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BODY IMAGE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULT BISEXUAL+ WOMEN
IN TÜRKİYE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Gülten Dilara DİKENCİK

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Body Image Experiences of Young Adult Bisexual+ Women in Türkiye: A
Qualitative Study

Türkiye’deki Genç Yetişkin Biseksüel+ Kadınların Beden Algısı Deneyimleri:
Nitel Bir Çalışma

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ABSTRACT

Body image encompasses how an individual feels, thinks, and behaves regarding their physical appearance and body. Research on body image has predominantly concentrated on heterosexual women and lesbians, whereas limited consideration is given to the experiences of bisexual+ (bi+) women. Bi+ women experience high levels of sexual objectification and suffer more from eating disorders compared to lesbian and heterosexual women. Since bisexual women are attracted to different genders, they have a distinctive social position, having different relationships with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (LGBTI+) and heterosexual cultures. Their distinctive position necessitates their body image experiences to be examined separately. To date, there have been no qualitative studies conducted with bi+ women and their body image experiences in Türkiye. To fill this gap in the literature, this study examined 10 young adult bisexual+ women's body image experiences via in-depth individual interviews, and the thematic analysis method was preferred for data analysis. Data analysis revealed three main themes namely, "Pressures on the Feminine Body", "Pressures on the Bisexual+ Identity and Body", and "Learning to Accept the Body". Findings revealed that bisexual+ women experienced pressures to conform to the idealized feminine body and behavior norms. The bisexual+ identity added a unique set of pressures that mainly resulted from the objectification of bisexual+ women and being raised in a heterosexist and monosexist cultural context. Participants navigated the pressures of being a bisexual+ woman and learned to accept their bodies through their social interactions, involvement with the LGBTQ+ community, and developing a critical perspective towards the objectifying male gaze. The results of the study are discussed in the light of existing literature, and clinical implications and preventative measures are presented. The limitations of the current study and future research suggestions are discussed.

Keywords: Bisexual+ Women, Body Image, Objectification, Femininity, Body Acceptance

ÖZET

Beden algısı kavramı, bireyin fiziksel görünümü ve bedeni hakkındaki hisleri, düşünceleri ve davranışlarını kapsar. Beden algısı üzerine yapılan araştırmalar genellikle heteroseksüel ve lezbiyen kadınlara odaklanmış, ancak biseksüel+ kadınların deneyimleri üzerinde sınırlı şekilde durulmuştur. Biseksüel+ kadınların, lezbiyen ve heteroseksüel kadınlara kıyasla daha fazla cinsel nesneleştirmeye maruz kaldıkları ve daha fazla yeme bozuklukları yaşadıkları bulunmuştur. Biseksüel+ kadınlar farklı cinsiyetlere ilgi duydukları için farklı bir toplumsal konuma sahiptirler, lezbiyen, gey, biseksüel, trans, interseks (LGBTİ+) ve heteroseksüel kültürlerle farklı ilişkiler içindedirler. Onların bu özel konumu, beden algısı deneyimlerinin ayrı olarak incelenmesini gerektirir. Şimdiye kadar, Türkiye'de genç yetişkin biseksüel+ kadınların beden algısı deneyimlerini inceleyen nitel çalışmalar yapılmamıştır. Literatürdeki bu boşluğu doldurmak için, bu çalışma, derinlemesine bireysel görüşmeler ve veri analizi için tercih edilen tematik analiz yöntemi aracılığıyla 10 biseksüel+ kadının beden algısı deneyimlerini incelemiştir. Veri analizi, "Feminen Beden Üzerindeki Baskılar", "Biseksüel+ Kimlik ve Beden Üzerindeki Baskılar" ve "Bedeni Kabul Etmeyi Öğrenme" olmak üzere üç ana tema ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bulgular, katılımcıların idealize edilmiş feminen beden ve davranış normlarına uyma baskısı yaşadıklarını göstermiştir. Biseksüel+ kimlik, biseksüel+ kadınların nesneleştirilmesi, heteroseksist ve monoseksist kültürel bir bağlamda yetiştirilmesinden kaynaklanan farklı bir baskı da eklemiştir. Katılımcılar, biseksüel+ bir kadın olmanın baskılarıyla başa çıkmakta yardımcı olan deneyimleri LGBTİ+ topluluğuyla etkileşim, sosyal destekleri ve nesneleştirici erkek bakış açısına karşı eleştirel bakış geliştirme olarak ifade etmiş, bu yardımcı deneyimlerin bedenlerini kabul etme yolculuğunda onlara eşlik ettiğini belirtmişlerdir. Çalışmanın sonuçları mevcut literatür ışığında tartışılmış, klinik sonuçlar ile önleyici müdahaleler sunulmuştur. Çalışmanın mevcut sınırlılıkları ve gelecek araştırma önerileri tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Biseksüel+ Kadınlar, Beden Algısı, Nesneleştirme, Kadınlık, Beden Kabulü

INTRODUCTION

As a multidimensional construct, body image encompasses how an individual feels, thinks, and behaves regarding their physical appearance and body (Morrison, et al., 2003). Body image disruption has been found to be associated with diverse mental health outcomes, including depression, and decreased self-esteem, and experiencing body dissatisfaction significantly predicts suffering from eating disorders like bulimia (Grabe et al., 2008). Research on body image has predominantly concentrated on heterosexual women and lesbian women, whereas limited consideration is given to the experiences of bisexual women; therefore, their perspectives have not been adequately explored (Taub, 1999). Since bisexual women are attracted to different genders, they have a distinctive social position, having different relationships with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTQI+) and heterosexual cultures. Bisexual+ women's distinctive position necessitates their body image experiences to be examined independently from heterosexual and lesbian women (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013). To date, no qualitative studies have been conducted with bisexual+ women examining their body image experiences in Türkiye. To fill this gap in the literature, this study explores how young adult bisexual+ women experience their bodies and the influences of psychosocial factors contributing to the development of their body images. This research mainly aims to contribute to the literature on body image among bisexual+ women, provide a deeper understanding of their experiences, and make clinical implications for mental health professionals who are willing to work with sexual minorities in Türkiye.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. THE CONSTRUCT OF BODY IMAGE

A person's sense of self is constructed socially, meaning that the social influences, perceptions, and treatment of others have a great role in the construction of a sense of self. What is more, that sense of self cannot be thought of as disembodied, and a woman's self-perception can be dominated by her physical characteristics (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Outside view of a person, their appearance influences our lives in intricate ways. Compared to the objective reality of how a person looks, the perceptions and feelings regarding one's appearance carry great psychological significance. Most basically, the construct of "body image" refers to the subjective perspective of people toward themselves and their bodies. It encompasses the psychological experience of embodiment, especially concerning one's physical appearance, but also extends beyond physical characteristics (Cash, 2004). The embodiment can be defined as the way a person uses their body to interact with the world (Carruthers, 2008). Furthermore, the functionality of the body is another dimension of body image (Riley et al., 2023). Cash and Pruzinsky (1990) posit that there is not one body image but multiple body images, to imply the complexity of the construct. Body image involves the ways one perceives self, and thinks, behaves, and feels concerning the body together with how a person thinks they are perceived by other people (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Kelly, 2007).

In modern Western cultures, the concepts of both appearance in general and especially body image hold significant importance (Tiggemann, 2011). The way we experience our bodies has a great influence on our relationships both with the public and people we are close with, and it has a noticeable impact on the way an individual perceives the world (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Ramachandran, 2012). Moreover, the individual's self-confidence, relations with other people, eating habits, and mood are profoundly influenced by the body image experiences of an individual (Burke et al., 2012). The importance of these concepts is also evident in academia. Researchers from different disciplines are concerned with the elements influencing

an individual's embodiment experiences and the ways body image influences human behavior. The escalation of cosmetic surgery practices, unhealthy diets, and the drugs used for muscle-building are some of the reasons leading researchers to examine the underlying impetus for these behaviors and wider embodiment experiences (Grogan, 2008). Body image, encompassing various psychological aspects of embodiment, has a great influence on the quality of life.

Clinical psychologists are generally interested in this topic assisting people with reduced life qualities due to body image disturbances (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Negative body image encompasses numerous dimensions that are characterized by an individual's negative perceptions and feelings toward their own body, leading to feelings of body dissatisfaction with several aspects of their appearance (Cash et al., 2004; Thompson et al., 1999). On the other hand, recent research introduces the concept of body positivity that is emerging from the field of positive psychology. Body positivity has been defined as not simply the absence of negative body image but rather as a combination of several affirmative experiences concerning one's body (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Tylka, 2011). It has been conceptualized to encompass processes to sustain satisfaction with one's body, irrespective of its compliance with prevailing beauty standards (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Tylka, 2011).

In the next section, the association between body image and mental health will be introduced. Then the psychosocial factors that contribute to body image disturbances in women will be mentioned since women are disproportionately at risk for developing body image-related disturbances. Afterward, the psychosocial factors that are peculiar to bisexual+ women's body image development will be explained, and the current study will be introduced.

1.1.1. Body Image and Mental Health

From childhood onward, feelings and thoughts about the body, that is one's body image, greatly influence the quality of life (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Research results reveal that for developing eating disorders such as bulimia nervosa, being dissatisfied with the body is the most consistent risk factor (Grabe

et al., 2008). Eating disorders are serious psychiatric conditions; among all psychiatric conditions, they have the greatest mortality rates and they are hard to treat (Calzo et al., 2017; Convertino et al., 2021). Moreover, disordered eating and behaviors that are intended to control weight and shape, such as binge eating, purging, and diet restriction, are also detrimental to health and are related to high mortality rates (Calzo et al., 2017). People from different demographic backgrounds can engage in these behaviors and suffer from eating disorders. However, some groups of people are significantly more at risk of developing these conditions (Calzo et al., 2017). In comparison to men, years of research findings suggest that women are more prone to experience eating disorders or engage in disrupted eating behaviors starting from adolescent years (Piran & Cormier, 2005).

Women are under great pressure to adhere to culturally established beauty standards and idealized thinness, and their values are often tied to their bodily features (Dworkin, 1989). Women's socialization leads them to equate their self-esteem to their physical appearance, which contributes to experiencing body dissatisfaction (Chmielewski, 2010; Dworkin, 1989). Body dissatisfaction refers to adverse emotions and thoughts regarding the body, often accompanied by assessing one's body size and shape negatively, and this often involves a perceived difference between the idealized body and one's own body (Grogan, 2008; Tort-Nasarre et al., 2021). Experiencing body dissatisfaction is widespread among women, and thus, irrespective of their age and weight, survey results suggest that women experience body dissatisfaction (Paquette & Raine, 2004). Women's worries about weight and eating have been labeled as "normative discontent", as feeling overweight is a shared experience among women and enduring dieting has become a lifestyle for many of them (Grogan, 2008; Rodin, et al., 1985).

The experience of this discontent has many adverse influences on physical and mental health. Some of the adverse outcomes can be listed as depression, body dysmorphic disorder, eating disorders, and obesity (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Dittmar, 2009; Thompson, 2004). Moreover, experiencing body dissatisfaction may lead to increased body-shaping practices such as cosmetic surgery, extreme dieting, and abusing steroids which can be detrimental to health (Dittmar 2009; Grogan,

2008). Sexual minorities, people not identifying as gender-binary, heterosexual, and cisgender are one of the groups having a greater risk of experiencing disordered eating (Calzo et al., 2017). Furthermore, in comparison to other sexual minorities, bisexual women have been found to experience higher rates of mental health problems and exhibit higher prevalence rates of eating disorders than heterosexual and lesbian women (Hazzard et al., 2019; Taylor, 2018).

In the next section, psychosocial factors influencing women's body image will be introduced, and then in the following section, bisexual+ women's body image experiences will be presented.

