

VEGAN IDENTITIES AND THE VEGAN MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **VEGAN IDENTITIES AND THE VEGAN MOVEMENT IN TURKEY**

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Veganism emerged in the 20th century as an anti-systemic movement and has become more common in the last two decades. It stands out from other rights-based movements as it involves everyday practices such as a specific diet and avoiding the use of animal-tested products. More importantly, the subject of the struggle -animals- are not the ones who are involved in the movement. The identification of vegans with the movement, therefore, differs from other rights-based movements. However, there may be commonalities in the identifications and motivations of the members of these movements. In this thesis, I explore how vegans identify themselves in terms of their political tendencies, gender and sexual identities, and their activist presence in other movements. In that sense, I try to draw a picture of the vegans and the vegan movement in Turkey by showing the connections between the vegan movement and other political movements, such as the feminist, LGBTQAI+ and labour movements in Turkey. I hypothesise that vegans' motivations and their definition of veganism are related to other identities that they have and that there is a connection between vegan identifications and other identifications. With this study, I aim to understand the dynamics of the movement and the identifications and motivations of vegans. Looking

at the identity formation and movement dynamics, I argue that the vegan movement in Turkey shares the characteristics of new social movements pursuing identity politics. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 self-identified vegans living in Turkey.

**Keywords:** Veganism in Turkey, political identity, social movements, political movements, new social movements

## ÖZ

### TÜRKİYE’DE VEGAN KİMLİKLER VE VEGAN HAREKET

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Veganizm 20. yüzyılda sistem karşıtı bir hareket olarak ortaya çıkmış ve son yirmi yılda daha yaygın hale gelmiştir. Belirli bir diyeti ve hayvanlar üzerinde test edilmiş ürünlerin kullanımından kaçınma gibi gündelik pratikleri içermesi nedeniyle diğer hak temelli hareketlerden ayrılır. Daha da önemlisi, mücadelenin öznesi -hayvanlar- hareketin öznelere değildir. Bu nedenle veganların hareketle özdeşleşmesi diğer hak temelli hareketlerden farklılık göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, bu hareketlerin üyelerinin özdeşleşmelerinde ve motivasyonlarında ortaklıklar olabilir. Bu tezde veganların kendilerini siyasi eğilimleri, toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinsel kimlikleri ve diğer hareketlerdeki aktivist varlıkları açısından nasıl tanımladıklarını araştırıyorum. Bu anlamda, vegan hareket ile Türkiye'deki feminist, LGBTQAI+ ve işçi hareketleri gibi diğer siyasi hareketler arasındaki bağlantıları göstererek Türkiye'deki veganların ve vegan hareketin bir çerçevesini çizmeye çalışıyorum. Veganların motivasyonlarının ve veganlık tanımlarının sahip oldukları diğer kimliklerle ilişkili olduğunu ve vegan kimlikleri ile diğer kimlikler arasında bir bağlantı olduğunu varsayıyorum. Bu çalışma ile hareketin dinamiklerini ve veganların kimlik ve motivasyonlarını anlamayı hedefliyorum. Kimlik oluşumu ve hareket dinamiklerine bakarak, Türkiye'deki vegan

hareketin kimlik politikaları izleyen yeni toplumsal hareketlerin özelliklerini paylaştığını iddia ediyorum. Bu çalışma için Türkiye'de yaşayan ve kendini vegan olarak tanımlayan 25 kişiyle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirdim.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye'de veganlık, siyasi kimlik, toplumsal hareketler, siyasi hareketler, yeni toplumsal hareketler

*To all animals who did not have a free life*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Veganism is a rapidly growing movement and identity around the world. It requires its committers to take certain actions in their daily lives personally as well as socially. As the definition of veganism may differ for vegans, their practices may also differ. In examining the movement dynamics, some scholars tend to see veganism as a lifestyle movement (Büchs et al. 2015; Dobernig and Stagl 2015; Cherry 2015), as it follows everyday practices such as abstaining from eating animal bodies or products derived from them as well as using them for other purposes such as vivisection, testing, transportation, agriculture etc. However, the main focus of veganism is not a change of lifestyle but a protest against animal use. Contrary to lifestyle movements such as virginity pledgers, voluntary simplicity (minimalism) or Quiverfull, veganism for some vegans is not about the lives of humans that follow it but about the animals whose rights are being upheld. Therefore, while a lifestyle approach to veganism would be anthropocentric as it puts the lifestyle of those who practice it, a rights-based approach places the subjects of veganism, animals, at the centre.

With the increase of the meat, dairy, leather, and other animal industries in the last centuries, the exploitation of animals has grown in both quality and quantity. The production using animals has multiplied with the establishment of bigger slaughterhouses, farms and factories. Capitalist growth is seen in the animal industry as well as other industries. In order to understand the systemic critique of veganism, the connection between capitalist growth and animal exploitation has to be addressed. Without addressing the systemic exploitation, veganism may be seen and framed as compassion and pity for animals, or simply as a diet. The way veganism and vegans are framed may therefore serve to maintain this capitalist exploitation. Just like the paid workers and environment, animals are also seen as resources that produce milk

and eggs or who die for the continuation of capital accumulation. When veganism is seen or presented by researchers as a middle-class lifestyle that concerns the individual who adopts it and not the others, and as a personal choice rather than a political movement, the systemic exploitation of animals that many vegans and vegan organisations address, is not questioned. However, vegans in Turkey, just like other vegans around the world, mainly focus on the universal right to life of those who have consciousness (a nervous system and the ability to feel pain) and who are sentient beings. The arguments of vegans aim at changing the relations between humans and animals.

In this thesis, the motivations and identifications of vegans living in Turkey are examined. I question how vegans in Turkey identify their veganism and themselves in terms of their political orientations, motivations, and activist presence, and I ask whether vegan identity intersects with other identities. Based on the answers of these questions, I also look at whether veganism can be regarded as a new social movement. Moreover, I explore how vegan identities and factors such as the city of residence, occupation and income level shape each other. I hypothesised that vegans' motivations and their definition of veganism are related to other identities that they have and that there is a connection between vegan identifications and other identifications. I start my discussion with a review of the literature on social movements, vegan movements and identities. Following this, I present a review of my methodology. I carried out field research and conducted interviews with 25 vegans living in Turkey. I intend to draw a picture of the vegans and their motivations to go vegan individually, and thus draw a picture of the vegan movement in Turkey based on individuals. After this, I present my findings and analyse the data I collected.

In doing so, I aim to understand the patterns of commonalities that vegans have or do not have with other political movements and identities. The identities that a person defines themselves with, shape each other mutually. Based on the interviews conducted with vegans, I argue that the vegan movement in Turkey shares the characteristics of new social movements (NSM) as it has participants from different social and economic backgrounds, just as the new social movements defined in the literature (Melucci 1980; Eder 1993). However, the vegan movement is still a political

movement. What makes the vegan movement different from other political movements, especially classical social movements is that it is not a class-oriented movement and it has a different level of subject, which are animals. Contrary to the classical social movements and most of the new social movements, the vegan movement's participants are not calling for a change for themselves but for others (animals). Moreover, I argue that the identifications of vegans in Turkey revolve around three main lines, while each vegan has a unique identity.

The first one of these is political vegans, who prioritise animals' right to life and who see veganism as an ethical responsibility, positioning it among other rights-based movements. For them, veganism is part of a holistic approach to oppression, and they claim to pursue a struggle against a common target. While the word 'political' has a broad meaning and can be used in many contexts, I use it in a way that it refers to people who see veganism as a systemic issue and calls for a revolution that would change the relations between humans and animals. Political veganism refers to a type of veganism that is more common among individuals who are politicized in matters other than veganism as well as in veganism. These may be feminists, queers or allies, anarchists, socialists or leftists in general.

On the other hand, apolitical vegans define veganism based solely on animal rights without addressing a systemic struggle. While apolitical vegans care for the animals and see it as an ethical responsibility not to use animals, most of them do not see veganism as a political issue. Apolitical vegans either do not affiliate veganism with other political movements such as feminist, LGBTQAI+ and labour movements or make a connection but do not base their veganism on this connection. Therefore, I make a distinction between political and apolitical vegans.

The third group of vegans is Sunni vegans, who draw parallels between animal rights and Islam and argue that contrary to the common belief, Islamic lifestyle and veganism may coexist. The reason why this group of vegans are named as Sunni vegans instead of Muslim vegans is that there are differences in the practice of different sects in Islam, including practices that include animals. For instance, Sunnis sacrifice animals every year while Alawis do not practice such a worship. Therefore, as the participants who

are categorised as Sunni vegans implied that they follow Sunni Islam, they are referred to as Sunni vegans.

Overall, the identity formation and motivations of vegans in Turkey lead to a reading of the vegan movement in Turkey as a new social movement that organises around identity politics.

While addressing the LGBTQAI+/queer movement or mentioning being queer, I refer to the movement and identity as discussed by Jagose (1996). For Jagose, queer is an umbrella term that refers to people who are not heterosexual. However, as mentioned by Jagose too, the term itself is in a constant process of formation and evolution. According to Kaos GL Association (2020), queer refers to people who reject heteronormativity and are not heterosexual, but it is also owned by heterosexual trans people from time to time. The use of the term queer in this thesis, therefore, refers to people who identify as LGBTQAI+. The queer movement is also no different than the LGBTQAI+ movement.

The vegan movements around the world and the vegan movement in Turkey are understudied in the literature. This is partially because veganism is boiled down to a diet or a lifestyle (North et al. 2021). This, to some extent, is even applicable for vegans themselves. Contrary to the literature, the participants of this study adopted veganisms that are beyond a diet or a lifestyle.

Looking at the classifications made in the literature, it is possible to say that motivations to adopt veganism, including socialising, are the main point of difference among types of veganism. To oppose this, I argue that types of veganism in Turkey are not classified based solely on the motivations of vegans but on many factors, especially how they define veganism and how they relate veganism with other identities.

The lifestyle movement literature, especially scholars who study veganism as a lifestyle movement, tends to separate it from its political context. Just as Cherry (2006), Gheihman (2021), and Haenfler et al. (2012) do, veganism is framed as a collection of daily habits that is more of a lifestyle than a political identity and

movement. However, this approach and framing of veganism miss the focus on animal rights. Many vegans adopt veganism because they respect animals' right to life. While there are other motivations to go vegan, the main focus of vegans is on the right to life, especially in Turkey. When asked, almost all of the participants said that their primary motivation to go vegan was not to harm animals. Therefore, everyday practices are not at the core of veganism but an inevitable outcome of adopting veganism.

Besides, the literature examining vegans and the vegan movement in Turkey has two main lines. One part of the literature looks at veganism as a separate movement, identity or practice from other movements. The second group of researchers, on the other hand, study veganism in Turkey as a movement that intersects with other movements. A theoretical, as well as practical connection, is established between veganism and feminism as well as other political movements or theories. In this thesis, I adopt a similar perspective to this group of researchers as I argue that veganism in Turkey intersects with other rights-based movements and struggles.

There are many different approaches to veganism in the literature. Veganism is commonly studied as a lifestyle movement and identity by social movement researchers. For those who study veganism as a rights-based/political movement, the connections of the vegan identity and vegan movement with other political identities and movements are sometimes missed or ignored. While many feminist researchers discussed vegetarianism and later veganism as related to feminism, this relation is limited to feminism in some cases. However, there are also many studies that see veganism in general and veganism in Turkey as a political movement that shares a parallel ideal with other political movements. As a response to the studies in the literature lacking this outlook and as a support to those who show the relation between the vegan movement and other movements, I looked at the vegan identities and the vegan movement in Turkey to argue that the overall vegan identity in Turkey has political grounds more than lifestyle or any other ground (health, environment etc.). This side of the vegan identity and movement in Turkey makes it belong to new social movements just as other identity-based movements.

Throughout the thesis, I use only they/them as pronouns to refer to the researchers and participants. The reason for this is that I do not know what pronouns they use. In the quotations from the interviews, I also use they/them because they are translated from Turkish, which is a gender-neutral language. There is no gender-specific pronoun in Turkish. When the participants used a pronoun in Turkish, it was not clear what they referred to in English. Therefore, in order not to assign a gender or a pronoun to the scholars, the participants or people that they mention, I use they/them throughout the thesis.

In the literature, animals are often referred to as ‘nonhuman animals’ to make the distinction from humans and to stress the fact that humans are also animals. This tendency addresses the speciesism that lies behind the distinction of the term ‘human’, which is used exclusively as if humans are not biologically animals. However, in this thesis, I use the term ‘animals’ instead of ‘nonhuman animals’ because the word ‘nonhuman’ is also based on being human or not, and is still anthropocentric. Contrary to ecocentrism, which attributes an immanent value to nature, anthropocentrism attributes a value to nature based on the material benefits that it provides (Thompson and Barton 1994). Veganism is against the human-centric view and the exploitation of animals by humans. Therefore, a human-centric term would not be in line with vegan ethics and with the idea that humans and animals are equal. While ‘human’ and ‘animal’ may still be human-centric, I use them throughout this thesis instead of ‘nonhuman animal’, as the meaning of ‘animal’ has evolved to exclude humans, contrary to its meaning in natural sciences.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE

#### 2.1. Social Movements Literature

Social movements are defined as informal networks of interaction between large numbers of individuals, groups and/or organisations that engage in political or cultural conflicts on the basis of shared collective identities (Diani and Eyerman 1992). For Tarrow (2011), social movements are collective actions against elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes, developed by individuals who have common goals and stand in solidarity and have permanent interaction with other groups and elements. Although there are some points of departure from this definition, political movements are mostly considered a sub-classification of social movements in the literature (Ferree et al. 2004; Nicholas 1973).

With the deep and rapid transformation of society and politics since the 1960s, anti-system movements have undergone a transformation. Student riots, new left, civil rights movements of the 1960s; LGBTQAI+, environmental, women's, peace and human rights movements of the 1970s and 1980s; the global justice movement of the 1990s and 2000s emerged one after another (Melucci 1980). The transformation of social movements has been evident in their participants, their goals and their forms of action. New social movements with less or no focus on class have emerged (Eder 1993), and identity politics have started to be at the forefront of the new social movements.

New Social Movements (NSMs) refer to a type of social movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the limitations of traditional, class-based movements. NSMs are characterized by their focus on issues such as

environmentalism, feminism, LGBTQ rights, and anti-globalization, rather than traditional economic and political concerns. NSMs are also defined by their decentralized and non-hierarchical organizational structure, as well as their use of new forms of communication and mobilization (Melucci 1980).

NSMs have been the subject of much scholarly attention, with scholars seeking to understand the emergence and characteristics of these movements, as well as their impact on politics and society. One early theory of NSMs, proposed by Alain Touraine (1985), argued that these movements represented a shift away from the industrial society and towards a post-industrial society characterized by individualism and consumerism.

More recent scholarship has emphasized the role of globalization and neoliberalism in shaping NSMs. Scholars such as Della Porta and Diani (2015) argue that NSMs are a response to the negative effects of globalization, such as economic inequality and cultural homogenization. These movements have limited or no motivation to transform power by seizing it. On the contrary, some of these movements aimed at only modifying societal and cultural norms. Resource mobilisation and new social movements theories arose in response to these changes (Topal Demiroğlu 2014).

Analyses within the framework of resource mobilisation theory revolve around social movement organisations and focus on the resources of movements, resource management decisions, organisational dynamics, and the political context and changes in which the movements are located. Consequently, the issues and actors that make up a social movement are taken for granted, and the actors develop their strategies to pursue their own interests. Therefore, resource mobilisation theory uses a purposive model and references the strategic-instrumental aspect of social movements (Della Porta and Diani 1999; Tarrow 2011; Tilly 1985). Accordingly, resource mobilisation theorists point out the similarities and continuities between the movements that emerged in the 1960s, rather than characterising them as a break from the movements that occurred in earlier periods. In this thesis, I see veganism as a break from the classical social movements as it struggles for the rights of animals rather than a certain

class of people. Therefore, resource mobilisation theory cannot explain veganism's big break from the movements of the 1960s and earlier.

In response to classical Marxism's reductionist structural interpretation of collective behaviour and social movement organisation, and the strategy-oriented analyses of resource mobilisation theorists, new social movements theorists draw the theoretical framework of how new social movements emerge as collective behaviours based on the different dynamics of movements. Despite the differences they contain, almost all NSM theorists agree that the structural features of classical liberalism shape the dynamics of workers' movements, and the post-industrial social formation and advanced capitalist society shape the existing types of collective behaviour (Buechler 1995). While NSM theories relate the new social movements that took place in the new social structure of the West, which started to transform in the 1960s, with the economic structure transformed at the macro level, they look at the impact of identity formation processes and personal behaviour on social movements at the micro level (Pichardo 1997).

New social movements express a horizontal process based on conflict, contradiction, ups and downs and intense communication rather than showing a linear development and regular progress (Touraine 1999). Conflict arises between those who have power and those who do not, in order to seize the historicity. The conflict between the ruling group and the rest of society is the central conflict. The new social movements not only bring a critical perspective to power but also include a critique of established politics and social order. Criticism of the status quo is especially related to everyday life and brings with it the effort to include everyday in politics (Mouffe 1984). Just like the new social movements, veganism creates a conflict between those who have power (humans) and those who do not (animals). In this case, the ruling group consists of humans. Moreover, veganism brings a critique of the established politics and the social order, or of the relations between humans and animals.

As Melucci (1980) says, new social movements are not solely class-oriented, which means that there are other factors such as mobilisation, organisation, leadership and ideology with which collective action emerges. As it will be argued in the following

pages of this thesis, veganism is not a class-oriented movement either. On the contrary, vegans are from different levels of income. While the level of income is not the sole indicator of class and there are other social indicators, the variety of income levels is sufficient to argue that vegans are not members of the same class. Moreover, the participants of this study argue that veganism is political but not a class movement.

## **2.2. Feminist Literature**

The connection between feminism and veganism has been argued by many feminist scholars. These include ecofeminist, radical feminist and classical feminists. Other than these, intersectionality scholars have also defended a connection between feminism and veganism. Some scholars also took this connection further to argue that liberation can be brought only by a total struggle.

### **2.2.1 Ecofeminism**

The ecofeminist literature offers a huge number of studies that is related to animal studies and veganism. Ecofeminism argues for a connection and commonality between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature. The source of this oppression is the male dominated system. As ecofeminists are concerned with nature and its connections with women, they see animal exploitation as a part of it. Although not all ecofeminists are vegan or vegetarian, some argue that an ecofeminist stance requires such action (Adams 2010). However, there are various aspects of ecofeminism that are concerned with nature. Greta Gaard (2017) offers a critical ecofeminist alternative that includes sustainability, animals, plants, the dairy industry, fireworks, animal use in labs and in space missions and approaches to climate change, including a queer alternative to it. It is argued that the critical ecofeminist theory aims to transform these areas, and a more comprehensive outlook is necessary. Gaard (2011) also says that the nature of some ecofeminist arguments is essentialist, and they attribute femininity or feminine qualities to nature, which were challenged by both feminists and anti-feminists. Revisiting the early ecofeminist stance of the 1980s and 1990s may bring a new understanding of the connections between race, class, gender and species-based discrimination, and the exploitation of the environment.

Feminist critical theorists Millman and Kanter's criticisms of social sciences argue that "sociology has focused on public, official, formal role players and definitions of the situation that it often ignored the supportive, less official, private and invisible spaces in social life" (quoted in Harding 1986). Although Millman and Kanter's criticism points out the androcentrism and lack of women's inclusion, it can also be read as a critique of the anthropomorphist view of science in general and sociology in particular towards nature and animals.

Ecofeminist criticisms of environmental studies focus on anthropomorphism and androcentrism. Kheel (2007) discusses animals and nature ethics, the male-oriented origins of the conservation movement and ecofeminist philosophy. The existing ecologic discussions and practices are criticised for being anthropomorphist and androcentric. Instead, Kheel presents an ecofeminist perspective and offers a more holistic alternative that does not marginalise animals. However, the same mistake is sometimes made by ecofeminists themselves. While making a point against the male hierarchy on women and nature, ecofeminists sometimes fall into constructing another hierarchy and stereotyping third-world women by appropriating and idealising their lifestyles and their connectedness to nature (Sturgeon 1999).

The ecofeminist literature helps the animal rights movement by deepening the thinking regarding the relationship between humans and animals. Moreover, it can help understand the intersectional oppression and the struggle against it. And this change will impact the practice of eating as well as other habits (Alloun 2015). Similarly, Twine says that "intersectional ecofeminist thinking on this question has much of value to offer the broader animal advocacy movement." (2014, p. 191). Looking at the disgust and hatred of feminists against ecofeminist arguments, Twine argues that this disgust comes from the internalised hierarchy of humans and animals and the presupposition that all ecofeminist arguments are essentialist. Moreover, Twine (2010) says that this disgust is consistent with the dualist ontology of feminism but that excluding animals from its understanding is not easy for feminism anymore.

The ecofeminist approach to environmental issues is adopted in a similar, although sometimes essentialist, perspective in Turkey as well. Seçkin's (2016) analysis argues

that women in Turkey have strong relations with nature just as women of other societies and that this closeness produces environmental consciousness among feminists in Turkey. Their consumption patterns are directed by their environmental concern, and a sustainable lifestyle is valued among women in Turkey. Although such ecofeminist efforts to build a connection between women and nature contribute to the idea that oppression of different groups is related, the ecofeminist perspective often falls into an essentialist viewpoint. While addressing the connection between male oppression over women and nature, ecofeminists romanticise femininity and being a woman. The argument of male domination leaves out queer possibilities. Therefore, it is beneficial to understand that there are multiple identities that one carries and that these identities may intersect. A woman may be the oppressor of another person, and a man may be the oppressed one. Similarly, a woman or LGBTQAI+ person may be the oppressor in their relationship with animals.

The ecofeminist connection between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature brings a strong argument. Just as Adams (2010), Gaard (2017) and Kheel (2007) say, ecofeminist criticism must include criticism of women's exploitation of animals. Early ecofeminists argue that it is the responsibility of women to protect nature against male oppression and exploitation (Mies and Shiva 1993). But the male hierarchical oppression of women and nature repeats itself in the relation between women and animals. Therefore, a wider understanding of the subjects of exploitation is necessary for women as well.

