

FOSTER MOTHERHOOD EXPERIENCE IN TURKEY:
INTENSIVE AND PRECARIOUS MOTHERHOOD

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

GİZEM KALKAN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

JUNE 2022

Approval of the thesis:

**FOSTER MOTHERHOOD EXPERIENCE IN TURKEY: INTENSIVE AND
PRECARIOUS MOTHERHOOD**

submitted by **GİZEM KALKAN** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Science of Sociology, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Ayşe SAKTANBER
Head of Department
Department of Sociology

Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR
Supervisor
Department of Sociology

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Reyhan ATASÜ-TOPÇUOĞLU (Head of the Examining
Committee)
Hacettepe University
Department of Social Work

Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşe İdil AYBARS
Name of University
Department of Sociology

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Gizem KALKAN

Signature:

ABSTRACT

FOSTER MOTHERHOOD EXPERIENCE IN TURKEY: INTENSIVE AND PRECARIOUS MOTHERHOOD

KALKAN, Gizem

M.S., The Department of Sociology

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR AKGÜNER

June 2022, 120 pages

This thesis aims to analyze the foster care motherhood experience in Turkey as a transformative and emotional experience, aiming to answer the question of how the implementation of the foster care policy shapes the foster motherhood experience in Turkey. Along with the familialization of the care policies, the number of foster care families sharply increased starting from the year of 2012, and, in this policy, caregivers are designed as mothers by the government. However, the foster mother's motivation for becoming a mother contradicts the temporary aspect of the policy. To analyze mothers' experiences and emotions, a qualitative study was conducted from a feminist standpoint. In this framework, fifteen in-depth interviews were made with the mothers who were reached through the İstanbul Foster Family Foundation by using snowball sampling. It is found that mothers are experiencing motherhood without enough support from their communities and MoFSS institutions. Meanwhile, many mothers are anxious about the biological family relationships and other critical procedures as they are not standardized and regulated well. As a result, the mothers are finding themselves imprisoned in a precarious motherhood experience with the responsibility of care and protection of a child with special needs knowing their children's future are on their hands. Consequently, they either create their ways of protecting their families

and/or transform themselves in their experience. At the policy implementation level, providing a transforming and more flexible legal status to the mothers and psychological support is recommended at the end of this study.

Keywords: Foster motherhood, foster care, Turkey, childcare policies, familialization

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE’DE KORUYUCU ANNELİK DENEYİMİ: YOĞUN VE GÜVENCESİZ ANNELİK

KALKAN, Gizem

Yüksek Lisans, Sosyoloji Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR AKGÜNER

Haziran 2022, 120 sayfa

Bu tez koruyucu annelik deneyimini dönüştürücü ve duygusal bir deneyim olarak değerlendirerek, yürütülmekte olan koruyucu ailelik politikasının koruyucu annelik deneyimini nasıl şekillendirdiğini araştırmayı amaçlar. Bakım politikalarının aileleştirilmesi ve özelleşmesi ile birlikte, Türkiye’de koruyucu aile sayısı 2012 yılı itibarıyla hızla artmıştır ve bu politika içerisinde bakım verenler anne olarak tasarlanmaktadır. Öte yandan, koruyucu annelerin anne olma arzuları, politikanın geçici özelliği ile çelişmektedir. Bu çalışmada annelerin bu deneyimi nasıl yaşadıklarını araştırmak üzere, duygularını da hesaba katarak feminist bir bakış açısıyla nitel araştırma yapılmıştır. Bu çerçevede, İstanbul Koruyucu Aile Derneği aracılığı ile ulaşılan on beş koruyucu anne ile derinlemesine mülakat yapılmıştır. Annelere kartopu örneklem modeli ile ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmada annelerin gerek çevreleri tarafından gerekse Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı kurumlarınca, yeterince desteklenmediği ve yalnız bırakıldığı görüşmüştür. Aynı zamanda, birçok anne iyi yönetilmeyen biyolojik aile ilişkileri gibi hassas süreçler yüzünden çocuklarını koruyamıyor olmaktan kaygılıdır. Sonuç olarak, bu süreçte anneler kendilerini güvencesiz bir annelik deneyimi içerisinde, özel bakım ihtiyacı olan

çocuklarının kaderinin sorumluluğu ile baş başa kalmışlardır. Sonunda, ya ailelilerini korumanın yollarını kendi kendilerine bulmakta ya da bu yolda kendilerini dönüştürmektedirler. Bu çalışma sonunda, politika uygulaması noktasında, annelere daha esnek ve değişen bir yasal statü sağlanması ve psikolojik destek verilmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Koruyucu annelik, Koruyucu aile, Türkiye, çocuk bakımı politikası, aileleşme

To my dear family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Fatma Umut Beşpınar not only for guiding this thesis but also for her inspiration and support since the very beginning of my license education. I admire her very much both personally and academically and I am feeling very lucky that I have met her and have her by my side. I owe my sociological imagination mostly to her as I followed her in each class both during my license and during my master's degree. Additionally, this thesis was possible thanks to her passionate and companionate guidance and enthusiasm. I hope we can keep having each other in our lives in future too.

Secondly, I would like to thank my psychologist Kübra Gökhan who I am consulting for many years now. She teaches me life skills beyond my imagination in her kind, patient and very committed manner. When I was writing this thesis, I noticed how I was less judgmental towards the mothers while conducting the interviews compared to a few years ago, and this is only because I truly changed my self-perception and my perception of this world changed along with her great help. I learned to be gentle and understanding to others without sacrificing myself and take care of myself better. She truly changed the colour scale of my life and helped me in feeling much calmer in all these different colours.

Third, I would like to thank my dear family. Both my father and my mother wanted to provide us with more than they had. They always put great importance on our education and wanted a dignified life for us. Even in the hardest times, they kept their naïve and honorable attitude toward life. My father is a very brave man who made bold decisions and created his special way of “raising a daughter” by making her free, curious, and very much loved. My mother is a smart, gentle, and beautiful woman who I admire since my very early ages of childhood. Learning from their mistakes while feeling their endless love is the blessing of my life. It is not easy to write something about my brothers and sister. Without Kıvanç, simply I would be alone in this world. Number 3 is my biggest teacher in this life, I respect his struggles and I am glad that I

am witnessing him in his life. The last one is my real-life shining star; she brightens the world with her light despite everything. I love and respect them and learned from them how I need to share in this life not only for others but also for myself.

Forth, I want to thank all the brave foster mothers I have met who imitated this process. I hope I could make them feel understood better.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my dear partner Eren Çalışkan, our dog Kermit and myself. After I have made Eren's master's thesis possible, now he made mine. He is my jackpot in this world. I always felt loved and supported by him. He pushed me when I stopped believing in myself and helped me when I cannot find a way by myself. He is an incredible person who truly supported me even during my wildest extravagancies despite him being the calmest person existed in this world ever. I wish we can keep being courageous enough to feel our despairs and suffering and keep being compassionate and patient enough to witness each others accidental, gorgeous, mortal beings in this world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZ	vi
DEDICATION	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xv
CHAPTERS	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Theoretical Debates and Research Question	4
1.2. Research Design and Methodology.....	13
1.3. Assumptions	17
1.4. Contribution.....	23
2. FOSTER MOTHERHOOD IN TURKEY	26
2.1. The Aim of the Foster Care Policies	26
2.2. The Experiences of Foster Care Families.....	29
2.3. Turkish Translation of the Foster Care Policies: Koruyucu Ailelik (i.e. Protective Family).....	30
2.3.1. A Short History of Foster Care Policy in Turkey	32
2.3.2. Unavoidable Rise of the Foster Care Family	33
2.3.3. The Cost of the Unavoidable Rise of the Foster Care Family	34
3. METHODOLOGY.....	37

3.1. Research Philosophy.....	38
3.2. Methodological Choice.....	42
3.3. Research Strategy	43
3.4. Sampling Strategy.....	46
3.5. Ethical Considerations	47
3.6. Limitations.....	48
4. EXPECTATIONS vs. REALITIES	51
4.1. The Short-Lasting Dream of Motherhood.....	52
4.1.1. Preparation and the Meeting	57
4.2. The Influence of the Close Environment.....	60
4.2.1. Supporters.....	60
4.2.2. Challengers.....	64
4.2.3. Changing Relationships.....	68
4.3. The Influence of the Biological Families	69
4.3.1. Collaborative Biological Parents.....	71
4.3.2. Not Collaborative	72
4.4. The Influence of the MoFSS Institutions	75
4.4.1. Lack of Information	77
4.4.2. Lack of Support due to Lack of Capacity	78
4.4.3. Institution Prioritizing the Biological Families.....	79
4.5. Mothers Left Alone with the New Realities.....	81
4.5.1. Protection of the Child	82
4.5.2. Coping Mechanisms.....	84
4.5.3. Separation Anxiety	87
5. CONCLUSION	90
REFERENCES.....	97

APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE	102
B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	103
C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET.....	105
D. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU	120

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Number of Children in Foster Care per Year Between the Years 2002 to 2020	31
Table 2 Foster Care Family Payments According to Age Breakdown for the First Quarter of 2022	34
Table 3 Official 2019 End of the Year Statistics from MoFSS	35
Table 4 Interviewees' Age, Number of Children, Experience and Marital Status...	47

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IVF	United Nations Development Program
MoFSS	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
LGBTQ+	Lesbien Gay Bisexual Trans Queer Plus
TL	Turkish Lira

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From where I stand, I can easily say one of the most determining factors in my personal history is having my foster brother and sister. I remember how we made this decision as a family. One day we were travelling as a family by car, and we saw kids outside. When we were talking about them, I learned that my mother used to have a dream of adopting a child. However, because of some reactions from our family and friends, they have given up on this idea. We discussed it for a while and my parents decided this time to realize this dream. We were very excited to change a child's life for good, but we did not know a child could and would have drastically changed our lives too.

Our life changed far more than we planned in this experience. In the beginning, when my parents started to share their decision with our family and friends, their reactions were not as cheerful as we were expecting. The first reactions were one minute of silence followed by a look implying "seriously?". Unlike pregnancy announcements, most people were worried rather than excited about our news of expecting a child. Since then, we knew that we would not have that much of a supporting crowd around us. People were very open to sharing their concerns and did not give countenance to our family. Especially when they found one of us alone, we were having a hard time dealing with increasing levels of indiscretion. I was exposed to a bunch of questions such as, what was the purpose of my family, why they were trying to have another child after two or if I am bothered with this.

When we met with our first foster brother, the reactions kept coming to our family and this time directly to my foster brother too, only in different forms. Sometimes there were rumours about his family history, sometimes there was a fight at school. Our very close family members or friends treated him differently from my biological brother. Some were even openly saying that he will always be a stranger to them.

Paradoxically, we were also repeatedly told how great our family is and we were doing an incredible thing. On the other hand, my brother was a child with special needs, which was not making things easier.

I was very confused. I remember I was trying to somehow help and protect my foster brother, but mostly I felt desperate against his intense anger and confusion. He was not sharing his emotions easily. He was very fragile and disruptive at the same time. In this emotional roller coaster having one side applauses and the other side judging faces, I struggled to maintain a steady relationship with my family. I was also not sharing my experiences with others because I knew this would only harm each one of us more. My foster brother would be targeted, I and my biological brother would be questioned, and our parents would be blamed more. Thus, rather than seeking help, I started to promote foster care as I saw that many other families do it as a protection mechanism to increase the awareness of the children under state care.

I was not the only one who is trying to adapt to the new situation. My parents were far more struggling than I do. They were trying to find a way to understand and help my brother while not harming their relationship with their friends and family. On the other hand, this was getting more challenging day by day as my brother was very open to the inducements of his peers and he was mostly struggling to express himself even when he did nothing wrong. However, while my father was able to drop his responsibilities simply by going to work, and stop being worried or reflecting his frustrations without any filter, my mother was taking the responsibility for the health and development of my brother, coherence, and safety of our family in general and our relationship with others.

My mother used to have a very coherent personality. She educated us for being as much as docile and well-behaved as possible in almost every situation. We were mostly fitting her apprehension for a “good kid”. Although my biological brother challenged her slightly, my foster brother was on a completely new level for her. Her usual methods were not working for my brother or for the problems he was causing. Neither our neighbours nor his teacher was praising him. She understood she was the only significant other for my brother. If she surrenders, nobody will put such an effort to understand his pain. As a result, her emotions were oscillating between a great

compression of being the only protector of a child in the whole world and frustration of having a much harder experience than her expectation and cannot find enough help or guidance from her environment and the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) institutions.

Moreover, while not being supported by our close environment, my mother was often put in a position to protect my brother from them as they were harming him. They were openly declaring how they do not like him or showing he is not accepted by separating him from their children. As a result, my mother started to put distance between some of her family members and friends.

My mother put a great effort into the school life of my brother as well. She was fighting with the school officials for my brother's scholarship right and to prevent peer bullying incidents. On the other hand, standing behind my brother was not that easy because of his condition in school as he was easily agitated or manipulated by his peers. It was always a big fight to make him accepted to schools with his scholarship and protect him from peer bullying at the same time. Thereby, my mother started to seek more support, and she found some foundations. Later she became a member of the İstanbul Foster Care Family Foundation. Through the foundation, my mother reached out to psychologists and psychiatrists, however, while he was prescribed heavy medicines by psychiatrists after a few sessions psychologists were claiming that reaching him was impossible. While dealing with nervous breakdowns and various disputes with schools, neighbours, and other parents, my mother became a board member of the foundation. Through her position in the foundation, she heard about a child abandoned by her family, and we met with our new member of the family: our foster sister.

This decision made our family even more "deviant" than before in the eyes of our community. Deciding to have a foster child once was seen as an adventure and the struggles were somehow interpreted as bad coincidences which were impossible to predict in advance. However, starting such an adventure over again was our fault. This time the reactions were much clearer. Some supporters and opponents were not beware of reflecting their emotions to every member of my family.

On the other hand, my mother also changed her position from coherent to more determinant in her relationships. She put even more distance to the ones who reacted

negatively, and she dedicated herself more to the foundation where she pioneered new projects, she gave interviews, and she gave guidance to many foster mothers on their journeys.

In the beginning, I was completely against the decision of having another family member most probably with various other special needs and challenges. I was angry with my mother for doing this once again while we were still struggling with our experience. However, after she came into our house, I realized that the decision was already made. I also understood how my mother passed through all the fear she has. After having a toddler looking at you with their big, lost and confused eyes, it is almost impossible to make a rational calculation.

1.1. Theoretical Debates and Research Question

When we discussed this topic with my thesis advisor a few years ago, I was not sure I was that interested in this topic as this experience was very new for me and I did not realize the intensity and uniqueness from that perspective. I was thinking it was a very bland topic where I cannot write much more than the experience of having a biological child which is already commonly discussed. Thankfully, I did not change the topic which allowed me to not only describe such a unique experience of mine but also helped to locate myself in this experience as I write.

After years of experience as a foster sister, I had a chance to witness foster parents' lives and hear their stories on several occasions. In the meetings where we discussed foster parenthood problems or other organizations arranged to promote foster care, I met with parents in person or listened to their speeches from the stage. Although their numbers were fewer, fathers were interested in these events as well. However, the reason why I prefer to study only mothers rather than parents, in general, is my observation of the gendered behaviour of parents here as well. Although fathers were very much interested in the issues discussed, the ones who find themselves in a hideous transformative experience are the mothers. I think the intensity of their experience cannot be solely explained by foster care parenthood, but it requires a gender analysis including a perspective of "intensive motherhood".

In these meetings, foster care policies were usually very much praised and promoted but in the small talks between the parents, foster parents commonly were sharing their very challenging experiences along with their very intense emotions. On the one hand, they were very much attached to their children, and they were stating that they are feeling great emotions, yet they were struggling with the foster care agreement that they are subjected to.

Meanwhile, the number of meetings promoting the policy was increasing along with the great interest and the leadership of Emine Erdoğan. Along with her appearance and support, the number of foster parents started to increase sharply. Between the years 2012 and 2013, the number is more than doubled and the increase maintained (Table 1). To understand the reasons and the results of this increase I looked at the literature on the family and care policies in Turkey and I noticed that many researchers emphasized the increasing familization and privatization of the care policies in Turkey under the rule of the current government of AKP (Acar & Altunok 2013; Dildar, 2022; Akkan, 2018; Aybars et al. 2018). Along with this intention, the institutions are emptied as much as possible, and the children are sent back to their biological families with socio-economical support (Kılıç, 2010). After biological families, adoption was the second alternative, however, all children were not able to be adopted. Foster care appears here as a great solution.

The foster care policy was very much coherent with the intentions of the government as it was providing an outsourced, cheap, and quality care opportunity for the children under the institutional care who were not able to be adopted. This policy was an opportunity too good to miss for the government. Consequently, the number of foster parents raised very quickly. However, although this raise was promoted as a great success, it was not representing the whole picture as the experience of the foster parents was still missing.

While searching for the experience of the foster parents in the literature, I noticed there is a gap in the sociology literature. There are only a few studies on foster motherhood in the context of Turkey and almost all of them are focusing on policy implementations, families' performances in care and rehabilitation, and foster children's psychologies. In other words, they are written to represent the practice of

this policy where parents are considered only as implementing partners rather than agents and real human beings with emotions. Besides, in the literature, there is overwhelming praise for the foster care policy for its groundbreaking model of providing care alternatives even for a short time which is diminishing the time children spend under the institutional care to a bare minimum. These praises are well embraced by governmental institutions and NGOs as well. Even the NGOs barely make studies on the problematic parts of the policy. While the intense positive emotions were very much emphasized, the struggles of the parents were treated as small prices paid for saving a child's life. Consequently, my thesis is a pioneer study in describing foster mothers' experiences in this policy, for this reason, it has a strong descriptive component. Besides, while focusing on the experience of these mothers, it is impossible to ignore their confusion and despair. Although this is contradicting its representation in the existing literature, in my study I aim to describe the challenging experiences of mothers along with their positive experiences, to understand the influence of the existing policy implementation in Turkey.

While analyzing the experience of the mothers shaped by this specific policy implementation, I describe foster mothers as agents who are shaping this experience while being shaped by it. To understand their position and perception of their role, I researched the concepts of "motherhood" and "adoption" in Turkey. Thereafter, I also examined the policy implementations and foster mothers' experiences in other countries and examined how the policy is imported, and how it does or does not fit the existing family structure. With the help of this contextual analysis, I described how foster care motherhood is a form of precarious motherhood because of the policies sacrificing mothers for the sake of the children.

Motherhood is a very loaded concept in Turkey, and it is a position that defines being a woman. Since the early republic, women have been defined as mothers and valued for being fertile, enduring, and loving mothers (Tekeli, 1985; Bora, 2016). In our times, despite various changes in cultural and demographic structure, many women in Turkey still want to become a mother and they even define their values according to their motherhood performances. The value of fertility and ongoing will for motherhood is mostly described in the studies focusing on the IVF technologies in Turkey (Sahinoglu & Buken, 2010; Gürtin, 2013).

On the other hand, the demographic structure of Turkey is changing and while divorce rates and single-headed households are increasing, becoming a mother is postponed especially in urban areas (Turkey Demographic and Health Survey, 2018). Due to the biological limits for fertility, women are seeking different options as In Vitro Fertilization (IVF). However, despite how they are represented, pregnancy through IVF technologies is a very costly procedure without any guarantee for pregnancy. As surrogacy is illegal in Turkey, the last option for becoming a mother is adoption but it also has some strict conditions and requires lots of procedures. Thus, the very last, cost-effective, and less complicated option to become a mother is foster care parenting.

As a result, women who want to become a mother apply to the MoFSS institutions as a last option for motherhood. When they apply for foster care, they are told; that foster care is very similar to adoption, but it has far less complicated procedures. Accordingly, mothers start to apply for foster care as they think they are going to have an experience of adoption with a few slight differences.

On the other hand, the aim of MoFSS in increasing the number of foster parents in Turkey is not to offer women an opportunity for motherhood experience but to offer a child in institutional care a house care opportunity. The foster care policy is developed for children who are not able to be adopted as they have a maintaining relationship with their biological families. The policy is imported to decrease the number of children residing under institutional care. For this reason, foster care is a temporary caregiving agreement between the MoFSS and parents to provide a child house care until they turn back to their families.

While foster mothers aim for a motherhood experience with their children, the government aims to outsource temporary, cheap, and quality care for children under institutional care. However, due to the naming and implementation of the policy, this intention of the state is obscure. The policy is called in Turkey “Koruyucu Ailelik” meaning “Protective Parenthood” rather than “Foster Care”. The denotation of the policy is hiding the temporary feature of the policy which is the very core condition of the agreement. As a result, mothers are starting this process to become a parent rather than becoming temporary caregivers which means a great difference in the relationship with their foster child. Besides, the temporary feature of foster care parenthood is

already highly criticized in other western countries, and it is identified as the most problematic part of the experience for the foster parents. This is because while the policy aims to provide temporary family care for children the concepts of temporary and family cannot coexist as durability is one of the very core descriptive elements of family.

The foster care policy is generated and implemented to provide children with temporary family care who are residing under institutional care. Unless a biological family withdraws from their rights, even when a child is taken away from their family for the best interest of the child, their ties must be protected. As a result, when a family puts their child into institutional care or the child is taken away, they are registered under state protection. That is, the legal guardian of the child becomes the state. Meanwhile, as institutional care is harmful to children, this policy allows children to spend more time in a family environment, rather than in institutional care. During this period, biological families are expected to recover, and they are supported for rehabilitation. When the biological family successfully recovers and proves that they can provide safe care for their child, the child is taken from the foster family and given back to their biological parents again.

As I already mentioned, the implementation of this policy is not as smooth as its idea. However, the difficulties are varying according to the differences in policy implementations. While in the USA the alteration of foster children is much higher which is causing problems with the attachment, in Europe families are complaining about the temporary aspect of motherhood (Wozniak, 1997; Leathers, 2005; Blythe et al. 2014)

Moreover, it is found that foster motherhood is defined as a rewarding yet very challenging experience for mothers (Blythe, Jackson, Halcomb, & Wilkes, 2012). Despite the growing need for foster parents, not only existing studies but also implementing policies are failing to address the experiences of foster parents as the foster parents are considered as implementing partners rather than real human beings committing an emotional relationship with children. The studies are mainly focusing on children or the care performance of the foster parents. However little existing

research on foster parenthood stresses how foster parents are struggling from lack of support and knowledge (Blythe et al. 2014).

I claim that it is important to emphasize these problems occur especially after policymakers position parents as temporary caregivers while foster parents are building a very strong bond of parenthood with their foster child whom they are providing very intense labor in their life. Policymakers may assume foster care providers would have a motivation of altruism while applying for adoption or foster care so that they would provide emotional and material labor without asking for any kind of commitment, but research shows that this is not representing the reality.

Despite the calculations of the policymakers, altruism is not the main motivation for foster care although it can be a part of it. Motivations for becoming a foster caregiver may vary from having a child, filling the place of grown children, or altruism. While for mothers who do not have a biological child, their motivation is having a child, for the ones who have one, altruism and feeling the “empty nest” are more common (Migliorini et al., 2018). Hence, becoming a mother is an important part of this experience.

I claim that, when familial structures are taken into consideration, the context of Turkey is closer to European practices than the USA as well as in terms of the motivations of foster mothers, and biological family profiles. Unlike the USA practices, temporary caregiving is not embraced by foster parents at all and a problem with safe attachment is out of the question. Consequently, mothers are starting this journey to “become a mother” and after this point, taking the child away or even an agreement stating they are not the “real” parents of the child is very contradictory to their motivations.

In the example of Turkey, although the “temporary” component is emphasized a lot, in practice the length of the foster care periods is higher than its western examples. In theory, short-term foster care is possible, yet it is not put into practice due to several reasons. The main reason is biological families are not put in a rehabilitation process where they are expected to take their child back in the end. This is because taking the children away from their families is consulted as the very last option in Turkey. The biological families are supported socio-economically before the decision of removing

the child and the biological family care is prioritized before all the other options. MoFSS institutions are well aware that if a child is taken away from their families despite all the support provided, it is very unlikely that they would go back. As a result, foster children are not spending a short time in the houses. Rather they are spending years in foster homes where they grow up, and some are not seeing their parents more than a few times in more than ten years.

However, current laws are prioritizing biological parents only with the condition of keeping their relationship by requesting meetings for one hour a year. As long as there is a meeting request once a year, biological parents keep every right without any loss, besides foster parents are not allowed to file suit for getting the child's custody. After increasing disagreements between MoFSS institutions and foster parents, recently foster parents started to increase filing cases against biological parents and MoFSS institutions for getting foster children's full custody of themselves. These cases are concluding more and more in foster parents' favour. However, MoFSS' attitude in prioritizing biological families is not changing. While the length of the foster care is a very determinant factor in the experience of foster parents and children, this aspect is not reflected on legal and policy levels and this is the reason why mothers are very concerned, especially about their very ambiguous position.

More briefly, from the policymaker's perspective, the foster care system is a way of providing children under state protection with temporary family care instead of institutional care. Contrary to adoption, the aim is not to provide a child for a family but to provide a family to a child residing under institutional care. The system prioritizes the needs of the child (Serdar, 2000). On the other hand, foster mothers start this procedure with the motivation of becoming a mother, they mostly are first applying for adoption. That is the difference between adoption and foster care is only valid for policymakers. While legally foster mothers are solely temporary caregivers, they define themselves as "mothers".

As it is shortly mentioned, different from adoption, children who are in foster care keep their status of state protection. Foster mothers are not legally in a position of legal guardian of the child as the state keeps the legal guardianship of the child to be able to give it back to the biological parents when they are rehabilitated. Foster parents have

rights and responsibilities accordingly. However, when these responsibilities are not regulated properly by MoFSS institutions, they turn into vicious disruptions to foster families' ordinary lives.

There are basic responsibilities such as regularly sharing information regarding the child with their assigned social worker and asking for their permission in necessary situations. Besides, foster parents are also obliged to collaborate with social workers to bring children and biological families together regularly unless otherwise indicated. These meetings can be traumatic for children and foster parents and, they require very sensitive regulation. Mothers hold the responsibility of protecting their families from the trauma of these meetings while it is also a very traumatic experience for themselves as well. The meetings are a continuous reminder of the delicate legal ground they have and how they are not a real family but just a temporary stop.

Moreover, while the foster care policy in Turkey is not giving the mothers the status of a "real mother", it also lands mothers with protection and rehabilitation of a child with special needs. The policy called "Koruyucu Ailelik" in Turkey stands for parents being the protector of their children. Mothers are expected to be the protector of the child's mental and physical health along with their caregiver's responsibility. Children are entering a very complex system where their legal parent states, that they have biological parents that they are supposed to see periodically but they are living in the house of their foster parents.

Studies show that the children who are available for fostering have commonly traumatic backgrounds. As a result, they are experiencing relative difficulties in their mental and physical development and health conditions (Blythe, Wilkes, & Halcomb, 2014). They have higher rates of mental problems, and they may likely suffer from emotional and behavioural problems (Minis et al., 2004) Consequently, foster parenting requires additional skills compared to traditional parenting. Besides, reaching guiding information is comparatively harder as well and they cannot find proper consultancy either.

According to the research made in Europe, while dealing with various struggles, foster mothers feel undervalued (Blythe, Jackson, Halcomb, & Wilkes, 2012; Rosenwald & Bronstein, 2008). They feel that neither their communities nor social workers

appreciate and support families enough. On the contrary, to prevent stigmatization they may hide that they are foster parents from their community (Blythe et al., 2012). I claim that in Turkey the experience is even more challenging.

