in Turkey 2018" (TSSEA), divorced women ranked 11th among the least preferred group as a

[151] CNN Türk (2014, July 28). Bülent Arınç: "Kadın herkesin içinde kahkaha atmayacak". Accessed January 8, 2021, https://www.cnnturk.com/haber/turkiye/bulent-arinc-kadin-herkesin-icinde-kahkaha-atmayacak.

neighbor with 20,5%.[152] Negative perception of divorced women in society seems to have influenced the interviewees in different ways and level, but always. Some developed their own strategies, some found more secured workplaces for themselves. Being married is a status in society that dignity of the woman is not questioned much, and existence of a man in the woman's life may keep some troubles coming from other men off. This may be the one reason for women to make divorce decision very hard, because society forces the woman to sign another agreement with the whole society, an agreement that does not make the woman's life any easier.

4.4.2 What About Romantic Relationships after Divorce?

One common claim in alimony debates is that women avoid remarriage to keep receiving alimony. As in discusses in Chapter 2, parliamentary discussions in 1988, tended to assume that alimony without time limitation would cause the woman to start a new family. However, when I asked about romantic relationships and their thoughts about remarriage, women put forward reasons unrelated to alimony or child support. Of course, they were women who did not receive alimony mostly. Their concerns about remarriage pointed to their fears they became familiar through their first marriages. Living away from a man's pressure and control was an important reason to avoid remarriage for women. Also, expectation to fall in love seemed a significant reason to make this decision.

> Zehra: I think that one should not get married just because to be married. If I had fallen in love very much, I would have thought about it. But there is no need for marriage. I have always taken up the challenges in life on my own, maybe's that's why I don't want remarriage. I have always become self-sufficient. Maybe it's because I work. I don't make money too much, but if you think that even with this amount, I can be self-sufficient, it's enough.

Being economically self-sufficient is an important factor in not thinking about remarriage. It implies that marriage is constructed as an institution that provides economic security to women. How the state and job market construct marriage in this way has been discussed in Chapter 2. When I asked Nevin if she had thought about remarriage, her

[152] Aydın, M. Çelikpala, M., Dizdaroğlu, C., Baybars Hawks, B., Güvenç, M., Karaoğuz, E., Kösen, M. G., Akıncı, B. A. (2019, January 30). *Türkiye Sosyal-Siyasal Eğilimler Araştırması-2018*, İstanbul: Kadir Has Üniversitesi Türkiye Araştırmaları Merkezi. https://www.khas.edu.tr/uploads/turkiye-sosyal-siyasal-egilimler-arastirmasi-2018.pdf.

account revealed various concerns and tendencies for avoid remarriage. For instance, the tendency that other interviewees shared: Divorced women tended to prefer divorced men as candidates for relationship or remarriage. Even if they do not have a specific preference, as Sevgi's account also shows, their partners' natal family may object, because they are divorced women.

> Q: What about romantic relationships? Have you ever thought about them or remarriage?
>
> Nevin: I did not think about it for a long time after divorce. My only concern was my son. (…) My son gave me permission to get remarried after his father remarried. After his permission, I started to think. Because all I have is my son. It's different when you have a child. (…) You cannot dare to talk to other men, you know. I couldn't venture accepting someone new into my life.
>
> Q: What were your fears?
>
> Nevin: I feared that they would not want my son. I set in my way; I did not want them to break it. I feared of living similar problems with my former marriage. If he would want my child, if he would misbehave my child, my son was my priority. Then I was afraid if he would cheat on me, if he would beat me. (…) I stayed away from places where I could meet someone. (…) But now I have someone in my life. But we cannot marry because he has never married before. His family does not want it. He's such a perfect person. I am not in love, but I love him. (…) A strong man. Maybe that's what give me confidence. I am not afraid of anything when I am with him. (…) When he talked about us briefly to his mother, his mother firmly said no.
>
> Q: Because you are divorced?
>
> Nevin: It's because I am divorced for sure. But we did not break up. (…) What will happen if I say I am breaking up? I won't be with anyone else. I have a relationship now, there's someone in my life who holds my hand, listens to my problems, and I will lose him. Why? Because I want to be married. Nonsense. You know, I am not a person who is okay with improperness. Like I am not okay with cohabitation or living a different life. I don't insist on marriage because I don't want to lose him. When the time comes, it will happen or not. I content myself with it.