### **2.2.2 Other Feminist Approaches to Veganism**

The literature that looks at the commonalities and relations between feminism and veganism, as mentioned above, is relatively recent. However, some of the works have already been widely known, such as Carol Adams'. The connection between women and nature is reflected as a similarity of objectification by Adams. Women's bodies and animals' bodies are both objectified by the androcentric view. Parts of their bodies are given names such as ribs, breasts etc., and are fetishised. Women's bodies are seen as sexual "playthings", and animal bodies are seen as food by cutting the connection between what is on the plate and where it comes from. Animals' body parts take

different shapes than how they used to seem when they come onto the plate. They are named “meat” while they actually are corps or bodies. The renaming removes the connection. Adams calls these terms “absent referents”, which do not refer to the bodies of living beings but to something void that does not remind us of where they come from (Adams 1990). In another work, Adams (2010) similarly examines how virility and masculinity are connected to meat-eating and argues that the increasing use of images that show women as animalised and that show farmed animals as feminised and sexualised are reproducing and reinstating meat-eating and masculinity.

Feminist thinkers have thought and theorised about the domination of men over nature for decades. Especially since the rise of ecofeminist understanding, the oppression of nature and animals has been a widely discussed issue. Some feminists have adopted a vegetarian lifestyle as they felt morally obliged to. The vegetarian ideal dates back to earlier years of feminist thought. Margaret Fuller opposed the killing of animals for food in *Woman of the Nineteenth Century* (1855). But the animal welfarist and vegetarian movements and theories have evolved independently from the feminist theory until ecofeminism. And as the animal rights movement and theory were developed by men, it was fit for men (George 1994). George says that they had become vegetarian, but not with the effect of the animal rights supporters but with other motivations. On the contrary, they argue that the feminist stance contradicts the animal rights arguments because of their male-centeredness. For this reason, George says that they did not adopt ethical vegetarianism. The ethical vegetarianism framework is established according to male physiology. The owners of it have the bias of power and of their class which makes them grant women the right not to adopt vegetarianism. So, although George accepts that any feminist ethics will recognise the equal right to life for living beings, they see ethical vegetarianism and feminism in contradiction.

On the other hand, many feminists defend the feminist vegetarian/vegan connection. Sheri Lucas (2005) defends the connection between feminism and vegetarianism and criticises George's argument that feminism and ethical vegetarianism are in contradiction. Lucas says that George uses dietary and ethical vegetarianism interchangeably while they are separate things, draws on outdated data and comes up with sexist conclusions about women's and men's health.

Later works focus on veganism instead of vegetarianism as it becomes more common and is seen as more ideal. The exploitation of female animals' reproductive and lactation systems is a feminist issue. If people did not domesticate the female animals, they would not be able to reproduce them to eat their flesh. Chickens' ovulation supplies the eggs, and cows' lactation for their babies supplies the milk people use. Therefore, there is double enslavement of them. This is reflected in the denigration of human females as they are called chicks, cows, bitches etc. (Adams 2006).

The connection between animals and women is reflected by Adams (1990) in terms of the violence they face too. Pornography and sex work are discussed as areas of violence against women, where their bodies are objectified. This is criticised by Hamilton (2016) from several perspectives. Hamilton finds the connection between violence against animals and pornography and sex work as unsubstantiated. They say that Adams' argument of oppression of women and animals are interconnected through the mechanisms of pornography excludes the voices and experiences of human sex workers. It is also inadequate for an understanding of the specific forms of violence committed by human beings against different species of animals. While opposing the anthropocentric nature of traditional scholarship to defend animal rights, one should not exclude groups of people, nor should despise different forms of pleasure for women, including pornography.

The vegan feminist framework does not only aim at transforming the academy or feminism but also the state and its institutions. The capitalist economy primarily targets a male-oriented audience for the consumption of animal bodies. Just as the objectification of women's bodies, animal bodies are objectified through sexist, patriarchal discourses too. In this discourse, the male eats, fucks and kills, and the female is eaten, fucked and killed. This normalisation of a hierarchy between males and females is used while feminising animals. Similarly, anti-vegan propaganda revolves around a male/power discourse. Getting enough protein, being powerful enough, being normal, healthy and fitting in with society are all associated with meat eating. Vegetarian/vegan men are feminised and seen as powerless because they do not eat meat. The consumption and male-oriented, capitalist hierarchy can only be overthrown by a species-inclusive feminist vegan approach. If the vegan component

is left outside, then the feminist project to reform society and hierarchy will be doomed to fail as the feminisation and oppression will continue on animals (Wrenn 2017).

To bring together the ones who share the ideal of a feminist vegan future, Wrenn (2019a) says, social media has been a massive tool. Although the number of feminists is very high among vegans, feminist ideals are not still commonly accepted by vegan organisations. However, with the help of social media, vegan feminists have organised more broadly and globally and in a more inclusive way in which women, disabled people, people of colour etc., produce a critical approach against the neoliberal and conservative values of the male-centred professional organisation of vegans.

Although the vegan movement is neither a monist nor a fully feminist one, affords to make it more inclusive still continue. The ideal of an oppression-free world is shared by queer people just as feminists. And similar to feminist theory, queer theory sees a connection between meat-eating and masculinity. Simonsen (2012) says that veganism, just like meat eating, includes gendered acts which are linked to masculinity, femininity and sexuality. They discuss the possibility of queer veganism. Refusing to eat meat does not only mean being against patriarchal culture, but it is also against heteronormativity, as meat eating is associated with heterosexual practices for both men and women.

### **2.2.3 Intersectionality**

As different forms of oppression are discussed together, intersectionality scholars argue that race, class and gender may all structure a situation, although they may not be equally visible and/or important in people's self-definition. One category may have salience over another, and these may 'intersect' or overlap (Crenshaw 2017). To understand what oppression is, intersectionality discussion asks new questions and reconceptualises oppression. As society and cities developed, white/privileged women developed an advantage over unprivileged women. The greatest division among Western women is between women who work and those who do not. But this division of class is not enough to understand the division among women. There is a need to look at women's relations at work with other women and other factors such as domestic service. The conscious or unconscious oppression of lower-class women by upper-

class women is a hierarchical relationship (Ramazanoğlu 2012). The issue of women's division also includes racial separation. Women of colour are more subordinated than white women. This is the case for women of colour against both men of colour and white women. Thus, the struggle is twofold for women of colour, just as it is for lower-class women. Women of dominant groups/races benefit from the subordination and also play a part in it. Thus, it is hard to give up one's privileges, just as it seems hard for men to give up theirs (Ramazanoğlu 2012).

The movement of black women has differentiated itself from that of the feminist. Just as womanism, Asian American, Mixed Race, Indigenous and Latina feminisms all have a sense of having been marginalised within feminism itself. They also share a sense of the experience of having been racialised as non-white. This marginalisation shows itself in the form of being the secondary in the women's movement as well as being the secondary after men (both white and colour). Womanism suggests that, in addition to gender, race is also constructed, and it works as a lens that people see others through. There is also a class perspective of the issue as black subordination takes its roots from the master-slave relations. The effects of race are experienced differently by black and white women. White women are sometimes unaware of their privileges by race. As these two are interrelated, race and gender cannot be separated because the struggle of black women is at the intersection of these two (Saulnier 2014).

Believing in both personal and social change is essential for black women to define themselves and survive. That is why race, gender and class are all emphasised in womanist theory. Womanism combines these three against categorical thinking. It suggests that it is necessary to analyse these three together as they are intersecting. It is an effort for an inclusive understanding of interdependent systems of oppression. The oppressive systems are described as a matrix of domination which is seen at the personal, communal and systemic levels. Black lesbianism experiences another level of oppression. Black feminists are often denied by other black women, which weakens the discussion of differences. Heterosexist oppression affects black lesbians just as their race, gender and class do (Saulnier 2014; Tong and Botts 2014).

White women in the feminist movement often ignore their privilege as being white while only mentioning their oppression as women. Although they are oppressed as women, they are also the symbols of oppression as white persons. Oppression is not a binary situation where one is either the oppressor or the oppressed. As there are many aspects of one's identity, there are also different positions that they are vis-à-vis other persons. Each group focuses on the identity that they are most comfortable with in being the oppressed one. Other identities are given less importance where they are privileged. Realising that there is more than one aspect of oppression and that one can be privileged in one aspect while being unprivileged in another helps to understand the frame that we live in (Collins 1993).

Collins (1993) also highlights the need for new visions of what oppression is. A different analysis of structures of oppression is necessary to understand race, class and gender better. Ranking these structures as if one precedes others will result in competing for supremacy over other groups of oppressed ones. Instead, we must understand that there are interlocking connections between different dimensions of oppression and must approach them with a holistic perspective. Changing our daily behaviours of marginalising and stereotyping and building new connections instead of categorical judgements are the ways to achieve long-term change.

Looking back at the early discussions on intersectional feminism, one can see that it started around the black women's movement. Just as Collins, bell hooks (1999) wrote on the multilevel oppression of black women by both men and white women. hooks says that racial imperialism supersedes sexual imperialism for black people. It was white imperialism that made white women think that they had the right to be the oppressor of black women as well as black men. They also campaigned for black rights and against slavery, but this was only for religious reasons. They did not want to abolish the hierarchy between black and white women. On the contrary, they wanted to maintain it as they enjoyed its privileges of it. Eventually, the white women's movement gained its full power because it did not care for black equality in the first place. If white women campaigned for the equality of all women, they would not be able to gain what they gained. Therefore, they prioritised their political right before that of black women.

Early white feminists acted as if it was their movement only. They felt that feminism was for their interests. Their definition of the groups of women included only white women and was not inclusive of non-white women. Black women were ignored and exposed to racism and sexism by white women. Their vision of liberation was only white women's liberation. This was also in the interest of white men who wanted to maintain the racial hierarchy between whites and non-whites. The racial hierarchy puts white women over black men, which white women did not have a problem with. When they faced criticisms from black women for their white female racism, white women opposed it and argued that oppression is not measurable (hooks 1999).

The resolution to the oppression of white and black women, hooks (1999) says, cannot be achieved without first eliminating the hostility, jealousy and competition that kept women weak and unable to create change. A feminist revolution will only be successful if women come together in solidarity.

hooks' (1999) criticism of prioritising a group's rights over another group can be raised for animals as well. If feminists argue against any kind of oppression, including race, gender and class-based, then other kinds of oppression must also be rejected. Delaying or ignoring the oppression of animals would mean that feminists are against only some kinds of oppression. Therefore, it is possible to connect intersectional thinking to veganism.

Feminist theories may sometimes fail to adapt to criticisms and changes in theory. For this, a post-humanist feminist understanding is needed, which would not place humans at the centre of its outlook but see all living beings as equally valuable. This post-humanist feminism needs an intersectional approach to the issues of animals to benefit at conceptual and practical levels. The colonial logic is still reflected in post-humanist feminist theory as whiteness and Western cultures are reflected as superior in discussions of human nature and human-nature relationships. For this, the theory needs to regard race and culture as levels of analysis to recognise the dynamic functioning of those levels with each other. The reason why post-humanist feminist theory needs a more intersectional analysis of the human-nonhuman relationships is that it has to be

inclusive of all in its analysis and that it will be able to capture the complex structure and depth of humans' and animals' power relations and subjectivities (Dechka 2012).

For animal advocacy, the relationship with feminism is twofold: The animal advocacy movement has to be intersectional because of the connections between animals' oppression and women's oppression, and it has to be feminist since the women who constitute the majority of the animal advocacy movement experience the oppression both in the movement and anywhere else at an intersectional level (Dechka 2013).

#### **2.2.4 Total Liberation**

As ecofeminists and feminists argued for a connection between the oppressions of poverty, racism, animal exploitation and women's subordination, they argued that people need to work simultaneously against sexism, classism, racism, speciesism, and homophobia. The idea of social justice is possible only through understanding the connections between different forms of oppression and carrying out a united struggle against all of them. This is necessary to liberate and protect animals as well as humans and the environment. Despite philosophical and practical differences, it is possible to establish a holistic approach against the oppressions and hierarchies (Kemmerer 2015).

Liberating all species from the exploitation and oppression of humans, especially against patriarchy, argues for a total liberation movement. This understanding stemmed from various disciplines, including feminism, environmental sociology, critical animal studies (CAS) and environmental justice movements. Pellow and Brehm (2015) explore the phenomenon of total liberation as a frame transformation and look at the motivations of activists in articulating the frame and how total liberation has influenced the direction and characteristics of the abovementioned movements so far. The authors argue that challenging the movements that they are part of makes activists develop a more radical orientation. The methods, goals, values, and ideas of the movements aimed at reducing harm while activists shifted to a restructuring of the relations between humans and animals to achieve equality for all.

Similarly, Colling, Parson and Arrigoni (2014) argue that the exploitation and oppression of nature, humans and animals result in damage to the habitat, human health and the lives of animals. They propose that individuals have to revolutionise themselves through decolonising their minds and actions, that solidarity must be established on the grounds of a common sense of struggle and resistance, and that activists need to adapt an indigenous understanding which implies that others are impacted by their actions. More specifically, they propose that only a transnational and inclusive total liberation can stop the destruction of life on the planet. The human and animal oppressions cannot be thought of independently. Therefore, while aiming at abolishing capitalism, total liberation must also aim at abolishing the animal industry.

Finally, David Pellow (2014, p. 6) says that total liberation is a result of the efforts to understand and defeat inequality and oppression. They argue that total liberation consists of four pillars: “(1) an ethic of justice and anti-oppression inclusive of humans, nonhuman animals, and ecosystems; (2) anarchism; (3) anticapitalism; and (4) an embrace of direct action tactics.”.

The total liberation movement and literature open a new and holistic possibility for the struggle against oppressions. In this effort, those who struggle against oppression stand against multiple inequalities and therefore are part of more than one movement at the same time. Their presence in various activist circles also shapes their identity. Therefore, total liberation can be seen as a bridge among rights-based political movements. In the discussion chapter of this thesis, mentions of total liberation by the participants can be seen. Total liberation of species and commonality of struggles are things that the participants stress often. Therefore, total liberation can be seen as relevant for Turkey as well.

### **2.3. Religion and Animal Ethics**

Religions do not only regulate or direct peoples' lives and the relations among them. Animals have long been part of religious books as they have long been in our lives. People use animals as food, for transportation, for clothing etc. Therefore, religions have regulated the use of animals in many areas. While some religions forbid the use

of some or all animals, some religions do not bring such measures. Religions regulate the use of animals and attribute a value to the animals.

Regulations and limitations for meat eating and animal use are present in many of the religious texts. They are seen in Abrahamic and dharmic religions in similar ways among each family of religion. However, the reason why certain acts regarding animals are forbidden differ. While some texts pronounce a reason, some do not. According to anthropologists, the motivations may be different than what the texts say. For example, the abominations and permissions regarding animal use in the Leviticus, for Douglas (2003), are related to power and danger. Good things come from blessing, and danger comes from the withdrawal of it. The prosperity of people relies on their wholeness and completeness.

In explaining the animal ethics of religions, there are important differences between animal ethics of dharmic and Abrahamic religions. The focus of dharmic religions is on the principal of non-violence. However, Hinduism and Buddhism separates some animals from others and do not grant the same value to all animals. When it comes to Jainism, the similarities are more than the differences. It can be said that Jainism has the strictest animal ethics and stems from a point that sees all humans and animals as equal and equally worthy. For the Abrahamic religions, the separation of animals is based on their sacredness. For example, the pig is seen as devalued in Islam and the animals that do not possess the characteristics of its family are seen as abomination in Judaism.

In Buddhism, animals are seen as living in a different realm of existence in the karmic vision (Rinpoche 2012, p.116). However, their lives are valued in the sense that Buddhism does not approve of harming them. Harming animals is denounced and saving them is praised. In Tibet, for example, saving animals from slaughter and releasing them into nature would help the dead (Rinpoche 2012, p.307). The same can be beneficial for the person who saves the animal as well. It is believed that saving an animal by buying them before being slaughtered and releasing them would bring long life to that person (Rinpoche 2012, p.249).

James Stewart (2014) says that harming animals is not welcomed in Buddhism. Contrary to the Vedic religion, Buddhist writings denounce those who kill or harm animals. However, Stewart adds, the exaggerated claims in the books may be aiming at making Buddhists more compassionate, and not may be literal. Especially threatening Buddhists with a bad rebirth may be to prevent them from harming animals.

On the other hand, when it comes to different practices regarding animals, Buddhism may take different stances. While ahimsa (no-harm) is an important principle for Buddhism, Lecso (1988) says that animal testing would still be condoned if it is proved to be effective for human health. Although Buddhism adopts no-harm, what Lecso says shows again that it does not place animals as equal living beings with humans as it would prioritise human health over animal health. Similarly, Fenton (2019) says that Buddhist animal ethics would not forbid the use of animals in research, even though it sets some ethical constraints.

Having been affected by and evolved from the Vedic religion just as Buddhism, Hinduism's regulation of animal use is limited. Contrary to Buddhism and Jainism, many Hindus eat animals and their by-products. While the proportion of vegetarians is very high among Hindus, religious texts do not forbid meat eating (Dewan 2017). Therefore, in terms of food consumption, Hinduism is less restrictive.

Just as Buddhists, Hindus also believe that animals are soul-bearers and that their souls can be reincarnated as well. However, there is a hierarchy among the souls. People who pursue a good life may become gods and those who pursued a dark life would become an animal after their reincarnation (Mittal and Thursby 2004). Therefore, animals are seen as inferior since bad karma leads to becoming an animal while good karma leads to becoming a human or a god.

For Hindus, although it may differ for some, animal use is not welcome in cases of vivisection, animal experimentation or using bovine-derived products for surgeries (Valpey 2016; Easterbrook and Maddern 2008). However, there is no universal rule for animal use as cows and other animals are valued differently for most Hindus.

In sacrifice, for example, contrary to Vedic practice, vegetables or rice and barley are better to present than animals so that there would not be any killing and thus any sin. The animals that were sacrificed in Vedic rituals were replaced with vegetables and rice cakes so that there would be no blood and also it would summon the living beings who sacrificed them (Smith and Doniger 1989). A similar practice is seen in the case of a shrine -Thakur Baba- to whom people sacrifice or present food and gifts but not animals, contrary to what their ancestors did. The practice of animal sacrificing was abandoned as people thought that it is not necessary for someone's death to cause another (Singh 2012).

Jainism sees humans and animals as equally valuable and thus avoids the use of animals for any purpose. Jains accept their privilege over animals. While animals are seen as objects serving human subjectivity in other beliefs, Jainism sees animals as subjects. Therefore, preserving life and avoiding death is central to the Jain belief for both humans and animals. Life is common to all living beings and humans and animals share their existence. All living beings have souls. It is not being animal or human that divides them but their advantage or disadvantage at the birth (Vallely 2020).

While the religious animal ethics often regulate the use of animals for their believers, they do not affect other people much. In the city of Palitana, however, Jains went on hunger strike to ban the slaughtering of animals and selling animal products. As the city is a sacred place for Jains, the legal enforcement was passed and animal slaughtering and selling were banned in the city, despite the opposition from the Muslim community (van Popering 2015). This example shows that Jain animal ethics and the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) is so prominent that Jain monks go on hunger strike for its implementation in their city.

In Judaism, just as many other aspects of life, use of animals is regulated very strictly. It incorporates an ethic for the rights of animals as well. In certain times or scenarios, use of some or all animals are forbidden. For example, one cannot have the animals work on Sabbath, must kill the animals painlessly when they are killed for food, must feed the animals before they eat etc. These regulations show that Judaism recognises a moral relationship between humans and animals (Weisberger 2003).

However, this moral relationship is not between equals. On the contrary, humans have pre-eminence over animals. As God commanded people to multiply on the earth and have dominion over fish, birds and the air, we can understand that animals' existence is seen as serving humans (Rayner n.d.).

When it comes to arbitrary harm and killing, Judaism does not approve of and forbids these practices. However, if the act satisfies a human need, then it is not forbidden. Cruelty to animals is denounced in Judaism even if it serves human welfare. Animal testing is an exception to this. With the condition that unnecessary pain is avoided, Jewish authorities authorise animal testing (Bleich 1986).

Islam comes from the same tradition as Judaism and therefore has similar stories and patterns. The attitude towards animals is also similar in Islam. The use of animals is regulated in Islam based on certain restrictions. Muslims must use animals only when necessary and with compassion and care. It is denounced to harm or kill animals unnecessarily or for satisfaction and with malevolence (Masri 2016).

The value attributed to animals is based on certain principles. It is believed that animals are trusts from God. Just as humans do, animals live in communities and families. They have souls and are able to feel, which means that they possess personhood (Haque and Masri 2011).

Just as in Judaism, Islam sees animals in a lower status than humans. In Quran, believers are warned that when they transgress the freedom of others, they will be reduced to the status of animals. As they are in a lower status, animals can be used as food, for transportation, testing etc. However, there are also restrictions on these uses. For example, one cannot eat an already dead animal or when it is still alive (when there is still blood in the veins) (Bekir 2003). For testing on animals, Masri (2016) says, there should not be any other alternative. If there are other alternatives, then testing on animals would not be appropriate. As the actions are evaluated based on the intentions, the correctness of such practices may change. But the general principle is that unnecessary harm and killings are not welcomed.

In a parallel way, Christianity presents a complex status for animals. It authorizes humans to exploit animals purely as means to human ends. However, parallel to other religions such as Judaism and Islam, Christianity shares the belief that all creatures are God's creatures and recipients of divine concern. According to Preece and Fraser (2000) how Christianity and biblical thought to be interpreted is "a debate influenced by economic forces, institutions, sheer individual and collective self-interest, as well as by honest, legitimate, and well-considered differences of interpretation" (p. 254). Since the religious doctrine is complex, the authors argue that some reforms on Christianity would require to consider animal ethics. McLaughlin (2017) argues that "[Christian doctrine] depicts a nonviolent relationship between humans and nonhumans—indicated by the practice of vegetarianism—as a moral ideal that represents the divine intention for the Earth community" (p. 144).