Even though the name of the policy is transformed and not lost in translation, the policy is almost directly imported from its western examples. Consequently, it is sacrificing mothers to protect children. Without giving enough material, social, psychological, or legal support to the mother, foster care policy is putting not only responsibility of care but also rehabilitation and protection of the child on the mother's shoulder without giving her solid legal ground.

Despite the policy being called the “Foster Parenthood System”, the structure of the policy does not represent family living. According to Bourdieu (1996), there are various family dynamics, and they are increasingly varying from the traditional nuclear family setting. This is giving the concept its dynamic feature, which is named by him a “*structuring structure*”. However, he defines three valid features to describe the concept of family in practice and theory. These are the translucent characteristic of family, privacy, and durability. The foster care parenthood practice is not in line with any of the features defined by Bourdieu. It is temporary and not durable. Besides, the foster mother is not holding the custody of the child and they need to collaborate with MoFSS for decisions made about the child, which is contradicting both the privacy feature and the translucent character of the family. The child has a relationship with the biological parent and has their legal rights on the state so that they could not count in any family as they belong to it. Foster parents do not privately make the decisions; the invasion of the MoFSS institution put a public feature on this relationship. Thus, foster mothers are expected to provide care with the attention and love of a family without having the status of a family.

I claim that mothers are left alone in the triangle of the foster child, biological parent and MoFSS institutions. The policy of foster care parenthood is making mothers invest their relationship with the foster children as if they are having an ordinary parenthood relationship while they certainly do not have it. After sheer numbers of experienced disappointments, the gap between expectations and reality expands. Mothers, who do not have enough support even when they have quite a high level of socioeconomic

status, are transforming themselves in this experience. From this perspective, I aim to understand the expectations of mothers from foster motherhood. Besides, I am questioning “how foster mothers are experiencing motherhood”, and “how this experience is shaped by different social, familial, and personal dimensions of mothers’ lives?”. Finally, my main question is, “How does the foster family interpretation of the state as a “protective family” that designs the foster care providers as mothers shape the experience of motherhood for foster mothers?”.

1.2. Research Design and Methodology

Before writing my thesis, in one of the courses I took during my master’s degree, I made a small study in which I conducted semi-structured interviews with six foster mothers. This small study gave me many clues about the foster motherhood experience, and I designed my research accordingly. Before this study, I only knew the story of my mother who already had two biological children and wanted one more due to altruistic reasons. Besides, the biological families of both my foster brother and sister are mostly collaborative. We have not met with any of them, and they did not violate a rule with the risk of hurting any member of my family. Thus, before this study, I was not aware of the various experiences and vulnerabilities of mothers and how biological parents and their assigned specialists¹ in the MoFSS institutions had the potential to define this experience.

On the other hand, my brother was a child with special needs who had mild aggressions, which was very challenging for each member of my family. I was thinking my parents are not doing a good job in dealing with a child with special needs as his emotional tantrums were not ending or getting any easier while his teachers and psychiatrists were repeatedly telling us that they cannot reach him. We were sacrificing a lot without moving any forward. However, when I met with other mothers, I realized that all mothers have made important sacrifices to protect their children as well. Like how we experienced, all mothers found themselves in the foster care system while

¹ Assigned specialists to the families are responsible for surveilling the family’s condition, the capability of caregiving and their relationship with the children to assess if they can provide a healthy environment for the children. They are also responsible for conducting all bureaucratic procedures from providing the necessary permissions to financial procedures. They are also responsible for regulating and assessing the meetings with the biological families. Finally, they are the main consultants of the families in the institution.

adoption was their first intention. As a result, I noticed that I should consider further points while designing my research for my thesis. First, it is very likely for mothers to feel like they are the ones who failed in providing good care rather than noticing this is a structural problem causing similar results for all foster mothers. Second, mothers most probably will have many negative experiences where their decisions and performances in motherhood are judged. Finally, mothers might feel the pressure of MoFSS institutions on themselves, as they are the authority defining their relationship with their children. As a result, I knew that I have to prove to mothers that I am a safe person to share these very intense experiences and feelings.

This time as I am well aware that the policy is shaping their experiences, in this study I aim to analyze the impact of foster care policy in Turkey on the foster motherhood experience. To answer my questions, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 foster mothers. My research has an ethnographic component due to my experience in foster care. I have an active participant position as a researcher as I already know many foster mothers and witness their stories but I am not a mother myself. Besides, as a foster sister, I am contributing to the activities of İstanbul Koruyucu Aile Derneği (İstanbul Foster Parents Foundation). Therefore, I reached mothers through this foundation and some WhatsApp groups of foster parents. Although foster mothers were reluctant to share their experiences, due to my position as a foster sister, it was not hard for me to reach mothers and motivate them to share their experiences.

All mothers had very mixed emotions about sharing their experiences with me. They were concerned, yet they wanted to express themselves and ask for some advice. As all foster children are suffering or suffered once from labelling, they were very aware of the fact that sharing the difficulties of their child may put their foster child in danger in their communities. Besides, as they have a connection with other parents from the foundation, they are very aware of the negative perception about children who are institutionally cared for in general, they did not want to say something that can support this idea. As they knew the struggles and the past of their children they felt even guilty about complaining about the times when the child slightly misbehaved after that much pain. However, this concern also brings solitude to the mothers where they cannot share their experiences with other mothers, and when a lack of institutional, specialized support added to this context, they were in an increasing need for sharing

what is happening in their lives. They were suffering a lot, they were paying high prices and they were very confused yet they were very tired of others' reactions. They were in desperate need of a piece of advice or recognition. Consequently, I was the perfect person who can listen to them, understand them and sometimes share my knowledge on existing available support mechanisms they can reach.

Despite strongly feeling the advantage of my “in-between position” as a researcher who was seen as a specialist but also someone who is an insider, this position was giving me responsibility for a relationship based on trust with mothers as well. This is because I noticed that there were three types of mothers answering the questions. One group was reluctant to share, and they were only sharing filtered experiences and emotions. With this group, I either could not manage to build trust, or they were reluctant in general. The other group were answering the questions sincerely, but they were always careful in protecting some information such as the name of the child. In the last group of mothers, the majority of the interviewees, shared their emotions and experiences without filtering them that much as if they were talking with a friend. These mothers were trusting me in understanding their experience and not causing further harm. As a result, they have shared personal information or emotions with specific details. Some mothers even met their children with me or sent me pictures or videos without my request. For this reason, I give importance to the ethical aspect of the research to protect mothers from possible harm that may be caused by this research.

All mothers were informed about the subject and other details of the research, and they signed consent forms before the interview. Before starting the interview and after the interview they were reminded that they can withdraw from the study whenever they want. The sound records are only saved on my personal computer and interviewees are informed about the recording beforehand. Additionally, I do not use mothers' or child's names, I call mothers with various colours according to their impressions on me. Finally, I filter the stories which can be easily detected and identified by their subjects or others.

From a feminist perspective, I aimed to reduce the hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the science object as much as possible. I did ask tricky questions as I do not believe there is a hidden knowledge which I am supposed to find by making

them reveal. On the contrary, I aim to provide a safe environment for mothers where they can share their experiences and I aim to be a collective echo of their voices. I encouraged mothers to share their unique experiences as much as possible without interruptions. Although I aimed to conduct semi-structured interviews for a few mothers who were not stopping to talk and wait for my questions, I gave space to share their feelings and these interviews became unstructured. However, I intentionally did not cut their words unless it is becoming irrelevant. Especially I encouraged them to make their points which they give more importance considering I might be forgetting some aspects.

I am aware that I am very emotionally loaded about my field of study. For this reason, in finding my position in relationship with my object of analysis, I am inspired by A. Abbotts's 2007 article *Against Narrative: A Preference to Lyrical Sociology*. Rather than trying to hide my emotions, I aim to be emotionally engaged with my study field with a lyrical sensibility. I aim to be "*curious without exoticism, sympathetic without presumption, and thoughtful without judgment*" during the interviews and later in my analysis.

While constructing the interview questions and later in the analyzing process, the position of the mothers put me in a challenging position. As I already mentioned, mothers are deprived of very basic and universal features of family settings starting from not having custody. For this reason, I needed a methodology, which is for analyzing not only traditional nuclear forms of families but also alternative ones. J. Finch offers to analyze families based on how they *display* and *do* their families. She claims that family relationships require to be displayed among the family members and for others as well (2007). As a result, I asked mothers their experiences with their children as well as how they are sharing or displaying their relationship with their significant others as well as their communities.

However, for this research, I claim that as much as what is displayed, what is not displayed requires attention. Similarly, while I focus on how they are "*doing*" their families, I also give attention to the activities where mothers feel like they are destroying their families. To illustrate that calling each other with the family names as "mother" and "daughter" or "son" is counted as *displaying* or *doing* family, I claim

taking the child to meet with adults while there is a potential of harm is a practice of “*destroying*” their family.

1.3. Assumptions

Thanks to having foster siblings for more than ten years, I have met with mothers and had the chance to have some intimate conversations before starting to write my thesis. For this reason, I had a strong assumption about what I could find in the interviews. Some of my assumptions were accurate while some were very different from my expectations and opened more discussions. First, I was expecting the legal background and policy implementations would define the journey of mothers. More than I assumed, due to the legal ambiguity I found that the quality of the specialists provided by the MoFSS can put mothers on completely different roads. Secondly, I was expecting to not encounter any mother who is in peace with the potential temporary aspect of their relationship, and I assumed all foster mothers would call themselves mothers not caregivers. About the definition of the relationship, I found exactly what I was expecting. Besides, I was expecting mothers to experience foster motherhood as a rewarding but challenging process, where foster mothers may feel appreciated but not supported enough by their communities, where protecting their child emerges as a very important component of the experience. Although this was a correct guess, I could not presume the great solitude and lack of appreciation and anger they feel. The labeling of the foster children experiencing is making the mother not share her challenges to protect the child, they are not asking for help or often cannot reach a specialist even if they do. Thirdly, because of their precarious legal position, I expected they may feel confused about their motherhood identities, and they may feel uncomfortable about the relations with the biological families of their children which lead led them to question their motherhood performances. Although these predictions were correct, I underestimated the impact of the biological families on the mother-child relationships, and about the motherhood performances, I found much more hidden suffering and worry than I have observed. Mothers are suffering, blaming themselves and others while feeling alone and they need support desperately. Finally, I could not predict the different motivations and how these motivations and different experiences may put great pressure on mothers. Besides, I was not aware of how the lack of institutional support can change the destinies of foster families.

After the interviews, I found that regardless of their motivations and expectations, a great effort is made by all foster mothers during the whole process. It is a very emotional and precarious experience for mothers. They all found themselves in positions where they were not imagining themselves before and severely changed their lives. Some mothers change their relationships, some change their work/employment positions, some change their environments and in the end, all mothers have a transformative experience on a certain level while they challenge their community for a transformation as well.

I was assuming most of the mothers are starting this journey to have a child or adopt a child but they learn about foster care on their way. I was expecting maybe to find a few mothers who willingly started this journey of foster motherhood. More than I was expecting, there is only one mother who started the process aiming to be a foster parent. All mothers first decide to adopt a child but find themselves in a position where it is not possible due to several reasons or foster care offered to them by social workers. Nonetheless, despite how it is presented to future mothers, foster motherhood and adoption have completely different legal grounds. Therefore, they generate very different experiences as they have different struggles. While adopting a child legally provides the parent with a full legal custodian of a child, foster care is only a temporary caregiver status. When a child is adopted, it means the new family of the child is the adopted family. Thus, they are legal parents and they have as much as legal rights in the decisions they make in the life of their child as a biological parents. To illustrate, they can change the name of the child, they give the child their family names, and they are not supposed to maintain the supervision of MoFSS. They even are suggested but not forced to tell the child about their non-biological family ties, they are not pursued and do not live with a risk of losing their child unless there is serious neglect or abuse. The only difference between adoption and biological parenthood is that parents are evaluated during the application procedure, and they need to wait until they pair with a child. However, foster care means a continuous relationship of the children with their biological parents and MoFSS social workers which means they are constantly reminded that they are foster children, and the family is constantly reminded of their precarious family status.

Before and during my research, I attended lots of meetings, conferences, and workshops and I obtained enough information about the implementations of the foster care policy in Turkey and the intentions of the MoFSS to interpret its effects on mothers' lives. However, although I was aware of various problems on the implementation level, I was not aware of how there are structural problems and the lack of specialists which can completely change the experience for the mothers. During the interviews, I noticed some specialists are not experienced enough to support mothers even on a very basic level. Besides, the legal background of the policy is putting foster parents in a very disadvantaged position against biological parents. Even when there are situations where keeping the relationship with the biological parents is endangering both the child and the family psychologically and physically, specialists may use this position to push families to keep the relationship even if it is clearly against the best interest of the children. A family would be lucky if they can encounter a well informed and experienced specialist who stands for them but they can encounter someone who even does not inform them about their very basic rights as periodical financial support for foster parents.

As the biological families of my foster siblings did not cause so many problems such as false promises, I could not imagine what can be the consequences of a regular problematic connection with the biological families. However, during the interviews, I notice the regular or irregular meetings of the foster children with their biological families are the most destructive component of this policy for the foster families, especially when they are not well regulated by the specialists. The meaning of the meetings with the biological family means a constant reminder of the quality of the relationship between foster parents. From the very early years of their lives to their teenage years' children always come back from these meetings very confused and emotionally triggered. All are showing behavioural problems which are sometimes overcome. Foster mothers complain about how their relationship hurts sometimes as they are forcing their children to go to see their biological parents. There is the mildest harm a biological parent can cause. Some parents are promising their children crying that they will take them back, parents who find the foster parents, threaten them, or ask for money from the foster children.

As it is previously stated, despite their slippery legal status, all interviewees call themselves “mother”. No foster mother said this is a temporary stage of her life. All mothers are very attached to their foster children. I have made interviews with mothers who are experienced for only one week to 24 years, yet they were all sharing the fear of losing their child. Interestingly, the ones who are claiming that the biological family meetings would not cause any problem were the ones who are with the foster children without a constant relationship with their parents. That is, I claim their remarks are not representing the real nature of the relationship, or I can say they implicitly are saying the best biological family is the disappeared, biological family. On the other hand, for other families, when these meetings are realized under the supervision of an inexperienced specialist, it can harm mothers. One mother stated she even considered moving abroad to get rid of these struggles.

On the other hand, mothers maintain that, despite getting lots of praise from their communities, they are not supported enough, on the contrary, most of them find themselves in a position of protecting their foster child against their communities and their very close ones. There are mothers, brothers, sisters, neighbours, friends, teachers, or even husbands who are distanced to protect the foster child. Family members especially can be very aggressive while opposing this process. The label of “child of the institution” (“kurum çocuđu”) is very common as reasoning their opposition. The main understanding is if a family abandoned a child s/he is the bad apple. In the heated debates between family members, this statement is not hard enough that they directly use expressions such as “a thrown away bastard of a stranger” (“elalemin dođurup attıđı piç”) or they are saying they will not value or love the child when the child can actually hear them. Mothers are very hurt and tired of the hypocrisy of their communities.

After a few bad experiences as above mentioned, mothers choose complete silence about their foster children as they perfectly know that any statement, they use may make out a case against the choice of becoming a foster mother. Thus, no matter how they struggle with their motherhood experience, they just do not share these problems with others or ask for help. Another motivation for not complaining and not sharing bad experiences may be the feeling of failure for mothers who do not have a biological child. Even during the interviews, those mothers kept mentioning that they are

enjoying motherhood so much and the child is a blessing to their lives no matter how I push them to express where they are struggling or where they need more support.

Similarly, all mothers were angry at the reactions of their communities however, while mothers who have biological children were angrier for less appreciation and support, mothers who only have foster children were not expressing such emotions. There was only one mother out of these categories who willingly chose not to have a biological child. She was easily expressing her anger. For this reason, the mothers who could not have children may feel that they are failed mothers, so they did not give themselves the right to complain about the “miracle” they finally have.

Most of the mothers stated that they were not expecting such a challenging journey with their foster children. Besides, they were not informed enough about foster parenthood at the beginning of their journeys, they were even misguided sometimes about the legal status of foster parenthood, their rights as a foster parent, and the biological family history of the child. Some mothers were promised that they will adopt their child soon or later and agreed to be foster carers with the idea that they are only passing through a temporary formality. Even though they all realized the difficulties on the way, after the attachment was made between their child and them, there was no comeback after building the relationship with the child.

The gap between the expectations from motherhood and the reality of practice widens for most of them over time. All are proud but very tired of their experience at the same time. One mother even told me frankly, “I would not suggest to anyone I love such a journey, my son is my life now, but if you ask me if I suggest this to others, the answer is no”.

Another reason why it is a very challenging process is the fact that almost all foster children have several special needs from learning difficulties to attachment problems or behavioural problems as they all have a traumatic background. However, often not enough information is provided about the specific traumas of the children. Families desperately are left with the need to learn the ways to cope with children having a traumatic background. Letting alone without providing specialized information according to the unique experiences of the children, most of the families did not even take basic introductory training.

While rehabilitation of the child is a solid problem for most mothers, foster parents are struggling to benefit from the rights of the child coming from their state protection status. To illustrate, most private schools are causing trouble when registering children free of charge. Even if they do, most of the foster children experience problems in their school environments from peer bullying to problems in learning. MoFSS is not pursuing enough for families to benefit from their rights and support families in predicted problems.

Despite all these struggles, all families somehow managed to maintain their fight for being good foster mothers but all were feeling the precarity of their position. There were no mothers who were comfortable with their performance. The efforts were not enough to make them even close to the perfect “mother” in the eyes of themselves or others. Foster motherhood is visibly very hard and it is an ongoing struggle for life rather than “healing a child with the secret love of a mother”. Thereby, it is not the desired experience but it is only a respected form of motherhood.

On the contrary to being desired, despite there being a very strong common discourse on foster care being a divine thing to do, it is also something that people wish to be far away from themselves. Consequently, while foster mothers were expecting to be completing themselves in a loving and harmonized relationship with their child while being appreciated for not only being a mother but also realizing such a sacred duty from an altruistic point, they find themselves in a very different position than their apprehensions. They are struggling much more, supported, and feeling successful much less than they were expecting. They are not heroic mothers, quite the opposite, they are clumsy mothers who brought trouble to themselves and their families by taking the responsibility for a problematic child who cannot be rehabilitated.

I find that mothers are obliged to redefine their position of motherhood in this experience. While they are dealing with an insecure legal status, lack of knowledge, bureaucratically slippery slope, and a child with various mental or physical problems; they might not be supported by their community as much as a “real” mother or they might not be rewarded by their altruistic motherhood choice. Far more than providing care for a child, I found that mothers take upon themselves the protection of a child and their transforming families, from the harm of stigmatization, bureaucratic

problems, and emotional struggles which might be a push factor for transforming self especially when this new position requires a different positioning than they already have. They find themselves stuck in a precarious form of motherhood where they seek their ways of security.

While both the concepts of motherhood and adoption are separately very loaded in the context of Turkey, putting them together and adding foster care ambiguity, is creating a very precarious motherhood experience for mothers. Almost all mothers I have met, this experience of being a foster mother required much more effort compared to their expectations and obtaining any result from the well-being of the child to the status of a good mother is much harder than their expectations as well. The distance between expectations and reality with such a high level of emotions constitutes a very hideous result for most of the mothers who are forced to change themselves to survive.

1.4. Contribution

As is already mentioned, there are not enough studies focusing on foster mothers' experiences as agents of this system. In this study, I study foster care from a feminist perspective where I examine and describe women's very unique experiences of motherhood where not only two very definitive elements of motherhood are separated: birth and care. Moreover, mothers do not have custody of the children. As a result, I emphasize their dialectical transformative experience where while they are transformed by this experience, they are transforming the definition of motherhood in the family structure with the influence of Bourdieu's definition of family as a "structuring structure". Foster motherhood experience is a very proper example of this concept with its not ending feature, this experience is pushing mothers to their limits for a change, and while even they do change, they cannot reach a comfortable position of "normal mother" where they can stop questioning motherhood.

My position is a combination of second-wave feminism valued motherhood experience and third-way feminism focusing more on various motherhood experiences. From a second-wave feminist perspective, I claim this experience has a creative power that pushes women to their limits for claiming their place in their

communities and/or being the agent in defining their relationships even within the most conservative relationships as relationships with their close family members. From a third-way feminist perspective, foster motherhood is worth examining as a unique experience of motherhood, which is very challenging to the conservative idea of standardized and universal motherhood.

This analysis of motherhood provides a critical opinion of the idea of motherhood by separating birth and care. Motherhood is a highly discussed topic by feminists as the experience is somewhere natural and cultural aspects intersect. However, what is natural and what is cultural in this experience is highly discussed. Rather than finding the line here, this study is important as it represents how thinking of motherhood as a natural experience affects the practice of motherhood. Mothers who do not have biological children are not complaining about almost anything regarding their motherhood experience after not being in the natural part of motherhood.

On the other hand, the great emphasis made on defining the self by not being a caregiver but being a mother shows the given importance of the status of motherhood. Motherhood is more valuable than only providing care. Although in practice they are giving care to a child, the caregiver is a bland description for mothers which is not enough to represent their relationship with their children. Motherhood is loaded with much more emotion and abilities than a caregiver whereas foster mothers barely feel successful but cannot content themselves with only being a caregiver. Being a mother is strictly represented as something more than being a caregiver. It is an important question to ask what this is “more” that can make a caregiver; a mother. More emotions or more abilities would be enough or there would still be something missing? If there is enough “more” to become a mother and if a mother could not give birth her child can fulfil this “more” and become a “real mother”.

I agree with the idea that the caregiver definition would be very unfair and would not represent the very labour-intensive and emotional processes they experience. On the other hand, if this is analyzed from the other way around, without the aim of being the “perfect mother”, providing care to a child with special needs who do not have a biological tie would be a choice that requires lots of explanation. It is very illuminating the fact that kind of choice can only be expected from a “perfect mother” of how

heavily loaded the concept of motherhood. In her analysis, Wozniak (1997) call this being the “True woman”.

Wozniak analyzes media coverage of foster mothers, and she maintains “contemporary foster care embodies the Victorian ideal, True women.” Through a selfless love for a child who they even did not give birth to, foster mothers are put the status of the “True women”, “Supermom”. She further claims, “Therefore, through the constructed ideal of True Women, foster mothers epitomize virtues of selflessness and benevolence and show their talent for transformation. True Women takes throwaway less-than-children and creates objects worthy of her attention i.e., True Children” (1997).

This very precarious, not accepted, not appreciated, not enough supported (compared to biological motherhood) and very labour-intensive form of motherhood is giving a clue about the magnitude of the status of motherhood can cover-up. Foster care motherhood provides mothers not an ordinary motherhood status, but they are becoming mothers who are really devoting themselves to their children without any kind of an expectation more than the joy of providing care to a child who is in need.

Finally, this study would be important for future foster mothers as it would provide a source for the specialists in policymaking to understand how and in which aspects mothers need support. Besides, it may be influential for the further regulations about the policy which is protecting families while protecting children by the adaptation of the existing policy regarding existing experiences of the foster mothers represented.

CHAPTER 2

FOSTER MOTHERHOOD IN TURKEY

In this chapter, I aim to describe foster care policy implementation in Turkey from the perspective of governmental institutions and mothers to understand mothers' position in this policy. To explain the implication of the policy, first I examine why and how such a policy is developed at first. After this part, I write about the literature on foster care motherhood experiences. Later, I analyze how this policy is implemented in Turkey within the framework of the care policies of the current government in order to how the intentions of the policymakers interfere with the family's purposes and experiences which is letting mothers in a legally precarious position standing without enough support. As a result, I explain how this policy is serving the need for protection of the children residing under institutional care while causing more vulnerabilities for foster caregivers as this part of the experience is not enough calculated.

2.1. The Aim of the Foster Care Policies

Foster care policies are developed and started to be implemented to provide a family care alternative to the children who are residing under institutional care. The policy aims to diminish the period of a child under institutional care which can cause harm to the child's mental and physical health and development. Thus, this care alternative aims to provide an uninterrupted family care alternative for the child even if it is temporary different from adoption.

The care alternatives are arranged in line with the best interest of the child. According to the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, family ties must be protected if it is not causing further harm to the child for their best interest (OHCHR, 1989). This principle is aiming to protect children from losing their family ties. As a result, the best scenario is when a child is living with their biological parents and able

to have a safe environment for their physical and mental health and development. However, if the biological parents are not capable to provide safe care to the child, the best alternatives are defined as other family members, kin or significant others who are alive and capable and willing to provide care to the child. However some children do not have these options either.

For these children, two scenarios are possible: the child may not be in contact with any family member or the child may actually have contact with their family members but they are not in a position of providing care. For the ones who fit the first scenario, they are available for adoption and this is the first option. However, for the second group, adoption is not possible. This is because, when a child is adopted, the legal guardians and the family of the child become the adoptive parent. Adoptive family gives their family names to the child and legally, there is no difference between having a biological child and adopting a child. However, for the second scenario, as the family ties need to be protected, state institutions keep the child's legal guardianship. Along with the aim of providing the safest and healthiest environment for the child, foster care provides children with the opportunity of spending less time under institutional care. Ideally, during this period of time, biological families are supported for rehabilitation as they would be the final destination for the child.

Consequently, in this system, children are put in their foster homes and foster families are expected to provide them care until their parents are rehabilitated. There are various foster care arrangements from foster care as kin to professional foster care but, without exploring all in detail, I would like to compare two models which are mostly debated: long-term and short-term foster care arrangements. These arrangements are discussed because while the short-term foster care policy works smoothly, long-term foster care is creating completely different results. This is because, during the care providing period, foster carers are expected to be aware of their temporary position. In long-term foster care, foster caregivers attach themselves to the child and vice versa. As a result, rather than feeling like temporary caregivers, they are calling themselves mothers (Blythe et al., 2012).

On the other hand, foster caregivers are also expected to take the responsibility for the continuation of the relationship between the child and their biological parents. They

are expected to collaborate with their specialists for the realization of these meetings. Although there are families who are peacefully regulating their relationship, in general, these meetings are very traumatic experiences as the child and foster families are regularly and continuously reminded of their temporary precarious position. The outcomes of these meetings are especially positive when birth families and foster carers are acting in collaboration. However, if children had ongoing maltreatment these contacts are causing further harm (Boyle, 2015).

Meanwhile, during the care providing period, foster carers are paid a fee for the costs of the children which is emphasizing the professional relationship between the state and the foster caregivers. The amount of the fee and the calculations may differ but regardless of the amount, foster parents declare payments cannot be a motivation for taking the care responsibility of a child (De Maeyer. et al., 2014; MacGregor et al., 2006). On the other hand, from the perspective of the government, foster care costs far less than institutional care even when all the fees are calculated.

Along with the financial benefit for the governments, the positive contribution of foster care to children's health and development is proven scientifically as well. Research shows among children who are raised in institutional care, behavioural and emotional problems are very common. On the other hand, for children who are placed in foster care, these problems may decrease by a significant level (Blythe et al., 2014; Minis et al., 2004; Smyke et al., 2012; Rosenwald & Bronstein, 2008; Üstüner, Erol, & Şimşek, 2005).

Consequently, foster care is a very appealing alternative for the governments compared to institutional care. Foster care policy provides them with increased health and safety of the child while diminishing the cost of the care at the same time.

However, not surprisingly someone pays the price of this profit: foster parents. The temporary aspect of the foster care policy is putting foster carers in an ambiguous position both legally and emotionally where they are feeling not enough supported or appreciated enough and stigmatized and alone at the same time.

2.2. The Experiences of Foster Care Families

The number of foster care parents is increasing (MacGregor et al., 2006). However, foster care regulations and policies are primarily made for child protection, and they may fall behind in addressing the needs of parents. Consequently, foster parents are ceasing to provide care because of a lack of support and recognition. (Denby et al., 1999).