Again, even though Nevin finally found someone who she loved and decided to marry, the fact that she was divorced was turned into an obstacle to marrying someone who had never married before. Moreover, her decision on her own life seems inseparable from her child. Having children with them plays a significant role in women's remarriage

decision. In Nevin's case, while her son's father did not wait for a permission from his child, Nevin waited for it. Moreover, Nevin emphasized her "properness" when she talked about her new relationship.

Women's romantic lives after divorce are generally not shaped solely by their decision. Their decisions are inevitably related respectable motherhood and womanhood performances in society. Their negative experiences in their former marriage affect their decision to start a new family or romantic relationship. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, women are perceived as part of a family, not "owner" of a family. The child from former marriage is a symbol of sexuality the woman experienced with another man (Yıldırım, 2017: 31). The predisposition to prefer to have relationship with a divorced man can be considered in this context. In this way, the divorced woman would not be the first woman who the man will sexually and legally "have".

*4.5 **Women's Thoughts on Alimony Debates***

My last question to women was "Have you ever heard of alimony debates?" A few women were aware of the debates whereas the most of them had never heard of it. The media manipulation seems to affect some women's opinions on the topic. Middle-class women tended to evaluate their and other women's experiences in relation to patriarchal structure in Turkish society while lower-class women tended to ask questions about the debates rather than to comment. Most women stated that they do not think that alimony and/or child support may aggrieve men, because courts generally adjudge small amounts and men do not even pay that amounts.

Pınar is a feminist, therefore, her opinion on the topic was short and clear:

> Q: Have you heard of alimony debates?
>
> Pınar: I followed it on social media. Mostly news about Istanbul Convention. What I think is clear. Men always see themselves as victims. I don't think that any man is aggrieved because of alimony or child support. There is no such thing as "I was married for a month; I have to pay alimony for a lifetime." They don't want to pay even child support.

Aysu and Robin shared other examples that they witnessed in their social sphere. These examples were also striking.

Aysu: My observation is that alimony is a quite troubled process, particularly in contested divorces. In social sphere I am involved in, I saw that in some wealthy families, even the man is wealthy, he takes very indecent steps just because he wants to make the woman's life miserable. Even though he is the one who cheats. From taking child custody to leaving the woman penniless, to make her deprive of her child. In my opinion, mostly the woman is aggrieved. I don't think our legislations are on the woman's side. It's always the woman who aggrieves in one way or another. (…) The man does not pay alimony or child support in most of the cases while he's wealthy. Preventive detention is helpful in that case, it could be disincentive. Still, there could be other threats in that case, like, I don't know, "If you want me to see the child, I won't pay alimony or child support" they may say to the woman. A man could use even that, can you imagine? If you sue me, I won't see the child, I won't take care of the child. The child becomes a tool. The woman and the child become victims once again. I have not observed that the man aggrieves that much. When the man says that he does not have money, alimony or child support could be removed. But emotionally, the woman with her child is forced to pursue these things.

Q: Do you see any common grounds behind what you talk about? Like make the woman's life miserable.

Aysu: It's because of society in general. The woman's place is always kept in the background in terms of education, employment. So, even though that woman is the mother of your child, it does not matter that much. I don't know if it's different in other countries, but the woman is still considered in the second place, there's still a big fight for women's rights. The reason behind all these is society. Because society accepts the woman as the oppressed.

When I asked Robin that if she knew about alimony debates, and that what she thought about male victimizations, as a clinical psychologist she relayed her observations and what she heard from her clients in addition to her opinions.

Robin: I know about alimony because I heard it a lot from my clients. But I don't have the full knowledge, maybe because I also did not demand for it. The thing is that the woman's domestic labor is always ignored. I was a little bit stronger; I had the power to resist, I followed my dreams, I did not quit my job. But I know many women who give up all these things. While the man moves on in his career, the woman may stay in the background, she may devote herself to her home. Even though she works, she keeps working without promotion. For instance, one of my friends recently divorced. Her husband forced her to quit her job in the marriage. She did not work for 9 years. Now she's about 50 years old, she does not have any savings, she lives with her family, and because of that 9-year job interruption, she cannot go back to work. Her husband is wealthy, he had 15 real estates. When my friend demanded for 2 of them, he refused to give them. She does not work;

> she needs something to live on. Therefore, I don't believe in male victimization. On the contrary, the woman invisibly aggrieves one way or another. (…) When I look at my clients, for instance, when the man remarries, when he starts a new family, he abandons his child from his former marriage as well. In fact, the man does not divorce his wife, he also divorces his child. I see that the man generally feels like he's used when he gives money. They do not want to give money to the woman, because they think that she will spend that money with another man. Or they don't want the woman to remarry. Maybe the reason that the man does not think that the woman does not deserve alimony is because the woman is the one who demands for divorce. Even I felt that I was the one who wanted to divorce, so I did not deserve receiving alimony. It's like a punishment. When the woman wants to divorce, she is somehow paid off. Therefore, I don't think male victimization is true.