The Christian Vegetarian Association (2005) regards vegetarianism as stewardship since "vegetarian diets express a faith in the reconciliation of all Creation to God's original intentions". Johnson's study (2015) shows that ethical veganism and ethical vegetarianism meet the definition for "religion" and "religious practice". According to the study ethical veganism is itself a practice of a religious belief. Ethical veganism is a religion, whose adherents practice veganism, which is a religious practice. Through this practice, the Christian ethical vegans fulfil the understanding of the Creator and/or the expectations of the Creator for human behaviour (Johnson, pp. 58-60).

#### **2.4. Literature on Veganism**

Veganism has been practised as a diet for centuries for various reasons, especially for religious reasons (Evans 2012; Rayner n.d.). It has become a movement advocating animal rights only in the last decades. As it has grown as a movement, discussions over whether veganism is a social movement or not have emerged in the literature (Troncale Rawls 2010). Aside from these discussions, there are also different approaches toward veganism for both those who practise it and those who study it. Veganism may be seen as a healthy diet, a lifestyle movement, an environmental movement or a rights-based political movement. While they follow common practices,

not all vegans carry political motivations (Wrenn 2019a). Therefore, one's veganism may be different from another one's veganism.

There are several approaches to veganism in the literature. The UK Vegan Society's definition of veganism is the most commonly used definition:

"Veganism is a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms, it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals." (The Vegan Society n.d.)

While it is defined as a philosophy and as a way of living, there is confusion among those who cite this definition. Veganism is commonly defined with the motivations of vegans (Aksulu 2013; Tunçay 2018; Yeğen and Aydın 2018), although the two are separate things. In the studies that examine how people define veganism, a rather limited understanding is still adopted. For North et al. (2021), veganism is either a diet or a lifestyle, even for vegans. Moreover, absolutism, social justice and animal ethics are also among the aspects that define veganism. Vegans', vegetarians' and omnivores' definitions differ, and vegans tend to see veganism as more of a lifestyle that respects animals' right to life, while vegetarians and omnivores place higher importance to defining veganism as a diet and its health and environmental aspects. Contrary to the literature, the participants of this study stated different definitions of veganism, some of which are motivations while most are unique definitions.

#### **2.4.1. Lifestyle Approaches**

Lifestyle movements as a social movement classification have been studied in the literature, especially in the last ten years. A lifestyle movement is one that aims at bringing social change through the promotion of a lifestyle of individual practices (Haenfler et al. 2012). As movements have collective actions and identities while lifestyles are individualistic practices, scholars have long distinguished movements and lifestyles. Haenfler et al. (2012) bridge the gap between these two concepts to

argue that lifestyle movements show the characteristics of movements as they aim at fostering social change and constructing a personal identity while still having a diffuse structure. The authors also add that veganism falls outside the mainstream while it still challenges cultural and societal norms. However, there is a contradiction in the discourse of the authors. They do not deny the political notion of the movements that they call lifestyle movements, but they distinguish vegan organisations from political movements by putting them in a different category despite the fact that vegan organisations challenge social norms.

Lifestyle movements are also distinguished from new social movements despite the similarities the two have. While new social movements such as feminism and the LGBTQAI+ movement construct a collective identity and follow public and collective actions, lifestyle movements aim to be the change itself instead of changing the world (Büchs et al. 2015). Moreover, lifestyle movements focus on individual practices instead of political change. They target culture instead of pressuring the state for policy change. While animal rights movements might call for regulations or restrictions for the animal industry, they mainly pursue cultural change through changing individual lifestyles by calling people to go vegan (Haenfler 2019). In the following pages, it can be seen that vegans in Turkey claim to do more than these. Vegan organisations and activists often call for legal and political measures to be taken to prevent animal use or torture. Therefore, it is hard to see veganism fitting into the lifestyle movement framework.

In examining how people join vegan movements, Cherry (2015) says that the focus of vegan movements, just as other lifestyle movements, is on the everyday life choices of people instead of political mobilisation. Similarly, Gheihman (2021) says that veganism should be seen as a lifestyle movement rather than a political one based on individual consumption. The cultural entrepreneurs bring veganism from the margins to the centre. With the effect of cultural entrepreneurs, veganism has become more of a lifestyle movement than a part of the animal rights movement. However, veganism, especially veganism in Turkey, is still a part of the animal rights movement. It is non-vegans who either criticise veganism for being a capitalist consumption habit, or place

veganism among lifestyle movements. Therefore, the cultural entrepreneurs argument may not be valid for the case of this thesis.

Wrenn's (2019b) analysis of The Vegan Society's quarterly publication, *The Vegan*, shows that its understanding of veganism has become more of a lifestyle among young people, contrary to the spotlight on religiosity and vegan family practices in the post-war years. While veganism is still being stigmatised, more people acknowledge it as an alternative lifestyle these days (Greenebaum 2017). For Greenebaum (2012), identifying yourself as a vegan is in itself a declaration of lifestyle.

The lifestyle movement literature, especially scholars who study veganism as a lifestyle movement, tends to separate it from its political context. Just as Cherry, Gheihman, and Haenfler et al. do, veganism is framed as a collection of daily habits that is more of a lifestyle than a political identity and movement. However, this approach and framing of veganism miss the focus on animal rights. Many vegans adopt veganism because they respect animals' right to life. While there are other motivations to go vegan, the main focus of vegans is on the right to life, especially in Turkey. As it can be seen in the discussion chapter, when asked, almost all of the participants said that their primary motivation to go vegan was not to harm animals. Therefore, everyday practices are not at the core of veganism but an inevitable outcome of adopting veganism.

#### **2.4.2. Abolitionist Approaches**

Ethical vegans make a distinction between themselves and other vegans whom they do not see as pure vegans. However, they also criticise themselves for their actions when they are not compatible with their vegan values. They do so to create a public image of themselves and claim authenticity (Greenebaum 2012). Seeking authenticity means that vegans pursue an identity that they see as ideal. However, the definition of ideal veganism may also differ among vegans.

In their efforts to bring change, vegans follow both individual and collective actions. At the individual level, vegans change their habits of eating, clothing, cleaning etc. At the collective level, protests, direct actions and vegan stalls/stands are some of the

ways vegans mobilise. However, there is no consensus on the ways to follow. While some vegans protest single issues regarding one or more animals as well as calling for an end to animal use in general, abolitionist vegans protest animal use in general and do not carry out single-issue campaigns.

The benefits of collective action are discussed by many authors. Wrenn and Johnson (2013) argue that single-issue campaigning of animal rights groups lacks the focus on speciesism and that animal liberation requires a holistic approach toward social change. They divide animal rights campaigns into three: single-issue campaigns with no abolitionist context, single-issue campaigns with an abolitionist context and the use of single-issue campaigns to address the underlying speciesism. They argue that these efforts cannot go beyond a piecemeal approach. Similarly, Gary L. Francione (2009) adopts an abolitionist approach to animal rights. Francione argues that the welfarist approach to animal rights lacks support for the use of them as a commodity. A welfarist approach seeks the improvement of the living conditions of animals, regardless of the context. Instead, for Francione and abolitionists, an abolitionist approach that aims to end the use of animals as they have the interest to continue living free would be more effective for animal liberation.

### **2.4.3. Vegan Identities and Veganism in Turkey**

While veganism argues for equality between humans and animals, it is sometimes discussed or seen as an elitist movement. Even some vegans themselves find it a privileged choice. From an ecocritical perspective, Wright (2017) says that veganism is still a white, middle-class identity of elites and is seen as a feminine identity, despite its spread to people from different backgrounds. Vegans build an identity and a collective culture through that identity. However, the identity or the degree to which vegans feel connected to others is affected by how active a vegan in the community is. Those who actively take part in vegan organisations and communities tend to have stricter diets, while those who do not connect with other vegans tend to adapt their veganism to their lifestyle (Wolfer 2017).

The vegan identity is not something that one builds alone. According to Cherry (2015), it requires learning, reflection and identity work. And to sustain that identity, one needs

the support of family and friends and the cultural tools that will supply the skills and motivation needed to take part in activism. Moreover, maintaining participation in the movement is dependent more on the support one receives from their social network than on one's level of motivation or vegan identity (Cherry 2006).

For Hunter (2020), vegans' motivations revolve around ethics, health, and environmentalism. While one of these is more prominent for some vegans, others may be more prominent for other vegans. Among others, gender is an important principle shaping the definitions of veganism. While the vegan habitus is embedded in vegans, they still maintain a hierarchy among different vegan identities. Most vegans see some value systems as superior to others, and they shape their consumption habits according to their own values.

Veganism may also be studied as a cultural movement under new social movements. Just like other cultural movements, vegans aim to create a cultural and lifestyle change in society. And success is measured according to the number of people who experienced such a cultural change. Contrary to the old social movements, members of new social movements are not always taking part in social movement organisations. Taking part in a social movement organisation or in a group of people with similar identities shapes one's vegan identity and motivations. Maintaining participation in the vegan movement depends more on the social network than one's self-reliance and willpower (Cherry 2006).

While external factors such as the social environment are shaping one's identity and motivation, perceived discrimination and satisfaction are also crucial for it. Bağcı and Olgun (2019) show that the level of discrimination perceived by vegetarians and vegans impacts their self-esteem and well-being. As the vegan identity is constructed as part of one's socialisation, it is affected by and related to other identities and causes as well. Wolf's (2015a) work looks at how veganism in İstanbul shares intellectual and practical dimensions with other movements. While vegans join other movements and call others to go vegan, there are disputes among them as well as the members of other rights-based movements on whether they should be seeking common grounds. Wolf (2015b) also says that the ways vegans in Turkey who pursue their activism are

marginal for many. As the vegan movement in Turkey emerged later than around the world, it adopted a critical stance against other forms of discrimination. As vegans pursued more politically correct ways, there emerged more disputes among vegans. These disputes led to different approaches towards veganism and ways of mobilising (e.g. abolitionist vs. single-issue campaigns) as well as different approaches towards total liberation and other rights-based struggles.

The process of vegan identity formation is directly related to one's choice of food and consumption. However, it is also related to one's other identities. Tekten Aksürmeli and Beşirli (2019) argue that veganism is not a single identity but has variations. However, there are commonalities in experiences on the grounds of gender and intersectionality with other identities. Vegans are either ethical vegans or health-oriented plant-based eaters. There is also a difference when it comes to taking part in vegan activism and the construction of the "other" identity. Ethical vegans are more active and have a stronger definition of the "other", while plant-based eaters take less initiative and have a weaker construction of the "other".

Vegans started to organise under vegetarian organisations since the 19th century. The first known vegan organisation, The Vegan Society, was established in the UK in 1944. While it had become a more diverse movement consisting of different outlooks in the following decades, it started out by suggesting plant-based consumption for the suffering of animals as well as for the environmental problems (Wrenn 2019b).

While veganism may have been practised for longer, vegan organisations started to be established especially in the 2010s. The first official vegan organisation, Vegan Association Turkey, was established in 2006 as a platform and had become an association in 2012 (TVD 2020). The organisations aim at changing the relationship between humans and animals by calling on others to adopt veganism. While doing this, the fact that some organizations mention that class, feminist and queer struggles intersect with the vegan movement also shows that the definitions of veganism go beyond an individual lifestyle, and they have a political stance against all forms of oppression and discrimination (Tunç n.d.).

The literature examining vegans and the vegan movement in Turkey has two main lines. One part of the literature looks at veganism as a separate movement, identity or practice from other movements. For some of these researchers, veganism is a movement (Yılmaz 2018; Erben and Balaban-Salı 2016; Eren Cengiz 2021), but the vegan identity is not researched or not even mentioned by them. For another group of researchers, the vegan identity is a postmodern, resistance identity (Yeğen and Aydın 2018) or simply an identity without making any specific portrayal (Tunçay Son and Bulut 2016). The resistance is carried out against the capitalist system and is for freedom and the right to life (Yeğen and Aydın 2018). Similar to the tendency in the international literature, some researchers examine veganism as a lifestyle, a philosophy and a healthy diet without mentioning it as a movement or an identity (Tunçay Son and Bulut 2016; Tunçay 2018; Kaytez and Tunçay 2020). Contrary to the commonly voiced three motivations (ethical, environmental and health-based), Tunçay Son and Bulut (2016) say that religious beliefs may also be motivating some people to adopt veganism. The framing of veganism as a diet is also reflected in the media in Turkey as well (Çakıcı, Kutlu and Yılmaz 2020). Other than these perceptions of veganism, Güler and Çağlayan (2021) discuss veganism as simply nothing, without framing it as an identity, movement, lifestyle, or diet.

The second group of researchers, on the other hand, study veganism in Turkey as a movement that intersects with other movements. A theoretical, as well as practical connection, is established between veganism and feminism as well as other political movements or theories. In this thesis, I adopt a similar perspective to this group of researchers as I argue that veganism in Turkey intersects with other rights-based movements and struggles. In their vegan feminist critique of an advertisement of a chicken products seller<sup>1</sup>, Gök (2019) argues that it is not possible to consider the framing of chickens as feminised and as decent food. Similarly, Sakarya and Gümüş

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<sup>1</sup> The advertisement shows a rooster that behaves rude to the customers around. The external voice says that there is no place for roosters that are not decent at Popeyes. Decent and seasoned are translated as the same word [terbiyeli] in Turkish.

(2017) make a vegan feminist reading of the Dede Korkut<sup>2</sup> tales and argue that the traditional tales and epics involve a male-dominant and speciesist outlook of the society and relations between men and women as well as humans and animals. Though framed as a lifestyle, Turgay (2020) looks at the everyday resistance practices of vegans in Turkey, such as habits of consumption, sharing posts on social media or organising picnics with fellow vegans. For Üzeltüzenci (2018), the vegan scene in İstanbul offers a socio-political phenomenon to understand veganism as an identity category and as a political stand, arguing that veganism can be seen as a project identity demanding change from all parts of the society regarding the relationship between humans and animals. Lastly, for Aksulu (2013), the vegan organisations and animal rights advocacy in Turkey are operating as new social movements using their tactics and social media to call for political change regarding animal rights.

There are many different approaches to veganism in the literature. As outlined above, veganism is commonly studied as a lifestyle movement and identity by social movement researchers. For those who study veganism as a rights-based/political movement, the connections of the vegan identity and vegan movement with other political identities and movements are sometimes missed or ignored. While many feminist researchers discussed vegetarianism and later veganism as related to feminism, this relation is limited to feminism in some cases. However, there are also many studies that see veganism in general and veganism in Turkey as a political movement that shares a parallel ideal with other political movements. As a response to the studies in the literature lacking this outlook and as a support to those who show the relation between the vegan movement and other movements, I looked at the vegan identities and the vegan movement in Turkey to argue that the overall vegan identity in Turkey has political grounds more than lifestyle or any other ground (health, environment etc.). This side of the vegan identity and movement in Turkey makes it belong to new social movements just as other identity-based movements.

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<sup>2</sup> Dede Korkut Stories are epic folk stories about the life and struggles of the Oghuz Turks taking place in the 10-11th centuries. Dede Korkut, who plays a role in all the stories, is a wise old man who has extraordinary features that make him different from other Oghuzs.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

While the literature on veganism has been growing in the last decades, there are a limited number of studies that look at the identifications of vegans and at the relationship between vegan and other identities. Moreover, the literature on veganism in Turkey is as young as the movement and is also very limited. Therefore, this thesis aims at contributing to the literature by addressing these issues. As I question the relationship between vegan and other identities, I try to understand the vegan movement and its members in Turkey. Moreover, this thesis also helps show how concentric the rights-based movements in Turkey are.

In doing so, I employed qualitative methodology and conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with self-identified vegans living in Turkey. The semi-structured interview is a commonly used type of interview where the researcher structures the questions according to the need of the study but leaves space for the researcher to explore the unnarrated contextual influences (Galletta 2013). It is the most frequently used method of interview for qualitative studies. It is especially useful as it enables reciprocity between the researcher and the participant (Kallio et al. 2016). The semi-structured interview method was employed for these benefits as the nature of the interviews was expected to be limiting further narration.

The participants were selected with random sampling. The data collection period started with drafting the questions. I carried out a pilot interview on October 16th, 2021. Following the pilot interview and the feedback from the pilot participant, I rearranged the order of the questions in a way that the participants would introduce themselves first and give demographic information before answering other questions. Between October 19th 2021 and March 30th 2022, I conducted 25 interviews. 13

interviews were conducted face to face, and the remaining 12 were conducted online or on the phone. For the face-to-face interviews, the venue selection was made by the participants. Ten interviews were conducted in a café, 2 of which were with the owner of that café. Two interviews were conducted at the participants' houses, and lastly, one interview was conducted in a public place which was the sitting area of the university campus. Out of the 12 online interviews, ten were conducted through Zoom. One participant requested to conduct the interview through an Instagram video call, and one participant asked to conduct the interview on the phone as they had a poor internet connection.

For the sampling, I employed four different methods. Out of the 25 participants, 12 were reached through Instagram by random selection. I texted Instagram users who have the word 'vegan' either in their username or in their personal biography. Seven participants were referred by the participants, including the pilot interview participant. I asked the participants to refer to a maximum of two people so that the sample would not consist of a small circle. Other than these, 4 participants were referred by my personal connections. And lastly, I reached 2 participants randomly by going into their workplace. Both of these participants were café owners.

The participants live in 8 different cities from six of the seven regions in Turkey. Eight participants from Ankara, 6 participants from İstanbul and İzmir each, and 1 participant from Sakarya, Giresun, Kocaeli, Burdur and Şanlıurfa each were interviewed. Following the face-to-face and online interviews in Ankara, I travelled to İstanbul and İzmir to conduct the interviews there face to face. Participants from the other five cities have all participated online.

Before the interviews, participants were informed about the content of the study and the interview. They were given a consent form to read and sign. For the online interviews, participants received the consent forms via email beforehand and approved their consent by responding to the original email. They were also reminded at the beginning of the interview that they did not have to answer any of the questions and could skip them if they wished to. Participants were also asked if they approved voice

recording during the interview and were informed that the records would be confidential. All of the participants approved voice recordings.

To ensure the neutrality of the interview, no other information was shared with the participants. However, some of the participants asked me if I was vegan or not. If I was asked before or during the interview, I did not answer this question until after the interview. Yet, starting with the 15th interview, I answered this question when asked and told them that I am a vegan too. This gave me a chance to make an observational comparison between the participants who did not know that I am a vegan and the ones who knew I am. I observed a feeling of closeness and intimacy among the second half of the participants. Earlier participants who did not know whether I am a vegan or not were more cautious while choosing their words and describing veganism. Especially the opinions on controversial issues such as the perception of vegans and veganism among non-vegans and the offensive language between these two groups were different. Earlier participants abstained from talking about these issues, possibly not to offend me as I could be a non-vegan.

The interviews lasted around 20,5 minutes on average, ranging from around 10 minutes to around 45 minutes. The length of the interviews had such a wide range because the interviews were semi-structured, and the participants varied in terms of their willingness to give extended answers.

The records were then transcribed using Transkriptor. The participants were given numbers from 1 to 25 to avoid confusion while analysing them, and to ensure confidentiality. The participant numbers are used in the discussion chapter after the quotations in brackets. After the transcriptions were completed, they were checked for mistakes and were analysed using NVivo. For the analysis, a thematic approach was adopted. Based on the questions asked, 16 main and 52 subcategories were coded. While some of the codes are single main codes, such as the age of the participants, some of them have several subcategories. The categories were created based on the questions asked, and the subcategories were created based on the answers. As some of the questions were open-ended, there are various answers and coding subcategories.

The participants were aged between 19 and 60, with an average of 33,3. While the common prejudgement is that vegans are mostly young people and students, my sample turned out to have a higher average age than this. Moreover, 8 participants - around a third of the sample- were over the age of 40, which could mean that the common judgement may not reflect the truth. The participants' durations of veganism also vary with a minimum of 5 months and a maximum of 12 years. On average, the participants were vegan for 3,5 years.

The participants also had a wide range of income levels. Two of the participants stated that they had no income. 1 participant had an unstable income as they were running a café during the pandemic. Five participants had low income, 10 participants had middle income, 3 participants had upper middle income, and lastly, 4 participants stated that they had a high income. I did not give a classification while asking about the participants' income levels. On the contrary, I left it open to see their perception. Some of the participants asked if they should answer this question with either low, middle or high. I told them to reflect on their own reflection and did not answer this question. Around a fifth of the participants replied with their salary, although I did not specifically ask them to. However, they also stated a level such as middle income. Therefore, I did not deduct any number into a category for this question.

In a similar way to their income level, the participants were asked about their political orientation without any guidance. Some of the participants asked if I was asking whether they were leftist or rightist/conservative. I reminded them that I do not intend to make any guidance so that they can reflect on their own identity in their own words. Some of the participants stated more than one orientation, while some only stated one. There are various political orientations among vegans, including liberal and right tendencies. Moreover, veganism and feminism were also stated as orientations, although they are not commonly seen as political orientations.

Lastly, the participants were asked whether they identified themselves as LGBTQAI+ or not. Six participants said yes, and 19 participants replied no. While this question was asked to collect demographic information, participants' queerness may also affect

or be affected by their vegan identity. Therefore, further analysis of these identities will be made in the discussion chapter.

In the discussion chapter, quotations from the interviews are used. For these, the participants were given numbers for anonymity. Following the quotations, participant numbers are given as (P1, 21, Ankara) in order to give the reader the chance to know the age and city of residence of the participants, and have a complete outlook of each participant by looking at the separate quotations used in different headings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION**

I hypothesised that vegans' motivations and their definition of veganism are related to other identities that they have and that there is a connection between vegan identifications and other identifications. The identities that a person defines themselves with, shape each other mutually. Based on the analysis of the interviews with vegan participants, it has become easier to make some deductions and generalizations regarding vegan individuals living in Turkey. In this chapter, I will discuss the types of veganism, looking at the definitions of veganism made by the participants, their motivations, political identities, their political activisms, the commonalities that they establish between veganism and other movements, and the influence between their professional lives and veganisms.