1.1.2. Women's Body Image and Psychosocial Frameworks

Various theoretical perspectives and explanations have been offered in the literature to explain higher reports of body dissatisfaction and negative feelings about the body among women. In the next section, objectification theory and the sociocultural model for body image will be explained in more detail to explain psychosocial influences on body image experiences among women. These two theories are preferred to understand body image experiences since this research adopts a social constructionist perspective on the body. This research views the body, perceptions regarding the body, the meanings we attribute to the body, and the engagements, and practices with the body as socially and culturally constructed (Braun et al., 2013). Adopting a contextual lens, this research considers meaning-making processes as embedded in their social and cultural settings, and thus, contextual factors cannot be overlooked and they require significant attention (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.1.3. Objectification Theory

Body as being the focal point of control in women's lives has been pointed out historically by feminist analysis. Contemporary feminist theory argues that women's common experience of dissatisfaction with their bodies cannot be considered as an individual problem, rather, it is a result of systemic social factors (McKinley, 2011). Bartky (2014) explores Michel Foucault's arguments on the operation of power in modern societies and she expands Foucault's ideas by

discussing the construction of femininity through patriarchal power. She suggests that femininity is a constructed concept and performance that involves embodying and repeating established gender norms manifested through a series of behaviors. According to Bartky (2014), femininity is constructed through relations of power and mechanisms of discipline. Women's bodies are targeted by the numerous techniques of disciplinary power, including surveillance, normalizing discourse, and internalizing the norms of discipline. Women engage in self-discipline and self-surveillance as a result of constant scrutiny and pressure to conform to beauty and femininity norms. Women learn that they will be scrutinized by others and will be judged if they do not adhere to societal feminine standards. The widespread norms around femininity, beauty, and body are internalized by women without being consciously aware of them, and thus, turning into self-disciplinary practices. Overall, Bartky (2014) argues that in patriarchal modern societies, several techniques of disciplinary power operate to regulate and control women's bodies, and that the traditional gender norms and power structures are maintained through the cycles of surveillance, and consequently, self-surveillance and self-discipline.

The great prevalence of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating patterns among girls and women in Western societies can be understood by the feminist perspective of the objectification theory. According to numerous feminists, within a patriarchal society, women are exposed to many different ways of subordination, one of which is objectification, through which they are reduced to their bodies (Murnen & Smolak, 2008). Since the body cannot only be thought of as a biological entity but as being embedded in social and cultural contexts, the discourses and the sociocultural customs shape and construct the body. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) suggest that women are exposed to sexual objectification through which they are considered as bodies, detached from the person they are, and their bodies are regarded primarily for their utility and consumption by others. Through gaze, women are constantly evaluated and sexually objectified. One of the major implications of objectification of women is women embracing an outsider perspective toward themselves, perceiving themselves as an object that is to be judged and evaluated, and thus, self-objectify (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Furthermore, the inclination for self-objectification constructs a unique perspective of the self through which a woman becomes self-conscious, which is marked by a continuous scrutinizing external appearance of the body. The body becomes an object that is a sight for others, expecting admiration and appreciation from others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

The expectation of a male gaze or the existent male gaze has been theorized to have an impact on women's body image since they feel the pressure to alter their bodies to conform to what is desirable by the male gaze (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; de Beauvoir, 1953; McKinley, 1996). With gender role socialization and sexual objectification, women tend to internalize the culturally established standards of beauty as their standards and assume that those standards are their desires (McKinley, 2011). Taking an outsider's perspective toward their own bodies leads women to constantly monitor their bodies, to deliberate on whether their bodies are attractive or not for a male observer, and to feel body shame (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Moradi, 2011). Experimental and correlational studies that are conducted with adolescent girls and women reveal a relationship between self-objectification and body dissatisfaction (Murnen & Smolak 2008; Smolak & Murnen 2007). Moreover, there is also numerous research indicating an association between self-objectification and disrupted eating in heterosexual women (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012).

1.1.4. Sociocultural Theory

The sociocultural theory suggests that, within a given culture, there exists societal standards of beauty. These standards are conveyed through various sociocultural means, and then, they are internalized by individuals (Tiggemann, 2011). As a result of this internalization process, people are either satisfied or dissatisfied with their appearances, depending on the level of alignment with the idealized appearance (Tiggemann, 2011). Within Western cultures, thinness is an idealized body characteristic for women. Being overweight has been associated with a lack of self-control and inadequacy of willpower, whereas thinness has been

linked with achievement, cheerfulness, social approval, and youthfulness (Grogan, 2008). Divergence from the idealized thinness has various adverse results. Overweight women are perceived as unattractive and are exposed to prejudice throughout their lives, starting from their childhood. For instance, Cash (1990) stated that children do not want to play with their overweight friends. Research conducted by Tiggemann and Rothblum (1988) suggests that college students negatively stereotype overweight women more than men. Another study also revealed that overweight people also stereotype fat people negatively (Grogan, 2008).

Although for many women, meeting with the idealized thinness through healthy means is not possible, it is still accepted and internalized by many of them. The societal pressure to be thin leads individuals to internalize the thin ideal and to experience body dissatisfaction. This pressure to be thin comes from different sources, such as family, friends, and media, which is also known as the tripartite model (Thompson et al., 1999; Tiggemann, 2011). The tripartite influence model is a widely supported sociocultural approach that is useful in understanding how various factors play a formative role in shaping body image disturbances. Either in direct or indirect ways, the three main factors of family, peers, and media can affect body image disturbances (Tiggemann, 2011). The indirect pathways include comparing appearances and internalization of socially acceptable appearance norms (Burke et al., 2012). These widespread pressures contribute to the thin ideal being internalized and attaching a great value to appearance (Stice, 2002; Tiggemann, 2011). Research findings have supported the great influence of the sociocultural model on the internalization of the thin ideal among heterosexual women (Huxley et al., 2015; Tiggemann, 2011). Moreover, other results also revealed a direct link between the internalization of the thin ideal and food restriction (Huxley et al., 2015; Thompson & Stice, 2001).

In the development of body image, the interpersonal setting of the family plays a formative role in shaping their children's values and attitudes towards their bodies (Tiggemann, 2011). As relational beings, humans seek acceptance from others, especially from their parents. The appearance norms and values are

communicated to children in their closest relational setting of the family (Jones, 2011). Parents convey their expectations regarding appearances through choices of their lifestyles, such as eating habits or exercises. They serve as role models in their children's lives in various ways. Whether children criticize or appreciate themselves and others is highly influenced by their parents' expressed opinions regarding appearance, in addition to their assessment of their own and others' bodies. Beginning in early childhood, around age 6, compared to males, females are more likely to be criticized for their appearances and also feel more dissatisfied with their bodies (Jones, 2011). Parents can impact their children's body image both directly and indirectly. For instance, by making comments on the appearance and size of the child or by imposing rules on the food the child eats, parents can have a direct influence on their child's body image. Additionally, parents' own concerns about their weight, or dieting behavior can indirectly influence their children's body image through unintentional modeling (Tiggemann, 2011).

Furthermore, the significant role of media in the development and sustenance of women's body image concerns has been pointed out in the sociocultural models used to explain body dissatisfaction and eating pathology (Fardouly et al., 2017). The association between body image disturbances and utilization of media has been suggested to be understood by making comparisons based on appearances. The research examining the influences of both traditional and social media usage on body image concerns has highlighted the significance of appearance-based comparisons and internalization of the standardized look (Holland & Tiggemann, 2016; Myers & Crowther, 2009). Fardouly, Pinkus, and Vartanian (2017) suggested that social media use is prevalent among young women, and compared to other forms of media, they are more inclined to make appearance-related comparisons with women they see on social media platforms. The influences of social media being stronger can be explained by its being easily accessible through smartphones, having more interaction with people around the same age with similar interests, and the evaluative nature of the platforms (Griffiths et al., 2018).

Moreover, in the development of body image, relationships with peers have a significant influence (Cash, 2012; Jones, 2011). Approval and feelings of belonging are fundamental needs of humans. To satisfy these needs, humans seek close relationships. These needs serve as the basis for peer influence. Through direct and indirect ways, social norms regarding appearance are learned and internalized within peer groups. While some experiences can be positive, such as making compliments on appearances, some can be negative including mocking about the size and weight of the individual, and even rejection based on one's appearance features (Jones, 2011). One of the most frequent types of mocking is mocking appearances, and ridiculing someone based on their weight is regarded as the most upsetting. Mocking of appearances was found to be associated with body dissatisfaction both for males and females (Jones, 2011).

Research has consistently prioritized weight as a measure of body dissatisfaction, neglecting other features of appearance. This is suggested to be resulting from a societal excessive focus on thinness, and even thinness being equated with beauty (Dittmar et al., 2000). However, in addition to the thin ideal, there are many other features of the culturally standardized appearance of femininity that women are expected to conform to. Dittmar and her colleagues (2000) examined the "ideal woman" for girl and boy adolescents, and aimed to examine other features of appearance together with weight. Findings from their qualitative study suggest that both boys and girls used adjectives of beautiful, attractive, and slim while describing the ideal woman. Girls also described the ideal woman as being stylish, well-groomed, and wearing fashionable clothing. This study finding also proposed that for boys and girls, what is regarded as beautiful is being thin. Being desirable sexually was also found to be important for the ideal woman for both boys and girls (Dittmar et al., 2000). Furthermore, boys' and girls' descriptions of the ideal woman were more similar than their descriptions of the ideal man, which may imply that the shared ideal of feminine beauty is more definite.

Moreover, facial beauty is another important component of attractiveness. Mueser and colleagues (1984) proposed that compared to the body, the face is a

more significant predictor for general attractiveness. Another study examining facial attractiveness reported that women were rated as more attractive when they were smiling and when their faces were younger-looking (Tatarunaite et al., 2005). A different study examined the relationship between exposure to facially attractive models in advertisements and participants' body dissatisfaction. Results revealed that exposure to advertisements inclines women to make comparisons, and when they see beautiful faces in ads, they are more likely to report being less satisfied with their physical beauty (Richins, 1991).

Furthermore, contemporary Western beauty standards for women focus on youthfulness characterized by thin and long legs, firm breasts, and smooth and flawless skin (Thompson et al., 1999; Tiggemann & Hodgson 2008). Body hair removal is a significant aspect of smooth and flawless skin. Body hair on women is broadly stigmatized and its removal is normative for women in Western cultures (Toerien & Wilkinson, 2003). Women find their body hair as a source of embarrassment, also perceived as repulsive. One of the most common body alterations for women is engaging in hair removal to reach the young and attractive ideal of femininity (Tiggemann & Kenyon, 1998) Although hair removal techniques can be risky, such as waxing may burn the skin or razors can leave scars, these risks do not prevent women from removing hair (Toerien & Wilkinson, 2003).

In sum, objectification theory and the sociocultural model of body image are influential perspectives in understanding women's experiences of body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors. These theories both highlight the importance of body norms imposed on women and the influence of family, peers, and the media in communicating these norms. As suggested above, research results revealed that sexual minorities experience eating disorders at a higher level than heterosexual people. The next section will introduce some of the challenges that bisexual+ women suffer due to their disadvantaged position in society which are likely to influence their mental health in general and body image concerns in particular. Next, the psychosocial factors that influence their body image and its development will be explained.

1.2. BISEXUAL+ WOMEN AND BODY IMAGE

Within a culture in which heterosexuality is privileged, non-heterosexual people and sexual minorities are at greater risk of experiencing emotional and social problems (Anderson et al., 2016). Sexual minorities experience a different set of psychological distress arising from their disadvantaged position in society. To understand the experiences of sexual minorities, Meyer (2003) proposed the minority stress theory, suggesting that the stigmatization of sexual minorities influences their mental health poorly. However, it is also significant to acknowledge the distinct experiences of sexual minorities, since it has been suggested that compared to gays and lesbians, bisexual people have more complex and stressful experiences due to the stigmatization of bisexuality which is referred to as “binegativity” (Anderson et al., 2016; Dyar & Feinstein, 2018). Oschs (2007) defines bisexuality as the “potential to be attracted- romantically and/or sexually- to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree” (Oschs, 2007, pp. 84). According to The Bisexuality Report (2012), compared to other sexual identity groups, bisexual people suffer more from mental health problems globally. Kerr and colleagues (2013) found that compared to monosexual women, bisexual women suffer more from anxiety and depression, and reported engaging in self-injurious behaviors and thinking about suicide. Bisexual women were also found to be at higher risk for developing substance use disorders compared to monosexual women (Green & Feinstein, 2012). Furthermore, young adult women, aged between 18-35, were found to be particularly vulnerable to experiencing depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders among sexual minority women (Boyle & Omoto; 2014). Bisexual women face “double discrimination” both from heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals (Ochs, 1996). Their poor mental health has been associated with biphobia and being invisible as bisexuals (Pennasilico, 2019). There are many different forms of biphobia, some of which can be listed as denial of bisexuality, such as regarding bisexual people as being not certain regarding their sexuality, and bisexual invisibility, which refers to the monosexist assumption of individuals as rather being heterosexual or gay or lesbian (Barker et al., 2012). Bisexual people

being promiscuous, wanting to be involved in group sex, being unfaithful, and not wanting to be in a monogamous relationship are only a few of the stereotypes that are attached to them (Dyar & Feinstein, 2018).

As Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) suggested, depending on the different characteristics of women, such as their ethnic backgrounds, social classes, age, and sexualities, the experiences of sexual objectification differ among women. Previous research shows that bisexual individuals are objectified to a great extent in media, and depictions of bisexuality in culture and different mediums of media exacerbate their sexual objectification (Chmielewski, 2010). Bisexual women are perceived as hypersexual, and their representation in media further supports this perception, therefore, they are sexually objectified distinctively from women with other sexual orientations (Brewster et al., 2013). This unique way of sexualization of bisexual women may reflect on their relationship with their bodies (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013). Therefore bi+ women's body image experiences requires an in-depth examination considering the biphobia and sexual prejudgments they are exposed to.

1.2.1. Body Image Research and Bisexual+ Women

There is limited research conducted on bisexual+ women about their body image experiences. Therefore, the results of the studies conducted with lesbian and heterosexual women will be presented briefly, and then limited studies conducted with bisexual women will be reported.

There exist two contrasting theories regarding to what extent culturally established ideals of appearance influence LGBTQ+ women's body image experiences. For a long time, sexual orientation has been thought to be a buffer against experiencing body dissatisfaction for lesbian women, since they are not susceptible to sexual objectification like heterosexual women (Chmielewski, 2010). Lesbian women were thought to refuse heterosexual culture and theorists suggested that compared to heterosexual women, lesbian women would internalize objectified messages to a lesser extent (Brown, 1987; Chmielewski, 2010). Brown (1987) proposed that being attracted to women and having relationships with women encourage lesbian women to refuse cultural beauty standards. Through forming

relationships with women whose body shapes and sizes are different from the socially idealized thin body, lesbian women can start to embrace and value their own body shapes and sizes (Huxley et al., 2011).

On the other hand, Dworkin (1989) proposed that, like heterosexual women, lesbian women also grow up within a culture where thinness is idealized, and they are also constantly told how they should look (Huxley et al., 2014; Rothblum, 2002). As a result, regardless of their sexual orientation, all women are under the influence of thin pressure and preoccupied with their appearances, and thus, susceptible to experiencing body dissatisfaction (Huxley et al., 2014; Rothblum, 2002). Studies examining the relationship between sexual orientation and body image are mainly quantitative, and they revealed inconsistent results. Most of the studies comparing lesbian and heterosexual women found more body satisfaction among lesbian women (Steel et al., 2019). In their study, Alvy (2013) suggests that larger ideal body sizes have been reported by lesbian women. However, other studies comparing lesbian and heterosexual women revealed that there was no significant difference between their levels of body satisfaction (Grogan et al., 2006; Huxley et al., 2014; Peplau et al., 2009; Tiggemann, 2015). Moreover, other studies found that heterosexual and lesbian women are not significantly different regarding having eating disorders (Austin et al., 2004; Feldman & Meyer, 2007). Ultimately, considering the contrasting findings of these studies, it can be said that the influence of societal norms endorsing thinness and feminine attractiveness may function differently for lesbian women than heterosexual women (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013).

The two arguments that are explained above have not adequately explored the experiences of bisexual women. There exists very limited research on the body image experiences of bisexual women (Huxley et al., 2011). Most of the studies examining the influence of sexual orientation on female body image either excluded bisexual women or grouped them with lesbian women and compared their experiences with heterosexual women. Being attracted to all genders puts bisexual women in a unique position, and their experiences need to be examined separately. There is growing recognition regarding the challenges bisexual women experience

in comparison to heterosexual or lesbian-identified individuals (Moreno-Dominguez et al., 2019). Studies have not yet adequately examined to what extent sexual objectification and societal norms around appearance affect bisexual women. However, their attraction to all genders places them in a different position regarding conforming or rejecting the idealization of thinness (Chmielewski, 2010). Bisexual women may feel the need to conform to the societal beauty ideals that are defined by the male gaze since they are interested in male attraction. On the other hand, their attraction to women may lead to distancing themselves from the heterosexist culture (Moreno-Dominguez et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to examine the influences of bisexual women's relationships and social environments on their body image and appearance experiences (Huxley et al., 2011).

One of the few research projects that has not grouped bisexual women with lesbian women and studied them separately is conducted by Koh and Ross (2006), who have examined the mental health problems of heterosexual, lesbian, and bisexual women in the United States. They found that both lesbian and bisexual women experienced more emotional distress as adolescents. Furthermore, results revealed that bisexual women were more than twice as likely as lesbian women to experience an eating disorder. Another quantitative study conducted by Polimeni, Austin, and Kavanagh (2009) examined body image experiences and weight control practices of heterosexual, lesbian, and bisexual Australian women. The result of the research suggests that heterosexual and bisexual women are at greater risk for engaging in disordered eating behavior.

Dress and appearance are thought of as significant ways for lesbians and gays to assert and express their identities. Through clothes and adornment, sexual minorities separate themselves from the mainstream culture, while also challenging the norms of the dominant culture (Clarke & Turner, 2007). Rothblum (1984) proposed two main functions of lesbian sub-culture appearance norms and asserted that conforming to those standards enabled lesbian women to recognize each other and form a distinct cultural identity that is dissimilar from heterosexual culture. Clarke and Turner (2007) asked college students what image came to their minds when they think of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. While students had a clear

image of lesbians and gays in their minds, they did not have a definite image of bisexual people. In a similar vein, another study finding suggested that while participants associated “butch” and having a “boyish” look to lesbian women, they could not identify any clear appearance standards for bisexual women (Huxley et al., 2013)

Taub (1999) suggested that beauty norms exist within the lesbian sub-culture that are different from heterosexual beauty norms. A qualitative study conducted by Myers and colleagues (1999) examined whether lesbian and bisexual women conform to societal beauty standards after they come out, whether the effects of feminine beauty socialization persist in their LGBTQ+ communities, or whether they are freed from heterosexual cultural norms and can express their distinctive styles. They also examined whether a new set of standards are established in these sub-cultures and whether they are imposed on individuals, and therefore, operate as restrictive standards like heterosexual standards (Myers et al., 1999). The study results suggested that the heterosexist beauty norms impacted lesbian and bisexual women as much as heterosexual women, and participants stated that they were freed from those standards once they came out. However, participants also reported feelings of body dissatisfaction due to their body weight which is a residue of socialization in the dominant culture. Lastly, some participants of this research mentioned the existence of butch, femme, and androgynous appearance norms in their community. Women stated although they are welcomed in their butch or femme circles, they struggle to be accepted within the wider lesbian community (Myers et al., 1999).

1.2.2. Factors Related to Bisexual+ Women’s Body Image Experiences

Some psychosocial factors have a likelihood of influencing non-heterosexual women’s body image experiences. Previous research has emphasized four areas when examining lesbian women’s body image experiences which are the influence of their romantic relationships, exposure to sexual prejudice stemming from living in a heterosexist society, supportive experiences as being involved in LGBTQ+ communities, and lastly, feminist ideology as a protective factor

(Chmielewski & Yost, 2013). Since these factors were found to be significant for lesbian women's body image experiences, they are important to be explored with bisexual women as well, as their experiences may differ from lesbian women (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013).

Rothblum (1994) suggested that when in a relationship with women, women are more likely to accept their bodies since they do not need to appeal to the male gaze. The history of romantic and sexual relationships has been included as a factor that may influence the body image experiences of bi+ women in several studies. For instance, in a qualitative study, Taub (1999) found that in comparison to having women partners, bisexual women experience more pressure regarding their appearances, to adopt heterosexually defined beauty norms including the removal of body hair and having more feminine appearance when they have male partners (Rothblum, 2002). Furthermore, study participants revealed feeling that their appearance is more accepted by their women partners which made them feel more at ease with their bodies when in a relationship with women. In a similar vein, a quantitative study by Huxley, Halliwell, and Clarke (2015) supports this finding. They have reported that for lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women, prevailing cultural norms regarding thinness are strongly conveyed by their male partners. For women who have both male and female partners, the pressure from male partners has the greatest influence on body image concerns.

Experiencing discrimination is a daily reality for most LGBTQ+ people within a society where heterosexism prevails. It has been suggested that sexual prejudice and discrimination LGBTQ+ individuals experience are likely to influence their body image experiences, as it influences their overall well-being (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013). For instance, the qualitative study that is conducted by Chmielewski and Yost (2013) examining the influence of some psychosocial factors on bisexual women's body image experiences revealed participants' longing for a thinner body type. They have discussed longing for thinness as being an impact of the sexist and heterosexist cultural standards. Moreover, they also highlighted the tension participants experience between wanting to conform to cultural norms together with wanting to refuse societal pressures of attractiveness and thinness.

Furthermore, research examining the relationship between involvement with LGBTQI+ communities and body image experiences has yielded varied findings for lesbian women. For instance, Rothblum (1994) suggested that within the lesbian subculture, appearance norms have changed over the years. Lesbian women were expected to adopt an androgynous look and those adopting butch or femme appearance norms were disapproved, suggesting that the protective role of community involvement decreased for them. On the other hand, other findings indicated lesbian subculture buffering against societal pressure to be thin (Brown, 1987; Owens, Hughes, & Owens-Nicholson, 2002). In their qualitative study, Chmielewski and Yost (2013) reported that although LGBTQI+ communities encourage acceptance of bodies, participants feel isolated due to their sexual orientation. The scarcity of research on the relationship between community involvement and the body image experiences of bisexual women prevents researchers from making conclusions regarding the influences of community involvement.

Lastly, adopting a feminist ideology has been included in studies examining the body image experiences of women with different sexual orientations. While some studies examining heterosexual and lesbian women found feminist ideology to be a protective factor against body dissatisfaction, other studies did not find a significant relationship between them (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Murmen & Smolak, 2009). Moreover, some women feel guilty and ashamed since they feel a contradiction with being a feminist while at the same time experiencing body dissatisfaction (Rubin et al., 2004). On the basis of this research, it is important to recognize that feminist ideas might also influence the body image experiences of bi+ women.

1.3. BODY IMAGE AND BISEXUAL+ WOMEN IN TÜRKİYE

Herek (2004) suggests that heterosexism is an intrinsic element within patriarchal societies. Heterosexism encompasses systems of beliefs about gender, morality, and danger that label sexual minorities as deviant, sinful, and threatening (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014; Herek, 2004). Within patriarchal institutions, especially conventional institutions of marriage, established gender norms prescribe ideal

“masculinity” and “femininity” roles while marginalizing identities deviating from these norms as the “others” (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014). In Türkiye, the LGBTQ+ community is the most excluded, and research consistently indicates adverse attitudes toward them (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu, 2009; Duyan & Duyan, 2005; Ergin & Gökşen, 2023; Gelbal & Duyan, 2006). The formation of sexual minorities and the discrimination against them can be understood concerning Türkiye’s modernization process (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014; Yüzgün, 1993). Kandiyoti (1996) suggested that, in the ideological formation of modern Türkiye, definite gender roles were assigned to men and women within both the nuclear family and the public domain. Consequently, patriarchy and masculinity are fundamental cultural components in shaping identities at national and personal levels in Türkiye. Compulsory heterosexuality as the dominant sexual regime is enforced by the patriarchy and masculinity, which leads gender-nonconforming individuals and sexual minorities to be marginalized, perceived as threatening or as challenging the essential principles of modern Türkiye (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014; Öktem, 2008).