Based on what she felt during her own divorce process, Robin mentioned "self-blame" in relation not to ask alimony. Another point she mentioned is also interesting: Men generally feel as if they were used when they give money to women and/or children as alimony and/or child support. This feeling of "being used" was visible in the accounts anti-alimony campaigners as well. Robin, Aysu, and Pınar clearly related experiences of them and other women's around them to gender inequality that negatively influences women in marriage, divorce, and postdivorce process within male-dominated structure of Turkish society. Based on their lived and shared experiences, they similarly stated that "male victimization" cannot be true in the context of financial, social, and emotional consequences of divorce.

Five women I interviewed works at the same working place. I visited them twice and I spend the whole day with them and other women working there. On my second visit, after the lunch, we were drinking coffee and chatting in the garden. A woman whom I met for the first time on that day asked me, "So tell us, what's the matter with men?" Before that, I did not explain the debates in detail to avoid affecting the course of interviews. When I was asked, I only mentioned the government's plan to bring a time limitation to alimony and simply said that "There is a group of people who demand limitation for legislation because it causes victimizations."

On that day, Zehra, whom I was going to interview later, led the way and answered the question: "Lifelong alimony for one day marriage. I think it's unjust. Besides, I am okay with payments for children, they have to give money for children. But why do they have to give money to the woman? A woman should not accept it. They can work, stand on their own legs. That relationship is over. That man is a stranger to you after divorce. Would you ask money from a stranger? Would you go to your neighbor to ask money?"

I attempted to explain the debates in detail, however, another woman talked. “It’s not like that. He does not let you work for years; he uses you like a slave, you serve him, his family, relatives. He cheats. He does anything he wishes to you. But when you divorce, he leaves you penniless.” Another woman said, “As if they paid child support. I have seen no man who pays child support properly.” Then, I explained the myth “lifelong alimony for one-day marriage” based on the lawyers’ statements. I explained that the law does not work in that way, that we don’t know exactly what one-day marriage implies. I relayed what Hale told me: One-day marriage may be related to virginity; it may refer to the number of days the couple sleep with together. Then I explained the law in detail, how it is gender-neutral, how articles regulate conditions for divorce, alimony, and child support. I told them that if the man was in need after divorce, he would receive alimony, however, the woman has more difficulties in terms of education, employment, and childcare responsibility. I tried to clarify that alimony is not a favor, it is a legal right. “I think the woman does it to herself,” said Zehra. “If a woman wants to find a job, she will find it. She goes and cleans houses; she finds a job in factories.” The chitchat continued in a way that a few women tried to convince Zehra otherwise. At that point, I preferred not to get involved, I did not say anything for or against. When I was asked about men’s claims, I briefly explained. I talked about manipulations on the media. The more women learned, the more they asked. None of them seemed surprised at what they heard, in fact, they looked extremely “knowing”. Those who are still married complained about how they have to deal with childcare, domestic works, cooking, cleaning even though they work during the day.

On the same day later, I went to Sevgi’s home to wish her grandson would get well soon because she received some bad news about her grandson’s health. I, Zehra, Sevgi, and Gülçin who works as a manager at working place where all women work at were sitting in Sevgi’s balcony and having a cup of coffee. Our interview reawakened Sevgi’s memories about her former marriage, therefore, she talked a little bit more about her experiences. Then, the topic of alimony debates started again. Zehra repeated her opinions that she shared earlier. Gülçin talked to her about inequalities, lack of education, unemployment, and lack of childcare services. She said, “Don’t take yourself as an example. You had opportunities but most women do not have them. Sometimes even their families do not accept their divorce.” Maybe it was because professional hierarchy between them, but Zehra seemed to change her mind.

I observed that women are so busy with daily fuss of marriage, or daily concerns related to be a woman living in a male-dominated society, they may not be able to spare time to recent political or legal developments. Even though we talked about the proposed legal amendment in Civil Code, I feel that it did not seem a possible threat to them, it was only a part of daily talks. They all have their emotional, financial, and psychological support mechanisms in their lives. This mechanism may include family, friends, co-workers, or their children.