The literature examining vegans and the vegan movement in Turkey has two main lines. One part of the literature looks at veganism as a separate movement, identity or practice from other movements. The second group of researchers, on the other hand, study veganism in Turkey as a movement that intersects with other movements. Theoretical and practical connections are established between veganism and feminism, as well as other political movements or theories.

For researchers who classify or identify types of veganism, the classification is made based on either the social role that comes with veganism or the motivations of vegans. For Larsson et al. (2003), young vegans living in Sweden adopt three types of veganism. The first group of vegans is conformist vegans who adopt veganism to socialise with others and share common attitudes. Organised vegans are those who defend and respect animal rights and protest animal exploitation. Lastly,

individualistic vegans are those who also prioritise animal rights but do not associate or identify themselves with vegan groups or ideologies.

On the other hand, Braunsberger and Flamm (2019) classify veganisms into four types based on the motivations of vegans: ethical, health, environment and spiritual veganisms. Ethical veganism is respecting and fighting for animal rights. Health and environmental veganisms focus on the positive impact that a plant-based diet makes on the lives of vegans. Finally, spiritual veganism connects the beliefs that one has with actions in everyday life.

Looking at the classifications made in the literature, it is possible to say that motivations to adopt veganism, including socialising, are the main point of difference among types of veganism. Contrary to the literature, I argue that types of veganism in Turkey are not classified based solely on the motivations of vegans but on many factors, especially how they define veganism and how they relate veganism with other identities.

There are mainly three different veganism practices among the participants of this study. The first one of these veganism types is political veganism which refers to those who adopt veganism as a political struggle and carry out vegan activism in different circles. Though named contrarily, apolitical veganism refers to a more passivist and less political type of veganism that is practised by a majority of the participants. Finally, a rather less common type of vegans, in terms of numbers, is Sunni vegans who practice a type of veganism that is in itself a protest identity. It is helpful to remember that political and apolitical veganisms are not binary opposites. Different veganisms could be more of a spectrum where there are different levels of politicisation. The political and apolitical naming of the veganism types does not imply that political vegans are %100 political, and apolitical vegans have no interest in politics in and outside of veganism. These labels were used to give an overall idea of how veganism is perceived by vegans. Moreover, veganism is not totally neutral for apolitical vegans. This group of vegans make political connections in some aspects. However, the categorization was made looking at the overall profile of the vegans, and for apolitical vegans, their overall profile does not reflect a fully political

understanding of veganism. Therefore, they are called apolitical despite the fact that they do not abstain from politics.

It is also helpful to remember that the discussion here revolves around those who identify themselves as vegan in one way or another, leaving out those who abstain from using the word 'vegan' and instead use identifications such as plant-based eating. The main motivation behind this distinction between the ones who identify as vegan and those who use other identifications is that this thesis focuses solely on vegans and veganism in Turkey. While there are various framings and perceptions of what veganism means, veganism is commonly mistaken for plant-based or healthy eating/living. There are vegans who identify as such. However, they are a small minority of vegans overall, and others mostly disagree with this perception of veganism. As it will be explained in the following pages, most vegans define veganism as an ethical responsibility to respect animal rights. All three veganism types that will be discussed in detail below show some level of respect for animal rights, and all three prioritise animal rights before other reasons or motivations to adopt veganism. Therefore, I argue that vegans living in Turkey approach veganism as a political issue. And the vegan movement in Turkey shows the characteristics of a political movement.

#### **4.1. Demographics of Veganism**

The participants of this study reflected on many issues regarding their understanding of veganism. Their understanding was explored by asking how they define veganism and how they became vegan. While many different phrases and labels were used to define veganism, four of these were used more frequently than others, which are animal rights, rejection of exploitation, ethical stance and equality. These four phrases being the most frequently used ones show that veganism is more often defined with its political aspect and with respect for animals rather than other definitions that address less or no political aspects. These four phrases were used 6-12 times each. Other than these, definitions and phrases such as philosophy, environment and sustainability, health, anti-systemic, lifestyle, activism, inner peace, social justice and love were also used although they were used by only 1-2 participants each. While these less frequently used phrases are not all apolitical and include phrases such as anti-systemic,

activism and social justice that address veganism as a movement advocating animal rights, the fact that they were not used by most of the participants shows that there is no consensus that these reflect a common understanding of veganism. On the other hand, it can be said that the phrases used by several participants such as animal rights, rejection of exploitation, ethical stance, and equality, may be reflecting a common understanding of veganism in Turkey. In the following paragraphs, a more detailed look at the use of these four phrases and the ways the participants became vegan is presented.

#### **4.1.1 Definitions of Veganism**

Veganism is about animal rights for most people. However, some see animal rights as exclusive from other issues, while some people locate it as a systemic issue. One participant stated that humans are responsible for protecting animal rights as humanity requires this:

*It is respect for the right to life. Veganism is the protection of the right of every living thing. A human being is a creature who can express this with a developed mind and considers themselves at the highest level at this point. But we are also responsible for protecting the rights of other living things that cannot express this. If you consider yourself at the highest level, humanity requires it. So, we live in the world with every living being as a whole. (P13, 51, İstanbul)*

Moreover, one participant said that this responsibility does not come from love. “You do not need to love animals to be vegan. Just do not support persecution.” (P15, 21, Sakarya). Similarly, another participant stated that “(...) people already respect each other and there are laws for this. You have to. I define it as showing respect and love to other living things.” (P17, 47, Ankara)

Some of the participants addressed the systemic exploitation of animals, saying:

*It is one of the first steps in our lives that we can take while fighting for animal rights and freedoms. Why? Because there is a system of exploitation that has been going on for years against non-human animals. And while defending animal rights and freedoms, the first thing we can do is not to use them in our own lives and not to be involved in this system of exploitation as much as possible. (P3, 23, Ankara)*

Addressing or not addressing the systemic aspect of animal rights and persecution was not always a purposeful choice that the participants made. However, those who addressed it show that they see veganism as part of a wider rights struggle. The high number of participants using this phrase to define veganism and the fact that they see animal rights as something that every human being must respect just as human rights, may also mean that the participants, including those who are not politicised, prioritise animals' rights to life over their consumption habits.

Just as seeing veganism as respecting animal rights, rejecting exploitation is also common among vegans who have different motivations. Regardless of their political or apolitical outlook, vegans state that they reject the exploitation of animals. For one participant, "Veganism is a necessity of the 21st century. And it is a situation in which people are trying to end the exploitation of animals by the industry. Vegans are people who resist animal exploitation in the 21st century." (P10, 41, İstanbul)

Similarly, another participant said, "Veganism is about preventing exploitation. In other words, the main purpose here is to oppose cruelty to animals." (P15, 21, Sakarya)

While mentioning the exploitation of animals is common, not all vegans start out with the same level of awareness towards this. As one participant stated, "Actually, I started out for my health. So, I started from the opposite end. I saw that it is good for my own health, but thanks to my daughter, I realised better how the meat and dairy industry works." (P20, 51, İzmir)

Rejecting exploitation refers to abstaining from using animals for any reason. Therefore, it is also parallel to respecting animal rights and is also seen as a responsibility not to exploit animals. The common use of this definition shows that animals are prioritised by the participants before other factors such as environment and health, meaning that veganism is understood as a political concept by the participants.

There is a general tendency to talk about animal rights, environment and health altogether while defining veganism. Some vegans also adopt the practice of framing veganism as such while promoting it. However, a group of vegans oppose this idea. While environmental and health benefits are not rejected, this group of vegans focus

on the responsibility or a stance that they call ethical: “The first priority for me in veganism is to understand the ethical part, to understand it.” (P1, 21, Ankara), “Veganism is first and foremost an ethical stance for me. Because veganism has many dimensions.” (P25, 34, Burdur)

Moreover, there is a common anger towards people who frame veganism as a healthy lifestyle:

*Frankly, I interpret it as an ethical lifestyle. I also try to change the understanding of veganism created by people who reduce it to food and diet. Because, you know, veganism is not something that you can overcome with diet, that you can prevent, and when it comes to animal rights, it is not something you can achieve by just changing your food. I think that it is an ethical and political point of view and a lifestyle, defending the existence of animals and the right to life. (P24, 27, İzmir)*

One participant even stated that they would still adopt veganism even if the environmental and health benefits did not exist: “There are animal rights, health and environment dimensions. So basically, it has three dimensions. I am definitely a part of the animal rights dimension here, and I am in the dimension of ethics in animal rights. I mean, if it was not for the other sides, I would still be vegan.” (P25, 34, Burdur)

The fact that more than one participant did not mention the ethical aspect of veganism shows that veganism is not seen as an ethical issue by some vegans. However, none of the participants rejected the ethical responsibility, while some of them even defined veganism with it. Connecting the ethical stance with animal rights and rejection of exploitation, it can be said that this stance is seen as a responsibility. The understanding of participants from this responsibility is that all humans are responsible for adopting this stance by rejecting the exploitation of animals and respecting their right to life.

From a similar point of departure with animal rights and exploitation, equality was also mentioned by the participants while defining what veganism is. One participant stated, “I think a vegan is a person who does not distinguish themselves among all

animal species, who sees themselves equal with them, that is, they accept themselves as an animal species.” (P19, 26, İzmir)

Another participant similarly said:

*I can say that veganism is the first condition of being human. I think it is the first condition of being human and not to make other living things suffer. It is to treat everyone as you would like to be treated and not to see yourself as superior to other living beings. (P2, 19, Ankara)*

The feeling of inequality among species, especially humans’ treatment of some animals as different from others, has also motivated some participants to adopt veganism. One participant said:

*So what made me vegan or vegetarian was my cats. I was little, I was in high school, and the emotional bonding was very different. The bond I formed with that cat, I said, why is it not formed with a chicken or a cow or a sheep or a fish? Later, I became vegan with the information I received from some platforms and associations. I want everyone to be vegan because if we are thinking about something, it may be political ideologies, it may be gender, and the equality of all comes, I think, from the equality of species. Which is veganism. (P6, 21, Ankara)*

Mentioning equality is not far from talking about animal rights. However, the participants who talked about equality specifically talked about speciesism. They addressed the discrimination of some animals against other animals by humans. And speciesism is located among other types of discrimination. For one participant, “Even if we are not racist, it is meaningless if we are speciesist.” (P11, 27, Şanlıurfa)

Demanding equality for all species is political. As a common trend, defining veganism as equality for all species means that the participants have a tendency to make political statements and have political stances. This tendency to be political means that veganism demands equality as much as other rights-based movements. Vegans’ struggle to realise animal rights through demanding equality as an ethical stance can be as legitimate as any other movement in Turkey.

Although the participants defined veganism as animal rights, rejection of exploitation, ethics and equality, these definitions were not a coincidence and were all based on the participants’ real-life experiences. The different ways participants decide to adopt

veganism can help us further understand the logic behind participants' different definitions of veganism.

#### **4.1.2 Adopting Veganism**

Just as there are various definitions of veganism, there are several ways that the participants adopted veganism. The way participants have adopted veganism later on effected how they define and perceive veganism as a movement. The participants reflected on four different ways and processes that led to their adopting veganism. Three participants adopted veganism as a result of an incident. Six participants said that they took a vegan person that they personally knew as a role model, and that person encouraged them to adopt veganism. Eight participants were self-motivated, meaning that they started questioning their eating and animal use habits and decided to adopt veganism after a while. Lastly, 8 participants were inspired or affected by the social media posts, a book, a documentary etc. Some of the participants also talked about their previous processes of adopting vegetarianism<sup>3</sup>.

The general remarks of participants show a trend of realising their positionality as a human within the wider system. This system for some participants meant the animal industrial complex, for some it meant the dairy industry, and for some, it meant nature and humans' cruel way of destroying the natural system.

##### **4.1.2.1 Adopting Veganism with the Effect of an Incident**

Of the 3 participants who adopted veganism as a result of an incident, two were affected by the loss of an animal and one was affected by the possibility of it. The latter participant said that they started questioning the difference between eating some animals while taking care of cats and dogs after their daughter asked if they would kill and eat a cat:

*We had a house with a big garden. I had 25-30 cats, dogs and ducks. Then we had a baby cat. Its mother did not take care of it. I took care of it in the garden under very difficult conditions. One day, my daughter said to me, 'Mother,*

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<sup>3</sup> As this thesis is focused only on veganism, processes of adopting vegetarianism were ignored and are not included here.

*imagine that you slaughter and eat Pıtış (the cat's name). This is a social culture; they eat dogs in other places. I mean, why should not the cat be eaten? We also eat cows and sheep'. I love animals, and on the other hand, I have meat on the plate. It suddenly seemed like hypocrisy to me. I woke up in the morning, and as if grace descends on a person, I got up in the morning and said I will eat vegan from now on. (P18, 57, İzmir)*

Another participant, who was affected by the death of an animal that they took care of, said:

*Three years ago, on the first day of Eid-al-Adha<sup>4</sup>, my cat was killed by a human. One year after that, I thought, it had been a year, and I wanted to do something for my cat. I wanted to commemorate it and joined a group to feed stray animals in Çorum. It was a garbage dump, and their situation was so bad that animals were eating each other's dead bodies. And I thought, yes, I did feed them, but the best thing I can do to commemorate my cat is not to exploit animals who are just like my cat, not to exploit those babies. I decided to be a vegan on the way back, and I have been vegan ever since. (P6, 21, Ankara)*

Lastly, one participant was affected by the killing of a dog:

*At that time, a dog was killed, and there was a lot of public reaction. I thought, why do we value one animal so much, but the death of another seems so normal to us? After I started to think like that, the rest was easier. I questioned myself and decided to go vegan. I asked myself why we categorize animals according to their species, why one is precious, and the other's life is worthless enough to be dinner. (P2, 19, Ankara)*

All 3 participants stated that they started to question the different values that they attribute to animals they eat and to the ones they like. The death of an animal led them to question their speciesism. Therefore, they made a connection between the right to life of cats and dogs and of other animals. Eating cows or chickens seemed no different than eating a cat or a dog, which made them stop it. Whether adopting veganism was a quick decision or the result of a thinking process, it was initiated by an incident.

The incidents helped the participants to realise their positionality<sup>5</sup> in the world. They realised how certain animals serve only the purpose of being slaughtered whereas the

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<sup>4</sup> Eid-al-Adha: One of the two feasts of Islam, during which, animals are sacrificed for God.

<sup>5</sup> Positionality is the social and political context that creates your identity in terms of species, race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status.

other animals (the ones that the system -culturally- prefer not to exploit) deserve the love of people. Participants' realisation helped them see that all animals, including themselves, serve a purpose within the system. Only some are exploited less than others. Demanding equality means that no species is there to be exploited. Every species exists for the sole purpose of existing in this world, without being capitalised.

For this, the participants decided to guard an ethical stance. This ethical stance through veganism meant that animals are entitled to rights as much as humans. From an individualistic point of view, this can only be ensured through not exploiting animals by rejecting to consume them. However, the rejection of exploitation can also be ensured and extended through networks of people. Vegans influencing their surroundings was also a way this ethical stance was practiced. Some of the participants adopted veganism with the effect of a vegan person that they knew. Something they said or did or the way they lived affected and made the participants take them as role models. Whether they had considered veganism before or heard about it for the first time, the participants started considering it. They questioned their habits and started to learn more about veganism by either researching on the internet or directly from the person that they were affected by.

#### **4.1.2.2 Adopting Veganism with a Self-Motivation**

Although some were influenced by other vegans, some participants were influenced by themselves. Self-motivated participants adopt veganism after a period of questioning their habits of animal use. While there may be other factors affecting their decision, such as an incident, a role model, a book, a movie etc., for those participants who decided to adopt veganism on their own, what made them decide was their own will. One participant said:

*I have loved animals since my childhood. I started visiting animal shelters when I was young. I began to feel a contradiction after working there voluntarily. After going to the shelters, it was strange to come back and eat a meatball or eat fish. In fact, my questioning started at that point, but I did not go directly to veganism with that questioning. I started with vegetarianism. I guess I wanted a smooth transition, but I knew that I was going to be vegan, so I knew what would happen next; it was just a matter of timing. I became a vegetarian in 2009 and switched to veganism in 2015. (P13, 51, İstanbul)*

Through their own will, self-motivated participants usually made connections between different kinds of discrimination and realised that discriminating against a human's right or an animal's right has very similar patterns. One participant questioned their habits in the first place after the discrimination that they faced based on their gender and sexual identity:

*I became vegan in high school. The reason why I decided this was, you know, there was inequality and violence against myself. Because of who I am. And then I thought, I am being exposed to such a thing, but at the same time, where and what could I be doing wrong? I may be exposing someone to such violence and inequality too. I was also hearing about veganism at the time. When I thought about it, I found myself in the position of a perpetrator. I realized that I have a privilege as a human over animals. And that is how I decided to go vegan. I did not know this much in the beginning. But this was what actually made me go vegan. Since I lived with my family, I had to convince them as well. That is why I became a vegetarian at first, but it lasted for only one month because I could not stand it. I felt bad for still continuing to use animals. In fact, when I became a vegetarian, I realized that I had not changed much. That is how I became vegan. It was in 2016. (P3, 23, Ankara)*

The participant's realisation of veganism after the discrimination that they faced shows that they make connections in the discrimination that they faced and the discrimination of animals. This issue will be discussed further under *Relating Veganism with Other Movements* heading.

#### **4.1.2.3 Adopting Veganism with the Effect of Social Media/A Book/A Documentary**

Lastly, a group of participants adopted veganism being affected by a book, documentary or social media. Some of the participants stated other factors in addition to these materials that affected them. However, what made all of them start questioning their habits was a book, documentary or social media post in the first place. Among these participants, 5 adopted veganism after encountering social media posts about veganism. One of the participants said:

*I am not one of those who made a quick decision. Mine was due to kind of a beam of light. I have a son, and they are now four years old, then they were about one year old. While breastfeeding, I saw a post by a friend of mine saying, 'Did you know that cows do not give milk without giving birth?' It sounded very similar to me as I was breastfeeding; I thought about how it is that cows are not creatures that were created to give milk, so I started questioning religion first*

*and then other questions like this. That evening, I started to follow 10-15 vegan accounts in one evening. My first reaction started thinking that cow's milk is the right of the calf, then I questioned how milk is made, and then eggs, honey etc. It was a one-and-a-half-year process that I went through by answering these questions myself. My husband's negative reaction extended my process a bit. But then I started to feel uncomfortable about what I ate and thought that I was eating unhealthy. Then I decided to go vegan. I do not eat plant-based; I also pay attention to clothing, wool, leather, etc. I am trying my best to keep it going. It was such a process for me. (P23, 30, Kocaeli)*

The participant's breastfeeding experience made them realise how animals' socialisations and experiences are not that different from humans. This made the participant question their positionality as an equal to an animal and it made them realise that their baby's right to breastmilk was exactly the same to a calf's right to breastmilk.

For two of the participants, visual content such as a video or a documentary was the initiator. One of the participants, who started to consider adopting veganism after watching the 'Game Changers' documentary, stated:

*How did I decide? Actually, my temperament was like as if I knew everything. A friend of mine was vegan, and I was always making fun of them. They did not say anything, but I was making fun a lot. Then one day, I stumbled upon a vegan documentary on Netflix. I did not know at first, I realized later that it was a vegan documentary, but it was also gripping. I started watching it. Game Changers. I was also a bit interested in sports at that time. I said I should try for a week and see if there would be a change or something. Then I watched Earthlings. When I watched it, I said I do not care if doing sports is not possible with veganism. I said I could not eat anymore. I called my vegan friend and said I am vegan. What am I going to eat tomorrow morning? Because I have been eating six eggs every morning for years, oats with yoghurt or something. All of a sudden, all my breakfast options were gone, and I realized that I could not eat them even if I wanted to, so it started that way. I watched two documentaries one after the other, and it changed my perspective a lot. (P22, 25, İzmir)*

This participant's remark shows how being exposed to the reality of the experience of animals make them realize their own positionality. The exploitation becoming visible helps vegans in their journey to guard an ethical stance. The ethics of the issue incorporates all of the participants to take action to the point of no turning back.

Lastly, one participant, who is a dietitian, started to consider adopting veganism after reading a book about nutrition. They told about their decision-making process as follows:

*It did not happen overnight. I was in a process; it took me a year or so for my transition to veganism. I was bored at home when I was pregnant with my second child. I said I would improve myself by reading at home. I bought a new book on nutrition because I am a nutritionist. We need to constantly research and renew ourselves. I bought 'Whole' by Dr T. Colin Campbell. The book talks about the risk of cancer from animal food, and I was shocked reading it. I am a nutritionist, but we did not learn this at school, although we talked about plant-based nutrition. They taught us that vegetarianism and veganism are a little fringe and extreme, and they must be adopted with care. They never emphasized how healthy it was, and after reading this book, I was frankly embarrassed. I said, what kind of dietitian am I? Why did I not know these? And I was very angry too. Because you learn how broken the system is. Dietitians, doctors, and all health professionals did not learn the importance of this plant-based diet in our training. Because lobbyists are very strong. I remember my professors getting funds from the industry lobbyists and the dairy and meat industries. For example, we had a very famous professor. They were receiving a large amount of funds from the Canadian Dairy Farm Association for research. They always taught us that low-fat dairy products are very healthy. You know, dairy products have to be an important part of your diet. I graduated from one of the best universities in Canada. I mean, I wish I had questioned, but I did not. After reading this book, I said to myself, they literally deceived us. So, to answer your question, my vegan journey started with this book. I researched a little more, bought other books, attended pieces of training and after learning so much, I asked myself why I did not do this myself and how I did not encourage this as a dietitian. Then this wave started to grow, and I became a vegan. (P9, 42, İstanbul)*

The participant's remarks show how the realisation of the systemic exploitation is a turning point of veganism. The dairy industry funding researcher's work on nutrition meant that the exploitative system is also sustained within itself. Having an ethical stance against the wrongdoings of the industry was only possible through adopting veganism.