Throughout history, women’s bodies have been dominated and controlled by men. In the formation of nation-states, like in all countries, citizenship in modern Türkiye has been closely tied to gender, sexuality, and reproduction, which was an inseparable part of biopolitics (Miller, 2007). Bodies are considered sites of power, and politics of intimacy has long been an important aspect of Turkish biopolitics which is tied to demographics to the establishment of the nation and economic development initiatives (Alkan et al., 2021). In contemporary Türkiye, political discussions and public debates regarding intimate relationships, body interventions, and sexual and reproductive capacities, are in increased trend. A state-led initiative aiming at masculinist rebuilding targets the bodies of women via gender-based hostility and coercive public discourse (Alkan et al., 2021). These arguments show that women’s bodies are a significant target of politics in Türkiye and that women’s bodies, and capacities of their bodies are under strict regulation and control.

Women’s appearances and body ideals also changed over time, and this change can again also be understood within the political and sociological changes in Türkiye. Türkiye wanted to distance itself from the Ottoman Empire at the time

of nation-state building because it was viewed adversely by Europeans (Özdemir, 2015). Türkiye desired to be a part of the modernized and secularized Western world. The portrayal of Ottoman women was coupled with the image of the harem. Women were thought of as exotic as they were seen as servitude, and harem's beauty was considered a unique characteristic of Ottoman culture. To establish the modern image of the Republic and present itself as distanced from the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye prioritized designing a new image of women. The transformation of Türkiye was portrayed to the world through women (Özdemir, 2015). In introductory materials, women were depicted as dressed in modern attire, stylish, and self-assured with contemporary hairstyles, and women were represented more than men in these materials. Therefore, the story of women's alteration was, in fact, a visual representation of the story of the new Türkiye (Özdemir, 2015). Considering these arguments, it can be seen that Westernized beauty and body norms have been adopted by Turkish culture from the beginning of the nation-state building. Nasser (1997) argued that the globalization of the Western thin ideal increased through mass media, as Western media broadcasted the thin ideal, resulting in increased body dissatisfaction among non-Western women (Swami, 2015). Together with the thin ideal, consumerism and the idealization of youthful-looking have also been globalized through media. Media served to increase beliefs regarding body and physical features, which are modifiable and portrayed as necessary and healthy (Swami, 2015).

In Türkiye, body image research is predominantly conducted with heterosexual, cis-gender women and adolescents (Güleç et al., 2022). Most of the research examined body-related concerns among women and reported the association with several psychological disturbances (Karaaslan & Hacimusalar, 2018; Sanlier et al., 2016). One of the few studies examining body image experiences of sexual minorities in Türkiye looked at the influences of minority stress and psychosocial factors on disordered eating behaviors and depressive symptoms (Güleç et al., 2022). Study findings suggested that sexual minority stress significantly predicts disturbed eating behavior and depressive symptoms. Sexual minorities living in Türkiye state high levels of perceived marginalization in many

different areas, including health care, education, and occupation. They express not relying on the juridical system because of the deficient legislation about LGBTQ+ rights in Türkiye (Güleç et al., 2022). In comparison to heterosexual individuals, sexual minority individuals conveyed substantially higher levels of stressors associated with their minority status, including economic, physical, and psychological violence, and being forced into sexual intercourse. Moreover, they are at higher risk of experiencing sexual abuse as a child (Boyacıoğlu et al., 2020; Göçmen & Yılmaz, 2017; Güleç et al., 2022).

The discrimination sexual minorities experience in Türkiye is also reflected in scientific studies in which they are not adequately represented. Although there are not enough studies conducted on sexual minorities in Türkiye, they are at increased risk for developing a wide range of psychological problems due to their disadvantaged status within the society. One study finding suggests that compared to heterosexual individuals, prevalence rates of depression and anxiety are greater among sexual minorities (Ünsal & Bozo, 2022). In line with research findings indicating higher prevalence rates of eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorders among sexual minorities in different countries, they are likely to be prevalent in sexual minorities in Türkiye as well (Convertino et al., 2021). In Türkiye, research on body image has been disproportionately conducted with heterosexual female participants, and thus, the experiences of sexual minority women have been neglected. There exists a gap in the literature concerning body image experiences among bisexual+ women in Türkiye.

1.4. THE PRESENT STUDY

As suggested above, the body image experiences of bisexual+ women are overlooked in academia, especially in Türkiye. In addition to the psychosocial factors that have been discussed above, there might also be other factors that contribute to body image development that are peculiar to bisexual+ women and are different from lesbian and heterosexual women in Türkiye. Westernized beauty standards have been globalized, especially through different forms of media, and accelerated with social media. Most of the Western beauty standards have been adopted by Turkish culture for a long time (Özdemir, 2015). Turkish women are

also under pressure to be thin and attractive. Moreover, being a more patriarchal society than Western societies, women's not only bodily appearances are under control, but there are widespread regulations regarding how a woman should use her body, and what she is permitted and not permitted to do with her body (Alkan et al., 2021). Therefore, studying body image with women in Türkiye also necessitates examining the norms and regulations around the female body and their influences on women's body image experiences. Together with being a patriarchal society, Türkiye is a sexist and heterosexist society in which existing as a sexual minority means struggling for life. Starting from early childhood, sexual minorities face discrimination, marginalization, and stigmatization. This situation continues throughout their lives and they must fight for even their basic human rights (Boyacioglu et al., 2020; Gulec et al., 2020; Sertoğlu, 2021). The prejudice sexual minorities experience has an impact on their overall well-being, and body image experiences constitute an important aspect of well-being. Therefore, the qualitative design of this research mainly aims to contribute to the literature on body image among young adult bisexual+ women and try to understand specific factors contributing to their body image development. The research questions of the study are:

- 1) How do bi+ women define and experience their bodies?
- 2) What major psychosocial factors shape bi+ women's body image development?

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

2.1 DATA COLLECTION

After receiving approval from the İstanbul Bilgi University Ethics Committee, the researcher employed convenience sampling to recruit volunteer participants. A digital flyer outlining the study was created and shared on the social media platform, Instagram, on the researcher's account. The flyer was also shared in WhatsApp groups including feminist and queer student club groups at several urban universities. The inclusion criteria of the participants were a) being a woman, b) being between 18 to 30 c) being bisexual+. The age range between 18-30, which is referred to as young adulthood, characterizes a transition phase from adolescence to adulthood (Rounsefell et al., 2020). Since young adults have been reported to be more concerned with their body images (Ojerholm & Rothblum, 1999), this study included bisexual+ women aged between 18-30. The exclusion criteria for the study were a) experiencing acute psychological stress and b) having a psychiatric diagnosis currently. People who have been diagnosed with any eating disorder or body dysmorphic disorder at any point in their lives were also excluded from the study since the interview questions can be triggering for individuals who experienced these disorders.

Ten bisexual+ women participants who met the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria were recruited for voluntary participation. Participants contacted the researcher through the email address that was provided in the flyer. The researcher sent a Google Forms link to the participants' email addresses for them to fill out the Demographic Form (Appendix B) and read the informed consent form (Appendix A). The participants' eligibility for the study was checked through the responses they provided in the Demographic Form. They were also asked to send an email providing a written statement confirming their understanding and agreement with the informed consent form before the interview. The participants who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and provided their written consent were invited for an individual interview. At the beginning of the interviews, the

researcher verbally reviewed the informed consent form with the participants, explained the research procedures, told them she would be asking open-ended questions about their body image experiences and would be taking audio recordings of the interviews. The researcher also reminded the participants that they could skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering and terminate the interview at any point they wanted.

For data collection, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted. Nine of the ten interviews were conducted online via Google Meets, and one of them was conducted face-to-face in a quiet room at Istanbul Bilgi University, Santral Campus. An interview guide was developed inspired by previous research on body image and their emphasis on several psychosocial factors, including involvement with the LGBT+ community, feminist ideology, and relationships with partners (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Özkan, 2021; Ryan & Morrison, 2009). In addition, objectification and sociocultural theories were used as a point of reference for developing questions. Clarke and Braun (2013) suggested that interviews are proper tools for inquiring about experiences. Being a relatively sensitive topic, using a semi-structured interview method to inquire into body-related experiences was considered to be appropriate to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' body image experiences. In addition, the semi-structured format allowed the researcher to tailor the wording and order of the questions according to the participant and ask further probe questions according to the nature of the interview (Bottamini & Ste-Marie, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). As suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013), the flexibility of this method and the questions being open-ended led participants to talk about the things that are important to them in a detailed way.

Before data collection, a pilot study was conducted to make sure the questions in the interview guide were comprehensible. Following the feedback received from the pilot study, the interview questions were revised, and two questions were found to be incomprehensible. Therefore, those questions were eliminated from the interview guide. Since no other major revisions were needed, the pilot interview was included in the actual data analysis later. The final interview guide consisted of 6 main sections and had 12 main questions with most of the

questions having follow-up probes (Appendix C). The initial section of the interview guide was the introduction in which, participants were asked to introduce themselves, and asked about their daily, social, work, and school lives. Then, in the second section, the participants were invited to share their experiences of being bisexual+ women in Türkiye. Afterward, the researcher told the participants that she wanted to learn about the thoughts and emotions of their embodiment experiences and participants were asked to tell a memory in which they felt positively and negatively about their bodies. In this third section that focused on body image, the researcher asked about their coping strategies when they feel negatively about their bodies. Moreover, they were asked whether they would like to change anything about their bodies. The fourth part of the interview guide focused on the development of body image and the researcher invited participants to reflect on their body image experiences when they were children and adolescents. Afterward, participants were asked to discuss what they had learned from their family, partners, friends, society, and the LGBTQ+ community about their bodies. Moreover, participants were asked whether they faced anything challenging as a bisexual+ woman within the LGBTQ+ community. Overall participants were required to reflect on their body image experiences and how their feelings and thoughts have changed until this day and age.

The fifth section of the interview delved into the topic of whether there is an ideal body for bisexual+ women and explored the potential advantages and disadvantages of having an ideal bisexual+ body. Furthermore, the participants were inquired about their thoughts on whether there is an ideal body standard for bisexual+ women that exists within the LGBTQ+ community and asked about the attitudes toward bisexual+ women who don't fit in that ideal. Additionally, the participants were asked about the media representations of bisexual+ women and their bodies, as well as what they have learned about bisexuality and their bodies from the media. At the end of the interview, participants were invited to share their experiences about participating in the research, and if there was anything else that they wished to share. The interviews lasted between 90 to 180 minutes. All

interviews were audio-recorded, with participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

2.2 PARTICIPANTS

Ten bisexual+ women were recruited and interviewed for the study. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 28. The education levels of participants ranged from university students to PhD students. Four of the ten participants had recently moved abroad. All demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.



Table 2.1.
Demographic Information of the Participants

P	Age	EL	CW	Occupation	RS	CoR	SES
Aslı	28	BA Graduate	Yes	Company Owner	Yes	İzmir	High
Derin	23	BA Student	No		Yes	İstanbul	Average
Esra	23	MA Student	Part-time	Journalist/ Advertising	No	Halifax	Average
Betül	22	BA Student	No		No	İstanbul	Average
Sibel	26	BA Graduate	No		Yes	İstanbul	Average
İlayda	19	BA Student	No		Yes	İstanbul	High
Asya	28	PhD Student	Yes	Documentation Employer	No	İstanbul	Average
Nehir	26	BA Graduate	Yes	UX Researcher	No	Berlin	Average
Deniz	25	BA Graduate	Yes	Diversity Equity and Inclusion Coordinator	No	Brighton	Average
Gizem	28	PhD Student	Part-time	Researcher/ Teaching Assistant	No	Boston/ İstanbul	Average

Note. P = Participant. EL = Education Level. CW = Currently Working. RS = Relationship Status. CoR = City of Residence. SES = Socioeconomic Status.