It is found that foster motherhood is defined as a rewarding yet very challenging experience for mothers (Blythe et al., 2014). Despite the growing need for foster parents, not only existing studies but also implementing policies are failing to address the experiences of foster parents. Foster parents are considered as implementing partners rather than real human beings committing an emotional relationship with children. The studies on foster care policy are mainly focusing on children or the care performance of the foster parents. Little existing research on foster parenthood stresses how foster parents are struggling from a lack of support and knowledge ((Blythe et al., 2014).

However, the foster care experience is emotionally loaded and requires intensive labour from the caregivers. In addition to the legally ambiguous position of the foster mothers as temporary caregivers and their relationship with the biological families, foster mothers are taking the responsibility for a child with special needs.

Studies show that the children who are available for fostering have commonly traumatic backgrounds. As a result, they are experiencing relative difficulties in their mental and physical development and health conditions (Blythe et al.). They have higher rates of mental problems, and they may likely suffer from emotional and behavioural problems (Minis et al., 2004). Consequently, foster parenting requires additional skills and support mechanisms compared to traditional parenting. Building a temporary but safe relationship with a child who already has the trauma of abandonment requires a very challenging if it is possible at all. The proper methods of caregiving for a child with such a background require guiding information which is comparatively harder to reach as well.

While the experience was found rewarding by mothers in the sense of providing care to a child who really needs it, it is not socially accepted. Even though the foster

motherhood is praised by almost all parts of the society except the ones who have religious concerns, foster mothers are not living experiencing this praise in the form of support.

According to the research made in Europe, while dealing with various struggles, foster mothers feel undervalued (Blythe, 2012; Rosenwald & Bronstein, 2008). They feel that neither their communities nor social workers appreciate and support families enough. On the contrary, to prevent stigmatization they may hide that they are foster parents from their community (Blythe, 2012).

To conclude, the foster care policy is providing a better care alternative to the children but when in the implementation foster caregivers are not paid enough regard, they are sacrificed to provide better care to the children. In other words, while the policy is creating a positive social and material value on the one hand, on the other hand, it creates vulnerability.

2.3. Turkish Translation of the Foster Care Policies: Koruyucu Ailelik (i.e. Protective Family)

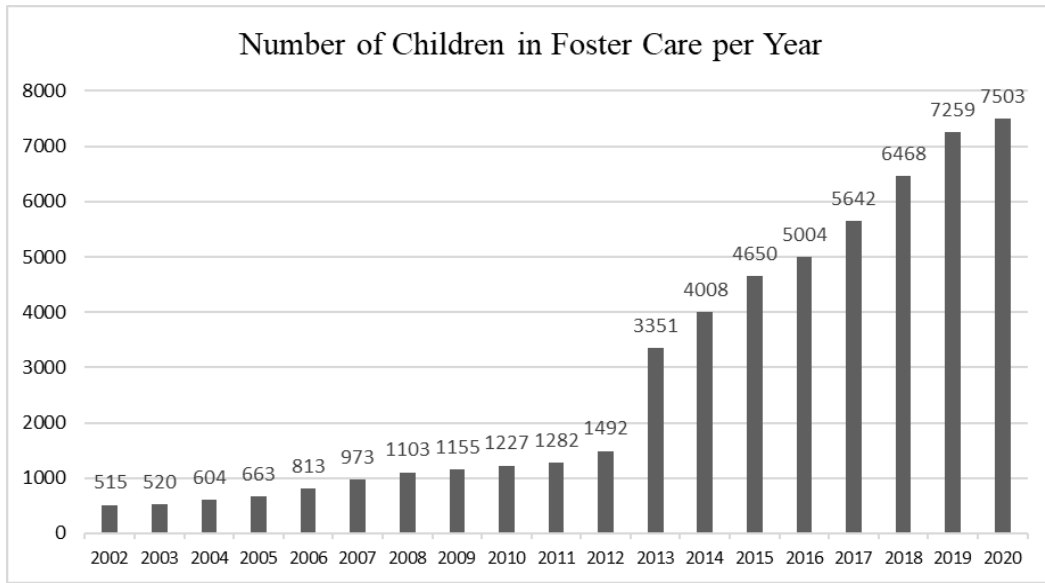
Even though the foster care policy is imported in the 1960s, the policy rose rapidly only after 2012 which can be clearly observed in Table 1. Only in one year the number of children under foster care more than doubled and the rapid increase is maintained in the following years.

Along with the accelerating familialism, in 2012, First Lady Emine Erdoğan took the lead in promoting foster care policy. A great importance is given to the foster care policy and a project started called Gönül Elçileri (Ambassadors of the Heart) with the spouses of the governors to promote foster care. The symbolic leadership of Emine Erdoğan and the wives of the governors have a very strong symbolic meaning only by itself in showing the strong gender component in this policy.

In 2020 Emine Erdoğan made a speech in the gathering with the governors' wives attending the project and other foster families to celebrate the success of the foster care policy. She proudly said: "I would like to address especially our friends who already are foster parents, please share this sacred experience that you have. Tell them about the sun rising in your spiritual world through working with such a jewel. Is there a

more beautiful view than witnessing a child grow up? For this reason, please share your experience so that everybody could have their share of your story”². Listening to her suggestion, I am sharing my story although due to the difference in our perspectives, we have quite different views.

Table 1 (Number of Children in Foster Care per Year Between the Years of 2002 to 2020)



I claim that the implementation of the policy is accelerated without enough investment in policy development along with the increasing familialism in care policies. As a result, foster mothers are put in a precarious motherhood experience without necessary support provided by the policy implementing institutions (i.e. MoFSS institutions). In this part of my thesis, I will provide a framework of the foster policy implementation in Turkey and then explain how such a policy suddenly took such a big role in family policies. Finally, I will locate the mothers in the policy as outsourced free care givers as well as mothers who are expected to protect their child with a great amount of

² Emine Erdoğan Speaking in the Presidential Complex of foster care policies of Turkey on 22.02.2020. The official announcement can be found here: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/haberler/410/116810/emine-erdogan-koruyucu-aile-programi-na-katildi> (Reached on 04.02.2022)

motherwork (Collins, 1994) and commitment without forgetting the temporary aspect of their relationship.

2.3.1. A Short History of Foster Care Policy in Turkey

Foster care and adoption are not developed as a form of child protection in Turkey. Although, taking care of an unaccompanied minor is an admired practice, it was only possible after personal initiatives rather than an institutional policy for a long period of time in the history of the republic (Şenocak, 2006). Rather than foster care, “*evlatlık-besleme*” (i.e. adoption) was a more common practice at the end of the Ottoman Empire but it is practiced as a cover of slavery. For this reason, girls are mostly adopted as domestic workers (Özbay, 1999). Although sometimes families provided those children with family care and a better future, there were examples where adopted children spent their life at the service of the family. On the other hand, while girls were adopted, boys were staying under the care of the institutions as an informal policy implementation (Karatay, 2017).

Foster care practices are first taken into consideration in 1960's in Turkey through a suggestion of an American counsellor specialist during his duty travel. He has suggested that institutional care is harmful to the children aligning with the rise of similar policies in Europe and the USA. The policy started to be implemented in 1961 and was defined as a paid family for children under protection. However, for long years it didn't become a widespread practice as it is interpreted only as a transitional state for adoption by foster families (Karatay, 2017).

In the year 2002 the number of children in foster care was only 515 and in ten years the number only rise up to 1492. However, there is a very sharp rise in 2012 climbing this number up to 3351 (Table1). The ratio of the children placed into foster care to the children staying under the institutional care is 8,21% in 2011 and this ratio climbed up to 20,90% in 2013. The rise is still low in comparison with the developed countries as the mean is placing 75% of the children in foster care (A.E. Baysal, 2017). On the other hand, this is a very high quantitative increase for only one year but rather than emphasizing insufficiency in my thesis, I problematize if this increase is also reflected in the quality of the services provided by foster care policy.

2.3.2. Unavoidable Rise of the Foster Care Family

In the policies implemented by the current government, there is a visible pattern of familiarization of the care policies and designing the role of women as invisible and free care providers as a part of their family (Acar & Altunok 2013; Dildar, 2022; Akkan, 2018 ; Aybars et al. 2018) On the other hand, while promoting an ideal conservative type of family ideally composed of a heterosexual couple with three children, government is not supporting their demographic agenda in policy level as this would cost more, but they are repeatedly promoting their ideas in discursive level (Dildar, 2022).

Foster care policy is a perfect fit in this framework as it means the possibility of reducing the cost of the children residing under the institutional care to a minimum and cannot be adopted either. The policy ensures government to outsource the *motherwork* from voluntary families with only a small price of care and allowance fees paid monthly. Besides, it has a bonus value of being involved with charity work for children who are in need.

The monthly prices paid by the government are way less costly than the cost of a child who is provided care under an institution. In Table 2, the care fees and allowances paid to the children are represented and the maximum amount is 2022,45 Turkish Lira (TL) which is less than half of the minimum wage in Turkey (4.253,40 TL). For the children with special needs, the payments are increased one and a half times. At the beginning of each academic year, the care fee is paid three times in return for the education. Two times a year, the care fee is paid for two times for clothing. Vocational or private course fees and the material costs are repaid if they are approved. Even when the additional payments are calculated except for the repayment for courses it is above 3.000 TL per month. This amount is lower than any kind of institutional care alternative.

Table 2 (Foster Care Family Payments According to Age Breakdown for the First Quarter of 2022)

Age	Care Fee Per Month	Allowance Per Month	Care Fee+ Allowance Per Month
0-3	923,26 TL	-	923,26 TL
4-5	1384,89 TL	-	1384,89 TL
6-9	1477,21 TL	107,88 TL	1585,09 TL
10-14	1477,21 TL	161,82 TL	1639,03 TL
15-18	1569,54 TL	215,76 TL	1785,30 TL
19+	1661,86 TL	359,59 TL	2021,45 TL
January, February and March 2022 Payments			

To conclude, with the approval and the support of the first lady, MoFSS institutions were not reluctant to accelerate this policy jackpot they have. However, I claim that during this quick rise neither the critiques of the policy, nor existing policy and family structure of Turkey is properly analyzed, and a policy developed accordingly.

2.3.3. The Cost of the Unavoidable Rise of the Foster Care Family

The first and most convenient policy to minimize institutional care is to keep families together. MoFSS is implementing policies to prevent children separate from their biological parents in the first place by providing material or psycho-social support. This policy is seen from the numbers provided by the MoFSS. According to the statistics of the year of 2019 which are seen in Table 3, family number who are supported without state protection is 125.258, while adoption number (in sum) is 17.403, foster care family number is 5.967.

Similar to the western examples, the foster care policy in Turkey aims to provide a family care alternative to the children who are residing under institutional care. For

this reason, children who are not in a position to be adopted and who are eligible for foster care are placed in foster homes. However, there is an important difference in the context of Turkey differentiating the experience from the western examples which are the family profiles of the biological families and the implementation of the foster care models.

Table 3 (Official 2019 End of The Year Statistics from MoFSS³)

Services for the Children		Number
Number of Children under Institutional Care		13,867
Number of Children Supported with their Families without taken under Foster-care		125,258
Total number of Children Adopted		17,403
Number of Children Provided with Foster Family Care		7,259
Number of Foster Families		5,967
Number of Children that are being Cared at Private Kindergartens and Daycares		3,300

Type of Institution	Number of Institution	Number of Children under State Care
Children Housing Estate	112	6,132
Children Housing	1,192	6,164
Children Support Center	65	1,571
Total	1,369	13,867

In theory, there are four models of foster care policies implemented in Turkey. The first is foster care by the kin or close relatives, the second is short-term foster care, the third is long-term foster care and the fourth is specialized foster care. However, only two of them actually are in practice while the legal base of the policy is designed as if all models are implemented: the foster care by kin or close relatives and the long-term foster care.

In Turkey, policies are prioritizing the care of biological families. For this reason, families are supported as much as possible before the child is removed from their homes. Align with this priority Kılıç explains how children placed back in their homes from the institutional care maintaining “The policy is known as “Back to the Family”, initiated and implemented by the Social Services and the Children Protection Agency

³ Imported from the website of Koruyucu Aile ve Evlat Edinme Derneği, The statistics can be found here : <https://www.korev.org.tr/p/21/istatistik-bilgileri> Retrieved on 04.05.2022

(SHÇEK) between 2005 and 2010, placed children who were in institutional care facilities, because their families were economically unable to support them, “back” to host families by providing monetary assistance to these families. The “Back to the Family” Program is a clear example where the family, as the building block of society is both promoted ideologically and used as an effective instrument of privatization of care services” (Kılıç, 2010).

As a result, if a child is removed from their house despite all the support provided by the state, there is almost no chance for them to go back to their biological parents’ home. Thus, the model of short-term foster care is not implemented as well as the professional foster care model. As a result, only actively implementing models are long-term foster care and foster care by kin or close relative. In other words, the temporary aspect of the care does not suit the practice.

As I already explained in the previous section, the most problematic aspect of the foster care policy is its temporary aspect. This is because while foster families are referred to as care providers within the policy framework, they are calling them mothers. As they are taking whole responsibility for the motherhood work of a child for years, they are building that kind of a relationship. While importing the policy rather than addressing this problem, policymakers deepened the problem by calling policy not Foster Care but Protective Family. While the name “foster care” has the professional care work connotation, “protective family” not only promises a family structure but also adds the responsibility of protection to the families. Meanwhile, the temporary aspect is well reserved as well.

Moreover, the foster care alternative is promoted to the families who are applying to the institution as a transitional state for adoption or a mild form of adoption as it is not preferred by most families. Although there are many families who are adopting their children after their foster care experiences, this is made by their own efforts and mostly without support from the MoFSS institutions. As a result, such a policy implementation creates a perfect base for putting more children in the house care as well as putting many families into an agreement in which they are not aware of the actual experience that they are committed to.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this research, how the foster family interpretation of the state as “protective family” that designs the foster care providers as mothers shape the experience of motherhood for foster mothers. Meanwhile, I also focus on the difference between the expectations of mothers and their actual experiences. In order to answer my research questions, I made qualitative research from a feminist standpoint. I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 15 mothers to understand the foster care motherhood dynamics focusing on how they are displaying their families. Moreover, rather than embracing a hierarchical researcher position with my subject of knowledge, along with the ethnographic feature of my study, I intended to provide a safe space for mothers where they can share their emotions and experiences. In this way I aim to represent a unique experience of motherhood with the influence of rapidly accelerated foster care policy putting mothers at the centre of my study. Thus, my thesis is not only contributing to the sociology of family literature as a representation of foster motherhood experience in Turkey, but also it has a guiding feature for policymakers as care policies are not going to lose their impotence in the near future.

In this thesis, I aim to analyze the effect of the foster family policy implementation on mothers’ experiences. I am questioning “how mothers define motherhood”, “how the perception of motherhood and the foster motherhood experiences are shaped by different social, familial, and personal aspects of mothers’ lives?” and finally “how mothers are transformed in this experience?”. While asking these questions, I am trying to find the gap between the mother's expectation of foster motherhood and their realities. Besides, I am also observing their transformation while living in this limbo. As a result, I maintain that within the limits of my current time and budget most effective research strategy is focusing only on the qualitative method and conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with mothers. This is because, even if I decide to

collect quantitative data, I cannot reach a representative crowd. Additionally, in this research I aim to describe mother's unique experiences which is not studied before. As a result, I need semi-structured interviews containing long conversations rather than quick surveys.

Moreover, as I repeatedly mentioned before, I adopt a feminist perspective. I embrace feminism not only in choosing my research subject but also in building my relationship with my object of knowledge. My research subject aims to further explore women's experiences as they are underrepresented in the research history. On the other hand, I am not conducting my interviews from a hierarchical position. I claim, as the agents of their experiences, that mothers are the best suitable source of knowledge and as a researcher, I can only provide them with a safe space where they can express themselves. For this reason, I conducted long interviews with the mothers who are willing to talk about their experiences and I took various measures to protect mothers' privacy.

Finally, due to the lack of existing literature, my study has a strong ethnographic and descriptive component. These are other reasons why I choose to prioritize qualitative research where I can reach the most fruitful data in the framework of my research. However, my research has some limitations in representing full experience of foster care in Turkey. First, unfortunately, there is no public access to detailed data on institutional care and alternative care models except for a few total numbers. As a result, I cannot define a proper framework. Moreover, the number and quality of my subject group are only providing me with a representation of a certain group rather than a general picture. Finally, through snowball sampling, I reached mothers who are having similar experiences while I cannot reach mothers who withdraw from the experience at one point or mothers.

3.1. Research Philosophy

I have a feminist standpoint as a women researcher who is producing knowledge in a gendered scientific arena to first properly analyze my position in the knowledge production. Additionally, in my relationship with my study field, I aim for an attitude which is emotionally engaged in research not only because I already have emotions as I am also a part of this experience but also because emotions are playing quite an

important role in this experience in general. Consequently, I need to design my research in a way that I can represent and analyze the emotions as well as give them their values in my representation of this particular social reality. Finally, the lack of literature focusing on the experience of foster mothers is also showing that I need a feminist perspective in approaching my study field in designating my contribution to the existing literature.

Despite the strong criticisms and changing science circles, scientific knowledge and naturally mainstream family sociology as well, still carries the heavy load of heteronormative white male-dominated knowledge. From the very early years of my education until today, I strongly felt the barrier of gendered knowledge production not only in the given value to the domains but also the methodological preferences. Until starting my master's degree, I was very influenced but also very bothered with the atmosphere in our department starting from the classes maintaining to the tables in our small garden. I used to think there must be two kinds of sociology, one is the real sociology which is interested in the sociology of knowledge and there is daily sociology dealing with simple and not important aspects of mortal life. Moreover, real sociology requires discussions made with tranquility for the high level of questions. The debates where emotions are too much involved could not be serving science. Not surprisingly, the real sociology was seeming as it belongs to the 'cool guys' while others can linger around. During my master's degree, the influence of this atmosphere was not that much strong for me but this time I found myself debating in most of the classes about the possibility of sociological knowledge and method apart from Lacanian perspective, as he became the god of the "real sociology" this time. I think the very gendered atmosphere requires attention as it is attributing a hierarchical value to the specific domains and methods of sociology without an ontological, epistemological, or methodological debate. These discussions were very important in the decision of my study field. I was in between challenging the stereotypes and focusing on my own experience and inclination. In the end I choose this study field which is giving me the opportunity to understand better my experience, but I cannot say that I feel that I am not feeling the influence of the atmosphere I described.

I also need the feminist standpoint as a woman researcher to remind myself of the context of my knowledge production. I will never forget the very first two pieces of

feedback that came from my thesis advisor for my first drafts: first, she said suggested deleting passive voice and do not cover up the writer of this thesis, second, she crossed all “I am trying to” expressions which I have used quite a lot. I was inclined to decrease my voice as much as possible to avoid being too assertive. I used to write carefully, trying to add a few ideas I have, if it will not challenge and bother any other authorities. Looking at myself who was very afraid of writing today, I am very proud of finding my voice and claiming the knowledge I produce which is open to criticism as well.

Luckily, although many other women and LGBTQ+ felt similar way in the history of knowledge production, we now have a guiding literature to name these aspects and reduce the patriarchal dominance on our research. A. Oakley (1981) criticized the embedded research protocol of her time and claimed that it is very masculine with its hierarchical and distant approaches to the field of research. The so-called proper way of conducting interviews required approaching the interviews as objects which are producing knowledge as machines. Besides, the proper way of interviewing is described in contrast to women’s attitude which is supposed to be more sensitive, intuitive, incapable of objectivity, and emotional detachment. However, she states “in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the interviewer and the interviewees are non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship”.

Following Oakley, from a feminist standpoint, I approach my interviewees, not as objects of knowledge but I aim to build a relationship in which they can comfortably share their social reality with me. While describing their experiences the emotions of the mothers are standing at the very core of my analysis. This is because, as K. Daly (2013) claims, although emotions are taking a very important place in designating the family lives, in the theories of family, they are not sufficiently represented with other important aspects such as spirituality and myths. Likewise, K. R. Allen (2000) claims that as researchers we have the responsibility to understand the family diversities and this is only possible through moving toward “an understanding of knowledge about families as constructed, partial, contested, and contingent on ever-changing historical variations”. She maintains “This movement requires us to expand our repertoire of what counts as legitimate empirical knowledge to include emotional sensitivity,

intuitive understanding, and reflective awareness as a way to improve the validity of our research practices and products”.

Accordingly, from the very beginning of the foster care experience, the decision for becoming a foster family through all the experiences, and emotions is very intense and are having a definitive role in the lives of the mothers. For this reason, I encouraged mothers to share their emotions and represent them as much as possible.

On the other hand, A. Abbott’s definition of lyrical sociology helped me to find my way in representing these emotions. Against narrative, Abbott (2007) suggests the author represent her emotional stance while having a lyrical sensibility with an engaged, non-ironic stance towards her object in her description of a social phenomenon in a certain time and place. Such an intense engagement aims to have a feeling of “curious without exoticism, sympathetic without presumption, and thoughtful without judgment”.

Finally, I need the feminist standpoint as a researcher when I approach my field as well. As I already explained in the previous chapter, during my research on existing literature on foster motherhood, I have only encountered a few studies focusing on foster motherhood experience. Foster care is mainly studied from a practical point, as a policy that provides an alternative for institutional care and the questions were mainly about its practical value. For this reason, it is studied mainly by social work and psychology disciplines. Within social work studies, the economical and public value of foster care is discussed while in psychology comparative discussions on children’s psychology before and after foster care is more popular. However, there are not enough studies focusing on caregivers. I claim this gap requires special attention. Rather than being just a coincidence, I claim it is an example of the invisibility of care labor provided by women. Therefore, I have a feminist standpoint in contributing to the existing literature by revealing the invisible labor of mothers by approaching them as agents in the foster family structure.

As a result, I embrace a feminist standpoint not only when I am deciding my subject field, but also in my approach through my study field. That is, although I am producing the knowledge at the end by writing, rather than seeing my interviewees as objects, I approach them as the agents of the foster care family structure, and I aim to reduce the

hierarchical positioning between the researcher and the object of science as much as possible. This way, as a researcher woman, I describe a unique emotionally loaded experience of women who are deliberately unseen for the sake of free care labor they provide, from an emotionally engaged standpoint.

3.2. Methodological Choice

In my research I aimed to understand mothers' experience and emotions in a non-conventional type of family setting. To reach to the emotions and experience qualitative methods are already more fruitful compared to quantitative methods. Additionally, I needed to have a methodology which should enable me to study this unconventional family setting. For this reason, rather than assuming family as a final product, I discuss and analyze family as a dynamic concept.

Researchers struggle to make a comprehensive definition. There is definition for the normal and legitimate family standing for a nuclear urban family composed of a cis-heterosexual couple with one to three children. However, the current structure and experience of family is diversified, and the conservative description of family only represents a minority rather than a norm. To illustrate, as in many other countries a study shows that in Portugal personal relationships are not dependent on marriage and blood ties as it was, the commitments are made by various relationships such as friendship, vicinity, dissolves marriages, step-parenting, and care arrangements (Wall and Gouveia). Even though there are studies focusing on these changing family dynamics, the family literature still is not covering the current family practices. Research done in the US shows that studies cannot keep up with the rapidly changing US family structure. The researchers suggest producing relevant and useful data there is a need for family sociologists to incorporate more of the complexity of contemporary family experiences into their studies (B. Farrell et al., 2012).

On the other hand, foster care is even alternative to the alternative families as it is temporary, not containing a legal guardianship or any biological tie. For this reason, to study this particular relationship I need a flexible approach where I can emphasize the fluidity of family. Bourdieu's approach to family as a "structuring structure" already helped where he claims family is a dynamic structure shaping by its agents while it has the power to shape these agents as well. In addition to Bourdieu, J. Finch's

methodological suggestion was very helpful for me not only in my conceptual definition of family but also in designing my research.

J. Finch suggests sociology should recognize the importance of “displaying” and “doing” family to understand contemporary family relationships. By giving reference to Morgan (1996), who defines family as a set of activities rather than a structure, she claims that families need to be displayed as well as done. She claims the meaning of the activities should be interpreted as “family activities” for all parts including. She claims “the question ‘who is my family?’ is really a question about relationships – ‘Which of my relations has the character of a “family” relationship’” (2007).

Finch defines display as “the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant others that certain of their actions do constitute ‘doing family things’ and thereby confirm that these relationships are ‘family’ relationships” (2007). She gives examples for the tools of display as physical objects such as photographs or domestic artefacts or narratives or stories told to describe the character of ‘the family’. As I already stated before, maintaining these examples, children mostly do not have birth photos, or they do not have birth stories. Thus, I question how they are doing with their families lacking this very crucial part.

Additionally, I claim that to understand the foster family setting along with focusing on family activities display the family, focuses on practices which stand in the direct opposite of the doing family things. These activities may be called doing non-family things and/or un-doing family things. This is because foster families are supposed to realize some practices starting with sharing their children with another family who they do not know.

To conclude, in order to research and analyze the experiences in a dynamic family practice, I needed to conduct a qualitative research in-which I conduct in-depth interviews with the mothers as I question the practices of how they realize their families.

3.3. Research Strategy

As being a part of the foster care experience for more than 10 years, I already was very familiar with the experience, and I was already in the community. For this reason, I

already was in a position of conducting ethnographic research with a complete participation as a foster sister. On the other hand, as I am not a mother, I categorize my position as an active participant where I could chance to observe mothers for a very long time from close contact and with an emotionally involved manner.

Through this time, I noticed that mothers are reluctant to share their negative experiences with others, even with other foster mothers, which would severely change the results of my study. For this reason, I decided to shape a research strategy where I should be able to make mothers comfortable to share various feelings and experiences without hesitation. Thinking through my mother, I notice one of the very important reasons behind their reluctance is causing further labeling of the child and themselves. In addition to sharing private information with a stranger, in this situation, they are legally responsible for protecting their foster children's identity. Therefore, I needed to make sure that mothers feel safe and ensure them repeatedly that I care about their privacy and they are always free to withdraw from the research as they feel even slightly insecure.

As a result, I decided to conduct one-to-one semi-structured in-depth interviews where mothers have space to freely and safely express themselves. However, knowing their feelings were not enough to make them feel safe as well. I noticed in my first interviews, mothers either shared with me some information as they want to be heard, or they only answered my questions trying to find the "correct" answers as if they are evaluated by a social worker. Therefore, I decided that I need to have a sincerer relationship in which I have to disrupt my position as a researcher which represents a kind of authority. Even though I was aware of all these struggles and I was already read various feminist methodologies offering to have a closer emotional relationship with the interviewees, I was struggling to find my position. After a few interviews, I noticed that mentioning that I am a foster sister and sometimes relating to their problems is making mothers feel much safer, as they know I am fully aware of the struggles they might be dealing with and I am not here to judge them or evaluate their motherhood performances.

I also realized how important it was for mothers to see that I am actively listening and remind them of the position mentioned previously. They were very sensitive,

especially because we were conducting the interview through the internet. Most of the mothers were very carefully following my responses or mimics especially after or before sharing triggering memories or intense emotions. Accordingly, I chose times when the interviews would not be interrupted by anyone and I prepared everything and conducted the interview with great attention even when mothers were sharing things that would not serve the research.

To be able to keep the feeling of solidarity and shared experiences, I conducted interviews as a form of “dertleşme” (i.e., sincere, and long conversations where the griefs are exchanged). Such form of conversation has an important place in Turkish culture. The most fruitful interviews were the ones where I also shared with mothers some small incidences of mine in which they can relate to their experiences. I also find it useful to remember some experiences with the expressions such as “some mothers are feeling... at that time” and then ask about their experience as this also makes them more comfortable in sharing.