*4.6 **Concluding Remarks***

This chapter presented the accounts of 10 divorced women in the context of their experiences on marriage, divorce, and post-divorce in male-dominated Turkish society. It aimed to fill the gap of financial, emotional, and social struggles that women face in marriage and divorce in alimony debates. The first section focusing on women's decision-making process for marriage, unpaid domestic and care labor as well as financial difficulties and inequalities revealed how patriarchal norms in family had a significant impact on women's lives from entrance into matrimony and exit of matrimony. Moving from that, the second section discussed constant existence of various forms of violence – physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, and economic violence– in women's lives in marriage, divorce, and post-divorce process. Women's accounts revealed the law enforcers' ineffectiveness and insensitivity to violence against women. In the third section, according to women's accounts, in the case of announcement of divorce decision to their husbands, threats came first, bargains and tricks on alimony, child support, or marital property distribution came next. The amounts of alimony and/or child support which was not paid regularly were not enough to raise a child, as TBNA Report in 2014 also shows. Fourthly, their accounts showed that women were not knowledgeable enough about their legal rights in case of divorce or violence. Alimony and/or child support seemed a secondary concern for them. The last section presented women's reactions and thoughts on alimony debates and it shows that women mostly are not aware of proposed legal changes.

Even though anti-divorce official discourse claims that divorce affect children's lives in a bad way, women's accounts showed the opposite. Moreover, although divorced women mostly incur a serious financial loss compared to their former lives in Turkey, some women whom I interviewed experienced the opposite as long as they work. Among

the concrete problems women mostly face after divorce housing, unemployment, and absence of public childcare services. Some women could solve these problems getting help from their families in housing and childcare. Another point that caught my attention during the interviews was that being a working woman was not conveyed as something extraordinary in a social structure where women's duties as wives and mothers were glorified. Some women felt guilty for not being able to take care of their children because they had to work, but they did not utter staying at home as an option for themselves, because working gave them self-confidence. The continuing intervention of ex-husband after divorce may have affected women's lives in various ways resulting in being kicked out of where they lived or got fired. Using or harming child to harm women also looked common among women's experiences.

Chapter 5:

CONCLUSION

This thesis has presented a critical and feminist analysis of alimony debates that have gained momentum in Turkey since 2016. It has demonstrated the opposite sides of the alimony debates and their arguments regarding the proposed amendment foreseeing the introduction of time limitation to the existing alimony regulation. I aimed to comprehend the political factors which have influenced alimony debates. I then analyzed the political discourse on family, divorce, and gender equality which came along with institutional changes in the context of neoliberal restructuring of welfare and neoconservative familialism. Through the accounts of anti-alimony campaigners, mostly divorced men, I have examined the dynamics of the anti-alimony campaign and the so-called "male victimization" as well as their experiences in marriage, divorce, and postdivorce process. Divorced women's accounts have shed light on women's experiences and struggles in economic, social, and familial relations. Furthermore, the accounts of divorce lawyers on their experiences and observations in divorce cases have provided information about general concerns and tendencies of women and men regarding social and economic consequences of divorce as well as spouses' grounds for divorce. The accounts of feminist lawyers with activist backgrounds and significant roles in law-making processes have revealed their firsthand testimonies regarding legal, discursive, and institutional

transformation towards family, gender equality, and divorce under the rule of AKP governments. This research aimed to contribute to the literature of gender studies, sociopolitical studies, and critical studies on men and masculinities, as well as providing a feminist criticism of socio-legal and family studies.

Gender order is constructed by mainly gender-related interactions within certain institutions such as family, state, education, or military, and reproduces male domination and female subordination in a patriarchal structure. The large-scale transformations in social conditions such as changes in work and family life due to urbanization, modernization, industrialization, or the rise of organized feminist movements create breaks in the gender order. In the Turkish context, while the state has withdrawn from provisions of public goods, services, and welfare under neoliberal rationality, it has appealed to neoconservative ideological means to support its legitimacy promoting familialism, nationalism, religiosity, or patriotism. At the domestic level, the male provider as "the head of the family", constituting one of the fundamentals of male privilege, is under pressure. Patriarchal apprehension of female subordination is not hegemonic anymore. This conflict between women's rising ambitions and determined male backlash creates a strong crisis in the gender order. Therefore, a new politics of masculinist restoration have emerged to maintain and reproduce patriarchy.