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The thematic analysis method, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), is utilized to understand participants' body image experiences. The thematic analysis method was preferred for data analysis, since this research not only attached great importance to individual experiences but also regarded contextual factors as important and sought to understand individual experiences as they are embedded in context. This research had an experiential approach since the researcher aimed to report 10 bisexual+ women's realities and experiences in a rich and descriptive way (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Considering the meaning-making process as being embedded in the context and constructed in social and cultural settings, this study adopted a contextual lens that informed the type of questions asked and the way the answers are analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The audiotaped interviews were transcribed, and the transcriptions were read and re-read together with the field notes before coding. The analysis was conducted according to the 6 steps that are suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step involved transcription and an initial reading of the data to look for and notice any patterns. The second step focused on generating primary codes and was carried out in a line-by-line basis. In this step, the researcher first coded the pilot interview sentence by sentence and then reviewed the codes with the advisor of the thesis. After discussing the coding process and going over the initial code list, the researcher continued with the coding of the other interviews. Some examples of the initial codes generated in this step were "family control/comment over weight", "lack of knowledge about bisexuality", "partners' positive impact on body image", and "no representation of bisexual+ women in media". The third step involved creating a combination of codes into potential themes by examining the frequency and meaning of the codes generated for the whole data set. While developing the potential themes, the list of codes was discussed with the advisor, and some potential themes were identified together. Some of the potential themes discussed were "the pressure of feminine ideals", "positive experiences", and "the pressure of bisexual identity". In the fourth step, the themes extracted from the data extracts and the entire collected data were reviewed to ensure that they accurately

reflected the participant's experiences. In the fifth step, the coherent themes have been determined and lastly, the final findings that represent the analysis were reported. While coding the interviews and forming the themes, the MAXQDA 2022 Software program was used.

2.4 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND REFLEXIVITY

To increase the trustworthiness of the analysis, investigator triangulation was carried out. The researcher regularly discussed her codes, potential themes, and interpretations with her advisor to decide on the final themes. This exchange helped to widen the perspective of the researcher and to reinterpret the data and codes more comprehensively. Secondly, once the data were analyzed and themes were identified, participants were reached once again for member-checking. They received a single-page summary of the themes via e-mail and were asked whether the themes reflected their experiences. Three participants responded and they found findings adequately capturing their experiences. Consistent with the positive feedback received from the participants, no revisions were made to the final themes.

As explained by Clarke and Braun (2013), reflexivity is an important practice that increases transparency in the research process and the trustworthiness of the analysis. Thus, during the research process, the researcher always kept field notes and observed her impact on the data collection and analysis. The field notes helped with the reflexivity practice and increased the transparency in the study. As the researcher in this thesis, I have studied psychology and sociology, and currently, I am pursuing a master's degree in clinical psychology at Istanbul Bilgi University. During my undergraduate years, I actively participated in LGBTQ+ and feminist clubs. My education has great influence on my queer feminist position and influenced the topic that I selected for my thesis research. I have grown up being someone who is not satisfied with the truths and norms of society at face value but questions the things that are served as the truth. I have always been curious about how certain values can shape individuals' lives so dominantly that they don't feel the need to question those values and norms and see no harm in imposing their truths on everyone. Some norms and values I like to problematize in my thesis

research revolve around issues such as femininity, gender roles, and heteronormativity just to name a few. In the patriarchal and heterosexist society we live in, women and women's bodies are controlled, disciplined, and scrutinized starting at an early age. Women grow up internalizing societal ideals and truths regarding their gender, body, and sexual orientation. When they become grown up enough to critically examine the societal norms that have dominated their lives so far, a state of unrest emerges. While I find this state of unrest exciting and intriguing, it is also an anxiety-provoking state where many women can feel overwhelmed and alone. Therefore, it is valuable for women and LGBTQ+ people to talk about themselves, sharing their own experiences rather than some other people talking about them.

Bisexual+ identity is a hard identity to embrace, since it challenges monosexism and heterosexism at the same time. Therefore, I was sincerely curious about the experiences of bisexual+ women. Throughout the literature review, I observed the invisibility of bisexual+ women in academic research and I wanted to offer a space for bisexual+ women to express their journeys, experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. Furthermore, for the past two years, I have been conducting psychotherapy sessions with children and adolescents. Although I was expecting to hear about body image issues in therapy sessions, I was surprised by the extent to which body image disturbances affect the quality of life of many adolescents, especially girls. While the body and feelings regarding the body hold significant importance in individual lives, there is not enough space for people to openly share their experiences and feelings. I started this research with the feeling that discussing the body is significant and during the interviews, I observed participants also shared the same feeling with me. Many participants stated that they do not discuss their body-related feelings, even in their therapy sessions, and decided to talk and think more about their embodied experiences.

Throughout the interviews, my main aim was to establish a secure environment where participants could freely share their experiences and perspectives without jeopardizing their confidentiality. Many participants were enthusiastic about participating in the study, they found the research topic unique

in the sense that it is an unexplored area in academia. They were eager to reflect on their experiences and critically thought about the interview questions before answering them. Since thinking and talking about bodily experiences are typically deemed to be private, some participants shared feeling naked and defenseless while answering the questions. Yet, no one became uncomfortable, and we also had a chance to discuss those feelings that arose in the interview, and the open dialogue allowed us to explore how come body is associated with privacy and shame. Building a strong rapport with the participants enabled them to feel comfortable and provide very rich answers to the interview questions.

Some of the participants related to my psychotherapist role in addition to my researcher role. I think this led them to share the feelings they are troubled with. Moreover, I am a woman who grew up in Türkiye and experienced similar pressures of femininity as they do, so participants felt their experiences were understood by me. In addition, from the topic that I chose to study, my queer feminist position is obvious. This also reassured participants that they would not be judged but only tried to be understood. Throughout the interviews, I was careful not to mix my feelings and thoughts with the participant's point of view. From my psychotherapy practice, I learned to listen to the person in isolation without letting myself interpret but try to understand the unique perspective and meaning-making processes of each individual on their own. While analyzing the data, I prioritized sticking to the reports of the participants, representing their experiences, and being careful again not to make over-interpretations.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This study utilized the Thematic Analysis method that has been developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify themes that emerged from the interviews and focused on the body image experiences of bisexual+ women. Three main themes generated after data analysis are: “The Pressures on the Feminine Body,” “Pressures on the Bisexual+ Identity and Body,” and “Learning to Accept the Body”. Sub-themes, representing distinct aspects of the main themes, are derived according to their shared meanings. The main themes and sub-themes are illustrated in Table 2. This chapter provides an in-depth examination of the main themes and sub-themes.

Table 3.1.

Themes and Sub-themes of the Study

Themes	Sub-Themes
Theme 1: The Pressures on the Feminine Body	The Pressure to be Thin
	The Pressure of Feminine Appearance
	The Pressure of Feminine Behavior
	Pressure of Constant Scrutiny
Theme 2: Pressures on the Bisexual+ Identity and Body	Objectification and Fetishization
	Ideal Bisexual+ Body and Appearance
	Discrimination and Harassment
	Stereotypes about Bisexuality and Biphobia
Theme 3: Learning to Accept the Body	Acceptance within the LGBTQ+ Community
	Social and Personal Coping Mechanisms
	Critical Thinking

3.1. THE PRESSURE OF THE FEMININE BODY

This theme addresses the pressures participants faced regarding conforming to traditional notions of femininity. It encompasses the various sources of pressure, judgment, and criticism participants encountered about women's bodies and appearance as well as their own bodies, including those from family, media, partners, and society at large. The participants talked about how these pressures put on the feminine body influenced their relationship with their own bodies. They reported feelings of shame, low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and disgust. This main theme culminated into four sub-themes, namely a) the pressure to be thin, b) the pressure of feminine appearance, c) the pressure of feminine behavior, and d) the pressure of constant scrutiny.

3.1.1. The Pressure to be Thin

The first sub-theme, titled "The Pressure to Be Thin," explores societal beauty standards centered around thinness and the challenges participants faced in meeting these standards. Participants reported that the pressure to be thin started at a young age, often accompanied by feelings of shame and inadequacy for not being thin enough. They mentioned important influences of family attitudes and comments regarding their body sizes and, consequently, their relationship with weight and eating behavior in the early years of their lives.

"My family didn't like me being overweight. It's not like they made me feel worthless, but they were always trying to control my weight, what I ate, and things like that. Maybe I learned to feel ashamed from them too. I remember what my dad used to say. My dad is a fat man. I remember him saying, 'If you keep eating like this, you'll end up like me.' So, I was already feeling ashamed at school, and I felt ashamed at home too." (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

"She's just a typical Turkish mom, you know... 'Oh, you've gained weight again, don't eat this, don't eat that.' Growing up with these kinds of things, I developed a sort of eating disorder. I would secretly eat something, hide everything, you know. So, it took me a long time to overcome that... I don't know how other people process these things, but I definitely had body image issues." (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

The pressures on body weight increased throughout their lives, and most of them stated feelings of body dissatisfaction due to their weight. Most of the participants shared they had been bullied either in elementary school or high school due to their weight. Although most participants stated they have much better relationships with their bodies and are at peace with their physical appearances compared to their own adolescence, most of them stated they would still like to lose weight.

"Even though I try to love my body as much as possible and accept many parts of it, there are times when I think, 'If I could just lose 5 more kilos and have this part look like that.'" (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

Many of the participants revealed feelings of body dissatisfaction when they gained weight, could not fit in the clothes they used to fit in, and stated feelings of disgust towards their fatty looks. Furthermore, according to one participant, the pressure of thinness made itself evident while flirting, as she felt her being overweight was something she needed to disclose before meeting in person with the men she texted through an online dating platform.

"When I like someone, it becomes a big issue for me. Like, 'Should I tell them I'm overweight or not when we're texting?' Yeah, this affects me quite a bit... But before, I used to sit and cry a lot about it, you know. But now I never sit and cry about being overweight. It doesn't upset me that much anymore." (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

Most of the participants stated they have grown up hearing a lot of comments regarding their weight, with many of them stating that the comments mostly came from their mothers compared to their fathers. Most of them declared that within their mother's generation, shaming bodies was very prevalent compared to their generation, and their mothers were fatphobic. While mothers were critical of other people and their daughters' weight, they also mentioned their mothers being preoccupied with their own weight.

"There's always this thing about losing weight and being uncomfortable with her weight. Actually, I don't think she likes her own body at all. It's always an issue. I think my mom has been trying to lose weight since the day I met her. So being thin

is the most ideal thing for her. I remember when I was little, my mom would ask this, it makes me sad now. Like, whenever she saw another woman, she would always be like, 'Is she fatter than me or am I fatter?' ... So she wanted to know if she was thinner than the other woman or something like that. I always remember this about my mom." (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

Moreover, they stated the pressure to be thin exists both in traditional and social media. One of the participants highlighted that there is no overweight women representation in media as if the representation of fat women would be like an insult to the television.

"I have never seen an overweight main character in any TV series. Or, you know, there were no main characters that we would call slightly overweight. I'm talking about Hande Erçel, who is of normal weight anyway. When she first played in Güneşin Kızları, she was at a normal weight. You know, she was thin and of normal weight. She was never overweight. But they lynched the girl by saying flatbread face or something. Then that girl lost weight like crazy and had many procedures on her face and now she is looked at as the most beautiful woman in the world. But you know, the girl was already beautiful. They lynched a person who is currently at a normal weight to reduce her to size zero. ... The lynching shown to a sexist person, or a sexist man is never the same as the lynching shown to an overweight woman. Or having an overweight woman on TV is like an insult to television. For example, he (a random men) says (when sees an overweight person on TV), 'Dude (to the producers), what is this? How are you letting this person (an overweight woman) play in this series?'" (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

3.1.2. The Pressure of Feminine Appearance

The second sub-theme of "The Pressure of Feminine Appearance " examines the widespread expectation of adhering to certain feminine norms regarding appearance and attire. The societal beauty and body standards for the feminine body other than being thin were imposed on the participants, again starting from an early age. The internalization of the so-called proper look of a woman led them to feel disgusted, ashamed, or dissatisfied with their bodies when they did not

meet societal standards. Moreover, they mentioned the existence of the pretty privilege and discussed that meeting the societal expectation of femininity brings a higher status in society. As one of the participants stated, within the Turkish culture, a woman should be many things at the same time.