#### **4.2. Politics of Veganism**

The participants of this study representing vegans in Turkey drew an overall political frame while talking about their understanding of veganism. Their understanding is shaped by their motivations to adopt veganism, whether they see veganism as part of their political identities, whether they have political/activist presence in other movements and whether they relate veganism with other movements or not.

### **4.2.1 Motivations to Adopt Veganism**

Under the previous heading, the ways that the participants decided to adopt veganism were analysed. In this section, their motivations are explained. While these two may seem similar, the previous section did not look specifically at what motivated them to take this decision. It looked at the facilitators of their decision-making processes. “How did you decide to adopt veganism?” and “Why are you a vegan?” are different questions that aim at hearing different answers. In this section, the answers to the question “What were your motivations to adopt veganism?” are analysed. Therefore, this question is, in a way asking the participants why they are vegan. While there are three main motivations that are commonly voiced (animal rights, environment and health), an additional one (profit) was brought to light. These four motivations may seem exclusive, but several participants mentioned more than one motivation. In total, 22 participants said that they are vegan for animal rights, 5 participants for the environment, 4 participants for health and 1 participant for profit.

Other than directly asking about their motivations, around half of the participants were asked whether they would still adopt veganism if it was harmful to the environment, and another group of participants were asked whether they would still adopt veganism if it was unhealthy. The reason why not all of the participants were asked these two questions is that these were follow-up questions to the main question, and not all participants gave certain answers to the main question. Those who were hesitant were asked these questions to better understand their motivations. All of the participants who were asked these two questions replied that they would still go vegan if it was harmful to the environment or it was unhealthy. These participants include the ones who said that the environmental impact or the health impact of veganism motivated them. While this may seem contradictory, it shows that those who counted environment or health among their motivations still placed them in the second or third place, after animal rights. Therefore, even if veganism was harmful to the environment or to their health, they would still choose animals’ right to life over themselves.

#### 4.2.1.1 Ethics/Animal Rights

Out of 25 participants, 22 stated that animal rights motivated them to go vegan. While animal rights or veganism may not be the same for each of these participants, they said that they adopted veganism because they respect animals' right to life and do not want to hurt them. However, there is still a division among these participants as those who solely mentioned animal rights and who mentioned environment and/or health together with animal rights. The first group consisted of 16 people who said that their only motivation was animal rights and that they did not think about the environment or their health while adopting veganism. One of these participants said:

*I mean, I never thought that it is good for the environment, or I did not think that I should do this because it is very good for my health. These are the things that come with veganism, yes, but my priority has always been to think about the subjects of violence. (P1, 21, Ankara)*

Similarly, another participant stated that they motivated themselves conscientiously:

*After realizing the animal exploitation, I definitely did not want to be a part of this exploitation, and I felt very happy even on the first day I adopted veganism. Maybe I may have felt happy as a conscience. I was not aware of what I ate before this. But after I became vegan, every meal has been a cause of happiness for me. Other than that, I did not have any goals like being healthy or not harming the environment. (P14, 26, Giresun)*

Among the participants, some tend to especially mention that they are 'ethical vegans', which means that they prioritise animal rights before other reasons, and they see veganism as an ethical responsibility:

*So my only thing is ethical reasons. The cruelty towards animals was in everything that I read in the early periods. Later, I realized that there are issues other than animal rights violations. I have noticed the environmental dimension, and the environmental impacts of the use of animals. I realized from the documentaries, videos, etc., how great the impact is in that respect. In terms of health, my health has also improved. But I mean, my motivation has never changed. It was ethics at first, and it is still now. (P16, 46, Ankara)*

Other than the participants who were solely motivated by animal rights, there were 6 participants who said that environmental and health impacts motivated them as well as animal rights. One of them stated:

*Animals and climate. That is all. Health was not my priority. The livestock industry plays a big role in the climate crisis, and I did not want to support that, either on an animal rights basis or on a climate basis, because it causes a very large carbon emission. Even methane gas. I did not want to support this. (P21, 24, İzmir)*

Another participant, for whom the health impact was also important, said:

*I realized that it is not the reality of nature; it is the reality of the capitalism that we created. I could have shown my stance by not eating animals. And my conscience will also be at ease. I mean, seeing those animals as individuals was what changed me. So, that is exactly what my motivations were. But that is not the only thing. Because you are human, and you think about yourself too. So okay, I am going to maintain this. I want to maintain it, but will it do me any harm? Am I going to be addicted to pills? Health came after the other. Otherwise, I could have remained a vegetarian. (P11, 27, Şanlıurfa)*

Respecting animal rights motivated 22 participants to go vegan. Despite other answers, animal rights were the main motivation for almost all of the participants. For those who said that more than one factor motivated them, animal rights were the primary one before other factors. Therefore, it is possible to say that the participants centre their veganism around animal rights. Contrary to the literature reviewed above, the participants of this study are not separated into three categories who are mainly motivated by animal rights, environment and health. Prioritising animal rights before environmental and health benefits or other factors means that it is a rights-based movement rather than a diet or lifestyle and that other factors are only secondary motivations after animal rights.

#### **4.2.1.2 Environment**

Out of the 25 participants, five said that the positive environmental impact of veganism motivated them to adopt it. None of the 5 participants was motivated exclusively by the environmental impact. All of them counted animal rights as their primary motivation. One of these participants said:

*What actually initiated my veganism was my being a zero-waste woman. Because when I was responsible for zero waste at TEMA<sup>6</sup>, talking about zero*

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<sup>6</sup> TEMA Foundation is an environmental organization established to combat erosion and protect natural assets.

*plastic, promoting solid shampoo, solid deodorant, and nature motivated me a lot. Yes, of course, our main goal in veganism is not to persecute, but the environment was also an important factor for me. Not harming nature motivated me a lot. Because I still argue that if a person defends nature and if they are a nature lover and if they do something about it, if they claim to protect the environment, this person has to be vegan or try to be vegan or not be anti-vegan. I definitely think so. Because a person who protects the environment can neither consume animal bodies as food, nor support and use animals. (P15, 21, Sakarya)*

While the participants who stated that the environmental benefits of veganism (meaning less use of resources such as land and water for plant-based consumption) motivated them to adopt veganism, none of them stated this aspect exclusively. All of the participants counted environment as a secondary motivation after animal rights, which shows that animal rights are the priority even if there are other aspects motivating the participants. Referring back to the studies in the literature analysing the motivations of vegans, the participants of this study showed that animal rights and environmental benefits can motivate people to adopt veganism at the same time, but animal rights are the primary source of motivation.

#### **4.2.1.3 Health**

Just as with the environmental impacts, there were participants who said that the positive impact of veganism on human health affected their decision. 4 participants were motivated by the health impacts. One of them said:

*I said, 'So what could happen if I tried it one day? Let me try.' I had also gained a lot of weight in recent years. I could not lose weight in any way. I was not feeling comfortable with my stomach as well. I said I would try, but I did not believe it would help anything. So, I did not start with a determined mind. Actually, I started out with health. So, I started from the opposite end. I saw that it is good for my own health, but thanks to my daughter, I realized better how the meat and dairy industry works. (P20, 51, İzmir)*

Similarly, another participant who did not pay attention to animal rights in the beginning but learned about it later, stated:

*I started because I am a dietitian. So, it had nothing to do with animal rights. Actually, I am so sorry that I have never thought of animals at all. Of course, I am thinking now. So, I started with a healthy vegan diet, but now I understand all the other aspects, and I can call myself an ethical vegan. I am 100% completely vegan and will never go back because it enlightened me a lot. I mean,*

*I now know about animal rights, but my journey started with health. When I started to research the benefits of this veganism more, I said okay, I do not like to eat meat anyway. I am going to give up dairy too. It was difficult, it was very, very difficult, but I was able to do it. Once you know this, there is no turning back. (P9, 42, İstanbul)*

The most important take from what these participants said is that they met veganism while looking for a healthy lifestyle. But after a while, they realised that veganism is not only about healthiness but that there is more to it. Especially the last sentence of the quotation from participant 9 shows that knowing or realising the animal rights aspect makes them more strict about their decision and that they do not want to ‘go back’.

#### **4.2.1.4 Profit**

Of the 25 participants, one participant who owns a vegan café stated that they adopted veganism for their business:

*We became vegan in the sense of being more creative at the cafe. Considering that we can diversify the number of vegan products we offer to people when we become vegan. I did not think about my own health. I think that it has positive effects on my own health, more precisely, it has positive effects on human health in general, but my motivation for being vegan is as a business, we prepare products and everything ourselves, and as I said, we chose to be vegan so that we could be more creative and prepare more product varieties, and that is what happened. When we were founded, we only had two products, but now we offer dozens of new vegan products with new ones that we add to our menu every month. (P10, 41, İstanbul)*

While this participant said that their motivation was profit-based in the first place, they also stated that they care about the exploitation of animals as well: “Veganism is a necessity of the 21st century. And it is a situation in which people are trying to end the exploitation of animals by the industry.” (P10, 41, İstanbul)

As with the other participants who were motivated by the environmental or health benefits at the first place but realised the importance of respecting animal rights after adopting veganism, this participant also had a similar process. While profiting from the vegan customers was what motivated them to adopt veganism and turn their menu

into a fully vegan one, they realised that they did not want to be a part of animal exploitation anymore and updated their understanding of veganism.

While the participant realised the animal exploitation and started defining their veganism with more ethical aspects, they were motivated by making a profit in the first place, which is not commonly seen in the literature among the motivations that make people adopt veganism.

#### **4.2.1.5 Counterfactual Questions**

As mentioned above, in order to better understand their dedication and prioritisation regarding veganism and its impact on the environment and health, some of the participants were asked if they would still adopt veganism if it was harmful to the environment or their health. In other words, the participants were indirectly asked whether they would still prioritise animals' right to life over their health or the environment. As mentioned above, veganism is commonly discussed around three main aspects; animal rights, environment, and health. Therefore, these questions aimed at making the participants compare the importance of their motivations. The questions set a counterfactual scenario where eating plant-based would be more harmful to the environment for using more resources to grow the plants that humans eat, or where eating plant-based would not be enough for humans to be healthy in terms of getting enough nutrition. 11 participants were asked for the environment, and 13 participants were asked for their health. All the participants stated that they would still adopt veganism if it was harmful to the environment or to their health. One of the participants replied:

*Yes, I would still be vegan. Because although our existence is harmful to the environment, we do not say, 'Let us not exist anymore.' I may be looking from a very radical point, but our existence also harms the environment. But there is something called the right to life and the right to bodily integrity. I guess I would still be vegan, as my top priority is again animal rights. (P1, 21, Ankara)*

Similarly, another participant stated:

*I would. I visited and witnessed the animals in farms and slaughterhouses, and we have no right to do so. If the planet is nearing its end, it is due to human activities, and the animals did not make that decision. If we are going to go*

*extinct, we deserve it. A few of us will find a place on Mars or something. Unfortunately, our species will not go extinct. (P5, 60, Ankara)*

Different from these participants, another one said that they would consider the environment as well. However, their consideration would not make them give up veganism:

*I would also think about the environment. If I had a chance to fix the damage I have done, I mean, if I could find an alternative, then I would still go vegan. For example, if so many resources are used during the production phase of avocado, and so I need to consume less avocado, it is okay, this is a very normal thing for me, so I consume it once a year, twice a year. I think that I would have balanced the damage I have done at some point. If I had to eat an animal, I would try to find a way not to eat it. About the environment, I would try to find a way out, but I would continue to be a vegan. (P7, 26, Istanbul)*

Regarding the health impact, the answers of the participants were the same as the participants above. All participants stated either that they do not see their health as superior to those of the animals or that they do not pay much attention to their health regardless of veganism. One participant said:

*I will not lie about health. I do not really care. When you go vegan, you learn about it, that calcium actually comes from plants etc. You know, I learned these things involuntarily, without ever worrying about my health. I am not a worried person generally. You know, before I became vegan, I was eating very unhealthy and still am. Frankly, I cannot say that I still eat very healthy. (P15, 21, Sakarya)*

Similarly, those who care about their health also stated the same. One participant said:

*If it was harmful to my health, maybe I would consider not doing it. But even if it is harmful to my health, no matter what, there is a very basic thing. Animals suffer. Animals feel. Animals are able to experience such emotions and have pain sensors. So, it is wrong for me to make them suffer. I would have done this even if it had no ecological or health benefits. (P22, 25, İzmir)*

When asked, all of the participants stated that they would still adopt veganism if it was harmful to the environment or to their health. This shows a common dedication towards continuing to be vegan and means that the participants did not adopt veganism solely for its environmental and health benefits. While some participants mentioned that they were also motivated by the environmental and health benefits, as mentioned above, these were secondary motivations for most of the participants. Animal rights is

the main motivation before the environment and health. Therefore, it is parallel to the result that they would still adopt veganism if it was not beneficial to the environment or to their health.

#### **4.2.2 Veganism as Part of Political Identities**

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is no consensus on whether veganism is a political movement and identity or not. While some scholars tend to classify veganism as a lifestyle movement, some see it as a rights-based and political one. The participants were asked whether they see veganism as a part of their political identity to also see where they see veganism in terms of being political or not. While this may seem like a simple yes/no question, all of the participants elaborated on their answers, and they were asked follow-up questions to do so when they did not.

People who call themselves a vegan assume an identity. However, as veganism is not a monotypic identity, people frame it in different ways. It is a political identity for some, while others see it as distant from being political. Out of 25 participants, 17 said that they see veganism as a part of their political identity, and eight participants replied the opposite. The high number of those who said yes and the reasons why they see it as political show that veganism is seen as a political identity rather than an apolitical one overall.

The reason why these participants see veganism as political is not the same for all of them. Six different groundings were made to explain the relationship between veganism and political identity. The first and the most common one is that veganism is parallel with other political movements such as the feminist, LGBTQAI+ and the labour movement. Ten participants supported their idea with this argument. One of them said:

*Yes, I see it as political. Let me try to explain the connections. In the first place, I talked about anarchism. I do not really want to be the master of non-human animals. We can summarize it this way. So I do not want to be associated with them hierarchically. As for feminism, I think that one of the most important concepts of feminism is consent. And feminism actually teaches us a lot about consent, and when we apply that to nonhuman animals, since we will not be able to establish such a communication, we cannot talk about consent or anything*

*valid. But the biggest thing about the continuation of this animal sector is the fact that those animals are constantly reproduced artificially, and this sexual violence is not something that only concerns female animals. I think there is sexual violence against animals of all kinds while making them reproduce. If we look at it from this point of view, there is such a connection. I struggle with sexual violence in my own life when it comes to people. Well, there are also non-human animals in question here. They are also exposed to it too. And that is one of the reasons why this system actually continues. Sexual violence against animals. About the queer movement, I mean, I cannot associate being queer in a different way than what I just said, but I can say similar things. (P3, 23, Ankara)*

This participant relates veganism to several of their identities. It is connected to feminism, queer movement and anarchism from different points. Therefore, they see veganism as political since it has many similarities with other movements' values. While some of the participants did not build this connection between veganism and other movements, they said that it is political because it struggles for animal rights, and anything related to rights would be political: "I think that veganism is a political thing. Because it is about their rights, we adopt veganism because we respect other living beings' rights, bodies and individuality. I think that this leans towards a more libertarian thought, towards left." (P2, 19, Ankara)

What is political and what is not may be subjective; however, what daily politics refer to is more or less understood similarly. Some participants tend to see veganism above politics. Yet, being above politics does not mean being apolitical for them. This group of participants see veganism outside daily politics (party politics, elections, politicians etc.) but still political in a way that veganism precedes other ideologies. Therefore, they believe that regardless of their beliefs and ideologies, everybody could find common ground in veganism:

*I see it as something above all politics, as something totally above everything else. I mean, I do not see it just in a political sense, only in a cultural sense, only in a sociological sense, or in an economic sense. Some people may see it that way. Maybe it is true, or there may be some truth to it, but I see it somewhere above all of them because this is the responsibility of all of us. In fact, veganism is not a matter of choice. Veganism is a matter of choosing whether to take the responsibility or not. (P13, 51, İstanbul)*

The difference between what this participant said and what the ones who relate veganism with other movements and identities say is that the former one does not see

veganism as parallel to some other movements but as above them, which means that veganism is a common ground of ideologies and movements. They see it above all ideologies. However, the latter builds direct ideological connections among veganism, feminism, LGBTQAI+ and anarchist movements and says that as these three movements are political, veganism must also be political because it is directly related to them. Therefore, it is possible to say that if veganism is parallel and connected to some political movements, then there may also be some political movements that veganism is in contradiction. As with some political movements, veganism is also in contradiction with the system as a whole for some participants, which makes it political:

*I see it as political because there is an established order imposed by the system. You want the system to improve because there are things that you are uncomfortable with, and you take action in parallel with them; you make choices. You make choices when you go to a market. That is why I think veganism is parallel in a way to the left in the form of system criticism. (P12, 35, İstanbul)*

A political identity may shape the everyday practices of those who adopt it. While the first thing about veganism that comes to mind is eating habits, there are other parts of everyday life that a vegan identity shapes. One participant shared that veganism is their political identity and that it acts as a filter in their social relations too:

*My political identity is veganism, but veganism does not fit into a political definition. In other words, I define my identity mostly through veganism, and I have been making many decisions on this for a long time. In other words, I develop my social relations on this. Sometimes I question myself, or people question me. What is it that I am so into? I am not in search of an identity. I am not a young university student who is looking for their identity. I already have an identity. But my world revolves around it. (P5, 60, Ankara)*

Finally, one participant stated that veganism is directly related to the environment and, therefore, is political:

*Yes, it is political because veganism depends on the environment. In other words, plant-based nutrition is a very, very good thing for our environment. In my political outlook, for example, I always vote for Greens. So, I want Greens and the government to promote plant-based nutrition more. Both for health, for the environment and of course, for animals. I mean, it is very, very bad, especially industrial livestock is very bad. I do not do much about politics, but I vote for the party that promotes plant-based nutrition. I support them. (P9, 42, İstanbul)*

While the participants made different points of connection, their justifications for why veganism is part of their political identities intersect at one point, which is that they all see veganism as a political identity that is also related to other political identities and movements. It was connected by the participants to environmentalism, anti-systematic identities, and rights-based movements or was defined as above other political identities. Therefore, while the participants made different groundings, they all saw veganism as part of their political identities since they all saw veganism itself as a political identity.

Other than those who see veganism as a political identity, 8 participants stated the opposite. While they were not on the same page as to why veganism is not a political identity, they all made a justification for this. Five participants said that they do not see veganism directly related to politics. One participant said:

*I do not think so because my political views have not changed. You know, if veganism was a part of my political identity, it would either strengthen my political views or maybe change them, but it did not. For example, I have a vegan stance, but suppose that the party I favour supports animal farms. This is not a pleasant thing for me, but when there is an election tomorrow, I may still vote for that candidate. Because politics in Turkey is a little different, I think they are incompatible. (P22, 25, İzmir)*

Just like the participant above, four other participants shared similar ideas. But they all considered their voting behaviours while talking about the relation between veganism and politics. Other than these 5 participants, there were also those who justified their answer with their religious beliefs or opposed even the idea of framing veganism as a political identity. Two participants said that they see veganism as related to their beliefs in Islam but do not see it as a part of their political identity. One of them stated:

*Honestly, I have never thought of it that way before. I mean, I never thought of it as a political identity. Because I do not like polarization. Yes, of course, we must always be on the side of truth. We should always defend the truth, but when we polarize it, when I put it into a political identity, then I am on someone's side again. Because in general, you know, vegans are seen as individuals who support LGBTQAI+ individuals, who oppose the rightist politics, or most of whom are atheists. In other words, no one thinks about a Sunni identity. But I like to present myself more as a Muslim vegan. Because you do not have to be an atheist or leftist to be vegan. I like to show people this. (P15, 21, Sakarya)*

While this participant does not see veganism as a part of their political identity, what they oppose is framing vegans as a homogenous group of people who are leftist, who identify as or support LGBTQAI+ and are atheists. However, their Muslim vegan identity may also be seen as a political identity as they say that it serves a purpose to define themselves as such. But there was also a participant who openly opposed framing veganism as a political identity or relating it with politics in any way:

*I have never seen it as a political identity because I am against all 'ism's. If veganism is a part of it, then I am against it too. Because when something has an 'ism' in it, something is discriminated against. That is why I do not want anything with an 'ism'. For example, I do not want to serve the capitalist industry. There is a capitalist system of exploitation and consumption. If it is veganism that becomes a part of this system, I am against it too. That is why I do not do anything; I do not want to get into something like that. (P18, 57, İzmir)*

As mentioned above, most of those who opposed the idea of seeing veganism as part of their political identities do so because they think of everyday politics or voting behaviour while talking about their political identities. Only three participants openly rejected veganism as a political identity. However, two of these participants stated that they see veganism as related to their religious beliefs rather than their political identities, which, I will argue in the following pages, is a type of vegan identity that cannot be thought independent of politics. Therefore, considering the participants who see veganism as part of their political identities and those who oppose this idea only because veganism did not change their political views, it can be said that veganism occupies an important space in the political lives of the participants.

#### **4.2.3 Political/Activist Presence**

As participants' definitions and motivations differed, they also had differing answers on whether veganism is a part of their political identity and why it is or is not. Similarly, in order to learn further about their political identities and activities, the participants were asked if they take part in any political organisation or have any activist presence. Their political/activist presence or lack of presence shows to what extent they are politicised outside veganism. Out of 25 participants, 13 said that they do not have any presence, five said that they used to have but do not have anymore, and seven said that they are active.

Those who did not take part in any political or activist scene have different reasons. One participant said that they do not want to be active in any way: “I am not involved in anything political right now. I try not to be involved because I do not think that there is an institution or organization that only realizes its main purpose. There is always a side-branching or something going on.” (P24, 27, İzmir). However, there was also one participant who wanted to be active but could not spare time: “No, I am not active at all; actually, I would love to, but because of my current professional life, I cannot take part much.” (P9, 42, İstanbul). Therefore, looking at the number of participants who do not currently have any political/activist presence, it is possible to say that there is a general tendency to stay away from taking an active part in them. However, just like participant 9, who wants to take part but cannot make time for it, most of the participants who do not take part did not oppose the idea except for participant 24.