The coalition of top-down and bottom-up masculinist restoration politics manifests itself clearly in the case of anti-alimony groups and the government's support. On the one hand, anti-alimony groups form their demands and objections based on the perception that legislations assuring gender equality and prevention of violence against women are threats to the family and also lead to "male victimization". On the other hand, the government's political discourse and social policies inform the anti-alimony discourse, and the government shapes its political discourse according to the demands of anti-gender equality groups. In political discourses, traditional gender roles and marriage are praised whereas gender equality and divorces are criticized, and even condemned, based on religious and cultural values in particular. In the case of AKP, the traditional family has been a useful tool for maintaining its rulership and the state includes men as part of its patriarchal ruling by encouraging male privilege over controlling women. The cases of femicides and violence against women receive lighter punishments (if any). Women's perceived disobedience and insubordination act as a primary trigger in all these incidents (for instance, in most cases, men murdered women who wished to divorce or who were their ex-wives). Restraining and protection orders through Law No. 6284 are not properly

followed. The police have attacked women's march on March 8 for the last three years and, in political discourse, feminists and women who do not fulfill their "divinely ordained nature (*fitrat*)" as mothers or wives are frequently condemned.

On the one hand, women whose personal decisions and/or lifestyles differ from patriarchal norms and values as the government dictates are considered as disobeying the state. On the other hand, women who wish to divorce, exercise their legal rights regulated with the Civil Code or in Law No.6284, are considered as disobeying their husbands. Thus, women's individualization and empowerment perceived as "disobedience" are one of the common grounds binding these bottom-up and top-down counterparts of masculinist restoration politics together. In this sense, the combination of impunity and/or lighter sentences in cases of femicides and violence against women, political discourses exalting the family institution in which male domination and female subordination is justified and reproduced, and increasing attacks to gender equality and women's rights at official and street levels clearly show the attempts to "tame" women to "put them in their rightful place."

The analysis of anti-alimony discourse has clearly shown that it tends to circulate "male victimization" in relation to anti-alimony campaigners' claim on "oppression of men" by the Civil Code and Law No. 6284, allegedly discriminating against them simply because they are men. This claim goes against the nature of these legal regulations. The Civil Code is gender-neutral, so it does not rule that only women can receive alimony. Falling into poverty is the fundamental condition to receive alimony regardless of the person's gender. Law No. 6284 protects the "victim" of the violent act regardless of the person's gender. In case of accusations, the law gives the accused the chance to disprove the testimony of the victim, and, in the event of disproof, the legal sanction is implemented against those who make a false statement. Drawing from the critical studies on men and masculinities literature, I discussed that the clear distinction between "oppression" and "costs of being on top" might be helpful to understand why "male victimization" should actually be conceptualized as "male self-victimization".

To emphasize the deceptiveness of the term "victimization" and to put it as "self-victimization" in the context of alimony debates are important to understand the dynamics of the debate in its relation to masculinist restoration politics since the term "male self-victimization" helps to unveil the fact that "victimhood" here stems from a subjective feeling of "entitlement". Anti-alimony groups construct "male victimization" through laws that offer ways to eliminate possible wrongdoings. The data in this research and

from previous researches and reports clearly show that the relevant laws regarding preventing and combatting violence against women and gender inequality have not effectively implemented by law enforcers. Moreover, in most cases, divorces evidently have negative influences on women and children rather than men in financial and social respects. However, the legislation that anti-alimony groups severely protest still provides a legal basis for the elimination of gender inequality in familial, social, and financial relations. Considering all of these, the main reason underlying the request for amendment in or annulment of the relevant laws is not the elimination of the "victimhood" of men, but the legal establishment of male privilege.

However, divorced men whom I interviewed in this research were not the prime examples of what was represented on pro-government media outlets as "alimony victims" in terms of economic difficulties. Only two interviewees remarried after divorce, and they did not have problems in their new marriages derived from alimony payments. None of the divorced women whom I interviewed were receiving alimony at the time of the interview. In this sense, further ethnographic research focusing on the financial consequences of divorce, particularly alimony, child support, and compensation, would enrich the knowledge in this research area.