“She should be 90-60-90, she should be thin, she should be long, but she shouldn’t be too thin. She should eat her food but shouldn’t gain weight. In Türkiye, at least, there is more of a feeling that you must be everything at once.” (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

A standardized feminine appearance includes a range of features ranging from fashionable clothes, being not too short or too long, not having any body hair, long hair length, a soft tone of voice, and smooth skin just to name a few. All the participants talked about at least one bodily feature that became the subject of bullying, criticism, or negative comments in their lives. Most of them mentioned the messages coming from the media, families, and friends about “what they should be” and “what they should look like”. They mentioned feelings of shame, guilt, and wanting to disappear when they were criticized about their bodies and appearances.

“Typical bullying experiences, I guess. I was bullied by the popular girl group in middle school for quite some time. They perpetuated this bullying by making a lot of comments about my physical appearance and body, as well as my clothes. It made me feel really bad about my body and the way I carried myself. These memories just came to mind... The first thing I usually feel is shame, and this sort of instinct to withdraw, like wanting to retreat into myself. It's like wanting to leave that place and wanting to disappear... My initial feeling is usually this urge to retreat due to shame. The desire to hide is usually dominant. I also feel guilty, though I have no idea where this guilt is coming from, but it's a feeling mixed with shame. Sometimes I feel anger, too. Like, ‘Why am I like this’ as if I am an adolescent. Because I remember that too. When I was a teenager, I used to argue with my mom, crying, ‘Why did you give birth to me so ugly?’ (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

“I remember when I was little, my dad always used to say things like, ‘A woman with a tattoo is a whore,’ saying uncensored, unfiltered things like that at home.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

Many participants stated their never-ending struggle with their body hair. Body hair and facial hair became an issue for many of them after entering puberty. Some of them stated they had been bullied because of their facial hair which made them not want to go to school. Some of the participants mentioned feeling disgusted with their body hair, as it felt dirty. One of the participants said that she was mocked by her woman partner because she had body hair. She emphasized that having women partners does not isolate them from the patriarchal beauty standards, since those standards are internalized by women as well. Many of the participants’ families made comments about their body hair, teaching that body hair is something that one should get rid of.

“The thing I hate most is when telling my mom a story, my mom says, ‘When will you start laser treatment?’ ‘Is that the point?’ I go crazy when it happens like this. So, either my mother looks at me while I’m telling stories and sees hair, or she never forgets this anyway. So, I guess she’s looking for a place to say it. I hate it. When I explain something to my mother, she would say ‘Oh, let’s start laser treatment’ in a very irrelevant way, or make conversations like ‘Should we start a diet, should we lose weight?’ etc.” (Betül, 22, cisgender woman)

The fashion industry produces clothes as if there is only one type of woman’s body. Therefore, some participants talked about how hard it is for them to find clothes that fit their bodies. Some women told how upset and angry they get in store dressing rooms, feeling dissatisfied and angry with their disproportionate bodies. Moreover, height was another topic that was mentioned by many of the participants. Some women said that they were dissatisfied with being short, while one of the participants was dissatisfied with being very tall. Since there is a height standard for women, and women are not expected to be tall, one participant said how hard it is for her to find suitable pants. In addition, she mentioned that she is tired of being the weirdo in the room, and people always commenting on her height.

Furthermore, many participants stated the comments they received from their families or other people regarding their choice of clothing.

"Something like this happened to me, in my old company they told me, 'You're a very beautiful girl. If you didn't dress like a man, you would be even more beautiful.'" (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

"I used to think, 'If only I were 5 centimeters shorter.' Not much, just 5-6 centimeters. It's really a difficult lifestyle, you know. Being tall and being a woman, already 80% of the clothes don't fit me. Like when you buy jeans, it only goes up to here (pointing to her ankle)." (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

"Especially, there's nothing that fits well with big breasts, everything just bursts from there, so whenever we go clothes shopping, and if it's not for sweatshirts or something, I hate my body. I reach the point of 'give me scissors in the dressing room, I'll cut this' or for example, buying a bikini. One of my friends says she bought it from the bazaar. What do you mean 'from the bazaar'? That's not possible, friends! First, you have to cry in the dressing room several times, and then you buy a bikini." (Betül, 22, cisgender woman)

3.1.3. The Pressure of Feminine Behavior

Together with feminine appearance norms, there are numerous norms, rules, and regulations about what a woman makes with her body, how she uses her body, and what she performs with that body. Various expectations for women on how to use their bodies are explained in this sub-theme. Since the body is intrinsically related to sexuality, many women talked about their sexual experiences and the expectations from their bodies sexually. Some women stated that women are thought of as desireless, and not having a high level of libido. Some participants mentioned the influence of societal disciplining of women's sexual behavior on their relationship with their bodies, and how they restricted their bodies.

"I was ashamed of having so much pleasure, of having such a high libido as a woman, of owning my pleasure. As I worked on these issues, it gradually opened up, because the other side (being worried about appearance, being afraid of

enjoying sex, experiencing a more outward-focused sexuality) was also tightening my body.” (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

“I was always made to do these things by being told that, as a woman, I had to do these things to please my lover and that I would be inadequate if I didn't do them. In other words, my body exists to please the other person, and I should also enjoy it. I'm a bad lover because I don't enjoy it, but I don't enjoy it, you know, I think it took me too long to enjoy sex like that.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

Moreover, participants talked about how society demands them to be decent, convenient, and in control of their bodies as women. Most of the participants stated that the societal pressure on their bodies led them to feel their bodies as something to be ashamed of. They felt that they should not display their bodies but on the contrary, they learned that they should be hiding their bodies. They internalized the body as something that they should never let anyone see or touch. All these things influenced their sexual experiences, and how they felt about their bodies during sexual intercourse. Some of the participants stated that it took a long time for them even to realize what is pleasurable for them and to talk about the things that give them pleasure during sex and share what they desire. They stated that requiring something from a partner was a skill they tried to develop.

“Being vocal during sex, expressing my desires, noticing what I enjoy, and sharing it with my partner is still quite new for me and still a bit of a work in progress, I think. ... But, you know, it has also developed a lot in the past year or so, I think.” ... I mean, before, I didn't have the possibility of saying that I liked something, sharing it, or requesting it, you know. Like, “this is what I enjoy.” So, things are getting a little better.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

Contrary to being always in control of the body, one participant also mentioned expectations from women to be sexy and good in bed.

“Making peace with your body in sexuality is also something that takes time. Because I think there is that male gaze, I think there is a performance anxiety unique to women. You know, there is the expectation of being good in bed, or being very sexy with your body, being very self-confident during sex, etc.” (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

Furthermore, for many participants, it was hard to state finding themselves beautiful or sexy. In addition, they abstained from saying that they were proud of themselves. One of the participants mentioned that saying 'I am beautiful' may be heard as arrogant since a woman is taught to be humble, and being humble is praised for women. Some participants mentioned they felt as if they should not take up space with their bodies.

"So, everything about my body feels like it's turning into a source of shame. Therefore, one of the first things I learned from society is to feel ashamed of my body. And to take up as little space with my body as possible. ... When you take up less space with your body, it's like you can't express yourself mentally as easily, it becomes more difficult to create space for mental expression." (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

Moreover, another participant mentioned as a woman she learned to hide her negative emotions.

"Together with being thin, to appear smiling [was taught by my family]. There were also voices advising me to always hide all my emotions, not express them, and always be smiling, cheerful, and in such an easy state." (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

3.1.4. Pressure Of Constant Scrutiny

The fourth sub-theme explores the tension between the body being considered private and taboo, meaning it is viewed as something not to be openly discussed and requiring concealment, while simultaneously being disciplined and objectified, necessitating control and evoking feelings of shame. In their accounts, the participants talked about the feeling of being under constant scrutiny by others and a sense of being surveilled about how their body looks. Some of the participants stated that it took time for them not to embrace an outsider's perspective toward their bodies, realize the internalized male gaze, and experience their bodies as belonging to themselves. The body being strictly regulated and controlled by society made women feel that their bodies did not belong to them since they heard many voices and messages about what they should be doing with their bodies.

“For example, using your body to dance might be seen as something intimate, as if you're doing something shameful. Like, ‘You can't dance everywhere, you can't dance in front of everyone, crossing your legs here is shameful’, and ‘Don't do this or that in front of them’. How you position your body, and the poses you put yourself in is constantly regulated by society. So, the excessive regulation of my body makes me feel like so many things about my body are shameful. It made me feel like my body wasn't mine, but belonged to society, mostly. Others always regulate it. Others always dictate how I should use it. ‘Should I cover my head? Shouldn't I cover my head? Should I wear a miniskirt? Should I cross my legs? Should I have sex? Should I be present physically in that environment at that time?’ So, because of all these, it feels like my body doesn't belong to me, but to society, and I exist only as a symbolic entity. That's how society generally makes me feel.” (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

Moreover, some participants talked about how much other familiar and unfamiliar people scrutinize their bodies, notice even slight changes in their bodies, and comment on them.

“For instance, every time I have my period, you know, when you have your period, you bloat and then you relax. Every time I have my period, they ask me how much weight I've lost. Every time it's like, ‘Oh my God, enough already!’ It's like my normal monthly cycle, you know, people notice. They're like, ‘Oh, you've lost weight again,’ for example. I haven't lost weight, I'm the same. Nothing has changed, I don't understand...Maybe that's why I can't do anything (to change my appearance). When I do something, it's so in the spotlight that, you know, just let me be!” (Asli, 28, cisgender woman)

Another participant highlighted people being very careless about commenting on her breasts and how angry it makes her. Moreover, she is angry that her breasts are appealing to men, and men do not hesitate to gaze at her breasts. She expressed thinking about having a mammoplasty since her big breasts made her very uncomfortable. She anticipated that many people would notice the change and comment on it.

“I think I’ll get breast surgery, and next summer, when I go to the summer house, a few guys will ask me some stupid questions like ‘What happened?’ And I’ll definitely shut them up.... For example, one guy from the summer house forgot my name but remembered my bra size. I never told the guy even once. He guessed it himself and guessed it correctly. Well... Of course, I’m not going to tell the guy my bra size because it’s not even a guy I like. And having him get my name wrong but remember my bra size was a terrifying memory.” (Betül, 22, cisgender woman)

Moreover, participants talked about how tiny details of one’s body were noticed and ridiculed, especially on social media. The widespread scrutinizing of bodies made her to be overly self-conscious about her body.

“For example, people make fun of everything on social media. When you take a photo in the mirror with your phone, they make fun of how your hand looks. Like, ‘Look at that T-Rex hand,’ for example. (demonstrates holding the phone with fingers apart) Even with that! With everything. So, you see, I still post it. Even if my hand looks weird, I still post it. I don’t have that kind of thing, but still, I check, you know. I post it by being aware of that. I think just being aware of that is already the effect of that pressure.” (Aslı, 28, cisgender woman)

Three of the ten participants moved from Türkiye after university, and all of them lived in Western countries at the time of the interviews. Compared to Türkiye, three of them stated how different beauty ideals exist within those Western countries, how much less of an issue how a person looks is, or their body size and shape. Moreover, all three of them mentioned no one commenting on people’s bodies or not even gazing at them as they do in Türkiye.

“Overall, beauty standards are very different in the UK and Türkiye. How I feel about myself, and my body is very different in Türkiye and the UK. Every time I come back (to Türkiye), it’s like, you know, ‘You’ve gained weight, why don’t you take care of your skin, what’s this? You’re dressed like a boy,’ blah blah, I mean, constantly hearing these comments from my family, from people around me, even from random people like the grocer. While this exists in Türkiye, the UK is much more individualistic, and these things are never acceptable, so you never hear them.” (Deniz, 25, cisgender woman)

“Türkiye is like a huge high school friend group; it feels like you're constantly trying to fit in. (laughing). You want society to love you, accept you, or simply not harm you, you know, the basics.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

Although talking about the appearances of bodies is excessively prevalent in Türkiye, functions or the internal states of the body is something talked about less, according to the participants. Menstruation was discussed as one of those taboo subjects in Türkiye, which is not talked about in most families. One participant mentioned her family talking a lot about things such as body hair, eyebrows, or about her wearing piercings but never talked about menstruation, although both her parents are medical doctors and even her father is a gynecologist.