Another group of participants said that they used to be politically active but are not anymore. The organisations that they were part of are Greenpeace, Kadıköy Cooperative<sup>7</sup> and TEMA. Other than these organisations, one participant counted Gezi protests as a political activity that they were a part of.

Finally, 7 participants said that they are taking part in political/activist circles. Among these are feminist, queer, anarchist, socialist/Trotskyist, and conscientious objection movements/groups. Some participants also stated that they joined the 8th of March, 1st of May and Pride marches.

Contrary to the high number of participants who see veganism as a part of their political identity, those who take part in other political movements or activist groups are less in number. Seven participants said that they are active in one way or another. Despite the low number of vegans who are active in other areas of struggle, most participants stated that they carry out vegan activism as well. The activist presence of vegans shows that the participants do not limit their veganism to personal practices but extend it to call on other people to adopt veganism. Some vegans also carry out other

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<sup>7</sup> A cooperative that aims to establish more sustainable and local consumption and supply chain between the producers of mostly agricultural products and the consumers in the Kadıköy neighbourhood.

activisms. Moreover, different areas of struggle are not separate from each other. Most participants stated that they relate veganism with other movements.

#### **4.2.4 Relating Veganism with Other Movements**

The participants have various perceptions of veganism. This is also reflected in their perceptions of the relation between veganism and other movements. Following the question of whether they take part in any political movements or activist circles, the participants were asked whether they relate veganism with the movements that they take part in and with the political movements in general. Out of 22 participants who answered this question, none replied no. All participants saw a theoretical/ideological as well as a practical connection between veganism and other political movements to some extent. The consensus over this connection proves that veganism is not perceived as an independent movement or practice. It is rather understood and practised as an intersectional political struggle that is part of a wider ideal.

However, two participants did not see a direct parallelism but found them somehow related, while 20 others answered yes. One of the participants who said that veganism and other political movements are somehow related stated:

*Veganism is not above and below others; let us say that I see it outside them. Veganism is more fundamental because all things in the human circle, including ethnic, identity, cultural, sex, and gender and all those discussions are only a fantasy compared to animal rights violations. I can give up the struggles of human beings about political identities. But you have a position when it comes to veganism. Because I see veganism as a more fundamental and more serious problem outside of all those human rights and political positions, I say outside, not above or below. (...) I feel close to the version of feminism that fights speciesism. I feel closer to the side of the Kurdish movement that also fights against speciesism. If there is a struggle against speciesism in working-class movements and such, I find them more consistent. I find all others selfish. (P16, 46, Ankara)*

This participant does not reject a possible relation between veganism and other movements. On the contrary, they make a distinction between the ones that are also against speciesism and the ones which are not. It is possible to say that their point addresses the need for a close relation and parallelism between veganism and other political movements. Therefore, while I made a distinction between these two

participants who found a weaker relation and those who see a direct relation between veganism and other political movements, it is important to note that the two participants are in a position closer to seeing a connection than not. Among the 20 participants who see a direct relation, the following movements and identities were counted as related to veganism: feminist, queer, anarchist, workers', left, ethnic minorities, environmental justice, anti-capitalist, disabled and socialist. Some participants stated that this relation gives people the responsibility to be against different inequalities:

*Frankly, I believe that it is our minimum responsibility to be against all kinds of inequality. And we are aware that white men with money come out one day and they say, here I am, I am superior to you, I am superior to people of different races, I am superior to people of different genders, especially non-heteronormative, and especially if you are not human, they say that I am superior to you. I mean, really, all these discriminations are what the male, carnist, cis-hetero patriarchy has produced. I think that being aware of this brings about being included in all of them in a way. And of course, if we are shouting 'freedom' on the streets, it should not be freedom for women only or freedom only for queers. If we say freedom, I think we must really want freedom, and if we are talking about the freedom that belongs to only one group, I am not sure how much freedom this is. It just comes down to 'let us be free but continue to dominate over those who are not of us'. So yes, there is a place where intersectional activisms are connected through oppression. (P1, 21, Ankara)*

The vegan identity brings with it a set of responsibilities, according to participant 1. Similarly, it also brings the ability or mindset that enables vegans to be more aware of the inequalities:

*Here is what comes with it when you go vegan. For example, you have a different perspective toward LGBTQAI+ individuals. I mean, yes, I am a person with a wide perspective, but I did not know that I had to look at it from such a broad perspective. I noticed that I had to be a person who not only accepts but respects everyone. For instance, a vegan would not talk behind someone's back and would be a humanist who is more neutral and accepting. (P11, 27, Şanlıurfa)*

The different outlook and responsibilities that come with veganism may also come from other identities as well. For some participants, other political identities require them to also adopt veganism:

*I do not believe a feminist or a vegan should be a socialist because socialism teaches us a form of government and economic model. That is why, for example,*

*someone who is vegan does not have to be a socialist. But a feminist has to be vegan because they come from similar places. Veganism and feminism. More precisely, eating meat or oppressing a gender are fed from similar places. But as I said, there is no need for a person with these two identities to be 100% socialist. But I firmly believe that a socialist must be a feminist as well as a vegan. (P7, 26, İstanbul)*

Therefore, it is possible to say that for most of the participants, veganism is connected on several points to other political movements and identities. This connection also brings expectations for those who share some of these identities to adopt other ones, such as expecting a queer or leftist person to adopt veganism or vice versa.

### **4.3. Economics of Veganism**

The participants' understanding of veganism is also shaped by the conditions that they live in. These conditions include the province that they live in, their professions and income levels.

#### **4.3.1. Geographical Differences**

The various inputs of participants in the previous headings show that there is not a single type of vegan experience in Turkey. The experience and perception of participants vary according to their age, political orientation, ways they adopted veganism etc. On top of these, where they live may also be shaping their experience. The participants contributed to this study from various provinces around Turkey. Those who live in relatively smaller provinces were asked to comment on their experiences of living there as a vegan. I hypothesised that the participants living in relatively smaller provinces would develop strategies to carry out vegan activism without being able to take part in vegan organisations. Three participants who currently or used to live in Giresun, Sakarya and Sivas have experienced hardships due to the limited supply of vegan foods and lack of vegan friends and organisations. One participant compared İstanbul, where they studied, with Giresun, where they currently live, and said that they have limited or no access to what they used to have in İstanbul:

*I just came here. I was in İstanbul for three years. I became vegan in İstanbul and was very happy there. I mean, I had a lot of alternatives; there are*

*completely vegan places, there are vegan shops there, even if you go to a pide shop, you can find pide with vegetables and potatoes. But there is not even a pide restaurant chain in Giresun. This is a very small city, so there is not even a mall. But there is online shopping. So, it is still somewhat possible to buy vegan milk, cheese, and soy meat online, but Giresun does not provide many opportunities in terms of eating out. So, I would say it is a little more difficult. (P14, 26, Giresun)*

Other than eating out or having access to vegan food, small towns also have a limited number of vegans, which means that vegans living there do not have many friends or cannot join an organisation. One participant from Sakarya stated that they did not have many vegans on the campus:

*My faculty is in Hendek district of Sakarya. There is a vegan community in İstanbul. Thanks to them, there was a meeting where the universities met. We are like three people in our university. One of them was trying to be vegan. They were a vegetarian. Hendek is a very small place, like a village. You know, there is no vegan organization anyway. We are very few, and there is no vegan that I can go and communicate with. So, I advocate veganism alone among my non-vegan friends. It is bad in that respect because sometimes you look for people who can understand your language. So, generally, we are alone. I mean, vegans do not know about each other. (P15, 21, Sakarya)*

Similarly, another participant who studied in Sivas said that they did not have many vegan friends both on campus and in Sivas. Moreover, they also did not feel welcomed at the faculty:

*Frankly, there was always a feeling of loneliness. I met some people on social media and learned that they were in Sivas by chance. There were some vegetarian academics that I met, and some of them later became vegan. Apart from that, I was talking about veganism at the faculty, but I could not find much response. I made a presentation about veganism in one of my classes. In general, I did not meet many vegans. There were not many options for eating out. Due to the pandemic, I was on campus only in my last semester. Only then I met a couple of vegans. (P19, 26, İzmir)*

While all 3 participants said that there were not many vegans or places to socialise, they are among the ones who took part in political movements or activist circles. The participant in Sakarya joined an environmental organisation, and the participant who studied in Sivas said that they took part in many marches and demonstrations for women's and workers' rights. Therefore, although they stayed that there were not

many vegan organisations to join, they still took part in other political activities and tried to spread veganism among the members of those communities.

#### **4.3.2. Veganism and Professional Life**

The process of adopting veganism is shaped by many factors. As described in the second and third headings of this chapter, the participants adopted veganism in different ways and with various motivations. While most of them did not directly mention it, it was observed that veganism and their jobs were mutually affecting each other. Some participants changed their job after adopting veganism, and some of them adopted veganism thanks to their job. Other than these, veganism changed the way that they do their job for 2 participants. One of these 2 participants, who is a café owner, said that they became vegan with the effect of their job:

*We did not open as a 100% vegan business. There were vegan meals that we made from the very beginning, such as the national dish of Egypt, koshari. Therefore, as vegans liked these dishes, more vegans came here, we learned veganism from them, and we changed our menu to 100% vegan thanks to them, and we became vegan ourselves. We have been vegan for two and a half years. (P10, 41, İstanbul)*

For 3 participants, however, this relation worked in the opposite way. One participant, who changed the subject that they were studying after adopting veganism, said that it was impossible for them to continue studying biology:

*One of the reasons I quit was because I could not slaughter animals in laboratory classes; I would not be able to do animal experiments. I do not think the professors were very understanding. One of the professors entered the class in the first week and said, 'If you do not bring a worm in this week, a cockroach in this week, and a frog in this week, do not come to my class.' and I did not go to that class again. So, there was not much to talk about. That was the biggest or even the only reason why I did not continue. (P21, 24, İzmir)*

Finally, for a number of participants, veganism was a factor that affected their professional lives. One of these participants stated that they would advise their patients to eat plant-based when they graduate from the school of medicine as it is healthier:

*It is definitely healthier to eat a balanced plant-based diet with whole grains and whole foods, paying attention to calories and paying attention to protein. So, it*

*fits with my profession. I can recommend it. I can recommend this to anyone who has cancer, diabetes or obesity etc. So, I can relate it to my job. (P22, 25, İzmir)*

Other than those whose jobs were influenced by their adoption of veganism and those who changed their jobs, one participant said that there had not been a major change or influence between their job and their veganism.

#### **4.3.3. Income Level**

As stated above, the participants of this study have diverse levels of income. When asked about their income levels, the participants were not given intervals or names of income levels. They were asked to reflect on their own perception of income levels. According to their own categorisation, 2 of the participants stated that they had no income. 1 participant had an unstable income. 5 participants had low, 10 participants had middle, 3 participants had upper middle income, and lastly, 4 participants stated that they had high income.

Such a diverse distribution of income levels, and the majority of them being in the lower and middle levels, mean that veganism is an identity that attracts people from different, especially lower and middle-income groups. Contrary to the general perception that vegans in particular, and new social movements participants in general are middle or upper-middle-income group individuals, the rather balanced distribution of participants to various income levels implies that veganism and new social movements may not belong to a single income level.

Despite the balanced distribution to various income levels of all participants, when the income levels of certain veganisms are examined, it was seen that political vegans and Sunni vegans are more concentrated while apolitical vegans are distributed to various income levels. Four of the six political vegans stated that they had low income, and two stated that they had middle income, which might mean that lower income levels lead to higher politicization of vegans. However, as the number of participants is limited and the focus of this study is not on the relationship between income levels and levels of politicization, this statement may also be an overgeneralization. A more comprehensive study is needed on Sunni vegans to reach such a conclusion.

While income level is not the only indicator of one's class, it has an important part in it. But rather than discussing whether vegans belong to a certain income level or not, it would be more beneficial to discuss whether animals are indeed a different class of living beings. The economic and political relations between people created classes that have a hierarchy between oppressor and exploited ones. However, just as the vegan identity does not belong to a certain class of people, the exploitation of animals does not belong to a certain class either, as it is practiced by almost all humans regardless of their class. Therefore, what identity politics call for can be applied to the relations between humans and animals, and the struggle for animal rights can also be carried out by those who support animal liberation as a class struggle for animals as a class. However, animals as a social class of living beings is a wider topic that requires further research and discussion and is not the focus of this thesis.

#### **4.4. Types of Veganism**

The political orientations of the participants show similar characteristics to their activist presence in other movements and the connections that they establish between veganism and other movements. There is also parallelism between the type of veganism that they practice and their political orientations.

Feminist, queer, anarchist, socialist/Trotskyist, and conscientious objection movements/groups were mentioned among the movements in which the participants took an active part. Some participants also stated that they joined the 8th of March, 1st of May and Pride marches. Other than the ones that they took part in, feminist, queer, anarchist, workers', left, ethnic minorities, environmental justice, anti-capitalist, disabled, and socialist movements were mentioned as related to veganism by the participants when asked if veganism is related to other political movements. These movements that participants take part in and the ones that they see as related to veganism have many overlaps with the political orientations of the participants, which are anarchism, feminism, leftism, liberalism, liberal leftism, liberal rightism, secularism, socialism and veganism.

The participants who are categorized as political vegans identified their political orientations as anarchist, feminist, leftist, socialist and vegan. For the apolitical

vegans, the orientations were more diversely distributed as anarchist, apolitical/not interested, confused, leftist, liberal, liberal leftist, secular and vegan. Finally, one of the Sunni vegans identified their political orientation as apolitical/not interested and the other one as a liberal rightist.

The political orientations of apolitical and Sunni vegans do not have a certain pattern or are not concentrated in certain ones. However, the orientations of political vegans, which are anarchist, feminist, leftist, socialist and vegan, imply that their political identity and their veganism belong to a wider ideal of political struggle. This struggle aims at bringing a systemic change to end the oppression of women, workers and animals. Some political vegans also aim at abolishing the state, which is an important part of the oppressive system. As the orientations of political vegans are all anti-systemic and protest movements, it can be said that their understanding of veganism is also parallel to their political orientations. Moreover, contrary to the idea that new social movements and veganism lack a critique of the capitalist system, the connections that the participants make between veganism and other political movements and their statements from the interviews show that veganism is indeed anti-systemic.

#### **4.4.1. Political Veganism**

Political veganism refers to a type of veganism that is more common among individuals who are politicized in matters other than veganism as well as in veganism. These may be feminists, queers or allies, anarchists, socialists or leftists in general. While it is possible to extend this list, they can be referred to as those who struggle for rights of any kind. Out of 25 participants, 6 are more fitting into this category. These participants have defined veganism using mostly the terms ‘ethical stance’, ‘animal rights’, ‘rejection of exploitation’ and ‘activism’. Using these words more frequently than others shows that they see veganism as an ethical responsibility to respect animal rights and not to contribute to their exploitation. As discussed in the previous chapters, it is not easy to draw a strict line between what is political and what is not. However, using these terms show a tendency to politicise veganism by stressing the point that it is a struggle for rights.

Moreover, all 6 participants said that their motivation to adopt veganism was to respect animal rights and that environmental and health impacts either did not affect their decision or came after animal rights and were less important to them. When asked, they replied that they would still adopt veganism if it was unhealthy or not beneficial for the environment. This shows that they have a high dedication to sustaining their veganism.

Veganism is adopted as a political identity by some vegans, while it is more of a lifestyle or a simpler practice for others. Political vegans in this study all stated that they see veganism as a part of their political stance and identity. Placing veganism as part of the political identity at the individual level can be read as framing veganism as a political movement at the organizational level. As the members shape the nature of the organizations and the organizational identity or ideology shape the members individually in turn, it is possible to establish a connection between seeing veganism as part of their political stance and seeing veganism as a political movement. Therefore, it is also possible to say that veganism is seen as a political movement by these vegans.

Carrying out vegan activism and other kinds of political activism can be seen as parallel to defining it as an ethical responsibility to respect animal rights and seeing it as part of one's political identity. All of the political vegans stated that they take part in other political movements or activist circles. Feminist, queer, anarchist, socialist/Trotskyist, and conscientious objection movements/groups were mentioned among the ones that they take part in. Some participants also stated that they joined the 8th of March, 1st of May and Pride marches. Taking part in these movements shows that political vegans do not only carry out vegan activism but also are active in other areas of struggle. Therefore, they may also build connections between veganism and these movements at the ideological level as well as the organisational level.

The connections that they established with other movements were stated by the participants as well. All political vegans said that they see veganism as related to other political causes. As they take part in some of these, feminist, queer, anarchist and socialist movements/ideologies were mentioned as related to veganism. These

connections were mostly established on the basis of the commonality of oppression. That is, the participants argued that as women, LGBTQAI+s, working-class etc. are the ones who are oppressed by the male-dominated, capitalist, heteronormative system; animals are also suffering from it, and that common ground on the basis of hegemony of the oppressor groups or establishments can be found.

The queer movement was counted by the participants among the ones that were seen as related to veganism. Just as women's and workers' rights, queer rights are seen as parallel to animal rights, whose struggle cannot be carried out separately. Six participants stated that they identify themselves as queer, while 19 said that they do not. Five of the six queer participants were categorized as political vegans, which may show a connection between queerness and the type of veganism that they practice. This connection was also raised by one of the participants who said that all discriminations are produced by the male, carnist, cis-hetero patriarchy and that being aware of this brings about being included in all of them in a way. (P1, 21, Ankara)

As mentioned above, it is not easy to make distinctions among identities as political and apolitical when they are part of a wide spectrum. Therefore, some of the characteristics of political vegans may also be the characteristics of an apolitical vegan or a Sunni vegan. However, a certain degree of politicization brings with it some aspects that the ones who are less political do not have. As there are intersections between the characteristics of different veganism types, it is helpful to remember that these are not mutually exclusive classifications.

#### **4.4.2. Apolitical Veganism**

Contrary to political veganism, apolitical vegans adopt a more moderate type of veganism that still places animal rights at its centre just as political vegans do but differs from it in two ways: the first point of difference is that some apolitical vegans put more emphasis on environmental and health impacts of veganism than political vegans. While animal rights are still at the centre of their veganism, some apolitical vegans say that they are vegan for animals and the environment/health. This shows that they were motivated by more than one factor while adopting veganism. The second point of difference between apolitical and political vegans is their veganisms'

level of connectedness with other political movements such as feminism and queer movement. As mentioned above, not all apolitical vegans say that there is no relation between veganism and other movements; however, some of them say that they are not related, and some of them say that they are parallel but do not establish an intersectional connection.

17 participants out of 25 were classified as apolitical vegans. In some aspects of their answers, they are not very different from political vegans. However, as it will be discussed in more detail below, an apolitical vegan can be regarded as a political vegan looking at only one or two aspects (these aspects being their definitions of veganism, motivations, political identities, activist presences, political orientations etc.), but can be regarded as an apolitical vegan when looking at these aspects altogether. For example, a person may see veganism as part of their political identity and relate it with other movements, but at the same time, they may make an apolitical definition of veganism and may have environmental or health-based motivations other than ethical motivations. Therefore, this person sees or practices veganism politically in only some aspects while ignoring its political side in some other aspects.

While defining veganism, some apolitical vegans used labels and keywords such as animal rights, rejection of exploitation, ethics and equality. However, philosophy, environmental/sustainability, healthy, inner peace, justice and love were also used to define what veganism is. Contrary to political vegans who used keywords such as animal rights, rejection of exploitation, ethical and equality only, apolitical vegans used a variety of labels to define veganism, some of which are not addressing the political aspect of veganism. Therefore, in terms of definitions, it is hard to say that apolitical vegans use only phrases that address animals' right to life.

Just as the various definitions, apolitical vegans have more various motivations to adopt veganism than political vegans. Five participants stated that the environmental impacts of veganism motivated them while considering adopting veganism. 4 of these 5 participants are apolitical vegans. While environmental impacts were not mentioned exclusively but were raised along with animal rights, their mentioning means that this group of vegans do not focus only on animal rights. Whether environmental and health

impacts are seen as secondary or not, they are counted among the reasons that they adopted veganism. Therefore, it can be said that apolitical vegans lack the focus on animal rights that political vegans have. Moreover, 4 participants said that the health impacts of veganism motivated them. All 4 participants are apolitical vegans. Just as the ones who were motivated by the environmental impacts, apolitical vegans who were motivated by health impacts also do not base their arguments solely on animal rights but on more than one aspect. The reason why environmental and health impacts are regarded differently than animal rights is that these aspects are not about animals, who are the subjects of the vegan struggle. Therefore, saying that animal rights motivated them can be understood as a political motivation, but the environment and health impacts are not targeting animal liberation and, therefore, are not political in the context of veganism. Environmental issues may be political in themselves, but the environmental benefits of veganism do not directly affect animals' right to life. For health benefits, it is not even possible to say that it has any political ground. Those who are motivated by the health benefits of veganism are considering these benefits solely for personal reasons.

When asked whether they see veganism as a part of their political stance/identity, 8 participants replied no. 2 of these 8 participants are Sunni vegans, and the remaining 6 are apolitical vegans. As mentioned before, not all apolitical vegans gave the same answers to each question. However, the fact that all political participants see veganism as a part of their political identity, and some apolitical vegans do not see it as such shows that this group of vegans have a rather limited understanding of veganism as political.

When it comes to political/activist presence, a more distinct line can be drawn between political and apolitical vegans. Seven participants stated that they take an active part in other movements or circles other than veganism. Six of these are political vegans, and only the remaining 1 participant is an apolitical vegan. The rest of the apolitical vegans either said that they used to take part but do not anymore (4 people) or that they did not take part in any other political movement or activist group. As mentioned before, political vegans are not politicized only for veganism but for other struggles as well, with which they also make connections. However, almost all apolitical vegans

are not politicized in matters other than veganism which shows that their political presence overall is limited. The apolitical vegan classification does not mean that this group of vegans are not interested in political matters or in daily politics. It means that they do not carry their struggle to a more intersectional level nor practice their veganism as a political issue.