Women's accounts revealed class-related differences in women's experiences in terms of accessing childcare and domestic labor services as well as financial consequences of divorce. Besides, these accounts have shown that the real problem about alimony and/or child support is the difficulty in collecting payments and low amounts that are not sufficient for living on or childrearing. The previous research on divorce and its financial consequences such as TBNA 2014 and Women's Solidarity Foundation's research in 2019 support the data in this research. Moreover, gender inequality in familial, social, and economic relations in everyday life in Turkey keeps influencing women's lives after divorce in the domains of housing, employment, childcare, and security. Male violence against women and children in various forms such as sexual, psychological, physical, and economic in marriage, divorce, and postdivorce process has been prevalent in women's accounts as well as men's accounts. Women's natal families' support makes a great difference in their life conditions after divorce and their security from aggressive ex-husbands. This pattern in women's accounts came along with their experiences in which law enforcers stay ineffective and insensitive to violence against women when women filed a complaint.

Women's accounts also show that they do not see themselves as subordinated subjects and having financial independence plays an important role in women's empowerment and ability to make their own decisions about their lives and choices. Divorce may have made women feel stigmatized in their everyday lives, but women's accounts commonly demonstrate that their quality of emotional and financial life has enhanced after divorce. Even though inequalities in family, society, and labor market may raise difficulties for women, remarriage does not seem an option for most of them for economic, social, and security-related reasons, because they do not want to risk experiencing economic, psychological, physical, and sexual violence.

The interviews with divorced women and divorced men on willingness to remarry showed one important thing. Historically, the woman is perceived as being better suited for the private sphere; the state's gendered policies and discourse position the woman in the private sphere as the primary caregiver, mother, and wife. These policies and discourse also make family a "safe harbor", a "need" for women. But according to the accounts of women and men in this research, while divorced men's interviews showed that they readily thought of remarrying, divorced women remained mostly reluctant. Some men said that their lives were over because they could not find anyone to marry due to alimony payments. So, being married is equated to "living life itself". Considering how being the head of a family is an inseparable part of male privilege in society, having a family is actually a "need" for men, and, as Kandiyoti (1987) remarks, it is related to the fact that masculinity is a status that must be earned constantly. Moreover, the fact that divorced women whom I interviewed did not perceive themselves only as mothers or wives above all actually indicates a change in the gender order. As I emphasized in the discussion of masculinist restoration politics, this shift in the gender order is one reason underlying masculinist restoration politics.

In its explanation of alimony in relation to "the whole problem of patriarchy", this thesis mainly has argued that alimony should be understood as part of gendered family relations. The fundamental condition to be an alimony claimant is to fall into poverty upon divorce, and this family model is the main reason behind women's poverty. Alimony debates in this historical, social, and political context demonstrate the state's contribution to the woman's poverty in marriage and divorce and to the increasing conservatism towards the woman's role as primary caregiver, wife, and mother through political discourse and familialist social policies, as well as its effects on society in return. Moreover, alimony is misrepresented to the public as "indefinite" and the state's

insistence on introducing amendment into alimony regulation without correcting women's disadvantaged position by providing care services for children, the disabled, and the elderly, and with the claim that equal opportunities for women in work life and education will only deepen the existing gender inequality in society. In alimony debates, alimony is not the cause but the result of gender inequality. Therefore, the way to eliminate the need for alimony is to develop policies that will ensure gender equality in society, employment, and education, and to consider women outside of their caregiver role by providing unpaid public care services for the child, the elderly, and the disabled.

As I have emphasized in different parts of my thesis, alimony debates have been based on unfounded allegations and anecdotal stories. There is a significant lack of data in the debates. Since alimony debates started in 2016, neither the Ministry of Justice nor the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services has provided any data on the number of people who pay alimony, the average amount of alimony, the number of requests for alimony extension, the number of people subjected to preventive detention (*tazyik hapsi*) due to alimony-related debt, or whether there was a disproportion between alimony amount and the alimony creditor's income. Even though anti-alimony groups claim that there are two million "alimony victims" in Turkey, this number is far from reflecting the real situation. Any amendment attempts to a legal regulation that would affect the entire society need to be based upon factual numbers that are more than "mere guesswork".