“For once, I mean, I think it's really weird that I was never taught anything about menstruation in my life. I mean, my parents are doctors, my dad is a gynecologist. I mean, they could have been a little more interested in this or could have shared something, you know. Other than that, it was always like, my body was never something recognized and talked about in terms of its functions. So, the only things I learned about my body were like, I need to be thin, I need to lose weight, or things like ‘your hair has grown, remove them’ or something. I remember when I stopped plucking my eyebrows during the pandemic and went home one day—I was living on my own. I went home, and my mom had a crying fit, she was devastated, like ‘What happened to my beautiful daughter?’ as if I had completely let myself go, or like she found out I started doing drugs, that kind of reaction, we were devastated for days, she cried every time she looked at me. It was very weird, I think. But generally, they push these things too much.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

3.2. PRESSURES ON THE BISEXUAL+ IDENTITY AND BODY

This theme explores the pressures faced by bisexual+ women stemming from their gender identity and sexual orientation. The participants’ accounts showed that they face a different set of pressures and norms related to having a bisexual+ woman’s body, in addition to feminine ideals and norms explained in the first theme. They explained that these pressures and expectations influenced their body image experiences. The sub-themes were defined as a) objectification and

fetishization, b) ideal bisexual+ body and appearance, c) discrimination and harassment, and d) stereotypes about bisexuality and biphobia.

3.2.1. Objectification and Fetishization

The first sub-theme illuminates the objectification and fetishization experienced by bisexual+ women. Within a society where women's bodies are objectified to a great extent, bisexual+ women's bodies are even more objectified since people mostly encounter bisexual+ women in porn, according to participants. The participants explained that although LGBTQI+ visibility in different mediums of media has increased over the past few years, bisexual+ women's media representation consisted of bisexual+ identity as the only attribute of those people, and topics mainly revolved around their romantic or sexual relationships. According to the participants, these inadequate, sexualized, or unrealistic representations contributed to bisexual+ women's bodies being objectified and seen as fetish objects.

“For example, let's say people who have grown up believing there's no option other than heterosexuality, especially teenage boys in places like Türkiye, may encounter lesbian or bisexual women in porn for the first time. When they come across such individuals in something like porn, they see that the woman is completely objectified because her only characteristic is her sexuality. When people see these women, they think, ‘Okay, then she has no other qualities, I can't talk to this woman.’ If her only characteristic is her sexuality, their humanity is taken away at that point. They are being othered. When they are othered, people may think of them as just something to fulfill their sexual desires, like ‘I have nothing in common with this person, the only thing they can offer me is sex.’ These things can happen. Objectification is the first step in fetishizing. And when you take away all their human character traits and only present them to people as bisexual or lesbian, that's the biggest problem with two-dimensional characters. Whether you're in Türkiye, America, or Canada, it doesn't matter. If you're from a small town, city, or village, if the first gay person you see in your life is this character, you have no

other reference. You might think all gay people are like that. And it's not anyone's fault other than the media because what can they do?" (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

As participants stated, while a homophobic heterosexual man finds two men kissing disgusting, he is likely to find two women kissing very attractive. Moreover, according to participants women- women's relationships are not thought of as romantic relationships but they are sexualized, men find women-women sex very exciting.

"A straight man who is homophobic may find it disgusting and say 'eww' when two men kiss, yet he can find two women kissing very attractive, and he can use it as a sexual stimulus to satisfy his own needs." (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

"This is actually very fetishized as well. For example, a heterosexual male friend of mine might want to hear about my experiences with women. And this could be just to fetishize me...Being fetishized in this way is very ugly in my opinion....Let me put it this way, for example, I have a boyfriend. I am in a romantic relationship with him, and let's say we're going to be intimate. I don't want him to imagine me being with another woman. I don't want him to think about another partner. I don't like this situation. But it seems like they do it a lot." (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

One of the widespread stereotypes attached to bisexual+ women that came up in the participants' accounts was that they were viewed as being very likely to cheat. However, the fetishization of women-women sex even led men not to perceive their women partners having relationships with other women as cheating. Some of the participants emphasized that having a relationship with a woman was not perceived as serious as cheating with a man. Therefore, the women-women relationship was invalidated, not seen as a serious relationship, but as fun and exciting, according to some of the participants.

"You know, this perception exists in heterosexual men. Like, they might think, 'You'll definitely cheat on me,' or something like that. Or sometimes it's the opposite, like, 'You can sleep with any girl you want. I won't mind,' or something like that. It bothers me a bit, you know. It's like you're not taking my sexuality seriously. If you don't see this as cheating, then you probably think I'm joking or something." (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

One of the most common stereotypes was bisexual+ women being regarded as the third participant of group sex.

“If we look at it from the perspective of heterosexual people, generally, bisexuals are seen as the ‘third’. That's why they are expected to be feminine and attractive. That's how heterosexuals see it. I mean, I'm talking about group sex. When you enter a dating app, heterosexuals immediately suggest group sex. That's why being feminine and attractive is expected. Being with men more is expected by heterosexuals.” (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

The expectations from the bisexual+ identity and the body were overly sexualized. Since being attracted to more than one gender, people think of bisexual people to be hitting on whoever comes in front of them. The participants shared many examples of situations where they faced such expectations.

“I think it also comes down to what you do with your body. You know, there's this expectation that all bisexuals are into group sex...There's also this aspect of what is expected from the body associated with that identity. Maybe it's related to that desire not being confined to one side, as I mentioned with monosexism, you're constantly expected to be open to everything. That's also an over-sexualization, I believe. It's a very masculine thing, regardless of who's doing the looking. It's a masculine gaze that says, ‘Oh, you're always up for anything with anyone’ ... I find this expectation, this demand, absurd.” (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

“Some men perceive it as a fetish. And they try to exploit it a lot. Like, ‘Oh, then kiss each other, you're both girls,’ and so on. I said, ‘What does that have to do with anything? I told my close friend group in the 9th grade. Some girls were like, ‘Oh, are you hitting on me?’ I said, ‘What's the relevance?’ (laughs). Just like every straight person doesn't hit on every person of the opposite sex. Even if I wanted to, I wouldn't feel any attraction to a girl I knew was straight. It's the same logic as not feeling attracted to a gay guy. But they really don't understand these things.” (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

3.2.2. Ideal Bisexual+ Body and Appearance

The second sub-theme of “Ideal Bisexual Body and Appearance” explores the expectations regarding appearance and behavior placed on bisexual+ women, addressing the sense of not fitting into the queer identity adequately. Whereas traditional feminine ideals dictate bisexual+ women to conform socially acceptable beauty norms, queer culture tries to expand the boundaries of heteronormative body ideals, therefore creating a fresh set of norms that leave participants feeling caught in the middle of both cultural expectations. Consequently, some participants shared experiencing a sense of being in between and not fitting in.

“Sometimes I feel like I'm not queer enough. I felt like there was a part of it, you know. The more you're outside what's socially acceptable, the more “queer” you are. The more you try to push the boundaries of what's socially acceptable – because, in a way, we're all trying to push those boundaries – we're not really fitting into them, but I embrace some of them. I'm happy with some of the social norms. But it's like the image of a bisexual woman in my head feels a bit outside those social standards and that socially accepted image of a woman. It feels like an image, you know. And I think many people feel this way too. So, there's kind of a little norm there, I think.” (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

As growing up by internalizing feminine ideals, some participants shared that discovering their bisexual identities and engaging with queer culture and feminism led to conflicted relationships with their bodies. They explained that whereas feminism and queer culture criticizes socially established feminine ideals and aim to challenge those ideals, the transformation of internalized norms on an individual level was difficult. Therefore, having a critical stance toward societal expectations created internal conflicts that some participants felt alone to cope with. For instance, experiencing body dissatisfaction was seen as conforming to the norms that feminists intended to challenge, and therefore, it was hard to express negative feelings toward the body for some participants.

“It's (feelings about the body) not something we talk about much, it's kind of taboo, even discussing body image, you know, we can't talk about it much even with our friends because, as I said, feminist friends just jump in, ‘No, why are you saying

that? You must love yourself, embrace your body, ' and so on. You feel embarrassed and ashamed, and you can't talk about it. Plus, the other non-feminist people just say disgusting things like 'lose weight,' and stuff, so you can't talk to them either. That's why I didn't have anyone to talk to. So, I'm really glad we could talk about this today. I'm very pleased. It was a great opportunity for me to be able to discuss this topic with you. Because, as I said, otherwise it's difficult. My feminist friends get angry, and I don't talk to the others who aren't feminists anyway.” (Deniz, 25, cisgender woman)

Similarly, some of the participants shared their observations regarding the expectation from bisexual+ women to be at peace with their bodies or to be against standardized feminine ideals. Thus, they reported experiencing a different sense of pressure to challenge bodily norms and feel happy about their bodies.

“In some bisexual women, I see this anger toward the standard in my experience. This time, it's like anger toward being forced into a mold or the aggression that comes with seeing that mold, resulting in sometimes reacting to women who shave their legs or who walk around completely hairless. It's like it's done for male approval, and it's seen as a weakness because she chose it. Similarly, we talked about a lot of things like excessive makeup, and aesthetics, and there can be judgment at the other end of the spectrum, a reaction to moving away from naturalness. It's a bit controversial. There seems to be a perception of a woman who loves her body and is more at peace with her natural appearance. That's what comes to mind for me, but I don't think there's a consensus on this. I can say it's like there's an underlying notion in the ideal image of bisexual women that they should be at peace with their bodies. So, there might be more pressure on women who are not at peace with their bodies, beyond how their bodies look.” (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

Most of the participants stated that there is no ideal body that is peculiar to bisexual+ women and rather bisexual+ women are not isolated from societal norms of the feminine body. For all sexual orientations, the expectations from the feminine body are similar. One of the participants mentioned that this situation may stem

from bisexuality not being recognized as a category on its own, and thus, it may be reflecting the invisibility of bisexual+ identity.

“I don't think there's such a big distinction, you know? I think there's something about that bisexual women category not being very recognized overall, so there's a bit of that, I think. There's not that kind of distinction in people's minds, it seems. The expectation of femininity. Because sexual orientation is not defined. Like, for example, there's this butchness in lesbian women, you know, a more masculine thing. It's not seen as absurd. Like, 'Oh, okay, that's how it is [because she is lesbian], that's why she is butch' You can perceive it that way, it's like a category has been established for them, but again, this is valid for a small community, for those who acknowledge and see it. For bisexual women, I don't know if there's an extra expectation like that. As I said, it could also be related to the fact that the category is not very defined or visible. Lesbians are more visible, it's a bit about the association of masculinity with them, and when there's a style and a way of presenting oneself, it doesn't have to be that way, of course. I'm talking a bit about the stereotypical "butch" lesbian thing. Maybe that masculinity doesn't seem absurd there, but I'm not sure if there's an extra expectation for bisexual women.” (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

Although the norms around the bisexual body were not very different from feminine body norms, most of the participants stated that a bisexual+ woman would not be expected to be too feminine or too masculine, but rather be in the middle.