The theoretical/ideological and physical connection between veganism and other political movements are mentioned in different contexts. When asked, all participants said that there is some level of relation between veganism and other movements. All apolitical vegans also said yes to this question. Feminist, queer, workers', left, ethnic minorities, environmental justice, anti-capitalist and disabled rights movements were mentioned by apolitical vegans as related to veganism. These movements are more or less the same as the ones mentioned by the political vegans. Therefore, there is not much difference between these two groups of vegans in this aspect.

#### **4.4.3. Sunni Veganism**

Different from political and apolitical vegans, there is a third category of vegans in Turkey whose religious identity is more prominent in their veganism. 2 of the 25 participants were classified as Sunni vegans who adopted a blend of religious and vegan values. While one of the participants directly used 'Muslim vegan' to define themselves, the other one did not use a specific phrase. However, both participants implied that they are part of Sunni Islam while talking about the Quranic verses that intersect with veganism. As sects of Islam may differ on practices regarding animals as well as other practices, Sunni veganism is used instead of Muslim veganism to be more specific about the beliefs of the participants.

Other than these two participants, two others also mentioned religious connections to veganism but did not make a strong point on the connection between their vegan and religious identities. Therefore, it can be said that, though limited in number, there is a tendency among some vegans in Turkey to practice a version of veganism that does not contradict Sunni values. On the contrary, Sunni vegans argue that there is a parallelism between veganism and Islam. Some verses from the Quran and hadiths of the prophet Mohammad call for compassion over animals and forbid ill-treatment of

them. One of the participants said that instead of sacrificing an animal as many Sunnis do, they make donations to charities in order not to harm an animal. According to this participant, those who practice sacrifice lack information and ignore the truth. However, there are also other Muslims who think like them. (P10, 41, İstanbul)

The Sunni vegan identity is not part of the political and apolitical veganisms as it stands out from these with a different politicization. Sunni vegans are neither politicized as much as political vegans nor the same as apolitical vegans. They built a different identity to prove that Islam and veganism can coexist. One of the participants said that they would rather identify themselves as Muslim vegan than identify with another political identity. (P15, 21, Sakarya). While there may be similarities in the answers that they gave to the interview questions with political or apolitical vegans, what makes Sunni vegans different is the specific identity that they assume.

In terms of the indicators that were analysed above, there are not only political or only apolitical answers given by Sunni vegans. To define veganism, 'animal rights', 'rejection of exploitation' and 'environmental and sustainable' phrases were used by them. The Sunni vegan participants stated that animal rights, environmental benefits and commercial profit motivated them to adopt veganism. When asked if they see veganism as part of their political identity, both participants replied no, which shows that they assume a different and unique Sunni vegan identity that they do not see as political. Both participants are not currently taking part in a political movement or an activist group. Finally, contrary to their not seeing veganism as a part of their political identity, both participants said that they relate veganism with other political movements.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Since its emergence, veganism has commonly been framed as a lifestyle and as a choice that some people make. The social movements literature studies veganism as a lifestyle movement and as a cultural movement. In the feminist literature, some researchers study veganism connecting it with feminist ideals. Some even take it further to argue that a true feminist has to be vegan as well. There is no consensus among the researchers who specifically study veganism. It is framed as a lifestyle, a cultural movement, a diet, an identity, a movement or a modern phenomenon. While those who see veganism as a political movement argue that it is connected with other political movements as an identity and as a movement, this group of researchers are a minority among the researchers of veganism. The tendency to study veganism as such is also common among those who study veganism in Turkey.

Looking at the identities and motivations of vegans living in Turkey, it can be said that there are three main types of veganism practised: political, apolitical and Sunni vegans. Political vegans practice veganism solely to defend animal rights and liberation. For them, veganism is a political identity and movement that has parallel ideals with other political movements such as feminist, queer, socialist and anarchist movements. On the other hand, apolitical vegans have more diverse motivations. While animal rights are still the main motivation for apolitical vegans, they also mention the health and environmental impacts of veganism as prominent in their decision-making processes. Contrary to political vegans, apolitical vegans have either no or a limited focus on the political side of veganism and on the connection between veganism and other political movements. Therefore, the main focus of apolitical veganism is not only animal rights but is more diverse. Lastly, Sunni vegans have a separate outlook of veganism that is

neither political nor apolitical. For Sunni vegans, veganism is a requirement of Islamic beliefs and cannot be thought of separately from Islam. The religious verses call for compassion and respect for animals, which can be translated as veganism in today's world.

Other than having three types, veganism in Turkey is overall a political identity and movement that has participants from all income levels, with a majority being from lower and middle levels. The political orientations of vegans in Turkey are also diverse and cannot be fitted into a single category. But most vegans establish connections between their veganism and their political orientations as mutually shaping each other. Moreover, political orientations such as feminism, socialism and anarchism, which were mentioned more commonly by the participants, show that this connection is also reflected in practice. Overall, vegans in Turkey have an understanding of veganism that is parallel to other anti-systemic and protest movements. Lastly, the participants who self-identify as queer also make a connection between their vegan and queer identities. Different types of oppression on different groups of people as well as on animals are interconnected and are perpetrated by the carnist, cis-hetero patriarchy. These connections that the participants made between other political movements and identities also show that veganism and new social movements bring a systemic critique, contrary to what some researchers argue. On the contrary, veganism is a new social movement that is shaped around the vegan identity and carries out a struggle for a systemic change in relations between humans and animals. It is also a political identity that shares common ideals with rights-based movements aiming at a world without oppression.

The vegan movement in Turkey shares the characteristics of new social movements as it has participants from different social and economic backgrounds, just as the new social movements defined in the literature. However, the vegan movement is still a political movement. What makes the vegan movement different from other political movements, especially classical social movements is that it is not a class-oriented movement, and it has a different level of subject, which are animals. Contrary to the classical social movements and most of the new social movements, the vegan movement's participants are not calling for a change for themselves but for others

(animals). Moreover, the identifications of vegans in Turkey revolve around three main lines, while each vegan has a unique identity.

Overall, the identity formation and motivations of vegans in Turkey lead to a reading of the vegan movement in Turkey as a new social movement that organises around identity politics.

As stated above, veganism is not a single body of ideas that everyone shares. It is understood and practised differently among vegans. Similarly, there is no consensus on what veganism is in the literature. Those who study veganism as a diet or as a trending habit lack the political notion of veganism that calls for an end to the exploitation of animals. For those who study veganism as a social movement, a different lack of understanding is visible. When veganism is studied as a lifestyle movement or as anything other than a political movement, it is misunderstood. Most of the studies about veganism in the literature did not include direct input from vegans but made a definition based on observation. Yet, a social movement can be described best by its members. Therefore, this thesis aimed at bringing in the perceptions of vegans living in Turkey to give them a voice on what veganism is. As the researcher, I did not leave out my vegan identity while carrying out this research as the product cannot be independent from its producer and as I wanted to include my input and position among those of the participants. For this, I believe that I am making a unique contribution to the literature of veganism studies since this is one of the very few studies that actually talked to vegans. The same is applicable to the literature on veganism in Turkey. Just as the international literature, there are few studies that look at veganism as a social movement. Therefore, I aim at making a contribution to the literature in Turkey as well.

Contrary to the literature, the participants of this study adopted veganisms that are beyond a diet or a lifestyle. Looking at the classifications made in the literature, it is possible to say that motivations to adopt veganism, including socialising, are the main point of difference among types of veganism. To oppose this, I argue that types of veganism in Turkey are not classified based solely on the motivations of vegans but on many factors, especially how they define veganism and how they relate veganism with other identities.

Veganism is framed as a collection of daily habits that is more of a lifestyle than a political identity and movement by researchers of lifestyle movements. However, this approach and framing of veganism miss the focus on animal rights. While there are other motivations to go vegan, the main focus of vegans is on the right to life, especially in Turkey. Therefore, everyday practices are not at the core of veganism but an inevitable outcome of adopting veganism.

The connections of the vegan identity and vegan movement with other political identities and movements are sometimes missed or ignored by researchers. However, there are also many studies that see veganism in general and veganism in Turkey as a political movement that shares a parallel ideal with other political movements. As a response to the studies in the literature lacking this outlook and as a support to those who show the relation between the vegan movement and other movements, I looked at the vegan identities and the vegan movement in Turkey to argue that the overall vegan identity in Turkey has political grounds more than lifestyle or any other ground (health, environment etc.). This side of the vegan identity and movement in Turkey makes it belong to new social movements just as other identity-based movements.

I tried to be inclusive and representative in methodology and in other aspects. The sample included people from different regions, age groups, genders, political orientations, income levels, identities etc. However, as with any research, mine also had its limitations. For example, contrary to what I expected, there were not many spiritual and health-oriented vegans. For this, future research may focus more on vegans whose motivations include spiritual aspects other than Islamic beliefs, as it was the case for the Sunni vegans of this study. Moreover, a wider perspective may also be helpful to better understand veganism in Turkey. Therefore, a comparative study with vegans from different countries, cultures, beliefs may be carried out.

Studying veganism is not only limited to talking to vegans. Vegan activism is carried out through organisations and groups as well. In order to study veganism as a social movement, its organisational structure, tools, tactics etc. may also be researched. To address all these possibilities, this thesis aimed at opening a way especially for studying the movement in Turkey.

Above all the things said in this thesis, one aspect is more important to me. Veganism in Turkey and around the world is a political struggle against the exploitation of animals and it is a responsibility for all humans without any excuses. It cannot be separated from other rights-based struggles as they are all parallel to each other for the system that they aim at changing is the same system that exploits the rights of animals, women, LGBTQAI+ people, disabled people and all who are oppressed. As the slogan commonly used by the socialist groups in Turkey says, “There is no salvation alone, all together or none of us!”.

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## APPENDICES

### A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
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Sayı: 28620816 /

14 OCAK 2022

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın **Antonie DOLCEROCCA**

Danışmanlığınızı yürüttüğünüz Ahmet TUNÇ'un "Türkiye'de Veganlık ve Vegan Hareket" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **0085-ODTÜİAEK-2022** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mine Misirlişoy".

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY  
İAEK Başkan

## **B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Could you briefly introduce yourself? Your age, gender etc.
- How and when did you decide to go vegan?
- What were your motivations?
- What is veganism for you?
- Do you see veganism as part of your political stance?
- Do you take part in any other activist scenes?
  - o Which ones?
  - o How do you relate them to veganism?

## C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

### 1. Giriş

Veganizm dünya çapında hızla büyüyen bir hareket ve kimliktir. Veganlık günlük yaşamda hem kişisel hem de toplumsal olarak belirli eylemlerde bulunmayı gerektirmektedir. Veganlığın tanımı bazı veganlar için farklılık gösterebildiği gibi, pratikleri de farklılık gösterebilmektedir. Hareketin dinamiklerini incelerken, bazı akademisyenler veganlığı bir yaşam tarzı hareketi olarak görme eğilimindedir (Büchs vd. 2015; Dobernic ve Stagl 2015; Cherry 2015), zira veganlar hayvan bedenlerini veya onlardan elde edilen ürünleri yemekten kaçınmak gibi gündelik pratiklerin yanı sıra onları canlı deney, ulaşım, tarım vb. gibi diğer amaçlar için kullanmaktan da kaçınır. Ancak veganlığın ana odağı bir yaşam tarzı değişikliği değil, hayvan kullanımına karşı bir protestodur. Bekaret yemincileri, minimalistler ya da Quiverfull gibi yaşam tarzı hareketlerinin aksine, bazı veganlar için veganlık, onu takip eden insanların yaşamlarıyla değil, hakları savunulan hayvanlarla ilgilidir. Dolayısıyla veganizme yönelik bir yaşam tarzı yaklaşımı, onu uygulayanların yaşam tarzını merkeze koyduğu için insanmerkezci olurken, hak temelli bir yaklaşım veganlığın öznesi olan hayvanları merkeze koymaktadır.

Bu tezde, Türkiye'de yaşayan veganların motivasyonları ve kimlik tanımlamaları incelenmektedir. Türkiye'deki veganların politik yönelimleri, motivasyonları ve aktivist varlıkları açısından veganlıklarını ve kendilerini nasıl tanımladıklarını ve vegan kimliğin diğer kimliklerle kesişip kesişmediğini araştırıyorum. Bu soruların cevaplarından yola çıkarak veganlığın yeni bir toplumsal hareket olarak değerlendirilip değerlendirilemeyeceğine de bakıyorum. Ayrıca vegan kimlikler ile ikamet edilen şehir, meslek ve gelir düzeyi gibi faktörlerin birbirlerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırıyorum. Veganların motivasyonlarının ve veganlık tanımlarının sahip oldukları diğer kimliklerle ilişkili olduğunu ve vegan kimlikleri ile diğer kimlikler arasında bir bağlantı olduğunu varsayıyorum. Tartışmama toplumsal

hareketler, vegan hareketler ve kimlikler üzerine bir literatür taramasıyla başlıyorum. Bunu takiben, metodolojimin bir özetini sunuyorum. Tezde kullandığım veriyi toplamak için bir saha araştırması gerçekleştirdim ve Türkiye'de yaşayan 25 veganla görüşmeler yaptım. Amacım veganların ve vegan olma motivasyonlarının bireysel bir çerçevesini ve böylece Türkiye'deki vegan hareketin bireyler temelinde bir çerçevesini çizmektir. Takip eden paragraflarda bulgularımı sunuyorum ve topladığım verileri analiz ediyorum.

Bunu yaparken, veganların diğer siyasi hareketler ve kimliklerle sahip oldukları ya da olmadıkları ortaklık örüntülerini anlamayı amaçlıyorum. Kişinin kendini tanımladığı kimlikler karşılıklı olarak birbirini şekillendirir. Veganlarla yapılan görüşmelere dayanarak, Türkiye'deki vegan hareketin, literatürde tanımlanan yeni toplumsal hareketler gibi (Melucci 1980; Eder 1993), farklı sosyal ve ekonomik arka planlardan gelen katılımcılara sahip olduğu için yeni toplumsal hareketlerin (YTH) özelliklerini paylaştığını iddia ediyorum. Ancak vegan hareket yine de siyasi bir harekettir. Vegan hareketi diğer siyasi hareketlerden, özellikle de klasik toplumsal hareketlerden farklı kılan, sınıf odaklı bir hareket olmaması ve farklı bir özneye, yani hayvanlara sahip olmasıdır. Klasik toplumsal hareketlerin ve yeni toplumsal hareketlerin çoğunun aksine, vegan hareketin katılımcıları kendileri için değil, başkaları (hayvanlar) için bir değişim çağrısında bulunur. Dahası, Türkiye'deki veganların kimliklerinin politik, apolitik ve Sünni veganlık olmak üzere üç ana hat etrafında döndüğünü ve bunun yanında her veganın kendine özgü bir kimliği olduğunu iddia ediyorum.

## **2. Metodoloji**

Çalışmamda vegan kimlik ve diğer kimlikler arasındaki ilişkiyi sorgularken, Türkiye'deki vegan hareketi ve üyelerini anlamaya çalışıyorum. Ayrıca bu tez, Türkiye'deki hak temelli hareketlerin ne kadar eş merkezli olduğunu göstermeye de yardımcı oluyor. Bunu yaparken nitel metodoloji kullandım ve Türkiye'de yaşayan, kendini vegan olarak tanımlayan 25 kişiyle yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yaptım.

Katılımcıları rastgele örneklem ile seçtim. Veri toplama sürecine soruları hazırlayarak başladım. Pilot görüşmeyi 16 Ekim 2021 tarihinde gerçekleştirdim. 19 Ekim 2021 ile 30 Mart 2022 tarihleri arasında 25 görüşme gerçekleştirdim. Görüşmelerin 13'ü yüz

yüze, kalan 12'si ise çevrimiçi veya telefonda gerçekleştirildi. Yüz yüze görüşmeler için mekân seçimi katılımcılar tarafından yapıldı.

Örnekleme için dört farklı yöntem kullandım. 25 katılımcıdan 12'sine Instagram üzerinden rastgele seçimle ulaştım. Kullanıcı adında ya da kişisel biyografisinde 'vegan' kelimesi geçen Instagram kullanıcılarına mesaj attım. Yedi katılımcı, diğer katılımcılar tarafından yönlendirildi. Örneklemin küçük bir çevreden oluşmaması için katılımcılardan en fazla iki kişiyi referans göstermelerini istedim. Bunların dışında 4 katılımcı kişisel bağlantılarım tarafından yönlendirildi. Ve son olarak, 2 katılımcıya işyerlerine giderek rastgele ulaştım. Bu katılımcıların ikisi de kafe sahibiydi.

### **3. Tartışma**

Veganların motivasyonlarının ve veganlık tanımlarının sahip oldukları diğer kimliklerle ilişkili olduğunu ve vegan kimlikleri ile diğer kimlikler arasında bir bağlantı olduğunu varsayıyorum. Vegan katılımcılarla yapılan görüşmelerin analizine dayanarak, Türkiye'de yaşayan veganlara ilişkin bazı çıkarımlar ve genellemeler yaptım. Bu bölümde katılımcıların veganlık tanımlarına, motivasyonlarına, politik kimliklerine, politik aktivizmlerine, veganlık ile diğer hareketler arasında kurdukları ortaklıklara ve profesyonel hayatları ile veganlıkları arasındaki etkiye bakarak veganlık türlerini tartışıyorum.

Bu çalışmanın katılımcıları arasında temel olarak üç farklı veganlık pratiği bulunmaktadır. Bu veganlık türlerinden ilki, veganlığı politik bir mücadele olarak benimseyen ve farklı çevrelerde vegan aktivizm yürütenleri ifade eden politik veganlıktır. İsmi karşıt olsa da apolitik veganlık, katılımcıların çoğunluğu tarafından uygulanan daha pasifist ve daha az politik bir veganlık türüne işaret etmektedir. Son olarak, sayı bakımından daha az yaygın olan bir veganlık türü de, kendi içinde protest bir kimlik olan bir veganlık türünü uygulayan Sünni veganlardır.

Politik ve apolitik veganlıkların ikili karşıtlıklar olmadığını hatırlamakta fayda vardır. Farklı veganizmler daha çok farklı siyasallaşma seviyelerinin olduğu bir spektrum olabilir. Veganizm türlerinin politik ve apolitik olarak adlandırılması, politik veganların %100 politik olduğu ve apolitik veganların veganlık içinde ve dışında

politikaya ilgi duymadığı anlamına gelmez. Bu etiketler, veganlığın veganlar tarafından nasıl algılandığına dair genel bir fikir vermek için kullanılmıştır. Dahası, apolitik veganlar için veganlık tamamen politikadan uzak değildir. Bu grup veganlar bazı açılardan siyasi bağlantılar kurmaktadır. Ancak bu sınıflandırma veganların genel profiline bakılarak yapılmıştır ve apolitik veganlar için genel profil tamamen politik bir veganizm anlayışını yansıtmamaktadır. Bu nedenle, siyasetten uzak durmamalarına rağmen apolitik olarak adlandırılmaktadırlar.

Ayrıca, buradaki tartışmanın kendilerini şu ya da bu şekilde vegan olarak tanımlayanlar etrafında döndüğünü, 'vegan' kelimesini kullanmaktan kaçınan ve bunun yerine bitkisel beslenme gibi tanımlamaları kullananları dışarıda bıraktığını hatırlamakta fayda vardır. Kendini vegan olarak tanımlayanlar ile diğer tanımlamaları kullananlar arasındaki bu ayrımın arkasındaki temel motivasyon, bu tezin yalnızca Türkiye'deki veganlara ve veganlığa odaklanmasıdır. Veganlığın ne anlama geldiğine dair çeşitli tanımlar ve algılar olsa da, veganlık genellikle bitki temelli veya sağlıklı beslenme/yaşam ile karıştırılmaktadır. Kendini bu şekilde tanımlayan veganlar da vardır. Ancak bunlar veganlar arasında küçük bir azınlıktır ve diğerleri çoğunlukla bu veganlık algısına katılmamaktadır. İlerleyen sayfalarda açıklanacağı üzere, veganların çoğu veganlığı hayvan haklarına saygı göstermeye yönelik etik bir sorumluluk olarak tanımlamaktadır. Aşağıda ayrıntılı olarak ele alınacak olan üç veganlık türü de hayvan haklarına belli bir düzeyde saygı göstermekte ve üçü de hayvan haklarını veganlığı benimsemek için diğer nedenlerden veya motivasyonlardan önce tutmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, Türkiye'de yaşayan veganların veganlığa politik bir mesele olarak yaklaştıkları iddia edilebilir. Türkiye'deki vegan hareket de siyasi bir hareketin özelliklerini göstermektedir.

### **3.1. Veganlık Türleri**

Katılımcıların siyasi yönelimleri, diğer hareketlerdeki aktivist varlıklarıyla ve veganlık ile diğer hareketler arasında kurdukları bağlantılarla benzer özellikler göstermektedir. Benimsedikleri veganlık türü ile siyasi yönelimleri arasında da paralellik bulunmaktadır.

Katılımcıların aktif olarak yer aldıkları hareketler arasında feminist, queer, anarşist, sosyalist/Troçkist ve vicdani ret hareketleri/grupları sayılmıştır. Bazı katılımcılar 8 Mart, 1 Mayıs ve Onur Yürüyüşleri'ne katıldıklarını da belirtmişlerdir. Katılımcılara veganlığın diğer siyasi hareketlerle ilişkisi olup olmadığı sorulduğunda, kendi katıldıkları hareketler dışında feminist, queer, anarşist, işçi, sol, etnik azınlıklar, çevresel adalet, anti-kapitalist, engelli ve sosyalist hareketlerden de veganlıkla ilişkili olarak bahsetmişlerdir. Katılımcıların içinde yer aldıkları ve veganizmle ilişkili gördükleri bu hareketler, katılımcıların siyasi yönelimleri olarak saydıkları anarşizm, feminizm, solculuk, liberalizm, liberal solculuk, liberal sağcılık, sekülerizm, sosyalizm ve veganizm ile birçok açıdan örtüşmektedir.