Alimony debates proceed without any solid data or any attempt to eliminate gender inequality in education, employment, and care/domestic labor, all should be provided by the state. "Male victimization" as the backbone of alimony debates is built upon anecdotal stories of divorced men and female alimony opponents. These stories receive support from the state and pro-government media outlets and are not based on data. In fact, the data on financial consequences of divorces, domestic violence, and ineffective implementation of legislation aiming to combat and prevent violence against women commonly indicate the opposite of anti-alimony groups' claims, while women's accounts are based on experience and supported by the data obtained from large-scale researches in Turkey. However, while men's accounts swiftly and visibly circulate, women's accounts' circulation is limited and even ignored as seen in the example of the Commission of Marital Breakdown. Different circulation dynamics of accounts of women and men point out the existing structure of the patriarchal public sphere that reproduce violence against women and/or ignore it. In other words, the deep-seated patriarchal values in Turkish society promote "men's struggle" against "male

victimization" in the name of the so-called quest of "saving the family". This "struggle" is discursive, state-supported, ideological rather than factual, and built upon the erasure of women's lived, shared, and verifiable struggles derived from gender inequality in familial, social, and economic relations. As divorced women's accounts have shown in this research, divorced women are already stigmatized in society and the attitudes of the government and anti-alimony campaigners in alimony debates only serve to marginalize divorced women even more. In this sense, the debates themselves have become economic, social, and psychological violence against women who have already divorced or who wish to divorce as well as an attempt to discourage women from ending their marriages filled with various forms of oppression and violence.

However, the anti-alimony campaign is only a part of a broader backlash against women's rights and gender equality in Turkey. Law No. 6284 and the Istanbul Convention have also been under attack particularly since 2016. As one solid result of these attacks, by the time I finished writing my thesis, a Presidential Decree published in the Official Gazzette at midnight on March 20, 2021 announced Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention.[153] The Istanbul Convention was accepted unanimously by Turkish Grand Assembly. According to the Article 90 of Turkish Constitution[154], international treaties regarding fundamental rights and freedoms cannot be terminated by a decision of the President. Therefore, bars and women's rights organizations strongly protested this announcement on the basis that the way that Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention was unconstitutional, and that the termination decision was null and void.[155] Pro-government media outlets and anti-women's rights groups overjoyed at the termination and they immediately pointed their fingers at Law No. 6284.[156] Bringing the Istanbul Convention and Law No. 6284 into question actually means eliminating the effective legal tools for combating violence against women, femicides, and gender

[153] T. C. Resmi Gazete, 20 March 2021, No. 31429, accessed March 31, 2021 https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2021/03/20210320.pdf

[154] The Article 90, Turkish Constitution. accessed March 31, 2021, https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf?TSPD_101_R0=08ffcef486ab200055f01c9433681217d237ee928691a5f3c9677897555d87fabacaa6b4b12d31ca08bff0e8b0143000ca121cb872dd48a821f12721d662524269a55aaa9568563070bdec581a5afe1ab30328722980327de9fe88157dbdbd36.

[155] The Women's Platform for Equality (March 21, 2021). The Presidential Decision on the Istanbul Convention is Null and Void. The Convention Remains in Force! Accessed March 31, 2021, https://esikplatform.net/the-convention-remains-in-force/

[156] Karataş, İ. (29 March 2021). *Yeni Akit.* İstanbul Sözleşmesi kadınları koruyor mu? Accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.yeniakit.com.tr/yazarlar/ibrahim-karatas/istanbul-sozlesmesi-kadinlari-koruyor-mu-35366.html.

inequality. Accordingly, in following first 12 hours after announcement of termination, men murdered six women.[157] However, the announcement caused a nationwide public unrest and countless women from all over Turkey went out to protest this unconstitutional termination of the Istanbul Convention.[158] The government announced that they have been working on the Ankara Convention which would prioritize "national values".[159]

Even though it seems that the Istanbul Convention was surprisingly terminated in one night, even the data just in this research clearly show that this is an outcome of long-term efforts of the AKP governments and its bottom-up counterparts as part of their masculinist restoration politics. As it is emphasized in the statement of Turkey's Presidential Directorate of Communications, published on March 21, 2021, Turkey "is not the only country who was serious concerns about the Istanbul Convention. Six members of the European Union (Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia) did not ratify the Istanbul Convention. Poland has taken steps to withdraw from the Convention, citing an attempt by the LGBT community to impose their ideas about gender on the entire society."[160] In other words, these developments are not specific to Turkey—they have a global context. In the literature, the global mobilization shaped under far-right, populist, and authoritarian governments against gender equality which is commonly considered as a threat to family and the civilization's future (Şahin, 2020) is called "anti-gender movement" (Kuhar & Patternotte, 2017; Köttig, Petö, & Bitzan, 2017). The Istanbul Convention has become a common ground of these governments for their anti-gender equality attacks because the Convention is the first international treaty that centralize the term "gender" and aims to prevent violence against movement through achieving gender equality in society (Official Gazzette, 2012; cited in Şahin, 2020). One main argument that these various governments put against the Istanbul Convention is that