On the other hand, I did not lie about an experience, did not share a mother’s specific experience to trigger any emotion, or made up a pattern to evaluate mothers' reactions. On the contrary, I choose my examples as natural and bland as possible. Despite I am very excited about my assumptions, I also endeavor to remember my main objective, which is to understand mothers’ experiences. To understand mothers, from a feminist perspective, I aim to open a space where they can freely and safely express themselves. I do not believe there is a hidden knowledge somewhere in their minds that I can take and show the world by tricking them. I think especially in the research where the researcher intends to build a trusting relationship, such a method would be a colonial abuse of power.

After the interviews mothers sometimes asked for some suggestions and information after the effect of the “dertleşme” (i.e. sincere conversation about on the griefs). I was reluctant to give suggestions as I have no specialty in the legal or psychological aspects of foster care but I could not remain unresponsive where I found the solution to share some reliable sources they can reach up to as NGOs working in this field as İstanbul Koruyucu Aile Derneği (i.e. İstanbul Foster Care Family Foundation) and Koruyucu Aile, Evlat Edinme Derneği (i.e. Foster Care, Adoption Foundation). Again, I was not

reluctant to share my gratitude and praise for their participation in my study and graceful determination to foster motherhood which was quite fascinating to witness.

Due to the pandemic, I could not travel. As most of the mothers were located in İstanbul and I am living in Ankara, I decided to conduct online interviews. I chose Zoom as it is recently the most used platform because of technical problems, I conducted two interviews through Skype and one through WhatsApp. Although at first, I thought the online interview would be a barrier between mothers and me as I am giving great importance to have a sincere feeling, actually it gave me and mothers flexibility of time. Mothers called me as soon as they have one hour, and I conducted the interview. When I realized the very busy schedule of mothers, I noticed how important this is. Moreover, being in their own environment not only provided comfort for mothers but also, I had a chance to have a sense of their daily life.

3.4. Sampling Strategy

Considering the facts that I have limited budget and time as well as the number of foster mothers in Turkey and not every foster mother is willing to share their experience, snowball sampling as a type of the non-probability sampling were the most convenient sampling strategy for me and I used this strategy for my research.

The total number of foster families in Turkey were 5.967 in 2019 (Table 3), compared to the Turkish population at the same year 83.154.997 this is representing a very low number. When the subject of my thesis also considered, finding foster mothers who are willing to give interviews is not that easy. For this reason, I used my already existing network in reaching most of the foster mothers. I have already met with a few mothers during the meetings, seminars, or workshops and through the İstanbul Foster Family Foundation. First, I informed them that I am starting to conduct research on foster motherhood and ask if they are interested to give an interview. Later during the interviews, I requested them if they can offer their foster mother friends to give me an interview. Meanwhile, I also ask my mother if she can mention my study to her friend and if they are interested give them my contact. This way I have reached 15 mothers, all residing in İstanbul and have a license degree of education.

Table 4 (Interviewees Age, Number of Children, Experience and Marital Status)

Pseudonym	Age	Number of the Biological Child	Duration the Foster Care Experience	Marital Status
Siyah Anne	41	1	9 years	Married
Gri Anne	59	-	15 years	Married
Mor Anne	41	-	9 years	Married
Yeşil Anne	49	-	6 years	Married
Lacivert Anne	39	-	6 months	Married
Mavi Anne	52	3	2.5 years	Married
Kahverengi Anne	66	-	24 years	Single
Zümrüt Anne	47	3	5 years	Married
Krem Anne	41	1	10 months	Married
Lila Anne	50	-	5 years	Single
Eflatun Anne	48	1	6 years	Married
Sarı Anne	63	2	3 years	Married
Kırmızı Anne	52	1	13 years	Divorced
Turuncu Anne	52	-	3 weeks	Single
Bordo Anne	41	-	1 month	Married

3.5. Ethical Considerations

During this research 15 interviews are conducted with mothers who are reached through İstanbul Foster Parents Foundation. All mothers are provided a consent form and they are informed about the study and how they can withdraw from it any time they like. Moreover, as foster mothers are rightfully concerned about protecting their child' identities additional measures are taken.

As in the scope of the research, I needed to make interviews with the mothers I applied to the METU Applied Ethic Research Center, Human Subjects Ethical Committee where I explained the subject of my thesis and how I will conduct the interview. Later they provided me an approval for my research and consent forms. While conducted the interviews, I repeated the subject of my research and that they should be comfortable to not share any information they are not willing to or feel uncomfortable and they always have the right to withdraw from the research.

Even though I reminded mothers that they have the right to withdraw, and they are not obliged to share any information that they are not willing to, as we are talking about a very emotional subject, I noticed mothers sometimes started to share things forgetting the interview is recorded and I will quote their speeches. At these times, I let them speak to not interrupt the interview with a sincere manner to make them feel comfortable in expressing themselves but for this reason, I did not write the quotes which can reveal mother' or child' identity with specific details. I avoid giving details if they are not serving for expressing their social reality.

Interviews are conducted online through Skype and Zoom platforms. I recorded the interviews. All mothers are informed and asked their permission for recording the interviews. The recordings are only saved on my personal computer during the transcription. Later they are saved on an external drive for further protection.

3.6. Limitations

During my study, my main limitations were the budget and time restrictions which affected research design and the implementation of the interviews and the sampling. Additionally, there is a lack of public quantitative data and there are not enough studies which I can refer to and discuss further. I needed to do the research in a very broad area which resulted in having loaded and complex data which is hard to interpret as the patterns were obscure and required too much interpretation.

When I started to write my thesis, I started to work full time in a different city which was a very challenging experience for me. Therefore, I postponed writing it for one year, until I was planning to come back to my city of the living. When I finally came back, I maintained working in another job, and also the Covid-19 pandemic started.

Due to not having any kind of other financial support during the whole process of thesis writing, I had no chance to stop working and continue to write my thesis which brought me both time and budgetary limitations. I only could afford one month of non-paid vacation to conduct the interviews. As a result, I limited my sampling and finalized the writing process in a limited amount of time.

For a descriptive study, 15 is a small number of interviewees to analyze and compare the effect of the different dimensions and their results. As my core research question was “how the perception of motherhood and the foster motherhood experiences are shaped by different social, familial, and personal dimensions of mothers’ lives”, this was very challenging for me. I trust in my interpretations as I have 10 years of experience in foster care and as I already listened to many other stories from other mothers yet, I would like to be able to ask these questions to more mothers which would bring me more concrete or different patterns. Even though I represent a general picture of foster care experience in Turkey, I could not reflect sub-discussions that are necessary to have. To illustrate having a husband or not or having a biological child or not is severely changing the experience. Especially mothers who have any kind of support are having a whole other experience than mothers who are lacking social and material support. When these aspects are properly discussed, the foster care mother’s experience can be much more representative.

Another very important limitation is I only have conducted quantitative research and I could not reach statistics from the public institutions. Unfortunately, MoFSS is not providing detailed numbers on the care policies. I only can reach the number of children who are living in the institutions, who are staying in foster care, and who are adopted. While most of the studies are labelled as “internal use” and not open for public use, the number of publications and research provided by MoFSS is decreasing through the years. After the year 2018, even very broad statistics such as the number of children under state care are not published. Consequently, I do not have access to the official numbers of the children who are in foster care, the application numbers for becoming a foster parent or the number of resignations. These numbers might provide a solid ground for further analysis of the impact of the policy.

I have some limitations regarding the quality of my sampling as well. I only reached mothers through the foundation. This means, I only interviewed the women who reach at least the support of the foundation, and they are a part of this community. That is, they are sharing a similar socio-economic background, all are living in İstanbul and they have the means to reach other mothers. Nonetheless, I could not reach the mothers who are not willing to enter this community, who are lacking an important part of the support. This study has no representation for the professional foster careers, the mothers who are living in other provinces, mothers who are choosing to hide this part of their lives from their children and their communities, and mothers who are already the relatives of the child. These aspects are open for more exploration. Finally, and most importantly, I could not conduct an interview with the mothers who gave up and stopped this process and would share very valuable information on their struggles.

CHAPTER 4

EXPECTATIONS vs. REALITIES

While interviewing with the mothers, I realized that there are some social, economic, or demographic dimensions which are transforming their experiences. The most concrete example of these were having a biological child or not. The mothers who have biological child and the ones only have foster child were interpret the motherhood very differently. While mothers who have biological child were problematizing the challenging parts of the foster care policy, the other group tends to interpret all the challenges “natural” and asses their motherhood performances very harshly. The age, duration of the foster motherhood, socio-economic condition, and the place of living of mothers were also very influential factors in defining their experiences. However, as this thesis has a descriptive character, it does not include enough sampling to compare all these dimensions and their influences. For this reason, in this chapter I am focusing the expectations of the mothers from this experience and the reality they are living in while analyzing if these are fitting or contradicting with each other.

Although I was aware the challenges of the foster parenthood experience, I was surprised witnessing mothers’ intense emotions and experiences. Foster motherhood severely changed the lives of all mothers. The experience of the mothers is defined by the triangle of the child, the MoFSS’s institutions and the biological parents. Meanwhile the environment of the mother is also very influential. Consequently, I found there are four main themes shaping this experience. First, the motivations of the mothers: contrary to the aim of the policy, there was no mother who started the process with the motivation of becoming a foster care provider. After applying MoFSS institution for adoption, mothers are thrown into this experience without enough information provided. Secondly, most mothers do not have the support from their environment as much as a biological mother. They are often challenged by their decision of becoming a foster parent and they finally need to change their

relationships. Thirdly, attained specialists of the MoFSS institutions have the power of providing all kinds of permissions as well as programming the biological family meetings which are defining the base of the experience. However, the specialists do not have a standardized attitude, so mothers are living in very different realities that changed after the level of experience and attitude of their specialists. Finally, mothers are left alone with the responsibility of care and protection of children with special needs, where they are not supported enough.

In this chapter, I analyze how the mothers are facing a different reality than their expectations through their ways, describing the transformative power of their strong emotions. That is, the process of mothers finding themselves who are the only protector of a small child in this world, but their responsibility is much bigger than providing care while their relationship is strictly prevented to have a family quality. To explain these, I use mothers' quotations, however, to protect them and their children to be recognized, I am filtering most of the selective anecdotes and I am referring to the mothers by the name of colors in Turkish according to their impressions on me.

4.1. The Short-Lasting Dream of Motherhood

In a conference I attended a few years ago where foster parents were sharing their experiences to inspire future foster parents, a mother stated that she had a very hard period of waiting for her child for nine months, comparing her experience with the pregnancy experience. Then she said that like a woman who recently gave birth, she was exhausted when her child came into their home, therefore her mother took care of the child. Another mother told me when I was conducting an interview in the scope of my pilot study that her breast started to produce milk when her foster baby came to their house. As a young woman who is not considering becoming a mother yet, I could not understand the given value of this process, and I have found these statements as irrational exaggerations due to the feeling of longing to have a biological child for a very long time.

Over time, my friends started to get married and get pregnant, I was still not sure if I wanted a child or not, but I knew my body has a certain time limit. I started to do research, and watch series about pregnancy and child-rearing or interviews of the

women who do not have children. I noticed that there is an incredible amount of content produced on social media about motherhood. I noticed how I become very worried about something that I even do not know whether I want or not: getting pregnant and having a baby. Even as a researcher who is writing her thesis on motherhood, I could not filter these contents. I found myself worried about being too late and I felt that I am unsuccessful.

Mills states the first fruit of the social imagination is that “the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period” (Mills, 1959). Although, I was very judging about my feeling of being unsuccessful, analyzing foster mothers’ motivation and experiences helped a lot to figure out how I could feel this as a feminist researcher.

I am not alone in feeling this confusion in Turkey as womanhood is historically defined as motherhood in this society for a very long time despite the strong feminist movement (Tekeli, 1985; Kandiyoti, 2000; Bora, 2011). The reproduction and care are attributed to women from the late Ottoman Empire up to the present by all governments regardless of their political agendas. However, changing family structure in Turkey challenging the position and the roles of the women in the nuclear family composed of a heterosexual couple and two to three children.

For more than 20 years in Turkey, the first marriage age has been steadily increasing. Although most women are married, the number of divorced women is significantly increasing, and the number of women who have not been married has increased in all age groups. On the other hand, the ideal number of children has slightly increased in recent years for married women. Although in urban areas the number of ideal children is less than in rural areas, it is still 2,7 while the birth rate is decreasing (TNSA, 2018). The average age of the women giving birth is steadily increasing (TÜİK, 2020). The ideal number of children is higher in the period closer to finalizing fertility (TAYA, 2018). These statistics show that there is still a will for becoming a mother, but the family structure is changing, and motherhood is postponed or not preferred especially for women who are educated, live in west-urban areas, and have more material well-being.

As a result, after these changes, while women search more for alternative ways to become a mother, care policies required a new shape as the role of women as free care providers of the family was losing its force at some level. This is a match made in heaven for foster care policymakers. The policy offers an alternative for women who wants to become a mother while it also means cheap care from the government's perspective. As a way of becoming a mother without pregnancy, foster parenthood might come after IVF and adoption as it costs less than IVF and the terms and conditions are looser compared to the adoption. However, in this equation, a very important fact is neglected: foster parenthood is not a form of motherhood. It is a form of caregiving.

In my research, I found that mothers are applying for adoption to the MoFSS institutions with the motivation of becoming a mother of a child. Even though this motivation conflicts with the aim of this policy, mothers are not aware of the position they are committing at the beginning of the process. While the mothers who started to become foster care before the acceleration of the policy (after 2013 the year when the number of the foster care families doubled) has an organic transition as already having met with the child, with this acceleration, specialists become more persistent in convincing mother to the foster care alternative.

Along with the goal of reducing the number of children living in the institutions, without paying regard to mothers' concerns and motivations, specialists made pressure on the mothers for considering foster care. There is even a strategy of "look once" mentioned by more than one mothers. After emphasizing the bureaucratic difficulties of the adoption specialists insist mothers look to the children who have the foster care status. During these visits, parents often meet with a baby, and they do not want to leave a baby there. Mother Yeşil explains how they decided first to adopt a child, but they were convinced to become a foster parent through their specialist.

We wanted a child for long years feeling the absence of it very much. After a bunch of trials of in-Virto fertilization, we could not have a child. Later we applied for adoption. At that time there was an age limit of 40 age between the mother and child. I wanted a baby. After a year of application, an officer guided us. They told 'it is very hard for you to match with a child as you like. We have a baby for you. Please come and see. We met with our son there. We were not very happy with the idea of foster care. We said we are very sensitive people. If we separate somehow, it will be devastating. We have lost

a bird once. Even that was very sad; it was very hard to deal with that pain. Therefore, we were not very willing but after too much persistence, we went there to look. After we saw him, I thought 'I cannot leave him here'. God gives everyone a child and takes them at the end. 'We are going to live our destiny' we said and agreed. (Mother Yeşil)

Mother Mor explains how they specifically emphasized that they do not want foster care as they do not want something temporary, they are misguided in the institution.

We went to the institution for adoption. When I was making my research I read things about foster families, but I was never interested. At that time there were events where they were promoting foster care to the families who apply for adoption as a policy of the institution. They invited us but we did not want to go. We only went there to listen to prevent their prejudice against us. Just to listen and come back. The officer there tried to convince us like crazy because at that time Emine Erdoğan said "empty the institutions, give them to families". They perceived us as an ideal family. I told them "Look I want my child to be my child. I want their guardianship for sure. I cannot share my child. I do not want to help someone". I know myself. I even cannot drop a cat if I took it to my house. They insisted so much. They said, "At least go to see our babies so on and so forth" and they send us to a nursery. I was almost leaving there, and I saw my daughter. When you see them, the world ends. It is such an amazing thing. They perfectly know this and for this reason, they insist that much. They told us "Even if you adopt biological family can file a suit. That is not certain either. We are giving the kids to foster families and later adopt them. You can see this on their file. We are waiting until the family disappears. Meanwhile, the child grows up in the institution. Then it becomes hard to adopt them. Let's accept this. You can adopt her after one year anyways". When I saw my daughter, I said ok she is my world anyways. One of the officers told me "You made an excellent choice. Her parents are not around. You can quickly apply for adoption". Then we took our child to adopt at the end... I even told them look I am changing her name. They told me "We are not approving that much but parents are doing that. This is your choice they said". We did not ask for the payment. Because we thought her status will soon change. One of the workers told us to take it to save it. Then we started to wait the one-year quota to file the case and take our child. On year passed like that. When only we had one month to file the case for adoption, the parents appeared suddenly. (Mother Mor)

Some foster mothers choose foster parenthood instead of adoption because of bureaucratic limitations as the age limit. On the other hand, this age limitation is not in practice currently. However, for a single parent adoption is still not possible while foster parenthood is an option. Both Mother Lila and Zümürüt are choose foster parenthood due to the age limits.

I directly applied for foster care. Not for adoption. Back then, the age law was valid, and I did not want a big child. I also did not want to wait so much. For this reason... I wanted to touch a child's life. I did not want to give birth to a child. I wanted to open a place for a child in my life and applied. (Mother Lila)

We wanted to adopt first but there was an age limit back then. We wanted a child between the ages of 0-6 and I was at age of forty. At that, time there was a range, and we were supposed to adopt a child older. However, they said that you can consider becoming a foster family. Being a foster family is not that different from adoption. It is even easier as it requires fewer documents. It would be even faster. We preferred this. The institution informed us about this. (Mother Zümüt)

Although there are mothers willing to become foster parents for altruistic reasons, they also are not at peace with the idea of temporary caregiving. There were only two mothers who maintained that they are comfortable with the policy. Both become foster parents before the sudden acceleration of the policy, and both are adopted the child in the end.

I have started the process as a foster parent. This is because, I knew that the children who are in the status of adoption are adopted immediately. They are not staying in the institution at all. However if children have the status of the foster parenthood, this is because everybody wants a child without any tie (çöpsüz üzüm) ... to illustrate everybody asks me if their parent appears so on and so forth. I, on the contrary, said that show me a kid who is not available for adoption, who does not have someone either. This will be a real support to that child... I wanted to stay in foster care, but we adopted her in the end. This was a compulsory thing. If you ask me if this is good. Yes, it is but this was not my intention in the first place... After the end of three years, they wanted to take the child back. I said this was not what you said. I filed a suit. I later heard that I was the first one to do this. I am incredibly famous in this sense. If the biological family wanted to take the child, I would say fine, but they told me not we are going to give her to another family who is waiting in the cue. I said not this is so stupid. For this reason, I objected. (Mother Kırmızı)

When the rapid increase in the number of foster care parents is considered with these interviews, this indicates a policy aiming only to increase in numbers without enough calculation of the capacity of the institution or the impacts of this acceleration. Although, the numbers are not published this kind of strategy may increase the returns to the institutional care which is more harmful to the children. On the other hand, focusing this study, becoming a foster mother without enough information, or being mistaken, causes mothers to not properly calculate their capacity and intentions. To understand better the limbo of the mothers, I asked them about the preparations and

the first arrival where I clearly see that they commit a strong attachment rather than temporary care providing a relationship with their child.

4.1.1. Preparation and the Meeting

Mothers were quite emotional when they describe the application process and how they meet. Rather than using the word of meeting, they often use coming together (i.e. kavuşmak). While they often assimilate their processes to the process of having a child through pregnancy, this process is described with spiritual anecdotes. To illustrate Mother Kahverengi said in a very surprised and even a bit proud manner “our first phone call from the institution came after exactly nine-month. Can you believe this. This was amazing. They that my application is approved.” Mother Bordo also describes how she rejected to choose the gender of the baby as it is not possible in pregnancy.

Our specialist asks my husband if he wants a boy or a girl. Then he asked me, and I said I came here to be a mother, during the in-vitro fertilization I did not have a chance to choose and now I do not want to choose either. (Mother Bordo)

After taking the call from the institution mothers are meeting with their child quickly. This often excites mothers very much. They are quickly making their home prepared for the child, most of the mothers explain how they are even felt a strong attachment when they meet. I claim that this is because as mothers know that the child was not in a safe environment more than meeting with a child, they feel as they are saving them. Especially mothers who are being foster care to the small babies are giving a great importance to build the attachments and make the baby feel safe around. Again, explaining this period spirituality and details plays an important role. Mothers give exact dates of meeting, what they were, or child was wearing or exactly how much they have been waiting. Mother Yeşil describes how she felt attached immediately and she describes the first days and the preparations.

We came to home there were another soul now. We felt very intense emotions for sure. We have made our shopping beforehand for sure. We both our crib, clothes whatever a pregnant family would to you imagine we did all. The days were beautiful. I cannot forget his smell, his attitude, his look. I remember how he comes to us in the institution. At that moment I knew I cannot let him go (Mother Yeşil)

Mother Zümrüt explains their meeting and the process of how they are connected to each other with a huge smile on her face.

Are you asking how we have encountered it? Our meeting was extremely exciting. We have waited for two and a half years, and we have even forgotten that we applied. I remember exactly (mentioning the exact date), I received a phone call. I was working... We called the institution immediately and said we are waiting but I said I should prepare everything. We do not have anything at home for a baby. All my kids are grownups. We do not have a bed for a baby, feeding bottles, snap suits, or anything. As if we are expecting a new born, from the very beginning, we painted the room quickly and bought everything even the bed but she slept with me for three years but still... her stuff, dresser, everything washed and ironed in a few days. I perfectly remember we went there with a close family member and my husband. When I saw my daughter and when she saw me, I cannot forget this, even the workers of the institutions started to cry. It was as if we have separated before, and we have finally met. You know children do not want to go to a stranger. It was nothing like that. She opened her arms and came to me. As soon as she came, she lies down on my chest like this (showing her picture). It was like I gave birth to her as if she was already my biological child. I was crying she was grabbing me. Everybody was crying. She came to me at that moment, and I did not find anything odd after that moment. You know when you see your friend's baby you ask for details. I did not worry at all. The only thing was, she used to immediately sleep when we put her in bed. I said no, she needs to get used to me, my scent. I made her used to me when sleeping. She slept for three years holding my necklace, smelling my breasts, used to my smell... I believe that we compensated for the time we lost, she used to have deprivation of mother and attachment. I think we spent this time even closer than a biological mother and a baby. Now she does not have any problem with attachment. She can stay at school more time. She trusts me. She knows that I will not leave her anywhere as she lived as if one of my organs for three years. We solved the trust think. (Zümrüt Mother)

Mother Bordo were feeling very happy about the fact than his son is very much attached to her. He described very detailed way how they have met in the institution that later how his son immediately felt the bound and did not let her go for a while.

When we have met my son always steering me. We have prepared everything, but my son was bigger than our expectations. Therefore, we bought new clothes. When I was washing them, he was chasing me. My sister-in-law said how much he is attached to me. (Mother Bordo)

After the institutional care for a long time, babies have a long period of crying. The sop of the cries is another threshold in their relationship. Moreover, they may carry some habits from the institutional care. Mothers think when these habits break, this is the signal of a real attachment. For Mother Zümrüt, this was her daughter starting to

sleep in her lab. For Mother Kırmızı it is her daughter who stops rejecting her attention during feeding times. She describes how hard it was for her to understand these are protection mechanisms for a very small baby.

We came home. She cried so much. She did not stop. I am grabbing her, giving her food. I did everything. My son came. He asked, “Mom is she going to stop?”. I said, “I do not know. We will wait until she stops”. She cried for weeks like this. Then later she stopped. She used to our home. It was interesting, let me tell you. She was falling asleep at her crib. She has milk before sleep, I am taking the milk to give her. I try to give her; she pushes my hands. She used to drink this milk alone. They most probably were taking her to the corner and squeezing the bottle somewhere there. She drinks it from there alone and sleeps. She tried to push my hands again. I let her alone. She is only a year-old baby. She went to the corner alone and started to drink that milk. Later, like I was doing with my son... I used to give him milk grabbing him. After a while, she stopped doing this as she started to trust my service (she laughs) she first started to act as if she falls asleep when she sees the bottle then slowly came to me.” (Mother Kırmızı)

As it clearly mentioned in the expressions of mothers there is a great attachment built between them and their children. The fact that the children are brought from the institution with the need for love, makes mothers start the process as soon as they meet. Due to the lack of attention, most children have a kind of special need especially if they are not taken from the institutional care in the early stages. On the other hand, mothers are not complaining about the difficulties of raising a child with special needs. The difficulties are perceived as a part of the child-raising.

Our expectation was the only love of children and learning from them and teaching them but as you know there are lots of difficulties in this system. To illustrate, we did not aware of the learning difficulties of our son. We did not aware that he did not know how to read and write. Everything passes we made this, but it requires great compassion and time. We only were expecting a child. Then we thought, we can raise a child. We can do this. (Mother Gri)

To conclude, when mothers grab their child, this is a stage where they decide there is no comeback. Especially if they build a connection with their child, it is almost impossible for them to turn back and leave their children to their destiny after having the chance to change their lives. For this reason, as the specialist know the intention of these emotions, such a process only should start after a mother completely agree to become a foster parent accepting all conditions. However, as it is represented in this chapter some mothers are not well informed and started this process with questions on

their minds. Unfortunately, the foster care experience is a rocky road, and it is not getting easier along the way.

4.2. The Influence of the Close Environment

In the interviews, I ask mothers if they shared their experiences with their environments at the beginning of the applications and later. While for some mothers this is a private process, some shared as much as possible at the very beginning to stand possible reactions. As a result, all mothers have supporter and challenger groups they face along with their ways. On the other hand, the reactions are coming in a very direct manner from the challengers. This is making mothers put distance between some friends or family members. Meanwhile, during this process, they also get closer with some family members or friends, after the support provided by them.

Although there are many people who emphasize the good work they are doing, most of the mothers are very disturbed by these kinds of tributes. They do not find these sincere and they think they are misinterpreting their relationship with their children as “good work” cannot be a sole motivation for taking this responsibility. Mother Krem says “They say ‘God bless you; you are certainly going to heaven!’. Everybody is sending us to heaven... Let’s see”. In other words, the prejudice against the children staying in the state care and foster care is harming mothers even if they are put in goodwill. Pitying the children or praising the families are very much disturbing to mothers.

4.2.1. Supporters

For mothers emotional and physical support both are valuable, as in Turkey childcare support comes from grandmothers before daycare or other professional services. That is more than approving their decisions mothers and sisters are helping in caregiving to the child.

4.2.1.1. Family and Close Environment

The main supporters are mothers, sisters, and close friends. On the other hand, physical support of a day-care comes from the mothers and sisters. Mother Lila even made her decision depending on her sister. She says: “I told my sister first as I am travelling a

lot. From my parents, they got anxious at first but later they got used to this idea. They support me in general anyways”. Mother Lacivert on the other hand says this providing a high-quality daycare in which her daughter has enough attention would not be possible without her mother and father. She states how she is glad about the relationship between her mother and daughter.

My mother adores my daughter. She is always with us. She spoils her very much. We were already good together, but we got closer. Without the support of my family, I could not provide this care to my daughter. (Mother Lacivert)

On the other hand, mothers also emphasized psychological support and for some mothers, it was important to be likened to the biological mothers. Mother Bordo says she gets closer to this idea through the support of her mother and says: “My close friends and my mother said that motherhood is not only giving birth. My mother cried after hearing my news. She very much celebrated us.”

Mother Yeşil also is very happy about the fact that her close environment accepted her son very smoothly.