Politik veganlar olarak kategorize edilen katılımcılar politik yönelimlerini anarşist, feminist, solcu, sosyalist ve vegan olarak tanımlamıştır. Apolitik veganlar için yönelimler anarşist, apolitik/ilgisiz, kafası karışık, solcu, liberal, liberal solcu, seküler ve vegan olarak daha çeşitli dağılım göstermiştir. Son olarak, Sünni veganlardan biri siyasi yönelimini apolitik/ilgisiz, diğeri ise liberal sağ olarak tanımlamıştır.

Apolitik ve Sünni veganların politik yönelimleri belli bir kalıba sahip olmadığı gibi belli yönelimlerde de yoğunlaşmamaktadır. Ancak politik veganların anarşist, feminist, solcu, sosyalist yönelimleri, politik kimliklerinin ve veganlıklarının daha geniş bir politik mücadele idealine ait olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu mücadele kadınların, işçilerin ve hayvanların ezilmesine son verecek sistemik bir değişim getirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bazı politik veganlar, baskıcı sistemin önemli bir parçası olan devleti ortadan kaldırmayı da hedeflemektedir. Politik veganların yönelimlerinin tamamı sistem karşıtı ve protest hareketler olduğu için veganlık anlayışlarının da politik yönelimleri ile paralel olduğu söylenebilir. Ayrıca, yeni toplumsal hareketlerin ve veganlığın kapitalist sistem eleştirisinden yoksun olduğu düşüncesinin aksine, katılımcıların veganlık ile diğer siyasi hareketler arasında kurdukları bağlantılar ve görüşmelerdeki ifadeleri, veganlığın gerçekten de sistem karşıtı olduğunu göstermektedir.

### 3.1.1. Politik Veganlık

Politik veganlık, veganlığın yanı sıra veganlık dışındaki konularda da politize olmuş kişiler arasında daha yaygın olan bir veganlık türünü ifade eder. Bunlar feministler, queerler veya müttefikleri, anarşistler, sosyalistler veya genel olarak solcular olabilir. Bu listeyi uzatmak mümkün olmakla birlikte, her türlü hak için mücadele edenler olarak da adlandırılabilirler. 25 katılımcıdan 6'sı bu kategoriye daha çok uymaktadır. Bu katılımcılar veganlığı çoğunlukla 'etik duruş', 'hayvan hakları', 'sömürünün reddi' ve 'aktivizm' terimlerini kullanarak tanımlamışlardır. Bu kelimeleri diğerlerine kıyasla daha sık kullanmaları, veganlığı hayvan haklarına saygı duymak ve onların sömürülmesine katkıda bulunmamak için etik bir sorumluluk olarak gördüklerini göstermektedir. Önceki bölümlerde tartışıldığı gibi, neyin politik olup neyin olmadığı arasında kesin bir çizgi çizmek kolay değildir. Ancak bu terimlerin kullanılması, veganlığın bir hak mücadelesi olduğunu vurgulayarak onu siyasallaştırma eğilimini göstermektedir.

Ayrıca, 6 katılımcının tamamı veganlığı benimseme motivasyonlarının hayvan haklarına saygı duymak olduğunu ve çevre ve sağlığın ya kararlarını etkilemediğini ya da hayvan haklarından sonra geldiğini ve onlar için daha az önemli olduğunu söylemiştir. Katılımcılara sorulduğunda, veganlığın sağlıksız olması ya da çevre için faydalı olmaması durumunda yine de veganlığı benimseyeceklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu da veganlıklarını sürdürme konusunda yüksek bir adanmışlığa sahip olduklarını göstermektedir.

Veganlık bazı veganlar tarafından politik bir kimlik olarak benimsenirken, diğerleri için daha çok bir yaşam tarzı ya da daha basit bir uygulamadır. Bu çalışmadaki politik veganların hepsi veganlığı politik duruşlarının ve kimliklerinin bir parçası olarak gördüklerini belirtmişlerdir. Veganlığın bireysel düzeyde siyasi kimliğin bir parçası olarak konumlandırılması, örgütsel düzeyde veganlığın siyasi bir hareket olarak görülmesi olarak okunabilir. Üyeler örgütlerin doğasını şekillendirirken, örgütsel kimlik ya da ideoloji de üyeleri bireysel olarak şekillendirdiğinden, veganlığı politik duruşlarının bir parçası olarak görmek ile veganlığı politik bir hareket olarak görmek

arasında bir bağlantı kurmak mümkündür. Dolayısıyla veganlığın bu veganlar tarafından siyasi bir hareket olarak görüldüğünü söylemek de mümkündür.

Vegan aktivizmi ve diğer siyasi aktivizm türlerini yürütmek, hayvan haklarına saygı göstermeyi etik bir sorumluluk olarak tanımlamak ve bunu kişinin siyasi kimliğinin bir parçası olarak görmekle paralel olarak görülebilir. Politik veganların tamamı diğer politik hareketlerde veya aktivist çevrelerde yer aldıklarını belirtmiştir. Feminist, queer, anarşist, sosyalist/Troçkist ve vicdani ret hareketleri/grupları katıldıkları hareketler arasında sayılmıştır. Bazı katılımcılar 8 Mart, 1 Mayıs ve Onur Yürüyüşleri'ne katıldıklarını da belirtmişlerdir. Bu hareketlerde yer almak, politik veganların sadece vegan aktivizmi yapmadıklarını, aynı zamanda diğer mücadele alanlarında da aktif olduklarını göstermektedir. Dolayısıyla veganlık ile bu hareketler arasında hem ideolojik düzeyde hem de örgütsel düzeyde bağlantılar kurabilmektedirler.

Diğer hareketlerle kurdukları bağlantılar da katılımcılar tarafından ifade edilmiştir. Tüm politik veganlar veganlığı diğer politik mücadelelerle ilişkili olarak gördüklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bunlardan bazılarının katıldıkları için feminist, queer, anarşist ve sosyalist hareketler/ideolojiler veganlıkla ilişkili olarak zikredilmiştir. Bu bağlantılar çoğunlukla baskınalmış olmanın ortaklığı temelinde kurulmuştur. Yani katılımcılar, erkek egemen, kapitalist, heteronormatif sistem tarafından ezilenlerin kadınlar, LGBTQAI+'lar, işçi sınıfı vb. olduğu gibi hayvanların da bundan muzdarip olduğunu ve ezen grup ya da kurumların hegemonyası temelinde ortak bir zemin bulunabileceğini savunmuşlardır.

Queer hareket de katılımcılar tarafından veganlıkla ilişkili görülenler arasında sayılmıştır. Tıpkı kadın ve işçi hakları gibi queer hakları da mücadelesi ayrı yürütülemeyecek olan hayvan haklarıyla paralel görülmektedir. Altı katılımcı kendilerini queer olarak tanımladıklarını, 19 katılımcı ise tanımlamadıklarını belirtmiştir. Altı queer katılımcıdan beşi politik vegan olarak kategorize edilmiştir; bu da queerlik ile uyguladıkları veganlık türü arasında bir bağlantı olduğunu gösterebilir. Bu bağlantı, tüm ayrımcılıkların erkek, karnist, cis-hetero patriyarka tarafından

üretildiğini ve bunun farkında olmanın bir şekilde hepsine dahil olmayı beraberinde getirdiğini söyleyen bir katılımcı tarafından da dile getirilmiştir. (K1, 21, Ankara)

Yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi, geniş bir yelpazenin parçası olan kimlikler arasında politik ve apolitik gibi ayrımlar yapmak kolay değildir. Dolayısıyla politik veganların bazı özellikleri aynı zamanda apolitik bir veganın ya da Sünni bir veganın da özellikleri olabilir. Ancak belli bir derecede politikleşme, daha az politik olanların sahip olmadığı bazı özellikleri de beraberinde getirmektedir. Farklı veganlık türlerinin özellikleri arasında kesişimler olduğu için, bunların birbirini dışlayan sınıflandırmalar olmadığını hatırlamakta fayda vardır.

### **3.1.2. Apolitik Veganlık**

Politik veganlığın aksine, apolitik veganlar, tıpkı politik veganlar gibi hayvan haklarını merkeze alan daha ılımlı bir veganlık türünü benimsemekle birlikte, bu veganlıktan iki şekilde ayrılırlar: Birinci fark noktası, bazı apolitik veganların politik veganlara kıyasla veganlığın çevre ve sağlık üzerindeki etkilerine daha fazla önem vermeleridir. Hayvan hakları veganlıklarının merkezinde yer almaya devam ederken, bazı apolitik veganlar hayvanlar ve çevre/sağlık için vegan olduklarını söylemektedir. Bu da veganlığı benimserken birden fazla faktör tarafından motive olduklarını göstermektedir. Apolitik ve politik veganlar arasındaki ikinci fark noktası, veganlıklarının feminizm ve queer hareketi gibi diğer politik hareketlerle bağlantı düzeyidir. Yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi apolitik veganların tamamı veganlık ile diğer hareketler arasında bir ilişki olmadığını söylemezken, bir kısmı ilişkili olmadığını, bir kısmı ise paralel olduğunu söylemekte ancak kesişimsel bir bağlantı kurmamaktadır.

25 katılımcıdan 17'si apolitik vegan olarak sınıflandırılmıştır. Verdikleri cevaplar bazı yönleriyle politik veganlardan çok farklı değildir. Ancak, aşağıda daha ayrıntılı olarak tartışılacağı üzere, apolitik bir vegan, sadece bir ya da iki yönüne bakıldığında (bu yönler veganlık tanımları, motivasyonları, politik kimlikleri, aktivist varlıkları, politik yönelimleri vb. olabilir) politik bir vegan olarak kabul edilebilirken, bu yönlerin tümüne bakıldığında apolitik bir vegan olarak kabul edilebilir. Örneğin bir kişi veganlığı politik kimliğinin bir parçası olarak görebilir ve diğer hareketlerle ilişkilendirebilir, ancak aynı zamanda veganlığın apolitik bir tanımını yapabilir ve etik

motivasyonlar dışında çevre veya sağlık temelli motivasyonlara sahip olabilir. Dolayısıyla bu kişi veganlığı sadece bazı yönleriyle politik olarak görürken ya da uygularken bazı yönleriyle politik yanını görmezden gelebilir.

Politik/aktivist varlık söz konusu olduğunda, politik ve apolitik veganlar arasında daha belirgin bir çizgi çizilebilir. Politik veganlar sadece veganlık için değil, aynı zamanda bağlantı kurdukları diğer mücadeleler için de politize olmuşlardır. Ancak apolitik veganların neredeyse tamamı veganlık dışındaki konularda politize olmamışlardır, bu da genel olarak politik varlıklarının sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir. Apolitik vegan sınıflandırması, bu vegan grubunun politik konularla ya da günlük siyasetle ilgilenmediği anlamına gelmemektedir. Mücadelelerini daha kişisel bir düzeye taşımadıkları ya da veganlıklarını politik bir mesele olarak pratik etmedikleri anlamına gelmektedir.

### **3.1.3. Sünni Veganizm**

Politik ve apolitik veganlardan farklı olarak, Türkiye'de veganlıklarında dini kimliklerinin daha ön planda olduğu üçüncü bir vegan kategorisi daha bulunmaktadır. 25 katılımcıdan 2'si dini ve vegan değerlerin bir karışımını benimseyen Sünni veganlar olarak sınıflandırılmıştır. Katılımcılardan biri kendilerini tanımlamak için doğrudan 'Müslüman vegan' ifadesini kullanırken, diğeri belirli bir ifade kullanmamıştır. Ancak her iki katılımcı da veganlıkla kesişen Kur'an ayetlerinden bahsederken Sünni İslam'ın bir parçası olduklarını ima etmiştir. İslam'ın mezhepleri hayvanlarla ilgili uygulamaların yanı sıra diğer uygulamalar konusunda da farklılık gösterebileceğinden, katılımcıların inançları hakkında daha spesifik olmak için Müslüman veganlık yerine Sünni veganlık tabiri kullanılmıştır.

Sünni vegan kimlik politik ve apolitik veganlıkların bir parçası değildir, bunlardan farklı bir politikleşme ile ayrılır. Sünni veganlar ne politik veganlar kadar politize olmuşlardır ne de apolitik veganlarla aynıdırlar. İslam ve veganlığın bir arada var olabileceğini kanıtlamak için farklı bir kimlik inşa etmişlerdir. Katılımcılardan biri, başka bir siyasi kimlikle özdeşleşmektense kendilerini Müslüman vegan olarak tanımlamayı tercih edeceklerini söylemiştir. (K15, 21, Sakarya). Görüşme sorularına

verdikleri cevaplarda politik veya apolitik veganlarla benzerlikler olsa da, Sünni veganları farklı kılan şey üstlendikleri özel kimliktir.

#### 4. Sonuç

Türkiye'de yaşayan veganların kimliklerine ve motivasyonlarına bakıldığında, üç ana veganlık türünün uygulandığı söylenebilir: politik, apolitik ve Sünni veganlar. Politik veganlar veganlığı yalnızca hayvan haklarını ve özgürlüğünü savunmak için uygulamaktadır. Onlar için veganlık, feminist, queer, sosyalist ve anarşist hareketler gibi diğer siyasi hareketlerle paralel ideallere sahip siyasi bir kimlik ve harekettir. Öte yandan, apolitik veganlar daha çeşitli motivasyonlara sahiptir. Hayvan hakları apolitik veganlar için hala temel motivasyon olsa da, karar verme süreçlerinde veganlığın sağlık ve çevresel etkilerinin de öne çıktığını belirtmektedirler. Politik veganların aksine, apolitik veganlar veganlığın politik yönüne ve veganlık ile diğer politik hareketler arasındaki bağlantıya ya hiç odaklanmamakta ya da sınırlı bir şekilde odaklanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla apolitik veganlığın ana odağı sadece hayvan hakları değil, daha çeşitlidir. Son olarak, Sünni veganlar ne politik ne de apolitik olan ayrı bir veganlık bakış açısına sahiptir. Sünni veganlar için veganlık İslami inançların bir gereğidir ve İslam'dan ayrı düşünülemez. Zikredilen bazı dini ayetler hayvanlara karşı merhamet ve saygı çağrısında bulunmaktadır ki bu da günümüz dünyasında veganlık olarak tercüme edilebilir.

Türkiye'de veganlık, üç türünün yanı sıra, çoğunluğu alt ve orta gelir düzeyinden olmak üzere, her gelir düzeyinden katılımcısı olan genel bir siyasi kimlik ve harekettir. Türkiye'deki veganların siyasi yönelimleri de çeşitlilik göstermekte ve tek bir kategoriye sığdırılamamaktadır. Ancak çoğu vegan, veganlıkları ile siyasi yönelimleri arasında birbirlerini karşılıklı olarak şekillendiren bağlantılar kurmaktadır. Dahası, katılımcılar tarafından daha sık dile getirilen feminizm, sosyalizm ve anarşizm gibi siyasi yönelimler, bu bağlantının pratiğe de yansıdığını göstermektedir. Genel olarak, Türkiye'deki veganlar diğer sistem karşıtı ve protest hareketlerle paralel bir veganlık anlayışına sahiptir. Son olarak, kendini queer olarak tanımlayan katılımcılar da vegan ve queer kimlikleri arasında bir bağlantı kurmaktadır. Farklı insan grupları ve hayvanlar üzerindeki farklı baskı türleri birbiriyle bağlantılıdır ve karnist, cis-hetero

patriyarka tarafından işlenmektedir. Katılımcıların diğer siyasi hareketler ve kimlikler arasında kurdukları bu bağlantılar, bazı araştırmacıların iddia ettiğinin aksine, veganlığın ve yeni toplumsal hareketlerin sistemik bir eleştiri getirdiğini de göstermektedir. Veganlık, vegan kimlik etrafında şekillenen ve insanlarla hayvanlar arasındaki ilişkilerde sistemik bir değişim için mücadele yürüten yeni bir toplumsal harektir. Aynı zamanda baskının olmadığı bir dünyayı hedefleyen hak temelli hareketlerle ortak idealleri paylaşan politik bir kimliktir.

Türkiye'deki vegan hareket, literatürde tanımlanan yeni toplumsal hareketler gibi, farklı sosyal ve ekonomik arka planlardan gelen katılımcılara sahip olduğu için yeni toplumsal hareketlerin özelliklerini paylaşmaktadır. Ancak vegan hareket yine de siyasi bir harektir. Vegan hareketi diğer siyasi hareketlerden, özellikle de klasik toplumsal hareketlerden farklı kılan, sınıf odaklı bir hareket olmaması ve farklı bir özne düzeyine, yani hayvanlara sahip olmasıdır. Klasik toplumsal hareketlerin ve yeni toplumsal hareketlerin çoğunun aksine, vegan hareketin katılımcıları kendileri için değil, başkaları (hayvanlar) için bir değişim talep etmektedir. Dahası, Türkiye'deki veganların kimlik tanımlamaları üç ana hat etrafında dönerken, her veganın kendine özgü bir kimliği vardır.

Genel olarak, Türkiye'deki veganların kimlik oluşumları ve motivasyonları, Türkiye'deki vegan hareketin kimlik politikaları etrafında örgütlenen yeni bir toplumsal hareket olarak okunmasına yol açmaktadır.

Yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi, veganlık herkesin paylaştığı tek bir fikirler bütünü değildir. Veganlar arasında farklı şekillerde anlaşılmakta ve uygulanmaktadır. Benzer şekilde, literatürde veganlığın ne olduğu konusunda da bir fikir birliği yoktur. Veganlığı bir diyet ya da bir moda olarak inceleyenler, hayvanların sömürülmesine son verilmesi çağrısında bulunan politik veganlık kavramından uzaktır. Veganlığı toplumsal bir hareket olarak inceleyenlerde ise farklı bir anlayış eksikliği göze çarpmaktadır. Veganlık bir yaşam tarzı hareketi olarak incelendiğinde ya da siyasi olmayan bir hareket olarak incelendiğinde yanlış anlaşılmış olmaktadır. Literatürde veganlık üzerine yapılan çalışmaların çoğu veganların doğrudan görüşlerine yer vermemiş, gözlemlere dayalı bir tanımlama yapmıştır. Oysa bir toplumsal hareket en iyi üyeleri tarafından tanımlanabilir. Dolayısıyla bu tez, Türkiye'de yaşayan veganların

algılarını ortaya koyarak veganlığın ne olduğu konusunda onlara söz hakkı vermeyi amaçlamıştır. Araştırmacı olarak, ürünün üreticisinden bağımsız olamayacağı gereğince bu araştırmayı gerçekleştirirken vegan kimliğimi dışarıda bırakmadım ve katılımcıların arasına kendi katkımı ve konumumu da dahil etmek istedim. Bunun için veganlık çalışmaları literatürüne özgün bir katkı yaptığıma inanıyorum, çünkü bu çalışma veganlarla gerçekten konuşan çok az çalışmadan biridir. Aynı durum Türkiye'deki veganlık literatürü için de geçerlidir. Tıpkı uluslararası literatürde olduğu gibi, veganlığı toplumsal bir hareket olarak ele alan çok az çalışma vardır. Bu nedenle Türkiye'deki literatüre de özgün bir katkı sağlamayı amaçlıyorum.

Literatürün aksine, bu çalışmanın katılımcıları bir diyet ya da yaşam tarzının ötesinde veganizmi benimsemişlerdir. Literatürde yapılan sınıflandırmalara bakıldığında, sosyalleşmeyi de içeren veganlığı benimseme motivasyonlarının veganlık türleri arasındaki temel fark noktası olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Buna karşı, Türkiye'deki veganlık türlerinin yalnızca veganların motivasyonlarına göre değil, veganlığı nasıl tanımladıkları ve veganlığı diğer kimliklerle nasıl ilişkilendirdikleri başta olmak üzere birçok faktöre göre sınıflandırılması gerektiğini savunuyorum.

Veganlık, yaşam tarzı hareketleri araştırmacıları tarafından politik bir kimlik ve hareketten ziyade bir yaşam tarzı olan günlük alışkanlıklar bütünü olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Ancak bu yaklaşım ve tanımlama, veganlığın hayvan haklarına odaklanmasını gözden kaçırmaktadır. Vegan olmak için başka motivasyonlar olsa da, özellikle Türkiye'de veganların ana odağı yaşam hakkıdır. Dolayısıyla gündelik pratikler veganlığın özü değil, veganlığı benimsemenin kaçınılmaz bir sonucudur.

Vegan kimliğin ve vegan hareketin diğer siyasi kimlik ve hareketlerle olan bağlantıları kimi zaman araştırmacılar tarafından gözden kaçırılmakta ya da görmezden gelinmektedir. Ancak genel olarak veganlığı ve Türkiye'de veganlığı diğer siyasi hareketlerle paralel bir ideali paylaşan siyasi bir hareket olarak gören pek çok çalışma da mevcuttur. Burada, literatürdeki bu bakış açısından yoksun çalışmalara bir cevap ve vegan hareketin diğer hareketlerle ilişkisini gösterenlere bir destek olarak, Türkiye'deki vegan kimlikleri ve vegan hareketi inceledim ve Türkiye'deki genel vegan kimliğin yaşam tarzı ya da başka herhangi bir zeminden (sağlık, çevre vb.) daha fazla politik zemine sahip olduğunu iddia ettim. Türkiye'deki vegan kimliğin ve

hareketin bu yönü, onu tıpkı diğer kimlik temelli hareketler gibi yeni toplumsal hareketlere ait kılmaktadır.

Bu tezde söylenenlerin hepsinin ötesinde bir konu benim için çok daha önemlidir. Türkiye'de ve dünyada veganlık, hayvanların sömürülmesine karşı politik bir mücadeledir ve hiçbir mazeret söz konusu olmadan tüm insanlar için bir sorumluluktur. Diğer hak temelli mücadelelerden ayrı tutulamaz çünkü hepsi birbirine paraleldir çünkü değiştirmeyi hedefledikleri sistem hayvanların, kadınların, LGBTQAI+ların, engellilerin ve tüm ezilenlerin haklarını sömüren aynı sistemdir. Türkiye'deki sol hareketin yaygın olarak söylediği gibi, "Kurtuluş yok tek başına, ya hep beraber ya hiçbirimiz!".

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