[157] Evrensel (31 March 2021). Güvencemiz sözleşme parolamız mücadele. Accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/429398/guvencemiz-sozlesme-parolamiz-mucadele.
[158] Evrensel (20 March 2021). İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nin feshedilme kararına karşı kadınlar her yerde eylemde! Accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.evrensel.net/haber/428564/istanbul-sozlesmesinin-feshedilme-kararina-karsi-kadinlar-her-yerde-eylemde.
[159] Diken (20 March 2021). 'İstanbul Sözleşmesi' gitti, 'Ankara Sözleşmesi' geliyor! Accessed March 31, 2021. http://www.diken.com.tr/istanbul-sozlesmesi-gitti-ankara-sozlesmesi-geliyor/
[160] Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, Directorate of Communications (21 March 2021). Statement by the Directorate of Communications on Türkiye's Withdrawal from Istanbul Convention. Accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/english/duyurular/detay/statement-by-the-directorate-of-communications-on-turkiyes-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention

it is against their national, religious, and familial values.[161] [162] It is also notable that, as the AKP government has created an anti-national "them" pointing Europe and European family model, it shares common ground with other authoritarian and conservative regimes in Europe in terms of the so-called quest of "saving the family". This "quest" commonly includes anti-gender equality, anti-women's rights, and anti-abortion political discourses, institutional changes, *de facto* implementations that confront legal regulations (i.e., the right to abortion in Turkey), and attempts to make dramatic changes in laws. Further research and analysis is needed to provide a broader and comparative account of how top-down and bottom-up masculinist restoration politics in Turkey at political, legal, discursive, social, and institutional levels are part of the global anti-gender movement with its differences and common grounds with other countries.

In Turkey, the report of the Marital Breakdown Commission should be considered as the first milestone in a series of official attempts that initiated the regression at women's existing vested rights and as the starting point of discussions on alimony and Law No. 6284. The report recommended introducing time limitation to alimony as well as requesting evidence and official documentation from those who demand restraining order through Law No. 6284. The Commission was evidently biased because claims of women, women's rights organizations, and the opposition parties were not taken into account effectively or adequately whereas recommendations were grounded on the statements of "victim fathers" or "alimony victims". An amendment in a given law concerns and affects every individual in the society. The laws should address the majority's conditions and needs. Therefore, before making any amendment introducing time limitation to alimony, a large-scale research should be carried out to gather concrete data on whether such an amendment is needed.

But this biased approach of the AKP government that ignores the majority's needs and opinions can also be observed in the termination of the Istanbul Convention. According to "Turkey's Pulse" research conducted by Metropoll Strategic and Social

[161] For instance, nationalist conservatists that have been in power in Poland argued that Istanbul Convention is against Catholic family traditions. Deutsche Welle (30 July 2020). Polonya'da İstanbul Sözleşmesi AYM'ye gidiyor. Accessed March 31, 2021, https://www.dw.com/tr/polonyada-istanbul-sözleşmesi-aymye-gidiyor/a-54386581.

[162] In Hungary, Viktor Orban, the Prime Minister of Hungarian government announced that gender studies programs in universities is forbidded by the government decree in 2018. Bianet (23 October 2018). Macaristan'da Toplumsal Cinsiyet Çalışmaları Yasaklandı. Accessed March 31, 2021. https://m.bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/201954-macaristan-da-toplumsal-cinsiyet-calismalari-yasaklandi.

Researches[163] in July 2020, only 17% of participants approved Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention whereas 63.9% did not. Yet the AKP government announced the withdrawal based on the misinformation that LGBT+ people misused the Convention "for the sake of family institution", just as allegations that women abused the existing legal rights in alimony debates.

However, where there is oppression, there is also resistance. In Europe and Turkey, women's and LGBTI+ rights defenders strongly resist their governments' interferences, and women's rights organizations in various parts of the world have been coming together. Those whose rights are under attack support each other on social media and in real life. For instance, in October 2020, The Women's Platform for Equality consisting of over 300 platforms, organizations, and groups assembled an online meeting with women from Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Finland, Estonia, Slovakia, Georgia, Germany, Austria, England, Spain, the United States, and Canada to discuss top-down and bottom-up attacks to the Istanbul Convention.[164] In other words, while top-down and bottom-up pro-natalist, pro-family, and anti-gender equality movement has a global characteristic, there is also a strong global resistance against these attempts.

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