My friends and relatives were all so happy that we have him. Our mothers, my sisters, and brothers everybody were very positive. Everybody loves him. He is one of us. They see him as a miracle. We did not have a problem in that sense... It was really like I gave birth and came from the hospital. (Yeşil Anne)

For the mothers, feeling the support of their close environment is very crucial as first, this is displaying their relationship of the mother-child relationship and existing in their close environment network as mother and child. In other words, this is one of the most significant ways of doing their families. Second, as in Turkey care, the main supporters are the grandmothers and sisters for these mothers as well, taking care of a child without the support of their families and friends would be much harder, for some cases even not possible.

4.2.1.2. School

In the school environment school consular and managers are playing a crucial role in defining the attitude towards the family and the child. The attitude of school is both important in the academic success of the child and following their psychological conditions. This is because most the children who spend years under institutional care

have various problems with learning, requiring close surveillance as well as guidance. Moreover, the biological family meetings may cause emotional tantrums for the children, and these may happen in school environments. Finally, due to their foster care status, they may be exposed to peer bullying in several ways.

Although I went through all the interviews, I noticed that mothers did not mention how they are supported in the school environment. Only a few mothers stated they are in contact with the school if necessary. Mother Mavi states that they are always in contact with the school consular. They are closely following the behaviours of her son, especially after the visits of biological families. They inform them if necessary.

This lack of statement may cause due to two reasons, first I could not emphasize the question well enough or as the mothers are not supported that much, they might quickly pass this question without an answer. I claim the second reason is most probable as the challenges about school is quite full.

Moreover, children under foster care have the right to be enrolled on private schools without any payment. This is ensured by the government by requiring a quota for kids who have special conditions such as being the kids of veterans and martyrs or children under institutional care. If the specialists of the children are following if they reach their rights children may reach to good and free education. Mother Krem stated that these special rights mostly stay on paper as well as free health services in private hospitals. She says “this is depending on the initiative of these institutions. If you push it stating the law, they can make it. This is not about money only. This is their rights... we are always discussing these with mothers”.

As a result, mothers are not usually supported in the school environments. If mothers can have a few contacts from teachers or other parents of the children, this increases the level of support. However, there are still problems even in reaching the basic rights of the children defined by the state in law, considering the difficulties of the children and the low awareness about the children with special needs in general, lack of social support appears as a natural result.

4.2.1.3 Other foster mothers

After meeting their child or even before, mothers may get in contact with the foundations of foster care where they meet with other mothers. Sharing their experience and fears with each other helping mothers a lot. As I found my interviewees through the foundation of the İstanbul Foster Care Foundation, all mothers were in contact with other mothers. Especially single mothers are having lot of support from their group. Mother Lacivert explains how she used the support of the foundation in the application process as they not only require technical information but emotional guidance. This is only possible through other mothers' support.

The foundation was much more helpful for us compared to the institution. The institution is saying everything that they are supposed to say. There is no problem with this, but we were very excited and what they are saying was passing over my head. From the people who experienced this, you can receive much more information. When communicating with the specialist I always think about things like what they think about me right now. (Mother Lacivert)

Mother Eflatun states that she cannot share most of her worries with her family and friends. Her relationship with other mothers is helpful to her in that sense.

Meeting with other mothers is very helpful for me. Because I cannot share these kinds of worries with my family. If I share with them, they may judge me most probably I do not know but... for this reason, I find it better to share these with my friends who can understand me. I feel better (Mother Eflatun)

Moreover, Mother Lila shares how especially for a single mother, community-support of a foster mother group is making their experience much easier.

I have met with many mothers. It is very interesting my aim was to make my son socialize with his peers, but thanks to him, I entered many different social environments. I have met great people. I found very good friends this way. We are going on vacation together. We are helping each other. We exchange pieces of stuff. Especially the single mother group is very special in that sense. Imagine, in the atmosphere of İstanbul and in these conditions of Turkey, being a woman is already hard. You are deciding to have a child, even not by giving birth but by taking care of someone else's child. We are together with these mothers. You can easily find common points. (Mother Lila)

As foster motherhood experience has its own dynamics, for mothers' the existence of other mothers around them is providing them support in various fields. They offer each other schools or specialists, or they can even consult each other on their legal positions. Beyond all kinds of support, mothers can only find people who have the

same experiences and same worries in these groups which is making them feel understood, besides mothers are very happy to help other foster mothers as they are aware of their struggles.

4.2.2. Challengers

The negative reactions are coming in a harsh manner and people are not reluctant in expressing their negative opinions. Mothers are facing with negative reactions everywhere from their neighborhoods to their close environments or parents in school. They have various coping mechanisms explained in the last part of this chapter but at the end most of the mothers are required to make a choice between those persons and their child.

4.2.2.1. Family and Close Environment

There are family members in most of the families who are reluctant about the decision of the mothers. However, this may be a small worry which can be overcome with time. The reasons of these worries are defining mothers' reaction as while some family members or friends are sharing concrete worries as their worries about the biological families or the difficulty of providing care to a child, but some are reflecting their ideas which provoke labelling and segregation of these children. As a result, mothers hearing that their close environment thinks that their child is a "bad seed", is not providing them support on the contrary they further stress as they know that they are supposed to protect their child from these persons as well.

In the case of Mother Zümürüt, although her mother and father were worried at first, they build a very close relationship by time with their granddaughter. However, she also had some friends who were worried about this decision asserting the genetic heritage of the child. While she was understanding her parents, her attitude was angrier describing her friends.

My mother and father opposed this idea, and we did not tell them at the beginning. I shared with my friends some appreciated us for touching a child's life but most of them opposed saying this is a very hard job, their genetics are different, in future they could resemble their biological parents, they can come and cause various problems they said but I did not listen these. (Mother Zümürüt)

Similarly, Mother Turuncu faced the reaction of her mother toward her decision. However, the reason why her mother reacted was the fact that Mother Turuncu were providing care to her mother as she is quite old. She was angry with her daughter as she thought she is not going to provide her care anymore as a foster child take this time.

We came to my mother, she saw her and said smiling “Oh! How cute is this girl, who are you, where is your mother, how you came here?” than my daughter looked at me and I asked her “who am I?” she said, “my foster mother”. The face of my mother changed suddenly. The atmosphere was very intense. She said she was waiting for me. I am giving her bath. She said, “but I thought you would also cut my hair”. I said “Ok, sure I will cut your hair too”. I did these all, but she did not soften her attitude. I asked help of my sister and escaped from there... On the one hand, she says this is good work what I am doing but on the other hand, she could not get used to it yet. She is very attached to me. (Mother Turuncu)

The family members or friends who are explicitly mentioning that they are not accepting the child as a part of family is distress mothers. However, their reaction often prioritizes the protection of the child. Mother Gri for example did not reacted her relatives who said they do not want her son in their house. She says: “Some were saying for example you can come to us, but can you leave him to daycare before. I guess they could not deal with the heavy emotions they have... Later they understood this is our life.”. I interpret her reaction as a strategy to prevent further conflict and potentially further harm to her family and child as she does not mince her words in other stories. On the other hand, there are situations where mothers are put in a position to react as the kids are concretely and intentionally harmed. While managing many reactions, mothers are first surprise, later they get upset and finally they may become very angry towards people as they lose their trust. The position of Mother KIRMIZI towards her family members is an example of these situations.

“My father told me that she does not fit in our family. My mother said, ‘you even do not cook, how you are going to look after a child’. This is their understanding of providing care. If you feed the child, you are okay. Her only need is nutrition. My brother said, “I am not an uncle or something”. I used to have a partner. He was very harsh. He told me “I will not be the father of a prostitute”. It was very traumatic. He told me “Choose: me or her”. I said this is not possible. From my environment, some said she was born on the wrong side of the blanket (gayrimeşru). A woman told me ‘You educated your son what about her?’. (Laughing) I said, “I am working for her to grow up. I am planning to make her a maid”. Those reactions came. I was not too worried

about these but these are affecting you for sure, but I did not react... I did not discuss it with anyone. A friend of my father was once appreciating me a lot, but I knew this was not his sincere feelings. I said, “Don’t worry there is plenty of kid in the institution. Go give your application form”. He told me unintentionally “God forbids”. It is like a joke right. I know their hypocrisy but this level... Everybody you clap but...” (Mother Kırmızı)

When the mothers are challenged by their close environments, they are not only losing the support which they very much need for providing sustainable care to their child but also, they are losing their secure environments. In some situations, mothers cannot compromise with their friends or families. In these scenarios, if they are not playing important role in mothers’ lives, they can overcome this problem. However, if these people are close family members, mothers are making a sacrifice of writing off these people. These sacrifices are making mothers more rigid and alone especially if they do not have access to other support groups.

4.2.2.2. School

In the school environment there are two main actors as the school employees and parents of the students. Mothers may choose to share that they are foster parents or not. While some mothers are having slight problems as a few reactions of parents of peer bullying which can be overcome, some cannot find a school to enrol or rather than other students they are facing the reactions of teachers which is worrying mothers a lot. Mother Zümrüt describes how a mother came toward her and her daughter in school and said, ‘Oh is this the child you took?’. She got very upset, but she responded in a bitter way saying that she is her daughter and warning her that this is not a kind manner of hers.

On the other hand, the kids may require special attention or the education and the test relevant to their intellectual capacities. As it is stated above, children under foster care may have problems with learning. However, with the great support from their mothers, they may come to a degree of it not that much observed. Mother Gri complained about the teachers not understanding the condition of her son.

You know these kids have some troubles in learning. We have some struggles in school life. They were looking at us, both mother and father are very interested. They could not understand why he was not successful... Sometimes they did not want to provide him with tests special to his conditions. They often told us “Look he is doing, why you are insisting on the learning difficulty

thing”. Yes, he was doing but they were not aware of our struggle behind. We were taking special courses for each class, plus I was studying with him for hours before each exam. (Mother Gri)

Moreover, school managements may not be willing to have foster children with the intellectual or behavioral problems, in their school as they may decrease the success of the school. In these scenarios, the attitude of the specialist is defining the child’s position in the school. If the specialist makes pressure with the help of the Ministry of Education, schools are put in a position where they require to come up with solutions to these problems without harming or sacrificing the child. However, if not the management may even push families to drop out the school by harming the child by not providing enough support or other means. Mother Siyah has a very bad experience in finding a school to his child as they also have a disabled child. Even though autism is a major variable which would have a great impact, I share her story as an example of how far the schools can go if the specialists are not supporting parents enough.

Nobody knows our situation (being foster care). I did this mistake before and shared this. Then they called my child bastard. The parents told me this. Not the kids only. The manager of a school told me, and a teacher told me this. When you can expect these words from them, you expect this from parents for sure... After our problems with labelling because of autism, we could not properly pass to the labelling of foster parents. They tried to expel my child once, I said no I will not take my child from the school. The manager of the school called me. He told me “When your child was falling from the sixth floor of the school...” and he stopped. I fell down crying and saying, “please do not tell me he felled, do not tell me he is died” Actually nothing happened. Only for torturing me, he did this. We are expelled from seventeen schools and finally, we find a school somewhere very far away from our home. (Mother Siyah)

Finally, they enrolled their child on a private school by paying the price and later when they have financial problems they gave up and enrolled him on a public school. On the other hand, with the support from the specialists, there are families who find out the quota that they can use while they are not told in advance by the school management. As a result, again the attitude and the experience of the specialist define the school life of the child. Even if the child encounters school employees with a negative attitude, they have the power to remind them of their responsibilities to the protection of a child under state care. Additionally, they have the power of sanction as well if they are willing to use it. However, mothers alone cannot cope with the school management as is observed in the example of Mother Siyah.

4.2.3. Changing Relationships

The relationship of mothers may change depending on the attitudes of the people they interact and if they influence their child. They may change positively or negatively. For Mother Mor, her relationship with her mother change in a positive way after she felt that her mother really loves her daughters sincerely, however they stopped to see each other with her aunt due to her comments after her children.

We have lots of relationships changed a lot. My mother for example immediately opened her heart. She is actually a tough woman, but she is tough with them too. If she was not sincere, I would be very sad. However, for example, my aunt is not like this, and we stopped seeing each other because of this. She tells us, "Now you are doing this, but your kids are going to throw you away when they grow up". She cannot see her own children. She sees mine. I stopped seeing her for this... Once the wife of my uncle was staring at us. My daughter newly learning how to walk. She holds the table and stands up. I am standing behind just in case. I did not stop her when she was falling so that she can sit like that. She told me 'If she was your child you cannot stop like this, I said sorry, but I want my child to learn how to walk and how to fall no matter if I give birth or not. (Mother Mor)

Mother Mor gave various examples of where she reacted these interpretations in a bitter manner. She is not the only one who stop mincing her words while speaking with family members. Mother KIRMIZI, shared how she had very open attitude towards her family members. She even broke up with a partner due to his ultimatum for leaving her child back to the institution and his bad treatments.

For years we did not visit my father with my daughter. I went there always alone. I separated from my partner. Later we come together once again. We have married, even after our marriage... First, he said that he is sorry, he admitted that he was wrong but he did not stop threatening bad to the child and finally we broke up again. He was telling me to leave her and make our own baby so on and so forth. I was saying okay we can have a baby, but this is not something that you can easily surrender. You cannot leave a fish. You know it is going to die. Like this many things happened but what I can do? This was my shot, and I have already taken it." (Mother KIRMIZI)

When the family members segregate or label the child mothers are taking serious steps to protect their children. Mother Siyah stopped seeing her mother after she treats different her son than her other grandchildren.

When my son came to my house, after their reactions I decided to write off them (mother and father). During this period, he becomes my kid. You are not

a mother, yet you do not know but whoever you put side by my kid, I would choose him. This is not a heavy decision. For sure, I choose him. Even if this is my mother. She should not separate him from her other grandchildren. This was not that hard honestly.” (Mother Siyah)

There are only a few mothers who did not remarkably change their relationships. However, most of the mothers had very negative and brutal reactions to their decision. When these reactions are compared with possible reactions after the decision of having a child through pregnancy the direct manner of people and the rigidity of the comments indicate the perception towards children under state care in general. As mothers also interpret this they are receiving the reactions as threat to their child not only at that point but as a representation of prejudice towards their children. As a result, as the reactions are severely affecting their lives sometimes these relationships are impossible to regulate, and mothers stop seeing some people for this reason. On the other hand, the intensity of the negative experience is making the support much more valuable for mothers which has a positive effect on the relationships of the mother with the owners of these support.

4.3. The Influence of the Biological Families

Foster care parenthood agreement requires foster parents to collaborate with the institution for maintaining the relationship between the children and their biological parents. These meetings supposed to be regulated by the specialists, the specialists are required to prevent the contact between foster parents and biological parents and specialists are supposed to accompany the meeting to prevent biological parents harm the children physically or psychologically. Biological parents have the right to request meetings once a month.

For the children staying under state care, if the parents have a collaborative manner from both sides, regular meetings with the biological families are recommended. However, as it is discussed in previous chapters, in Turkey the category of families who are having a temporary crisis in their lives and have the potential to recover and take their child back, does not exist. All families are already provided other kinds of support and in the end, the children are taken away from the families when there was no other solution left. I asked mothers the stories of their biological parents. From my experience and knowledge, I claim for most biological parents regaining the

guardianship of their children is impossible. However, MoFSS insist on implementing the policies prioritizing biological families and maintaining their relationship with these meetings even in situations where children might be seriously harmed both physically and psychologically. Moreover, only a few specialists accompany these meetings while there are cases where parents meet and even fight due to the lack of security provided by the institution.

Mothers are aware of their responsibility of collaborating with specialists in maintaining the relationship between the biological family and the child. However, often, specialists are not regulating these meetings considering the best interest of the child which is making mothers very anxious. Moreover, these meetings are very sensitive in remembering children their traumas and making them question where they belong but while meetings are ensured, the psychological wellbeing of the child is not paid attention. Mother Lacivert explains how she was worried while bringing her daughter to the institution for this meeting and how she felt desperate when she is leaving her child with someone she does not know or trust.

Our specialist said they are very aggressive about their meeting request, but we said that we are waiting for you. We said okay but they did not arrange the meeting for months. Finally, when the meeting happened, they came very late. They saw each other for half an hour. My daughter was very much affected. She came very sadly. Later they did not request a meeting again but for my daughter it was bad. She is just a baby. We are trying to explain but she cannot understand. From her point of view, her mother and father took her somewhere by car and give her someone who is a stranger. They have disappeared for one hour. Then they came back and took me again. This was her first disappointment of her for us. For this reason, I felt very bad. If she was a bit older, I would tell her, but she could not understand. After the meeting, we literally become one. I started to sleep in her room. She started to cry at night. She did not separate from me for anything. For this, I am afraid of these meetings now. (Mother Lacivert)

As in the experience of Mother Lacivert, children usually turn back from these meetings very affected. The bond of trust between foster families and children is quite damaging through these meetings especially when the children do not want to go to the meeting.

4.3.1. Collaborative Biological Parents

The biological parents may be actively or passively in collaboration with the institution as well as with the foster parents. The ones who are actively collaborating are the biological families who have accepted the fact there is no way for them to gain back the guardianship of their children and they are aware that being in a foster parent's home is good for their children, so they collaborate with the institution and mothers. However, in practice these parents are few. They are usually young women who gave birth to their children without the information of their parents, and they are not able to provide care. The second group is standing for the families who are disappeared or the ones who only are coming to see their children rarely. Separately from their intentions they are also passively collaborating with the institution.

As one of the biggest fears of the foster mothers is the possibility of a return to the biological family, passive collaborative families are making them very happy. Mother Bordo explains how she is relieved when the biological parents did not request meeting for a long time.

Before applying, I saw in the news a child who is given to the biological family and together with my husband we started to worry a lot thinking what we would do if our child is taken from us. However, thanks to God our family (biological parents) are not willing to see my son. (Mother Bordo)

The smoothest relationship, after the ones who are not seeing their biological parents at all, is the one between the child of the Mother Yeşil and his biological parents. They only met one time where the child cried a lot which is often in biological parent meetings but later, they did not meet face to face. As a result, the child was not affected by these meetings.

Our biological family is not able to visit her son often because of her condition. (I ask: How your son is affected by her existence in this setting?). She has almost no influence. She called us one or two times. Once we have met at the very beginning. The institution told me if I can stand with my mother. My baby cried a lot when she first saw her. They asked me to stay together in a room. I said ok. I can do this. We stayed together for half an hour. It was not easy for sure for me and him. Later we shared our numbers. Now she asks for pictures only or hears his voice. I know it is not the best thing, but I am okay with it. I am trying to send pictures. In the end, I would not wish this for anyone (referring the mother). My son does not care that much yet. He only feels that there is something. (Mother Yeşil)

Although the biological mother is in contact with them. Mother Yeşil is not too much worried about their relationship as she accepted the situation. Mother Yeşil tells a situation how she even promotes their relationship.

The mother came only a few times for meeting with him at first then she stopped. From time to time we are sending pictures. He (foster child) does not know who she is exactly but he knows that she exists. To illustrate on Mother's Day, I say let's send a message to her. He asks 'to Mother?' he understands. (Mother Yeşil)

There are also mothers who mentioned that they do not have any biological meetings realized yet. Interestingly, these mothers said that the biological parent problem is too much exaggerated by the foster mothers. When the parents do not exist or do not cause any trouble I agree with them, however I observe that this is not the case for the majority.

4.3.2. Not Collaborative

The biological parents have the potential to cause many problems by being not collaborative with the institution and the foster parents. The problems start from the false promises to the child about they will come together soon even when it is not representing reality, they can reach up to physical harm to the children or the parents. I will not share all incidences to protect the identity of my interviewees however, there are cases both children and the parents are endangered because of poorly regulated meetings.

False promises are very often and as the specialists do not accompany to these meetings as they are supposed to, they are not correcting the parents after these words. After the meetings with their biological families, children are going back to their foster homes with great confusion and the trust between them being injured. Mother Eflatun explains how they are starting over every time solving the problems of her child as eating disorder and as the mother requests meetings each and every month they start over again and again.

The mother started to confuse my child by saying things as we will meet soon. I both this and this for you. She is like where I belong. I must be temporary here. These periods are especially hard for us honestly. She becomes very

aggressive. Do not listen to me. Not eating enough. I was very hard... It is not possible for them to take her back but still it was very influential for my child. When they were not meeting, she become better. Now they are meeting, and we experience same thing again. (Mother Eflatun)

There is no sanction implemented to the parents who does not behave as they supposed to in these meeting. However, when the parents are rejecting these meetings in order to protect their children they are immediately reminded of their temporary position, and they are threatened with the return of the child. This threat is not representing the reality as foster parents are not as vulnerable in law as much as they were in the past, but it is used as a trump. As a result, most of the foster parents feel very helpless even when they are worried that their child may get more harmed.

The meetings with the biological families often have a potential security threat due to the profile of the biological parents. Although there are biological parents who leave their children due to they cannot provide them care, there are parents who abuse the child or commit serious crimes. If they do not have a restraining order, they also have the right to request these meetings. The MoFSS specialists can decide if these meetings should or should not be realized. If they are experienced enough and they care about the children's wellbeing they regulate these meetings in a smooth way and sometimes reject them. However, there are cases where foster parents are forced to maintain the meetings even if it is clearly harmful to the child. Mother Mor explains her experience with the biological parent which also affected the attitude of the institution towards them and how she wants to prevent these meetings only for her child's psychological wellbeing.

The biological parent wanted to see my child when she was a toddler. The procedure is taking my daughter from us and bring her to the biological parents. We did not know this, and we were thinking to protect our own child. So, we said no. I told them "If you took her from me, she would cry her lungs out. Can we come together we said? At least we can be with her, and she would be more comfortable". We went there and meet. As soon as he saw us, he imagined dollars. He did not look at the face of the child once. She was always in my lab. We were playing music on the phone. He told 'this is her thing, it's a girl, she dances and sings'... We said we want to adopt her. He told us "No way. Grow her up. Make her a public prosecutor. Then I will take her back". We felt like we crashed a wall. Until that time the institution was very nice to us. They were even not coming to regular checking. Then as soon as this family appears the attitude changed. He even told the workers "Tell them to buy me a house" and as we did not give anything, he started to request meetings after more than

a year... (I said: It is a very clear story, even he offered bribery to the specialist. This cannot be along with the best interest. Still, nobody said anything?) No this was our crisis. The institution's attitude broke our sense of security. As soon as the biological family appeared, the institution become our enemy. I am trying to complain. They say: 'She is not your child anyways. We are paying you for care. Her family can request a meeting whenever they like. You did not adopt her etc.' We suddenly fall from heaven to hell. If they want to see they will. Ok, I got it. I can understand the biological family too. I am not an idiot. You aim to provide a home to these children and give back to the biological family, but this is not our case. He is not capable of providing her care or other sisters and brothers who are still in institutional care. Woman eighter (Details are not mentioned for privacy). In this situation, they cannot go back to this family. They are taken from them because of their condition at the beginning. So, you cannot give my child back anytime am I right? They say yes you are... Then why are you torturing my child?... This is the biggest need of a little child. They want to feel that they belong to someone. She feels that she belongs to us. Then who are they? If you cannot give a clear answer, you lost the child. Are you my mother? Yes or No. The answer is clear. Maybe there is such a thing as professional motherhood but not here. All families I have met calling their child my son or my daughter. They will not give their child back in any condition. We are not in America. If we took a child into our home, they are ours. I can give my life for her. This is our family structure. This is what I feel. We are not individualized. We are bound like this. We act with a feeling of community. We say mine. Therefore, as soon as she comes home, she heals. Because we provide her with this security. If you cannot give them this sense of security, it does not matter if she grows up in an institution or in a home. (Mother Mor)

Biological parents usually do not have intentions to abuse the relationship of the foster parents as Mother Mor experience. However, as it is represented in her story, they may not be prevented to do so if they attempt.

To realize these meetings. Children are taken not child friendly spaces as jails. Moreover, as they supposed to go there in school days and without their foster parents, children may resist to go. For mothers, persuading their children to go to these places knowing that they will be very uncomfortable while this experience has no benefit for them is very desperate. Mother Mavi explains how she was uncomfortable in convincing her child to go to a jail as he rightfully does not want to go to such a place.

The mother requested a meeting two years ago at that was that. Another parent is in jail. He requested a meeting. The child did not want to go. He resists but we convinced him... The child did not want to go. I convinced him. I told him we can play afterwards. I said that I will buy you chips. He went there at the end... It is not logical that he insists on the meeting. Because these kids need to go there during working hours on the weekdays. For this, we are taking him

from the school, and they are going there with a specialist. My daughter and I tried to convince him. Once my daughter asked him “Baby, why you do not want to go there? What is that place?” he told us “Only if you go there, you know what is that place” (i.e. gören bilir). Why you are doing this torture to this kid. Only because the father has the right to see him, is this fair? I do not accept this. (Mother Mavi)

When mothers share their discontent regarding these meetings, the specialists insist on emphasizing the temporary character of their relationship and reminding them that they already agreed with these meetings at the beginning. However, mothers are not objecting to these meetings to reject the biological families but to protect their children. They do not believe that the specialists are paying enough regard to regulating these meetings and they are not taking enough initiative. For this reason, they are required to protect their children themselves.

4.4. The Influence of the MoFSS Institutions

MoFSS institutions are very involved in this experience from the very beginning until the end (adoption, growing up or return). They are expected to be the main source of information in both legal and practical terms. However, mothers are usually consulting to the foundations rather than the institution. To understand how the institution failed to gain the trust of mothers and become somewhere mothers are afraid of rather than feeling their support, I first explain the responsibility and the operation of the MoFSS institution, then I share mother’s experiences with the institution.

I already explained how they are influential in guiding parents to become a foster parent rather than adopting a child. Later, parents are appointed social workers to regularly follow up with the children, guide the foster parents and regulate the biological parent meetings.

The attitude of the assigned specialist is the most influential parameter in defining the experience of the foster parents. It is even more important than the attitude of the biological parents as they can regulate this relationship as well. While there are specialists who are experienced and have comprehensive knowledge of the case of a child, there are also many specialists who are not experienced and/or not capable of regulating the process in which foster parents struggle. There is a visible decrease in the expertise level of the employee working in the institutions. While old foster parents

are constantly happy with their specialists' attitude, currently for mothers encountering a specialist having remarkable knowledge and experience is just a matter of chance. To illustrate Mother Kahverengi is the mother who has the best relationship with the institution who is adopted her child after years of foster care.

“I took very much support from my specialist. Because my specialist was very experienced, and she guided me a lot. It was not like today; she was very good. Thanks to the specialist it was very easy. To illustrate, when they come the home, I heard these children cry for a few days. I did not know this. When my daughter cried, I immediately called and ask them. They told me this is very normal. We only should wait for a while. She was very nice... This is how it is supposed to be. If there is the existence of a state behind your back, you should feel secure. I am sure they are with me. They were shrivelling very well too which is I think very necessary.” (Mother Kahverengi)

There are other mothers who are pleased with their relationship with the institution in general. Mother Zümrüt indicates “...information providing was excellent. We are living in a small town. They know me and I know them. I did not have any challenges caused by the institution. On the contrary, they helped other families. We are very satisfied with them”. Mother Yeşil states also she was very satisfied with their support saying “They were very helpful to us. They come and go asking if they can support us. We were always discussing together what to do next”.

Moreover, there are also many specialists who generate very good solutions to some problems and take initiative to protect the families and the children if necessary. However, as the specialists change often, they start to explain their story and try to prove their good will all over again. If the relationship does not go well, mothers are facing a completely different side of the institution. To illustrate in the case of Mother Mor, she could have protected her daughter from the meetings with the biological family thanks to her specialist's persistent attitude. However, as soon as they lost them, their relationship with the institution was destroyed and they could not explain why they want to prevent these meetings. Mother Lila experienced a similar switch in the attitude of the institution after the change of her specialist.

Our specialists changed very often. The first we started with someone who was very interested in my son. He knew all his history starting from the institution but right now it is changed, and I cannot say we are that much supported...At the beginning of our process for example our specialist also governed the process with the biological parents very well. He said he would not tell my son

that he is his biological father. In the office, they met as if the father is a friend of our specialist because we did not know if they are going to continue meeting. They did not and thanks to him he does not remember this as an important thing. Right now, how they would manage this process, I have no idea... Lila Anne

There are many mothers how has no trust to the institution. However, they still are responsible for decision-making for the children so the relationship is unavoidable. The decisions made by specialists may be about daily practices such as providing necessary permissions to foster parents for reaching health documents of the child or permission to travel for a short time, or they can be very fundamental decisions such as making the decision to order foster parents a meeting which has not been realized for years for security reasons. While making these decisions, specialists may take biased positions or obstinate with the foster parents while they supposed to prioritize the best interest of the child. Seeing their biological parents may not be in the best interest of a child especially if they have had an abusive relationship in the past. Most of the children even if they do not have a history of serious abuse, are neglected for a considerable amount of time. As a result, for the children meeting with these family members is not only confusing but also seriously harmful.

4.4.1. Lack of Information

For the mothers, information provided by the MoFSS institutions is very critical as they are required to provide general information regarding the needs of a child who went to foster care from institutional care but also about the special case of the child containing the family biological history of the child and health records.

Although there are mothers who said they receives enough information from the institution, the institution is very inadequate in providing guidance to the families in general. At the beginning of the foster parenthood, there is an education supposed to be provided to the foster parents containing a few models. Only Mother Lila attended said: "I have attended the first meetings of the education. However, they did not call me for the maintenance. They were presenting things about the law and so on. Nothing was surprising to me. I already have read much more before coming there." Later she consulted the foundations when she had a question, not the institution.

Besides, when children or families are requiring support for a problem, the institution is not providing any kind of support more than giving pieces of advice and taking the minutes. They are not even directing mothers to the specialist which only requires a network of specialists. Mothers mostly find the specialists themselves if they need them.

Moreover, mothers are not informed about the history of their children in which they can take measures accordingly. To illustrate many mothers learned very late about mental health problems or drug use in children's biological families. On the other hand, families are also not properly informed about children's health history. While sometimes this lack of information is caused after the choice of the institution but there are also cases where the record does not exist. Mother Turuncu explains how she is caught off balance to her daughter when she mentioned some details about her biological mother.

“When we met with my daughter, she told me things and I was shocked. She told me about the traumas regarding her mother. If I knew these, I would have been prepared. Although I am an adult, I was not ready for such a piece of information. I did not know anything. I learned everything from my daughter. I also told my specialist. I said look, she is telling me this and this, but I do not know if I should believe her or not. She told me yes these are true. They only gave me the proper information when we were on our way home. This was too late. I have the right to know... I heard that mothers have the file of the child, but I even do not have this” (Mother Turuncu)

Mother Turuncu is not having the file of the child showing the unstandardized implementation of the institution as she has the right to have. Again, in reaching proper information specialists attitude is determinant.

4.4.2. Lack of Support due to Lack of Capacity

I claim that rather than intentional negative attitude, most of the struggles happening due to the specialists are caused after their lack of experience and the rapid alteration of the specialists. The difference of attitude even causes a family to start a foster family or not as in the experience of Mother Lacivert.

“We went to the institution to apply for foster care and adoption together. We decided to apply for foster care knowing that the process is faster. When we went to the institution our meeting experience was very bad. The specialist even did not look at our faces. Although we were meeting all the requirements

they said that we are not eligible without a proper explanation. Most probably, as we already lost our daughter, they thought it would be too much for us, but they did not properly explain this either... We wanted to adopt a child from abroad to be able to reduce the probability of return to a minimum, but we could not succeed. Then we noticed that this is not a rational way to follow, and we decided to apply once more. This time we met with a very kind specialist, and she rapidly proceed with our application. Now my daughter came.” (Mother Lacivert)

Mother Siyah also complains about how they are not supported at all, especially after their first specialist.

Our first specialists were very much supportive always but after that, no one supported us properly. Now we do not want support or anything. No specialist can enter my house without informing me after this time. If I want, I take them, if I do not I will not. If they are not supporting me, they cannot come only for surveillance. (Mother Siyah)

Mothers often mention a change in the attitude of the specialists and how they could not explain their conditions to the new specialists. I guess this change has resulted after the very aggressive growth of capacity. The new specialist started to take responsibility for many cases which are not easy to manage and they failed.

4.4.3. Institution Prioritizing the Biological Families

Although foster parents are taking the care responsibility of the children for long years, they still cannot reach very practical, daily information. To illustrate, while the online information of the child is open to the biological family, foster parents are required to ask every time for permission from the institution. Mother Zümürüt explains how they are struggled having permission to a very necessary surgery for their child.

Mothers have very little rights over children. Without the permission of the institution and biological family you cannot do anything. How can I describe this? To illustrate we had a problem, health problem with my daughter. We needed a small operation. My husband is a doctor. Her doctor said she needs the surgery but without the permission of her mother, she could not have the operation. (Mother Zümürüt)

On the other hand, the MoFSS institutions have a biased attitude in regulating biological family meetings as well which is making mothers concerned about protecting their child from biological parents as well. The mothers are feeling as if they are the only responsible part for collaborating in these meetings as they are getting

threat of their children can be taken from them. However, the same attitude is not valid for biological families when they are not behaving according to their contact. Mother Lacivert describes how she was worried for her daughter in these meetings as she does not trust the institution for the protection of her daughter.

I cannot judge anyone. I cannot blame them, but I am worried about my daughter, and I cannot trust the meetings. I do not know the conditions. I do not believe that they are giving real importance to the protection of these children. They look at this as a job and they are just checking another box. I really do not think they are that much worried. On the contrary, in my case, as the family is aggressive, to prevent further problems they are treating them with understanding but not to my daughter. (Mother Lacivert)

Mother Mor explains she is not standing against biological family meetings in general but she does not believe that the institution properly analyzes if these meetings would be harmful to the child or not.

They say the best interest of the child is being with the biological family without considering the condition of the child. When they put this definition like this, you cannot do anything. There is no psychological analysis or whatsoever. There is no interpretation special to the child. Everything is according to the regulations. These meetings are causing problems to all foster families. Because parents disappear and come and promise that they will take them back. This time child starts to have crisis again. You are fixing the child and they come back. Everybody's problem is biological family in this system. This is because you can negotiate for everything else. You already know this is a tough nut. You do not expect a snowflake or angel wing. You know the weights and you accept but as soon as biological parents came into the frame a great problem occurs. Because there is no control over them. (Mother Mor)

Mother Siyah is emphasizing they are very much disturbed by the threat of taking their child back although she knows that this is not that easy anymore.

I perfectly know after these years it is not easy to take my child from me after this time. I do not need a guardian. I only need that they stop being a barrier in front of me. They are not supposed to always remind me that he is not my child. They injure my emotional tie with my son which I have built myself. Before foster parents, the specialists need education and learn not to destroy the tie between parents and child. (Mother Siyah)

The specialists are also required to manage the process of meeting children with their biological families when they are teenagers. Even when the families are not meeting with the children due to several reasons, children may prefer to reach their parents when they become teenagers. However, rather than a happy meeting with tears as we

see in the movies or TV shows, most of them are facing disruptive scenes or the parents who are willing to abuse the child emotionally or materially. As the holder of the information of the parents, specialists need to regulate this process in collaboration with foster care families to protect the child. This is also not a standardized procedure, yet which is causing high prices.

As a result, while mothers are treated as if they are not accepting their reality and for this reason, they are trying to prevent the meetings with the biological families, they are actually trying to protect their child from the trauma of these meetings. I claim that mothers are willing to collaborate more with the institution if they believe in their expertise and objective position. However, the institution is not providing families with enough support along with standardized procedures which are pushing mothers to take their own measures.

4.5. Mothers Left Alone with the New Realities

Most of the mothers expressed they were not expecting the struggles they are experiencing during the application process or even at the beginning of their experiences. This difference is also visible in the statements of the mothers who newly become foster care mother compared to the ones who are more experienced. While new mothers are focusing on general difficulties of childcare, the experience mothers are mentioning the struggles caused by the policy implementation. To illustrate, Mother Lila who has five years of experience is aware that her son is not alone in his learning difficulty. Many other foster parents have a similar problem. She thinks that they could be further supported by the institution and express her child's condition in a clever way.

I was not expecting this much honestly. It is much harder than I expected. I did not imagine this when I was applying. All kids in my social environment are too intelligent. They always surprise us, right? My son did not surprise me a lot with his talents and actions (laughs)... They always told me not to worry.
(Lila Anne)

While they are trying to cure the injuries of their children they are targeted by various agents. Institutions may not provide enough support to them, on the contrary, they may cause further threats. Biological families rarely do not cause problems.

Besides, after facing the reactions of the people who are not approving their decision or segregate or label their child, mothers may become angrier and more alone overtime to protect their child.

The price of being a foster mother cost much more than providing care.

4.5.1. Protection of the Child

In this policy implementation is more than the care of the child, mothers are expected to protect their children as they are vulnerable children with special needs, and their position is very open to labelling.

4.5.1.1. Labelling

As institutional care still has a very bad reputation, various myths still exist about the institutions as well as the children. They are given attention very much. Although the rumors are transferred by peers in general adults are the ones who are digging the lives of the children under foster care. Mothers are organizing their lives and find various strategies to prevent labelling. Mother Zümürüt explains how she responded a child when she openly asked if her child is adopted or not.

“We newly moved to our apartment. Some of our neighbors were aware of our situation, some were not. A mother told her child that my daughter is adopted (evlatlık , i.e. slang version of being adopted). The child is a friend of my daughter, while they are playing, my daughter shouts to me saying “my friend is telling me that I am adopted. What does it mean?” I asked the girl “Why you are telling this”. She answered, “My mother told me”. I said “No! Why you are making up such a thing, (to her daughter) didn’t you tell your friends that you were born through my heart?” I called them, show the pictures of my daughter, and said, “whoever told you this story they were wrong, look she was a baby”. The kids did not tell anything and left. My daughters were very little as well and she did not understand the meaning of it. I thought to talk with this mother and ask what her purpose was but then I did not. However, these things happen. People talk about these things. I know that this will continue. I don’t know what is going to happen later” (Zümürüt Anne)

Parents are not hiding the fact that they did not give birth to them however if they do not see their biological parents regularly are introduced to their realities slowly, as far as they ask. There is a common story used by foster parents telling the children that they are born through the heath of their mothers but not their bellies. When the child

asks the reason why parents tell their stories. For this reason, they are trying to prevent these kinds of interruptions as much as possible.

Mothers do not want their child to be pitied either. For this reason, they may choose not to share the fact that they are foster care.

This child has nothing to pity. He has everything. He has more than one family. He has money provided by the state. Even if they would not give money, we were ready to spend. He is in a good condition. Only separated from his parents. Being an orphan is sad for sure but for this reason I am not telling this everyone. I share with the ones who can be inspired with this but, if possible, not when my son is with us. When he is not with us, I share but if we are for example together with our neighbor, he comes nearby calling me, mother.” (Mother Mavi)

Labelling can also be harmful in environments where the mother does not have as much control as in school. If teachers or other parents are inclined to label the child, this has the potential of causing peer bullying and/or academic failure in the child. For this reason, many mothers are not sharing that they are foster parents with other parents or every teacher in the schools.

4.5.1.2. Vulnerable Children with Special Needs

Children in foster care usually require support due to their vulnerabilities or special needs. Mothers are supporting their children by using their own resources. Mother Yeşil said, “We are in contact with our psychiatrist friend. She included us to a playgroup. We are observing him. Now he seems good”. However, most of the mothers cannot reach such support but still require following up. To illustrate Mavi Anne herself is consulting a psychiatrist. However, although she knows the need she cannot afford the therapy for her son as she even has no idea when they can stop.

“He is not an easy child. He is not used to studying. He pushed us a lot to understand if we will leave him. I started to consult a psychiatrist. I mostly tell them about my son. For example, his sister is marrying now, and he does not want this. My psychiatrist offered us game therapy, but this costs a minimum of 250tl per session. I must pay for this. So, we could not start.” (Mother Mavi)

Mother Lila realizes the need for his son to be supported in his intellectual capacity. Besides, she says that this is not special to his kid.

When he come, he could not speak. We went through three years of therapy. His intellectual skills were always a bit late compared to his age group. He learned to read very hard, and he cannot properly write even now. These challenge me a lot. I am trying to do all these by myself. The institution only controls the family with a few questions and the law perceives us as paid care providers... Not as mothers. When the law is like this, the specialists also act like that. They are not acting with us; they position themselves as they are above us. I think these intellectual supports are very crucial. From my observation, almost half of these kids staying with foster families have some kind of a learning problem. Most probably because of their traumas and lack of stimulation. We are trying to find this by ourselves. The specialists can help us with these. We can take this kind of support through institutions. All specialists are psychiatrists as well. These can be provided by the institution... I am seeing similar difficulties a lot. The therapies are expensive... I was not enough informed about these. I did not know how three years old behave but they did not inform me well either.” (Mother Lila)

Most of the children have obvious special needs such as behavioral problems or problems in learning. However, even though these are not visible, it does not mean children are doing fine as all these kids are experiencing trauma at a certain level. For this reason, although mothers feel that they are alone in this experience and often blame themselves for not providing enough for their child, this is a common problem and requires to be addressed at the policy level.

4.5.2. Coping Mechanisms

Mothers are very creative in inventing coping mechanisms for the challenges they experience. They are mainly deciding the environment where they would safely share their stories or not, they gather with other foster mothers and consult each other, but most importantly they try to empower their children and try to make them comfortable in their stories to increase their resistance.

4.5.2.1. Gathering with other foster mothers

Gathering with other mothers helps them a lot as they can share their experiences with each other and consult each other. However, MoFSS institutions are not organizing these gatherings. They only refer mothers to the foundations. This means, that not all mothers are reaching other foster mothers, which is highly beneficiary for making this process easier.

Mother Yeşil explains how gathering with other mothers helped both herself and her son to not feel alone.

We were gathering with other mothers to share our feelings drinking tea. This was very nice... We have similar problems and challenges. We are talking to each other. For example, labelling... We are talking about we cope with these. Most importantly, when they are growing up, the children can see and say, "Look there are other kids like me, I am not alone, this happens, and it is normal". He is actually very little but still. (Mother Yeşil)

The foundations are aiming to make these gatherings as much as possible. Mother Gri said accordingly, "In the foundation, we have met with other mothers. We heard each other's stories. It was very nice. This was the purpose of the foundation anyways. We were helping each other".

4.5.2.2. Hiding Foster Motherhood

Mothers may prefer not to share their stories to protect their child mainly. Mother Lacivert who has a little baby explained why she does not prefer to share their situation with everyone.

Sometimes people may not know what they supposed to say. Therefore, I am not telling this everyone such as my neighbours. I only shared with the ones who I already trust; I know what they would think... I hate when people say this is a good work. I do not want them to pity my child when she start to understand what they are saying. (Mother Lacivert)

In order to protect the children in school environment mothers may also ask to hide their situation from the teachers as Mothe Zümürüt who said, "In the school, I requested them to have the records as they should be but do not use her family name in the class". Mother Gri also did not prefer to share with everyone especially in school. She stated, "We did not share this with everyone. In the high school, we only told the teachers but later we did not tell. Sometimes he told his friend himself. Sometimes I hid from the families to prevent pity."

4.5.2.3. Sharing Foster Motherhood

On the other hand, as hiding foster motherhood, sharing it is also used as a strategy by mothers to emphasize further this is not an abnormal experience by spreading it as much as possible. Mother Mavi chooses to share, and she maintained: "I always shared

this with everyone. I am also very active in the foundation. We wanted to be an example. We told this to everyone. When we were voluntary, we were sharing and now we are sharing the foster care as well.”

4.5.2.4. Making Child Familiar with their Stories / Empowering the Child

The most preferred and most effective strategy used by mothers is making their children familiar and comfortable with their stories. While some mothers are trying to desensitize the children to certain words, others are using alternative stories and tales to make them used to their own stories.

To illustrate Mother Siyah stated that she once heard in school some kids started to use the word “bastard”, then she said “I started to use this word as if, it a said to the cute stuff you found around. When someone does a smart thing, I started to call them bastard to gain the word another meaning”.

On the other hand Mother Kırmızı told how she explained their condition to other children as a normal family story rather than getting angry or fighting against the rumors in an aggressive manner.

I am trying to be open about this to at least prevent the rumors. To illustrate they somehow understand she does not have a father. A friend of hers comes saying ‘My mother told me no child cannot have a father’ I ask, ‘Do you have a brother?’ she says no. I say ‘ok, if there can be a child without a brother, they can exist without a father too’ they say ok and go. For a child it is fine. The parents are digging these. (Mother Kırmızı)

Mother Zümrüt says she is always telling her daughter the story of their meeting. How they encountered, how they came home. However, like many other mothers, she also uses the famous story of giving birth from the heart.

I am telling her often the story of the birth from the heart. I am telling the story, but she cannot understand totally. I am showing the pictures telling her “We were expecting you with my friends. We were so excited. You came to our house and made us very happy”. I am telling her that I was missing her, and I felt complete when she came. I do these but the kids are very mean. You never know... (Mother Zümrüt)

The story of giving birth through the heart but not from the belly is commonly used and told by foster mothers to give children a story with a hint of truth. The aim of the

story is to make the child familiar with their history and give them a space where they can ask further questions. I claim that these kinds of stories both help the children and the mother defining and doing their families. As is already discussed, family stories and pictures are very important parts of displaying families. While trying to hide the truth is creating a black hole in the personal history of these children, presenting their stories from a different perspective creates a real family practice. Children do not care if their story fits into the normal family category or not they just accept this family practice as it is. The reaction of the children is making mothers even more comfortable in accepting their practice further. As a result, they are feeling they realize their family and they are feeling that they are in a strong family structure even if it is not an ordinary one.

4.5.3. Separation Anxiety

One of the mothers was telling me that God gives her child and if it is their destiny, God may take them back. During the interview, I could not believe her calm attitude. I was even annoyed by this submission. I knew that her kid was at the center of her life. Why then she was telling me she is okay with this fact. Then I realized listening again, she is identifying the separation with the death of the child. She was actually perfectly aware of how this had the potential of destroying her but this is her coping mechanism. She was telling me that same as death, I could not compete with this.

All mothers are very attached to their children. Only two mothers declared that they do not have separation anxiety and they both were already adopted their children. As a result, I can easily say that the worst nightmare for mothers is separating from their children. This is because this means both they will not be together with a child they are very much attached anymore but also, they are not going to be in a position to protect them.

Mothers repeatedly told me during the interviews that they are mothers of these children. They are not temporary care givers. Mother Mor explains why separation anxiety is a normal emotion to feel and it should not be repressed.

We are not maids who provide paid care to these children. My children grow up with maids but do not call them mother. In the evening she waits for me at the gate. She tells the maid to give them food, bring them to the park but all

she wants is her parents. If you are telling kids that the foster families are not their parents, leave them at the institutions. At least, they will not be confused. The institution is telling us “Why you are attached? You were not supposed to be attached” they say. Why do I have the child then? The caregivers in the institutions can provide the same care. What I am doing is telling them that they are mine. I say “Learn my smell and I will learn yours”. This way child attaches to me and she has healthy psychology. When I do this, I am guilty?! (Mother Mor)

All mothers are feeling that they are blessed by their children, and they are very much attached to them like Mother Lacivert.

She calls me “mother”, calls her dad by his name... She is incredibly compassionate and filled with love. I think we are the perfect match. Sometimes I ask myself are we that lucky or do they care that much about matching, but this is a beautiful match I must say... Our only concern regarding foster care was the possibility of return. This time when we were starting our process, we decided to not plan too much. Because if something is going to happen it will. There is a possibility of return, but I am trying not to think about it. I believe in energy. I do not want to call it (Mother Lacivert)

On the other hand, as Mother Mor claimed, the children are also express in their sentences and questions that they need a permanent and safe home to stay. Mother Turuncu maintained how she was very surprised when her daughter immediately give her this clue as soon as she came to their house.

When we came to our home, she told me “Something tells me that your bad days stayed behind, say hi to your new life”. I said, “for sure, this is your new life. Look there is a new house, a new family”. She has such sayings I cannot believe; I cannot understand how she can speak like that. She knows to appreciate. (Mother Turuncu)

Although she is not worried anymore Mother Kahverengi also states how her biggest fear was losing her child once.

My anxiety was if the biological parents show up. Imagine you are doing everything for her for years, you are starting to direct her somewhere. Someone appears and says, “She is mine, I am taking her back”. I live for 16 years with this feeling, but I said okay I do not have anything to do. They did not call and appeared. So, we happily lived until now.” (Mother Kahverengi)

Mothers are meeting with their children when they are in desperate need. Krem Anne said after very hard times her child was in a very bad condition.

She was not responding her name, she was looking very dull, her hair was fall-out, we thought many things, but she has beautiful lips, beautiful eyes. I fall in love but as a mother, it broke my heart. She holds my hand. When we were leaving, she did not want to leave. (Mother Krem)

After meeting with these kids in these conditions and after making the decision of taking them to their lives, fighting very much with their close environment, school, MoFSS, and biological parents separately, the mothers are building a very strong attachment. Between all the emotional tantrums, difficulties with the school and peer groups, and the reactions from their communities, mothers are finding the possibility of separating from their children the most challenging part of their experiences. As they are not legally protected no matter how much time they spent with their child in the foster care experience, although the rate of the returns to the biological families is very low, they cannot feel secure.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this research, I aimed to understand how the state policy implementation of “Protective Family” (i.e. foster care) is effecting the foster motherhood experience of mothers. I intentionally focused on mothers rather than parents in general as they are mostly the ones who are initiating the process and facing the difficulties. I aim to understand and reflect on their experiences and emotions through this process from a feminist standpoint. In order to do this, I have conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with fifteen mothers. In the interviews, I asked mothers about their family experiences with their foster children approaching family as a practice rather than a final category. Meanwhile, I also focus on the practices which are not coherent with family experience.

After witnessing my mother for more than ten years with two foster children, I was wondering if other mothers are experiencing a similar solitude as my mother does and if they are feeling often desperate about not being able to heal their children despite all their efforts and in the end blame themselves while losing their trust to others including some of the significant ones. I thought most of these experiences and feelings must be special to our family. I knew that foster motherhood is a very challenging experience, but during the interviews, I realized our struggles are shared by other foster families as much as our joys.

Mothers are left alone with their struggles within a precarious care agreement telling them to act as a family when they are making children feel like they are growing up in a safe house and being their care provider, but not act as a family when feeling attached to the children. However, these conditions interfere with each other and create the

ground for the precarious caregiver agreement in which mothers' care labor is exploited without giving the status of a "real mother".

I am supposed to ask a further question to understand the mother's position: "What is family?" as in the policy family is very much emphasized where mothers are reminded that they are the temporary family of the child. However, might a temporary family be possible? With these questions on my mind, I reread Bourdieu's article "On the Family as a Realized Category" one more time and I noticed it is very helpful for me to define family.

Emphasizing the difference between the concept and the practice of family, Bourdieu explains common presuppositions in both scientific and ordinary discourse of the concept of family. He claims that family is seen as a reality transcending its members. Second, the family represents the interior, which is private and secret, and there is a barrier between the outside world, and it is a durable entity (1996). Thus, the family must contain three definitive fundamental features: transcendent, private, and durable.

On the other hand, foster care families are families which even not contain biological ties which are supposed to be de facto characteristics of a traditional family. As a result, as we need an alternative definition for family, we also need alternative methodologies. For this reason, I benefit from J. Finch's method of "displaying family" not only in conducting my research but also in my analysis of the foster care family setting.

Combining Bourdieu's definition and Finch's methodology, I rethink the features defined by Bourdieu by focusing if they are displayed and how they did in the foster care family setting. On the other hand, with the inspiration of the article Finch, I claim in this analysis focusing on practices which do not have family features is important as well. That is while I focus on how families are "doing" their families, I also focus on the practices causing "undoing" the families.

First, foster care is not transcendent as families cannot give children their family names and they do not have children's legal guardianship. Legally foster care is not transcendent obviously, but it is not transcendent in practice as it cannot be displayed. To illustrate in school children are using their biological family names.

Second, it is not private either as the specialists' surveillance proceeds and most importantly families are required to ask permission from the specialists for many daily decisions about their children such as health-related decisions or travels.

Finally, it is not durable, it is temporary caregiving until the biological family rehabilitates and takes their children back.

As a result, families are constantly realizing practices what a family would not do. They are bringing their children to the institutions and living them in order to make them meet with their biological families even when they know this will be harmful to them. They are postponing a surgery which they think is necessary and they have the capacity to realize it. They are letting the biological families promise that they are going to take them back and they cannot even tell their children that they are not going to allow anyone to separate them, that they would do anything to prevent them.

First, although I was expecting maybe to encounter a few more children with special needs, however, all children if they are not placed in homes within a few months after birth have various special needs and this makes the experience very difficult. This is not only because providing care to children with special kids is harder by nature but also because most of this fact is totally ignored by the MoFSS institutions.

To conclude mothers are finding themselves forcefully realizing some practices of "undoing" their families which is putting themselves and their children in limbo where they are trying to be a family without trying to be one at the same time. When they choose a position for example not acting as if this is a temporary caregiving agreement, they are accused of being selfish and forgetting their agreement. Even mothers themselves used these sentences a few times during the interviews saying that they do not want to be selfish by not letting the child go after touching their lives or they blamed other mothers for this.

However, the reality of this experience makes mothers visible desperate and mothers who were most attached to their child told me that they would not suggest the foster care parenthood to their close ones, or they already gave up even if they were considering it after witnessing their condition. Mother Mor said, "Yes, foster care is a great thing but not when it is governed like this. If I have ten families in my

environment who have potential, after seeing what happened to me, none of them will do it". Similarly, Mother Lila says that she stopped promoting herself as much as she does in the past.

"After this experience, I am not promoting that much anymore. I am trying to tell the difficulties and good parts as well. Especially this fear of losing them is very hard. If you have a chance to adopt, I say adopt. You are not only taking a child to your life also the institution and you are taking criminal people into your life you would never encounter without this." Mother Lila

As I broadly discussed in the previous chapter, the relationships mentioned by Mother Lila are required to be governed by the MoFSS institution. However, the current policy implementation is not prioritizing the well-being of children, biological parents, or foster parents. It only prioritizes reducing the number of children in the institutions with the idea of institutional care is harmful compared to the other care alternatives. Although this is a scientifically proven correct starting point, without paying enough regard to regulate and supporting the foster care procedures, this policy creates traumatized families instead of reducing the number of traumatized children.

In this study, my main limitations were the lack of statistics provided by MoFSS institutions and the lack of studies made in this field. As both studies and statistics were not enough, my study become more descriptive than my initial aim. Moreover, I reached my interviewees using snowball sampling and through a foundation in İstanbul. As a result, all mothers I reach out were already willing to share their experiences and they are a part of a similar community. I could not reach some categories as foster mothers who are the relative of the children or professional foster mothers. On the other hand, my sampling was too broad while being too small at the same time. The variables such as socioeconomic status, having a child or not, age of the mother, age of the child or the biological family's conditions are very much affecting the experience. As a result, it was mostly very challenging for me to grasp and represent different patterns. Moreover, I could not reach out to the mothers who quit their journeys after feeling helpless and leaving their children back in the institution. I cannot reach the statistics for the returns either which would provide another perspective to analyze the policy implementation's results. With my limitations, I do not know what the final deal-breaker is for the mothers who quit as I am exposed to the survivor's biases. Finally, in order to analyze the whole policy implantation, expert opinions from the MoFSS institutions, social care workers,

managers and the NGOs are necessary. My representation is only representing mothers' experience.

This study could be followed up by various discussing foster care policy implementation from the perspective of the specialists working in MoFSS institutions or biological parents would be very valuable. Another fruitful area is the differences between adoption and foster care experiences. This difference can be studied with the mothers who gain the adoption status after foster care, and they might be asked about their changing experiences. Although reaching them is very challenging, a study focusing on parents who have quit foster care parenthood would provide a whole with another perspective.

Finally, I finalize my thesis with some policy recommendations I found important during my study. I categorize these recommendations as short-term/practical recommendations and long-term/structural recommendations.

Short-term and practical recommendations are very basic and not costly support mechanisms which could be very beneficial to the foster parents. These are specialist networks for guidance, foster care breaks and voluntary foster parent group organizations. Specialist network lists might be created and owned by the assigned specialists of the foster caregivers. The lists may contain especially medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists and pediatricist who are familiar to work with the children who are staying or spend some time under the institutional care. Even though MoFSS institutions would not pay for these specialists, they may guide families who have the capacity to buy their services. This way, foster families would save time and money they spend while consulting the wrong and inexperienced specialists. Another implementation already in practice in some other countries is foster care breaks. In this system, the children in foster care are spending a weekend or a few days of the week with another voluntary foster family. This was not only the children staying in foster care are having the chance to socialize and bond with other families but also foster parents can have small breaks for themselves as they usually cannot have or request such support from their families. Finally, voluntary foster group organizations are a very easy and very beneficial way to support families. This is also implemented in various countries. As soon as the families have become foster caregivers, they might

be placed in a group of foster care families in which they can meet with other foster parents and share their experiences and guide each other. These groups might be guided as group therapy sessions or not. Either the session would be guided by a psychiatrist, or they would only share experiences with each other, foster parents would feel much more supported and feel less alone.

Long-term and structural recommendations would be not easy to implement due to their structural requirements and costs on the other hand these would be real solutions to the existing problems of the foster care policy. First, a well-regulated, informative, and selective application process is strengthened with well-structured, effective, and adequate training and orientation sessions are required at the beginning of the process. Second, increasing the expertise of the specialists and assignments according to the quality of the case would not only provide a better experience for the families but also would protect the MoFSS specialists. Third, foster parents' legal status should be adapted according to their experience. Fourth, the legal and psychological support should be provided by the institution both for parents and children and finally, but most importantly standardized procedures should be ensured for all families and children.

First and foremost, rather than aiming for an increase in the number of foster care parents, MoFSS institutions should implement a selective process of applications. Extending this process and making it bureaucratically challenging is testing the patience of the parents but does not say anything about providing care to a child with special needs. MoFSS institutions should take more responsibility in providing enough information to the families specific to the children's cases as well as for testing their capacities. Moreover, training beforehand is not enough for supporting parents. Although the institutions continue to surveille parents during the orientation period, they can also provide support by simply assigning a psychologist to the families who they can consult not to control but to support them. On the other hand, secondly, existing specialists are not all qualified enough to guide foster parents or smoothly regulate their procedures. During the periods when the capacity of the institution increases, new specialists may be assigned to the families who are in very problematic situations. The assignments are supposed to be made according to the family's situations and continuity should be aimed. Third, foster care parents are keeping the

same status until adoption. Only they may be treated better by their specialists over time by their initiatives. However, their legal rights might be increased in the years while their biological family's legal rights might be decreased as they are becoming the main caregiver of the child. Forth, almost all foster parents require psychological and legal support. Psychological support is necessary as all the children are experienced at least one trauma of being left by their significant others who are their caregivers. On the other hand, legal support is necessary to inform parents about their rights over their children and the adoption process. Foster care families may be willing to file suit for adoption and they are getting stronger in the courts for taking the guardianship of their child. For this reason, rather than threatening foster parents, the institution should properly inform parents about their legal rights and conditions. Finally, and most importantly, in my study, I saw mothers' experiences may seriously differ due to the different implementation of different specialists or institutions. As a result, when this is combined with rapidly altering specialists, mothers are very anxious about coming across with a specialist who they cannot get along with. However, there should be a standardized approach to protecting both mothers and specialists in case of any conflict.

To conclude, as a foster sister for more than ten years and a researcher who worked on this topic, I can easily say becoming a foster care parent is one of the most effective goodness someone can make in this world. It literally means changing someone's life. I will not forget how my sister was shaking while sleeping after biological parent meetings in the car seat or how my brother jumped for fifteen minutes when I turned to our home after a few months as he thought I left them. For this reason, I know not only through my research but also from the bottom of my heart what it means to deal with a child's attachment disorder. For this reason, I want to end my thesis by emphasizing again very small policy changes mean a lot in these lives. I have met incredible women who are committed to achieving the impossible, I hope I can reflect on their voices, and I hope this study would be an inspiration for other studies that would be made in this field.

REFERENCES

- Abbott A. Against Narrative: A Preface to Lyrical Sociology. *Sociological Theory*. 2007;25(1):67-99. doi:[10.1111/j.1467-9558.2007.00298.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2007.00298.x)
- Akkan, B. (2018). The politics of care in Turkey: Sacred familialism in a changing political context. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 25(1), 72–91. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxx011>
- Aybars, A. İ., Beşpınar, F. U., & Kalaycıoğlu, H. S. (2018). Familialization of care arrangements in Turkey: Questioning the social inclusion of ‘the invisible.’ *Research and Policy on Turkey*, 3(2), 115–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23760818.2018.1517447>
- BBC News Türkçe (2014) Erdoğan: Kadın-erkek eşitliği fitrata ters. https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2014/11/141124_kadininfitrati_erdogan
- Blythe, S. L. (2014). The foster carer's experience: An integrative review. *Collegian*, 21(1), pp. 21-32. doi:10.1016/j.colegn.2012.12.001
- Blythe, S. L., Jackson, D., Halcomb, E. J., & Wilkes, L. (2012). The Stigma of Being a Long-Term Forster Carer. *Journal of Family Nursing*, pp. 18(2) 234-260. doi:10.1177/1074840711423913
- Bora, A. (2011). Kadınların Sınıfı: Ücretli Ev Emeği ve Kadın Öznelliğinin İnşası. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.
- Boyle, C. (2015). “What is the impact of birth family contact on children in adoption and long-term foster care?” *A systematic review. Child & Family Social Work*, 22, 22–33. doi:10.1111/cfs.12236

Bourdieu P. On the Family as a Realized Category. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 1996; 13(3):19-26. doi:10.1177/026327696013003002

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1994. "Shifting the Center: Race, Class, and Feminist Theorizing about Motherhood." in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience and Agency*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Forcey. New York, Routledge: 45-65.

Daly, K. (2003). Family theory versus the theories families live by. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65(4), 771–784. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2003.00771.x>

De Maeyer, S., Vanderfaeillie, J., Vanschoonlandt, F., Robberechts, M., & Van Holen, F. (2014). *Motivation for foster care*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 36, 143–149. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.11.003

Dildar, Yasemin. 2022. The effect of pronatalist rhetoric on women's fertility preferences in Turkey, *Population and Development Review* 48(1): 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12466>

Finch J. Displaying Families. *Sociology*. 2007;41(1):65-81. doi:10.1177/0038038507072284

Gürtin-Broadbent Zeynep Başak. (2013). *The Art of Making Babies: Turkish Ivf patients' experiences of childlessness, infertility and Tüp Bebek* (thesis).

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Nüfus Etütleri Enstitüsü. (2018). (rep.). *2018 Turkey Demographic and Health Survey*. Ankara.

Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. Yale University Press.

Jackson, S. (1993) *Women's Studies Essential Readings*, New York University Press, N.Y.

- Kandiyoti, D. (2000). *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşla, Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler (Ş. Tekeli vd., Çev.). İstanbul: Metis.*
- Karatay, A. (2017). Foster Family in Turkey: Origins, Development and Today. *Üsküdar University Journal of Social Sciences*(5), 389-427.
- Kılıç, Azer (2010). Gender, family and children at the crossroads of social policy reform in Turkey: Alternating between familialism and individualism. In Mimi Ajzenstadt, & John Gal (Eds.), *Children, gender and families in Mediterranean welfare states* (pp. 165–179). London: Springer.
- Laura Migliorini, Nadia Rania, Nicoletta Varani, Joseph R. Ferrari. (2021) Unaccompanied migrant minors in Europe and U.S.: A review of psychological perspective and care challenges. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 0:0, pages 1-13.
- Leathers, S. J. (2006). *Placement disruption and negative placement outcomes among adolescents in long-term foster care: The role of behavior problems*. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30(3), 307–324. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.09.003
- MacGregor, T. E., Rodger, S., Cummings, A. L., & Leschied, A. W. (2006). The Needs of Foster Parents: A Qualitative Study of Motivation, Support, and Retention. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(3), 351–368. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325006067365>
- Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. New York. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Minis, H., Everett, K., Pelosi, A. J., Dunn, J., & Knapp, M. (2004, November 22). Children in foster care: Mental health, service use and costs. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 14(2), 63-70. doi:10.1007/s00787-006-0452-8
- Ministry of Family and Social Policies. (2012, December 14). Regulations. *Refulation of Foster Parenthood*. Turkey: T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Resmi Gazete.

OHCHR. (1989, November 20). Convention on the Rights of the Child. Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights.

Özaydın Demirbaş, E., İmir, H. M., Kılınç, F. E., & Bektaş, N. (2021). Üniversite Çalışanlarının Koruyucu Aİle Uygulamasına Bakış Açısı: Bir Durum Çalışması. *Sosyal Politika Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 231-277.

Roberts, H. (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*, London: Routage (1981) and Malseed, J., 'Staw men: a note on Ann Oakley's treatment fo textbook prescriptions for interviewing,' *Sociology* 21(4): 629-631 (1987)

Rosenwald, M., & Bronstein, L. (2008, October 11). Foster Parent Speak: Preferred Characteristics of Foster Children and Experiences in the Role of Foster Parent. *Journal of Family Social Work*, s. 287-301.
doi:10.1080/10522150802292376

Serap Sahinoglu & Nuket Buken (2010) Gender, Infertility, Motherhood, and Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) in Turkey, *Human Reproduction & Genetic Ethics*, 16:2, 218-232, DOI: 10.1558/hrge.v16i2.218

Serdar, İ. (2000). Koruyucu Aile. *Prof. Dr. Seyfullah Edis'e Armağan*, 467-508. İzmir.

Stacy L. Blythe, E. J. (2012, April 16). Perceptions of Long-Term Female Foster-Carers: I'm Not a Carer, I'm a Mother. *2013 (43)*, s. 1056–1072.
doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcs047

Şenocak, H. (tarih yok). Korunmaya Muhtaç Çocuklara Sağlanan Bakım.

Tekeli Ş. (1985) Türkiye'de Feminist İdeolojinin Anlamı ve Sınırları Üzerine. *Toplumsal Araştırma Dergisi*, (9), 60-64

Üstüner, S., Erol, N., & Şimşek, Z. (2005). Koruyucu Aile Bakımı Altındaki Çocukların Davranış ve Duygusal Sorunları. *Çocuk ve Gençlik Ruh Sağlığı Dergisi*, 130-140.

Wozniak, D. F. (1997). *Foster mothers in contemporary America: objectification, commodification, sexualization*. *Women's History Review*, 6(3), 357–366. doi:10.1080/09612029700200150

APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
ueam@metu.edu.tr
www.ueam.metu.edu.tr

Sayı: 28620816 /

14 OCAK 2022

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR

Danışmanlığınızı yürüttüğünüz Gizem KALKAN'ın "Türkiye'de Koruyucu Annelik: Koruyucu Annelik Deneyiminde Zorluklar ve Destek Mekanizmaları" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 0040-ODTÜİAEK-2022 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkan

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Koruyucu aile olmadan önce

- a. Koruyucu anne olmadan önce aile, iş ve arkadaş çevrenizle ilişkileriniz nasıldı?
- b. Koruyucu anneliği nereden duydunuz? Siz koruyucu anne olmaya nasıl karar verdiniz?
 - i. Bu süreçten beklentileriniz nelerdi?
 - ii. Süreç ile ilgili endişeleriniz nelerdi?
 - iii. Süreç ile ilgili sizi heyecanlandıran şeyler nelerdi?
- c. Koruyucu aile olmaya hazırlanırken hiçbir kurum ya da kimseden destek aldınız mı?
- d. Koruyucu aile olmaya hazırlanırken bu konuda uzmanlığı olan kurumlardan bir destek aldınız mı (ÇHGM ya da dernekler)? Yeterli oldu mu? Yetersiz kaldıysa, neler yaptınız?
- e. Bu durumu yakın çevrenizde kimlerle paylaştınız? Nasıl paylaştınız? Nasıl tepkiler aldınız? İş, aile, arkadaşlar, akrabalar, komşular...
 - i. Olumsuz tepki aldığınızda uzaklaştığınız kişiler oldu mu? Kimler? Nasıl, Bahseder misiniz? Bu tepkilerle nasıl başa çıktınız? (ikna etme, uzaklaşma vb.)
 - ii. Size destek olanlar, cesaret verenler oldu mu? Kimler? Nasıl, Bahseder misiniz?

2. Koruyucu Anne Olduktan Sonra

- a. Çocuğunuzla ilk tanışmanızı hatırlıyor musunuz? Biraz bahseder misiniz?
 - i. Tanıştığınızda yanınızda kimler vardı?
 - ii. Yanınızda birileri varsa, nasıl tepkiler verdiler?
 - iii. Çocuğunuz duruma nasıl tepki verdi?
 - iv. Çocuğunuz size nasıl hitap ediyor? Anne diyorsa böyle demeye ne zaman başladı?
- b. Çocuğunuzla yaşamaya başladıktan sonra ilişkilerinizde değişiklikler oldu mu nasıl?
 - i. Çocuğun akrabalarınızla, arkadaşlarınızla arası nasıl?
 - ii. Çocuğunuzun akranlarıyla arası nasıl?
 - iii. Okula gidiyor mu? Gidiyorsa okuldaki diğer velilerle aranız nasıl? Koruyucu aile olduğunuzu biliyorlar mı? Okul yönetimi ya da rehberlik servisi biliyor mu?
 - iv. Çocuğunuzun tepkilere şahit olduğu oluyor mu? Bu durum tepki gösterenlerle ve çocuğunuzla ilişkilerinizi etkiliyor mu?

Çocuğunuzu (olumlu/olumsuz) tepkilerden korumak için neler yapıyorsunuz?

- c. Başka koruyucu anne ya da evlat edinen bir anne tanıyor muydunuz? Şu an tanıyor musunuz? Onlarla nasıl bir iletişiminiz var? Ne sıklıkla görüşürsünüz? Neleri paylaşırsınız?
- d. Kurumsal bir destek alıyor musunuz (ÇHGM ya da dernekler)? Bu destekler yardımcı oluyor mu? Yeterli mi?
- e. Biyolojik aile ile görüşmeleriniz nasıl gidiyor? Düzenli mi? Bu çocuğunuzu nasıl etkiliyor?
- f. Koruyucu anne olduktan sonra aile, iş ve arkadaş çevrenizle ilişkileriniz değişti mi? Evetse, nasıl?
- g. Belirtmek istediğiniz başka bir nokta var mı? Sizce koruyucu ailelik sisteminde düzenlenmesi, değiştirilmesi ya da desteklenmesi gereken en önemli şey nedir?

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Hayatımın bu noktasından baktığımda yeniden fark ediyorum ki, ailemin koruyucu aile olmaya kadar vermesi hayatımın en önemli dönüm noktalarından biri oldu. Koruyucu aile olmayı ailece ilk düşündüğümüz günü çok net hatırlıyorum. Annem, babam ve ben arabada giderken sokak çocuklarından konuşuyorduk. Annem uzun zamandır bir çocuk evlat edinmek istediğini ama buna bir türlü cesaret edemediğini, ona herkesin karşı çıktığını ama şimdi zamanı olduğunu söylemişti. Bu şekilde hayatın ona cömert davranmasının karşılığını dünyaya verecekti. O zaman aklımıza düşen tohum oldukça hızlı büyüdü ve hepimizi bir çocuğun hayatını kökünden değiştirme heyecanı sardı. Fakat o zamanlar o çocuğun da bizim hayatımızı kökünden değiştireceğini pek de farkında değildik.

Bu kararı kesinleştirdikten ve sürece başladıktan sonra, kararımızı yavaş yavaş çevremizdeki insanlarla paylaşmaya başladık. Biz eve bir çocuğun geleceğinin heyecanını yaşarken karşımızda nadiren duygularımızı paylaşan insanlar bulduk. Genellikle insanların tepkisi ya “ne büyük sevap, bravo size” gibi anlamsız derecede büyük bir övgü içeriyordu ya da ortamı büyük bir sessizlik kaplıyordu. Bazen bu sessizliği sorular takip ediyordu: “neden”, “iki çocuk yetemedi mi”, “korkmuyor musunuz”, “annesi kimmiş”, “neden yurttaymış” veya “büyüyünce ne olacak”. Bu tepkilerle karşılaştıkça, bizi bekleyen deneyimin sandığımız kadar kolay olmadığını anlamaya başlamıştım.

Sonra ilk kardeşimle tanıştık. Yerinde duramayan kıpır kıpır bir çocuktü. İlk gece ona masal okuduğumuz için heyecandan uyuyamamıştı. Hayatının çok uzun bir bölümünü yuvada geçirdiği için gelişimsel olarak yaşlılarından geride olduğu birçok şey vardı. Renkleri bilmiyordu, karnı acıktığında yemek isteyebileceğini bilmiyordu, aidiyet kavramını bilmiyordu, oyuncaklarını dahi sahiplenmiyordu ama aramızdaki ondan fazla yaş farkına rağmen yatağını benden çok daha iyi topluyordu.

İlk günlerimiz, haftalarımız hatta aylarımız böyle bir varoluş karşısında sürekli şaşırarak ve çok duygulanarak geçmişti. Fakat bu duygusal günlerden kardeşimin öfke

nöbetleri karşısında ne yapacağımızı şaşırduğumuz günlere geçişimiz pek fazla zaman almadı. Bir yandan ona duygularını anlaması ve yönetmesi konusunda destek olmak istiyorduk, bir yandan ne yapacağımızı bilmiyorduk. Yaşadıklarımız ne bizim daha önceki tahayyülümüzde vardı ne de bize anlatılmıştı. Üstüne üslük bağlı bulunduğumuz Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı kurumundan (daha sonra yalnızca “kurum” olarak adlandırılacaktır) iyi bir uzamana dahi yönlendirilmiyorduk.

Her ne kadar bu süreçten ailece etkilenmiş olsak dahi ben ve biyolojik kardeşim kardeş rolümüzle durumun sorumluluğunu elbette tem olarak almamıştık. Babam ise genel olarak ilgili bir baba olmasına rağmen anneme kıyasla durumun çok daha az içindeydi. En nihayetinde tüm bu sorumluluk ve zorluklarla baş başa kalan kişi annem oldu.

Bu süreçte yeterli desteği bulamayan annem İstanbul Koruyucu Aile Derneği'ne üye oldu. Burada diğer annelerle ve başka kurum yetkilileriyle tanıştı. Fakat kardeşim için gereken desteği bulmak hala çok zordu. Gittiğimiz psikologlar ve psikiyatrlar kardeşime ulaşamadıklarını söyleyip bu çabadan vazgeçmememizi öğütüyorlardı. Aynı şekilde akrabalarımız ve yakın çevremizden bu öğütleri sıklıkla duyduğumu hatırlıyorum.

Bu sırada diğer kardeşim de evimize gelince yakın çevremizin ve akrabalarımızın gözünde annem iyice “iflah olmaz” olmuştu. Dürüst olmak gerekirse bu fikre en başında ben de pek sıcak bakmamış, karşı çıkmıştım. Fakat kardeşim eve gelip kocaman, kaybolmuş gözleriyle bana korkuyla gülümsediğinde, aklım ve mantığım kuş olup uçmuştu. O andan itibaren bizi kimsenin ayıramayacağı apaçık belliydi.

Teorik Tartışmalar ve Araştırma Sorusu

Annemin dernek üyeliği sayesinde koruyucu ailelik ile ilgili birçok toplantıya katılma fırsatı buldum ve bu toplantılarda aileler ile tanıştım. Toplantılarda genellikle koruyucu ailelikten büyük bir övgüyle bahsediliyor ve olumlu deneyimler paylaşıyordu. Fakat aralarda ebeveynler birbirlerine kaygılarını ve yaşadıkları sıkıntıları anlatıyor, akıl danışıyorlardı.

Toplantılarda anneler kadar babaları da görmek mümkündü fakat babalar koruyucu ailelik ile ilgili politikalar üzerinde çalışıp deneyimlerini paylaşırken, koruyucu ailelik sürecini başlatan ve bu süreçte yoğun ve yıpratıcı bir dönüşüm sürecine girenler

genellikle annelerdi. Bu nedenle ben arařtırmamda yalnızca annelere yönelmeyi tercih ettim.

Annelerin deneyimlerini anlayabilmek adına Türkiye’de annelik, evlat edinme ve koruyucu annelik üzerine var olan literatürü inceledim. Fark ettim ki Türkiye’de koruyucu ailelik genellikle sosyal politikalar ve psikoloji alanlarında çalışılmış ve koruyucu aileler birer özne olarak ele alınmamışlardı. Daha ziyade koruyucu aileler bir politika uygulayıcı birim olarak görülmüş ve var olan problemler çocukların korunması yolunda ödenen basit bedeller olarak yorumlanıp es geçilmişti. Öte yandan bu süreci yaşamış biri olarak sürecin ne kadar duygu yüklü ve dönüřtürücü bir süreç olduğunun farkındaydım ve arařtırmamda da koruyucu anneliğın bu yönünü ele almayı ve literatüre katkı sunmayı amaçladım.

Her ne kadar sosyal politikalar literatüründe koruyucu ailelik sisteminin amacı ve yapısını ele alan kapsamlı çalışmalar olsa da doğrudan koruyucu annelik deneyimini ele alan fazla çalışma bulamadığım için Türkiye’de var olan bakım politikalarını inceledim. Birçok arařtırma günümüzde var olan bakım politikalarının özelleşmesi ve aileleşmesini ortaya koymaktaydı (Acar & Altunok 2013; Dildar, 2022; Akkan, 2018; Aybars et al. 2018). Burada söz edilen aile ancak var olan hükümetin aile tahayyülüne uygun olduğu sürece destekleniyor ve bu tahayyülün gerçekleşmesine yönelik politikalar geliştiriliyordu.

Bu kapsamda geliştirilen politikalardan biri de “Aileye Dönüş” projesiydi. Proje kapsamında kurum bakımında olan çocukların aileleri desteklenmiş ve çocukların bakım sorumluluğu ailelerine yeniden teslim edilmişti (Kılıç, 2010). Fakat elbette ki bu politika yalnız başına devlet koruması altındaki tüm çocukların aile yanına yerleştirilmesi için yeterli değildi. Bu nedenle öncelikle evlat edinme desteklendi fakat hala kapsanamayan bir grup vardı: kurum bakımında olup evlat edinmeye uygun olmayan çocuklar. Bu çocuklar aileleri hala hayatta olsa da onlara bakacak durumda olmadıklarından kurumda kalmaktaydılar. Bu durumda olan çocuklar için hem yurt dışında sıklıkla uygulanan hem de her ne kadar yaygınlaşmamış olsa da Türkiye’de de yasal karşılığı olan bir model vardı: koruyucu ailelik.

Koruyucu ailelik politikası hem çocukların zihinsel ve fiziksel sağlık ve gelişimi için zararlı olan kurum bakımından çocukları çıkarmakta ve aile yanında bakım alternatifini

sunmakta hem de devlete çok daha az bir maliyeti olduğundan hem toplumsal hem maddi yarar sağlamaktaydı. Bu şekilde devlet ucuz, kaliteli ve geçici bakım hizmetini ailelerden sağlayabiliyordu.

Dolayısıyla zaten yasal düzlemi çok daha önce oluşturulmuş olan fakat yaygınlaşmayan koruyucu ailelik politikası Emine Erdoğan'ın da liderliğindeki Gönül Elçileri projesi ile başlayarak hızla tanıtılmaya başlandı. Sivil toplum örgütleri ve akademik çereler de politikanın yararlarını sıklıkla dile getirdiler ve 2013 yılında koruyucu ailelerin sayısı bir önceki yıla kıyasla iki katından fazla arttı ve bu artış günümüze dek sürdü (Tablo 1).

Fakat övgü ve gururla anlatılan bu hikâye benim deneyimimden oldukça farklıydı. Yalnızca benim de değil, gördüğüm diğer annelerin deneyimleri ile de bağdaşmıyordu. Toplantı ve panellerde koruyucu aileliğin güzelliklerinden bahseden anneler, birbirleri ile psikolog numaraları paylaşıyor, çocuklarının öğrenim güçlüğünden, davranış bozukluklarından yakınıyorlardı. Başka bir deyişle madalyonun öbür yüzü pek fazla gösterilmiyordu.

Diğer ülkelerde yapılan çalışmalara baktığımda koruyucu annelik deneyiminin çok kıymetli fakat bir o kadar da zor olduğunun tespit edildiğini gördüm. Koruyucu anneler genellikle özel ihtiyaçları olan çocuklarına bakmakta oldukça zorlanıyorlar ve kendilerini bu anlamda yeterince takdir edilmemiş hissediyorlardı (Blythe, Jackson, Halcomb, & Wilkes, 2012; Rosenwald & Bronstein, 2008). Politikanın araştırmacılarca en çok sorunsallaştırılan yanı ise geçici olma özelliği idi. Her ne kadar politika yapımcılar koruyucu aileleri bakım veren olarak tasarlıyorsa da koruyucu aileler kendilerini anne olarak tanımlıyorlardı.

Politikanın İngilizce dilinde kullanılan tabiri dilimize doğrudan çevrildiğinde “Mesafeli Bakım” gibi bir manaya tekabül etmektedir. Öte yandan var olan politika “Koruyucu Ailelik” diye adlandırılmıştır. Bu adlandırma politikanın geçici tarafını vurgulamak bir yana, başvurulara “aile” kurgusu vaat etmekte ve üzerine de “koruyucu” rolü eklemektedir.

Fakat koruyucu aile sözleşmesi ve pratiği bir aile deneyimi ile bağdaşmamaktadır. Aile kavramının tanımını yapmak her ne kadar zorlaşmış olsa dahi Bourdieu aile kavramını

tartışırken hem teoride hem de pratikte geçerli olabilecek üç özellik tanımlamıştır. Aile geçişken, özel ve süreklidir der (Bourdieu; 1996). Fakat koruyucu ailelik ne geçişken ne özel ne de süreklidir. Geçişkenlikten söz ederken Bourdieu ailenin temsiliyet özelliğine vurgu yapar, ailenin bir tüzel kişilik gibi davranıp içindekileri temsil edişini ifade eder. Koruyucu aileler bir soyadı paylaşamadıklarından bu özellikten yoksundurlar. Sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının dahili koruyucu ailelik sürecini aile tanımının ikinci belirleyici özelliği olan özel olmaktan çıkarır. Son olarak koruyucu ailelik en nihayetinde çocuğun biyolojik aileye dönüşü hedeflendiğinden sürekli değildir. Dolayısıyla koruyucu aileliğe bir aile adlandırması yapmak dahi oldukça güçtür.

Bu nedenle araştırmamda aile kavramını tamamlanmış ve durağan bir durum olarak ele almam mümkün değildi. Tanımlamamda daha dinamik bir aile anlayışına ihtiyacı vardı. Bu anlamda gerek araştırmamın yapısını oluştururken, mülakat sorularımı hazırlarken ve de analiz sürecimde Finch'in Displaying Family (2007) makalesinden yararlandım. Finch makalesinde aileyi olagelen bir kavram olarak tanımlarken, araştırma metodu olarak aileyi gösterme hallerine bakmayı önerir.

Ben de Finch'ten hareketle koruyucu annelerin aile oluşlarını gösterme biçimlerinde inceledim. Ne yaparak aile olduklarını, birbirlerine ve çevrelerine aile olma halini nasıl gösterdiklerini gözlemledim. Finch'e ek olarak araştırmam özelinde aile olmanın aksi yönde hareketlerin de önemli olacağını düşündüm. Bu nedenle "bir aile ne yapar" sorusunun ardından "bir aile ne yapmaz" ve de "ne yaparak aile olunmaz" sorularını sordum. Bu sorular özellikle biyolojik aile görüşmelerinin analizi sırasında bana çok yardımcı oldu.

Sonuç olarak, çalışmamda var olan bu politikanın "koruyucu ailelik" olarak adlandırılırken, aynı zamanda geçici özelliğinin korunmasının annelerin deyiminde ciddi bir karmaşa yaratacağını iddia ettim. Tüm bu tartışmaların ve verilerin ışığında, koruyucu annelerin bu deneyimden neler bekleyip ne bulduğunu, deneyimlerinin hangi faktörlerin şekillendirdiğini araştırdım. Temel araştırma sorumu da şöyle belirledim: "Bakım verenleri anne olarak tasarlayan koruyucu ailelik politikası, Türkiye'de koruyucu annelik deneyimini nasıl şekillendirmektedir?".

Araştırma Kurgusu, Metodu ve Kısıtlamalar

Halihazırda bir koruyucu aile içinde yer aldığım için araştırmayı katılımcı-gözlemci bir pozisyondan gerçekleştirdim. On yılı aşkın deneyimim, başka koruyucu anneler ile görüşmüş olmam ve bir yılı aşkın kurum bakımı altında bulunan çocuklar ile çalışan Hayat Sende Derneğinde yarı zamanlı çalışmış olmam bana politika uygulamalarını reel düzlemde gözlemlene olanağı tanıdı. Bu sayede annelerin neler yaşadığını, neler konuşmak istediklerini, neleri konuşmaktan kaçınacaklarını tahmin edebiliyordum. Araştırma kurgumu ve sorularımı hazırlarken bu deneyimlerimden oldukça yararlandım.

Sürecin ne kadar duygu yüklü bir süreç olduğunu ve deneyimi en çok bu duyguların tanımladığını bildiğim için duyguları yansıtmaya büyük önem verdim. Aynı zamanda bir araştırmacı olarak kendi duygularımı ve pozisyonumu paylaşmanın sosyal gerçekliği yansıtmakta faydalı olacağını düşünüyordum. Araştırma yaparkenki duygularımı ve bu duyguları sosyolojik bir analiz içinde nasıl yansıtacağımı bulmamda Abbott'ın "Against Narrative: A Preface to Lyrical Sociology" (2007) makalesinin bana çok yardımcı olduğunu belirtmeliyim.

Araştırmamı gerek bir kadın deneyimini yansıttığım için gerekse ataerkil bir akademik ortamda bilgi üreten bir kadın araştırmacı olduğum için feminist bir bakış açısı benimseyerek yaptım. Bu bağlamda araştırmacı olarak deneyimlerini dinlediğim annelerden üst bir pozisyonda konumlanmamaya ve varsayımlarımı doğrulamaya çalışmak yerine annelerin deneyimlerini yansıtmaya özen gösterdim. Yine bu nedenle araştırmaya verdiğim emeği gizlememek adına araştırmayı yazarken bilinçli olarak edilgen bir dil kullanmadım.

Annelerin deneyimlerini duygularına da ağırlık vererek araştırmak için derinlemesine mülakatlar yapmanın faydalı olacağını düşündüğümünden nicel araştırma metodunu benimsedim. Bu bağlamda on beş anne ile yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlar yaptım. Derinlemesine ve yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar yapmak bana annelerin konuşmakta zorlandıkları bir konuda konuşabilecekleri güvenli bir alan oluşturma olanağı sundu. Mülakatları bilinçli olarak "bilimsel bir araştırma" yerine bir "dertleşme" havasında uyguladım. Bu sayede annelerin benimle deneyimlerini daha rahat paylaşmalarını sağladım. Fakat bu durum aynı zamanda bir hassasiyete de yol

açtı ve annelerin bazen benimle bu duruma olan güvenleriyle birtakım deneyimlerini paylaştıklarını fark ettim. Bu nedenle annelerin iyi niyetlerini suiistimal etmemek adına kim olduğu anlaşılabilir hassas anekdotlara alıntılarda yer vermedim. Bu bilgileri yalnızca analiz yaparken kullandım.

Annelerin güvenlik ve gizliliğini korumak için araştırmamda onlara kendi isimleri yerine bende çağrıştırdıkları renklerle hitap ettim. Mülakat kayıtlarını almadan önce kendilerini bilgilendirdim. ODTÜ Etik Araştırma Komitesi kararı onayı aldıktan sonra mülakatları uyguladım. Tüm mülakatların onam formlarını imzalı olarak aldım. Mülakat kayıtlarını ve onam formlarını sadece kendi kişisel bilgisayarımda, başka kimse ile paylaşmadan saklamaktayım.

Benimle mülakat yapmayı kabul eden annelere dernek ve birbirleri aracılığıyla ulaştım yani kartopu örneklemi metodunu kullandım. Örneklemimdeki annelerin hepsinin üniversite mezunu olması dışında bir koşul koymadım. Bunun nedeni ulaşabildiğim annelerin sayısının halihazırda oldukça sınırlı olması ve var olan araştırmaların azlığı nedeniyle araştırmamın betimleyici ve öncü yanının öne çıkmasıdır.

Araştırmamda her ne kadar nitel araştırma metodunu benimsemeyi uygun bulmuş olsam da yalnızca kurumsal olarak sağlanabilecek birçok verinin yokluğu nedeniyle var olan örneklemimi konumlandırmakta zorluk yaşadım. Bununla birlikte araştırma yaparken zaman ve bütçe kısıntısının olması ve saha araştırma dönemimin COVID19 salgını dönemine denk gelmesi araştırmamı sınırlandırmıştır. Pandemi nedeniyle görüşmelerin hepsini internet üzerinden uyguladım ve bu durum görüşmelerin kalitesini etkiledi.

Çalışmamda farklı sosyoekonomik koşullar, biyolojik çocuk sahibi olunması, yaş, evlilik durumu, yaşanan yer gibi birçok önemli faktörün annelik deneyimini nasıl değiştirdiğini tartışmadım. Aynı zamanda koruyucu ailelikten vazgeçerek çocuğunu kuruma terk eden anneler ile görüşme gerçekleştirmediğim için araştırmamda bu sürece devam eden annelerin önyargısı olabilir. Bu literatüre süreçten vazgeçen annelerle, koruyucu aile olan babalarla, biyolojik ailelerle ve koruyucu ailede büyüyen çocuklarla yapılacak çalışmalar katkı sunabilir.

Varsayımlar, Araştırma Bulguları ve Politika Önerileri

Araştırma yapmaya başlamadan önce, bir pilot çalışma yapmış ve beş anne ile aynı konuda görüşmüştüm. Gerek bu araştırmamdan gerekse kendi deneyimlerimin etkisiyle koruyucu annelik deneyiminin manevi tatmini yüksek olsa da yansıtıldığından çok daha zor olmasını bekliyordum.

Çalışmaya başlamadan, süreci yürüten asıl ebeveynin anne olduğunu ve babadan daha yoğun bir süreç yaşadığını varsaydım. Annelerin tüm güçlük ve engellere rağmen çocukları ile yoğun duygusal bir bağ kurmuş olacaklarını ve kendilerini bu ilişkide anne olarak tanımlayacaklarını öngördüm.

Mülakatlarımı tamamladıktan sonra en çok zorlandığım konu annelerin birbirinden fazlasıyla farklılaşan deneyimleri belli temalarda toparlayıp yansıtmak oldu. Bazı grupların deneyimleri birbirinden çok farklı olsa da kendi aralarında bütünleşiyordu. Örneğin biyolojik çocuğu olan anneler, olmayan annelere kıyasla, annelik performanslarına dair çok daha özgüvenlilerdi ve koruyucu ailelik politikasının kendilerini zorlayan yanlarını çok daha rahat eleştiriyorlardı. Bu gibi farkların analizinin oldukça kıymetli olduğunu düşünmekle birlikte, çalışmamın kısıntının farkında olarak bu farkların analizini derinlemesine yapamadım. Bunun yerine tüm annelerde ortaklaştığını düşündüğüm temaları oluşturdum ve bu başlıklar altında inceledim.

Öncelikle tüm annelerin süreçten beklentisi ve süreç içinde yaşadıkları farklıydı. Bir anne hariç tüm anneler kuruma koruyucu aile olmak için değil evlat edinmek için kuruma başvurduktan sonra koruyucu anneliğin evlat edinmeye çok benzer bir süreç olduğu belirtilerek kurum yetkilileri tarafından yönlendirilmişlerdi. Bu yönlendirme sırasında süreçte kendilerini nelerin beklediğine dair yeterince bilgilendirilmeyen anneler, süreç içinde zorluklarla karşılaştıklarında sorunu var olan sistemde aramak yerine kendi annelik performanslarını sorgulamışlardı.

Görüştüğüm sadece bir anne zorunlu olması gereken koruyucu ailelik eğitiminin yalnızca bir modülüne katılım sağlamıştı. Yalnızca bu veri dahi annelerin koruyucu annelik deneyimlerini ne kadar hazırlıksız olduğunu anlamak için yeterli bir veridir.

Annelerin hepsi çocuklarıyla ilk karşılaşmalarından itibaren çok yoğun duygular yaşıyorlardı. Çocukları ile bağları çok kuvvetliydi. Bu bağın kuvvetli olmasında çocuğun bu dünyadaki tek koruyucusu olduğunu bilmelerinin çok etkili olduğunu pek çok kez ifade ettiler. Çocuklarından vazgeçmelerinin çocukların kaderini geri dönülmez biçimde etkileyeceğini farkındalardı. Bu nedenle sevgi bağının yanı sıra koruyucu aileliği kabul eden anneler ve çocuklar arasında bir çeşit kader bağı da vardır. “Ben sana mecburum” dizesinin vücut bulduğu bir ilişki biçimidir bu. Anneler bu mecburiyet ile karar almakta ve ilişkilerini buna göre belirlemekteydiler. Dolayısıyla önlerine engeller çıktığında koruyucu anneliğe devam edebilmek için anneler pek çok radikal karar almışlardı. Bunlardan en uç olanları iki boşanan ve bir annesi ile görüşmeyi tamamen kesen anneydi. Fakat neredeyse bütün anneler ilişkilerini o ya da bu şekilde bu kadarları çerçevesinde düzenlemişti.

Yakın Çevre ile İlişkiler

Annelerin yakın çevrelerinin koruyucu aileliğe dair tavrı deneyimlerini çok etkilemişti. En büyük destekçileri kız kardeşleri ve anneleriyle en çok zorluk çıkarırlar erkek kardeşleri ve eşleriydi. Pek çok anne kız kardeşlerinin ve annelerinin bakım desteği olmadan bu sorumluluğu almanın mümkün olmadığını ifade etti. Akrabaları tarafından koruyucu aile olma kararları desteklenmeyen ailelerin birçoğu, bu aile yakınları ile ya görüşmeyi kesmişlerdi ya da sorunlu bir ilişki sürdürmeyi göze almışlardı.

Geniş ailelerin ya da aile yakınlarının onayının olmaması anneleri çok kızdırıyor ve üzüyordu. Bunun nedeni bu şekilde akrabalarının koruyucu annelerin anne olma / aile olma pratiklerine çomak sokmalaradır. Aile olmayı isteyen anneler için akrabalarının aile olduklarını kabul etmeyen tavırları ailelerinin varoluşuna bir tehdit olarak var olmaktadır.

Annelerin yakın arkadaş çevreleri “koruyucu aile olduğu gerçeğini kabul eden ve köstek olmayı bırakanlar” eleğinden geçebilenlerden oluşuyordu. Anneleri pek çoğu daha başvuru sürecinde arkadaş çevrelerini tartmış ve sadece destek olanlarla yollarına devam etmişlerdi.

Kısacası anneler, akraba ve arkadaşları aile ilişkileri onaylamadıklarında onları gözden çıkarabilmişlerdi ya da onlarla normal bir ilişki sürdürmemeyi göze almışlardı. Bu radikal tavrın nedeni ailelerini bu akrabaların ve arkadaşlarının negatif tavırlarının ailelerini gerçekleştirme yollarına ket vurmalarıdır.

Biyolojik Aile ile İlişkiler

Koruyucu ailede büyüyen çocukların aileleri aksi belirtilmedikçe çocuklarıyla görüşme talep etme hakkını korurlar. Biyolojik aile görüşmeleri var olan yönetmeliğe göre bir sosyal hizmet uzmanı gözetiminde gerçekleşmeli ve çocuğun üstün yararı gözetilmelidir.

Her ne kadar ilgili yönetmelik biyolojik aileyi, koruyucu aileyi ve en başta da çocuğu korumaya yönelik düzenlenmiş olsa da annelerin paylaştıkları deneyimler sıklıkla bu yönetmeliğin uygulanmadığı pratikleri göstermekteydi. Koruyucu annelerin en çok zorlandıkları konu çocuklarının biyolojik aileleri ile olan ilişkileriydi. Zaman zaman bu ilişki çocuklardan taşıp annelere bizzat sirayet etmekteydi. Her ne kadar bu ilişkiyi çocuğun yararına yönlendirmek adına ciddi anlamda uğraşan ve gerekli inisiyatifleri alan sosyal hizmet uzmanları olsa da, annelerin çoğu zaman sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının görüşmelere eşlik dahi etmediğini belirttiler.

Biyolojik aile görüşlerinden sonra en sorunsuz ilişkilerde bile anneler çocuklarının psikolojik olarak ciddi anlamda yıprandığını ifade ettiler. Öte yandan bazı biyolojik ailelerin çocukların fiziksel ve psikolojik iyilik hallerine açıkça tehdit oluşturmalarına rağmen görüş talebinde bulunmaya devam edebilmeleri koruyucu anneleri fazlasıyla kaygılandırıyor. Anneler kimi zaman bu nedenle görüşmelerin kesilmesini ya da istediklerinde taleplerinin sosyal hizmet uzmanı ile iletişimleri doğrultusunda şekillendiğini belirttiler.

Biyolojik aile görüşünde standart bir uygulamanın eksikliği annelerin çocuklarının psikolojik sağlığı ile ilgili tedirgin olmalarına neden olmaktadır. Bu pratik aile olma haline en çok zarar veren deneyimdir. Bunun nedeni anneleri çocuklarına zararlı olacağını bilerek, çocuklarını tanımadıkları yetişkinlerin yanına bırakmalarına zorlanmalarıdır. Burada annelerin kaygısı yalnızca çocuklarının biyolojik aileleri ile görüşmeleri değil bu görüşmelerin yeterince iyi denetlenmiyor olması ve bu durumun

çocuklarının iyilik haline zarar veriyor olmasıdır. Anneler sıklıkla buna engel olamadıkları için kendilerini suçlu ve çaresiz hissetmektedirler.

Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı Kurumu ve Yetkililer ile İlişkiler

Anneler sosyal hizmet uzmanları ile kurdukları iletişimi ve kurumdan aldıkları destekleri anlatırken çok farklı betimlemeler yaptılar. Bazı anneler bağlı oldukları kurumdan ve yetkililerinden gerek bilgilendirme anlamında gerekse süreç yönetimi anlamında destek görmüşlerdi. Bazı anneler sosyal hizmet uzmanları ile çocuklarının iyiliği ile ilgili en doğru kararları almak konusunda kendilerini fazlasıyla güvende ve desteklenmiş hissetmişlerdi. Hatta bazı anneler bağlı buldukları kurum yetkilileriyle başka koruyucu aile adaylarına destek vermişlerdi. Fakat bazı annelerin deneyimleri oldukça olumsuzdu. Koruyucu ailelik ile ilgili eksik ve/veya yanlış bilgilendirilmiş ve süreç içinde kendilerinin ve çocuklarını iyiliğinin sağlandığını hisseden anneler de vardı.

Annelerin kurum yetkilileri ile ilişkileri ailelerini gerçekleştirmeleri için çok temel bir yerde durmaktadır. Bunun nedeni annelerin yasal olarak izin süreçlerinde kuruma bağlı olması ve sosyal hizmet uzmanları tarafından düzenli olarak izlenmeleridir. Sosyal hizmet uzmanları eğer koruyucu aileyi önceler ve öyle davranırsa koruyucu anne, kurumu, ailelerini gerçekleştirmekte bir destek olarak algılamakta aksi durumda bir tehdit olarak algılamaktadır.

Öte yandan her ne kadar zaman zaman kurum koruyucu aileyi asıl aile olarak kabul etmiyor olsa da sorumluluk paylaşımı noktasında koruyucu aileden “gerçek” bir ebeveyn performansı beklemektedir. Kurumun çocuğun gelişimi için sağladığı destek mekanizmaları her ne kadar çocuğun menfaatine olsa dahi çocuğun iyilik halinin sağlanması için yetersizdir. Bu noktada kurum koruyucu annenin gerçek bir anne gibi davranarak çocuğun sorumluluğunu alıp maddi ve manevi fedakarlıkları yapmasını beklemektedir.

Annelerin Yeni Gerçeklikleriyle Yalnız Başlarına Kalakalmaları

Anneler çoğunlukla koruyucu annelik deneyimini üstlenirken yalnız kaldıklarını belirttiler. Anneler aynı zamanda bu süreçte karşılaştıkları en büyük zorluğun çocuklarıyla kurdukları güçlü bağa karşın bağlı buldukları koruyucu ailelik

sözleşmesinin geçici olma durumu ve koruyucu ailelik hallerinin sonlandırılma ihtimali olduğunu dile getirdiler. Her ne kadar çoğunlukla koruyucu aile statüsünde olan çocuklar biyolojik ailelerine geri dönüş ihtimali düşük olan çocuklar olsalar da anneler bu ihtimalden oldukça tedirginlerdi.

Kurum ile ilişkileri iyi olan ya da koruyucu aile dernekleri ile bağlantısı olan anneler bu konuda daha rahattı. Bunun nedeni çocuğun geri alınması söz konusu olduğunda son dönemde görülen davalarda koruyucu ailelerin haklarının gözetilmesi ve çocuğun üstün yararı değerlendirilirken koruyucu ailelerin katkılarının göz önüne alınarak karar verildiğinin farkında olmalarıydı.

Sonuç

Koruyucu anneler deneyimlerinin başından itibaren bir annelik deneyimi yaşamak üzere yola çıkmışlar ve sonrasında da ilişkilerini bu düzlemde tahayyül etmiş ve şekillendirmişlerdi. Anneler çocuklarına normal bir anne çocuk ilişkisindeki gibi bağlıydılar.

Araştırmam sırasında fark ettim ki gerek akademik çevrelerde, kurumlarınca ve hatta birçok sivil toplum örgütü tarafından iddia edilen aksine, yürürlükte olan politikanın anneler için oldukça adaletsiz ve güvencesiz olmasına karşın, koruyucu annelerin kaygısı yalnızca annelik statülerinin geçici olması ile ilgili değildi. Anneler bu statüleri ve çocuklarının durumu nedeniyle gerekli olan; biyolojik aile görüşmeleri ve / veya çocuğun evden ayrılma durumu gibi süreçlerin çocuğun iyilik hali gözetilerek yürütülmemesinden endişelilerdi.

Çocuğun ailede geçirdiği süre yasal düzlemde koruyucu ailenin statüsünde hiçbir değişiklik sağlamamaktadır. Bu durumun yasal düzlemde karşılık bulmaması, annelerin denk geldikleri kurum yetkilisine göre bir süreç yaşamalarına neden olmuştu. Dolayısıyla annelerin kaygıları çocuk evlat edime statüsü kazanana ya da on sekiz yaşını doldurup bu konuda kendi karar verecek yaşa gelene dek sürmekteydi.

Gerek biyolojik aile görüşleri öncesi ve sonrasındaki süreç yönetimi, gerek çocuğun fiziksel ve ruhsal gelişiminin takibi ve gerekli önlemlerin alınması annenin sorumluluğuna bırakılmıştı. Kurumun anneye olan ilişkisinde anneler çoğunlukla yalnız hissetmişlerdi. Kurum denetleyici bir mekanizma olarak var olsa da çoğu anne

için destekleyici bir taraf değildi. Annelerin yakın çevrelerinden de her zaman kesintisiz bir destek bulmaları mümkün olmadığından, anneler çoğunlukla özel bakım ihtiyacı olan çocuklarının sorumluluğunu tek başlarına üstlenmekteydiler. Üstelik koruyucu aile yanında kalan çocukların travma geçmişlerinden dolayı olan hassasiyetleri ve duygusal durumlarının yönetimi ve korunmasını da çoğunlukla tamamen anneler üstlenmişlerdi.

Her ne kadar koruyucu ailelik politikası geçici bir bakım sözleşmesini üzerine kurmuş olduğu sıklıkla ifade edilse de pratikte annelere yüklenen maddi ve manevi bakım sorumluluğu düşünüldüğünde, anneye biçilen rolün bakım verenden ziyade şefkatli, fedakâr ve sabırlı bir anne olduğu görülmektedir. Bakım sorumluluklarına ek olarak anneler çocuklarının yakın çevrelerinden, okul yetkilileri ve velilerden hatta zaman zaman kurumdan ve biyolojik ailelerinden korunması sorumluluğunu da almışlardır. Dolayısıyla anneler var olan koruyucu ailelik politikası içerisinde gerçek bir annenin sorumluluklarını taşımakta fakat bir annenin haklarına sahip olamamaktadırlar.

Fedakâr anne rolü var olan hükümetçe övülmekte ve gerek söylemde gerekse politikalarda sıklıkla destelenmektedir. Bu politika çerçevesinde de annelere bakım desteği vermek bir yana, fedakârlık söylemi ile devlete ait olması gereken bakım sorumluluğu annelere yüklenmekte ve de bakım emeğinin karşılığının verilmemektedir. Dolayısıyla koruyucu annelik anlaşması annelerin hem maddi hem duygusal anlamda yıpratıldığı, adaletsiz bir anlaşmadır. Politika anneleri ucuz ve kaliteli bir bakımı dışarıdan sağlamak için kullanırken, yeterli desteğin sağlanmaması nedeniyle onları güvencesiz bir annelik deneyimini hapsedmekte ve ciddi anlamda yıpratmaktadır.

Politika Önerileri

Araştırmamın sonucunda koruyucu annelerin bu deneyimde yalnız ve güvencesiz hissetmemeleri için alınabilecek uzun ve kısa vadeli bazı önlemler ve uygulamalar önermem mümkün oldu.

Öncelikle politika bazında koruyucu aile sayılarının nicel olarak artması yerine çocukların doğru aile ile eşleştirilerek geri dönüş ihtimalinin azaltılması ve bu süreçte ailenin de çocuğun da zarar görmemesi hedeflenmelidir.

Bunun için Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı kurumları aday aileleri belirlerken yalnızca denetleyici değil aynı zamanda destekleyici olmaya önem vermelidir. Aileler süreç hakkında var olandan çok daha iyi bilgilendirilmeli, karşılaştıkları zorluklarda kurum uzmanları tarafından daha fazla desteklenmelidir. Uzmanlar biyolojik aile görüşlerinde tarafsız biçimde süreci yönetmeli ve aileler bu gibi kritik süreçlerde standart bir uygulamaya tabi tutulmalıdır. Bu şekilde ailelerin kuruma olan güveni artacaktır.

Destekleyici bir uygulama olarak ailelere sosyal hizmet uzmanının yanı sıra bir psikolog ve grup terapisi imkânı sağlanabilir. Özellikle çocuklar için sosyal hizmet uzmanı tarafından yönlendirilen ve mümkünse ücreti devlet tarafından karşılanan bir psikolojik danışmanlığa çok ihtiyaç duyulduğu görüşmüştür. Bunların yansira bazı ülkelerde uygulanan “mola” sistemi ülkemizde de uygulanabilir. Bu sistemde koruyucu ailede kalak çocukla bir-iki günlük süre için gönüllü ailelerin yanına gitmektedirler. Bu sistem hem çocuğun güvenli bağlanmasına fayda sağlamakta hem de akrabalarından ve çevrelerinden bakım desteği görmeyen koruyucu ailelerin dinlenmelerine olanak sağlamaktadır.

Ailelerin yasal haklarını farkında olmaları ve hakları doğrultusunda süreci yönlendirebilmeleri için yasal danışmanlık sağlanmalıdır. Koruyucu aile statüsü yasal düzelmeye tek bir statü olmamalı, aile deneyim kazandıkça istikrarlı biçimde kurulan güven ilişkisi yasal statülerine yansıtılmalıdır.

Özetle, on yılı aşkın bir koruyucu ailelik deneyimi olan bir araştırmacı olarak gönül rahatlığıyla söyleyebilirim ki koruyucu aile olmak bu dünya için yapılabilecek en etkili faydalardan birini sağlamaktadır. Kelimenin tam anlamıyla koruyucu ailelik bir kişinin hayatını değiştirmektedir. Hayatım boyunca biyolojik aile görüşünden sonra küçük kardeşimin araba koltuğunda sayıklamalarını ve büyük kardeşimin ben Ankara'dan döndüğümde gerçekten dönmüş olduğuma inanamayarak sevinçten oradan oraya atlayışını unutmuyacağım. Tüm bu süreçlerde bağlanma problemi olan bir çocukla ilgilenmenin ve ona güven vermeye uğraşmanın ne demek olduğunu çok iyi öğrendim. Bu nedenle tezimi bitirirken bir kez daha vurgulamak isterim ki var olan politikalar söz konusu hayatları çok derinden etkiliyorlar ve ufak değişiklikler sıklıkla iyi ya da kötü anlamda ciddi sonuçlar doğuruyor. Araştırmam sırasında kendilerini imkânsız

başarmaya adanmış inanılmaz cesur annelerle tanışma fırsatım oldu. Umarım onların sesini doğru yansıtmayı başarabilmişimdir ve çalışmam bundan sonraki çalışmalara ilham olur.

D. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

(Please fill out this form on computer. Double click on the boxes to fill them)

ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

- Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences**
- Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Social Sciences**
- Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Applied Mathematics**
- Enformatik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Informatics**
- Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences**

YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Kalkan
Adı / Name : Gizem
Bölümü / Department : Sosyoloji / Sociology

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English):

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans / Master Doktora / PhD

1. **Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır. / Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide.**
2. **Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of two years. ***
3. **Tez altı ay süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır. / Secure the entire work for period of six months. ***

* Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu kararının basılı kopyası tezle birlikte kütüphaneye teslim edilecektir. / A copy of the decision of the Institute Administrative Committee will be delivered to the library together with the printed thesis.

Yazarın imzası / Signature

Tarih / Date

(Kütüphaneye teslim ettiğiniz tarih. Elle doldurulacaktır.)
(Library submission date. Please fill out by hand.)

Tezin son sayfasıdır. / This is the last page of the thesis/dissertation.