“So, I feel like there's a bit of a need to be both feminine and masculine and to strike a good balance between the two.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

“Specifically, I think it could be that idea of being in a liminal space, which creates confusion—not being overly feminine or overly masculine but being somewhere in between. The idea of being attracted to both genders, therefore, presenting both masculine and feminine vibes, this attitude could be it.” (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

Moreover, some universal queer women symbols that hint at sexual orientation were discussed. Most of the participants stated that a standardized image of bisexual+ women was globalized through social media. This image was

described as having short nails, a septum, a piercing, a radical haircut, a different color on the part of the hair, and a tattoo. Apart from these, some clothing styles were pointed out by some of the participants, such as velvet pants, and flannel shirts. *"I think there's still a bit of the old media leftover perception of how bisexual women should look, you know, with radical, shorter haircuts or something. Especially lately, with the whole "wolf cut" or "mullet" style, something different (from a straight woman). If a straight woman's hair is like this (shows with her hand, long), then people expect a bisexual woman's hair to be more styled, you know, fancy or something. Or people generally expect it to be dyed, you know, with different colors. (laughs) Like nose rings, either here or here (pointing to the middle and side of the nose). Or sometimes both. Piercings are common, usually. And then... Short nails maybe. Clothing-wise, people probably expect a bit more, but that's not realistic because people always have this perception, you know, lesbians wear more masculine butch clothes, but there are plenty of feminine lesbians too. So, it's just the media perception, really, with bisexuals being like that. Plaid shirts, you know, open-front shirts. Lumberjack shirts, something like that. Lumberjack shirts or something, a bit more tomboyish and stuff, those perceptions exist, but how true are they? Not very, I think. (laughs)" (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)*

"Yeah, there's a type that comes to my mind, it's very familiar. Brown hair, but here, there's a pink strand (points to the front strand of hair). Wearing round glasses. Velvet pants. Wearing a short-sleeved white shirt or something like that. Wearing a denim jacket and stuff." (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

"Dyeing your hair is seen as a typical thing for bisexual girls. Having a septum piercing or eyebrow piercing is seen as a typical thing for bisexual girls... These things, like nails, piercings, tattoos, tattoos too." (Deniz, 25, cisgender woman)

The standardization of bisexual+ women's appearance was a contradictory subject. While some participants expressed their feelings of not being queer enough due to the representation of this ideal look, some of the participants mentioned the potential functions of this look, such as recognizing other bisexual+ or queer women through their appearance cues and feeling safer to approach them.

“When I was in Türkiye, I used to look at visual things. I mean, I sometimes felt more comfortable talking to people who looked more "gay," in quotation marks. Or sometimes... I don't know, I used to say that I was comfortable, but I always looked at how the other person reacted, after all. So, I might have found it a bit easier to approach people who fit into this stereotype...It gave off an impression that I might be judged less. If you have such an ideal appearance. Or if you can catch those visual clues, you know. If you catch a little bit of those visual clues of the ideal bisexual woman (laughs), it's like I felt more like, ‘Oh, maybe I can talk to this person, maybe they understand me.’” (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

Additionally, establishing new norms of queer appearance may reflect the need for self-expression, according to one participant, since clothes and appearances are mediums for expressing their identities. In addition, as another participant mentioned, standardized appearance paved the way for realizing other queer people, who may be potential partners for them.

“I think people want to be noticed a bit. They want to be seen as they are, you know, they're not part of this heteronormative thing. They want to express that they're a bit different, that they're bisexual, and that's why I think they do something, and there's definitely a common image, you know, definitely. (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

“It could be related to acceptance (bisexual women having similar appearances), like why do heterosexuals dress and look so alike, for example. ... They might also be creating their own acceptance, their own normal, their own norms...They probably try to settle in a certain way in society as well... It's not like heterosexual people who can just say, ‘Oh, I like that girl in my class, let me go ask her out or write her a message,’ it could also be at a point like, ‘Hey, I'm bisexual or lesbian, if you are too, let's meet’ or something. That must have an effect too.” (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

Furthermore, some of the participants shared their ideas regarding the consequences of not conforming to the standardized bisexual women's appearance. Such consequences included being mislabeled as being heterosexual or their sexual orientations being invalidated and questioned.

“There's not much of an expectation for either extreme masculinity or super femininity, I think...They might be constantly mislabeled (if they do not conform to the ideal bisexual appearance). Or it's a bit like this, I guess. You know, like men not being able to understand when a very femme woman is with another woman.” (Aslı, 28, cisgender woman)

“If a woman is very conformist to societal norms, then probably that's what's discussed, you know. Like, they might ask if she's really trying (to be bisexual) or not, whether she actually likes women or not, things like that. It's talked about, you know.” (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

According to one participant, the societal gender norms are reproduced in the LGBTQ+ community as being feminine is associated with being passive as a sexual preference, while having a masculine appearance is associated with being in an active role in sex.

“For example, there's this idea that a top (in an active role in sex) woman should be more masculine, while a bottom (passive role in sex) woman should be more feminine. Like, this is the ideal, not body, but image, I'd say. Not necessarily tall, not necessarily thin, but there's this attempt to categorize people into feminine and masculine. Some people expect a top lesbian to be a bit more masculine, maybe someone who dresses more masculine, has short hair, maybe tattoos, etc. They expect a bottom (passive) to be a bit more feminine, cute, and sweet. But I think this is very wrong. Because there are masculine bottoms (passive role in sex) and feminine tops (active role in sex). People don't always have to reflect their sexual preferences in their appearance. This perception of masculinity as control and femininity as submissive is completely wrong, it comes entirely from the idea of male dominance and female submission, which I am strongly against. It's very diverse, it can vary a lot. Trying to fit it into a mold is contrary to humanity... When we're trying to break down the traditional gender roles, we're still falling back into the top-bottom, masculine-feminine, dominant-submissive dichotomy.” (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

There are conflicting ideas regarding the ideal bisexual+ women's body. Some of the participants mentioned conforming to the feminine norms that appeal

to the male gaze was more acceptable for bisexual women, even within the LGBTQI+ community. These participants explained the existence of the pretty privilege and stated that what is considered pretty is feminine. On the other hand, many participants shared their ideas that hyper-feminine appearance was not appreciated by the LGBTQI+ community.

“There is discrimination against bisexual women who are very feminine, in my opinion, [within the LGBTQI+ community].” (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

“It feels like you have to be in the middle, like you can't do that thing where you dress up overly feminine or let's not say overly feminine, that stereotypically sexy, beautiful dressing style. It feels like if you do that, it would be seen as odd. It's like you have to be in between there [within the LGBTQI+ community] as well, or you have to do something completely opposite to your gender identity. There seem to be categorical things there too. But in a way, it doesn't seem like a discussion topic. At that moment, it melts away, and it feels accepted in a way.” (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

Furthermore, social media not only represented the stereotypical bisexual appearance. One participant mentioned that other features including a typical bisexual woman's dating experiences were also represented in media in a standardized way, as if there is only one way of being a bisexual woman.

“When I think about things like TikTok, Instagram, and so on, it feels like they're still somewhat rooted in stereotypes to me. I don't really think there's much diverse representation, to be honest. I don't come across much bisexual content, for example, on TikTok. Again, it feels like it's coming from that stereotypical place... so it's like I'm seeing all these different versions of the same ideal image I mentioned earlier. And it's like, ‘In a relationship, you do this, you do that.’ How can I say it? Like, it's not relatable for me at all. There's this constant content about going on a date with a woman and the date lasting for hours, spending a few days together, and then becoming girlfriends. It's come up so much that I'm like, ‘That has not been my experience’ (says in a sad tone). Then again, it's like, ‘Am I not bisexual? Am I just pretending to be something?’ and so on. It feels like I'm being pushed into these thoughts...There's a lot of talk about being squeezed into this typical,

compressed experience. And honestly, the experiences of the bisexual women around me, including mine, are quite different from that. But I'm like, 'We exist too, you know.' There's no one way to be bisexual." (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

3.2.3. Discrimination and Harassment

The third subtheme explores participants' experiences of discrimination and harassment. Türkiye is a heterosexist society where experiences of discrimination and prejudice are daily realities of sexual minorities. Therefore, one of the most frequently mentioned issues that came up in relation to the participants' experiences with having a bisexual+ body was street harassment and discrimination. Most of the participants stated that being bisexual+ in Türkiye is as hard as being any LGBTQI+ person. The central government's hostility toward the LGBTQI+ community made life harder for LGBTQI+ people every day.

"It's getting harder, obviously. Being targeted, becoming the center of political discourse...A big target you're, you know. It has become a vulnerable aspect of politics, as the community. ... The issue doesn't just end in discrimination. It extends to violence. Again, it varies depending on where you are and whether there's a support system or not. Many people with the means are migrating, at least the middle class, those who have the means, the language, who have that capital. I don't really know what the experience of lower-class queerness is like.... My friends there, my friends who have much more intimate connections there, say there's a terrible drug addiction problem. I get that. Of course. Because there's no prospect. There's no future. Well, that's true for most people, not just related to queerness. It's the poverty we experience. But there's another layer there. Of course, not having that space is crucial to your life." (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

Another participant also mentioned the LGBTQI+ hostility of the government. However, she also highlighted the invisibility of bisexual+ people even in hate speech.

"So, you're in an environment where everywhere is a battleground. It's not just about the AKP government, of course. But with the LGBTI+ hostility that the AKP government has turned into a central government policy, it has certainly become

more severe. And also, I think there's a part of it, but this is a very subjective opinion. I'm not saying this as something politically grounded, but I feel like there has always been invisibility, and especially lately, invisibility has become more prominent. I feel like nobody talks about bisexual+ people when they talk about LGBT+ people. So, it feels like everywhere is a battleground.” (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

“I really struggled for a long time. Because you feel different at some point, and most people don't accept that. For example, especially when we think about our own community, they constantly look at it as if it were a terrorist organization. Our President comes out and suddenly targets it. Like on Twitter... They start seeing it like FETÖ or something.” (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

The widespread hatred towards LGBTQI+ people was also reflected in the street harassment some of the participants experienced. Moreover, participants shared feeling afraid, worried, and unsafe when they are intimate with their women partners on the streets. One participant also shared being harassed due to her makeup that was considered weird by some guy and he saw no harm in commenting on it.

“In Türkiye, someone spat in my face just because I was walking hand in hand with a girl on the street... Having a girlfriend in Türkiye means both worrying for yourself and your girlfriend's safety.” (Deniz, 25, cisgender woman)

“I went out for a late-night snack with my friends once, and after having a few drinks, old men said something like ‘Look at those freaks’ or something similar. It was the first time in my life that someone called me a freak. They said, ‘They are Satanists’ or something like that. I don't know what that has to do with anything. After that, when walking on the street, I felt compelled to hold onto my gay friends' arms. Because they were looking at us as if they were going to eat us in Taksim or something. I was scared, they were looking at us that way”. (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

Moreover, participants mentioned that they do not feel safe coming out about their sexual orientation, since they cannot predict the reactions of people, and this makes them afraid.

"Ours is a more masculine job, you know, cooking, it's more of a masculine job, a place where big guys are in charge and where harassment is also rampant, for example, I'm a bit worried about that. My current partner is a woman, and when they ask if you have a partner if you don't say you have a partner, it leaves the door open, you know? It's not pleasant at all. And because I do have a partner, I said I did. Then I started getting these constant questions like, 'What does your boyfriend do?' 'Who is your boyfriend?' and so on. I didn't want to come out about it. It creates pressure, even in the workplace, I think. But I was scared to say it. Will they harass me? Will they start looking at me differently? That fear was there, of course." (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

3.2.4. Stereotypes about Bisexuality and Biphobia

The fourth sub-theme explores the widespread stereotypes about bisexuality together with participants' experiences of biphobia. Participants expressed their encounters with biphobia and shared their experiences of not being taken seriously by others.

"If a man is bisexual, he's gay; if a woman is bisexual, she's just attention-seeking...This is a great summary of biphobia." (Betül, 22, cisgender woman)

"[People think] she's clueless, she's pretending to be bisexual now because guys didn't look at her, she's being desperate, she's hitting on girls." (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

All the participants mentioned numerous stereotypes that are attached to bisexual+ women. One of the common stereotypes participants mentioned was bisexual women being greedy and would be partners with whoever they came across.

"I think the prejudice of being seen as '(for bisexual women to be a partner with someone) sufficient just to breathe' is really painful.... Being seen as a pervert, that's the term for it. Being seen as a pervert is a really terrible thing." (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

Another common stereotype attached to bisexuality was bisexual+ women being indecisive, as bisexuality is seen as a stage after which they would decide

whether they are heterosexual or lesbian. The participants mentioned the pressure of people telling them to “pick a side”. As one of the participants explained, this stereotype stems from the monosexist assumption that people are expected to have one orientation and only be attracted to one gender.

*“I often hear, ‘Bisexuals are untrustworthy. You’re either a lesbian or straight.’”
(Derin, 23, cisgender woman)*

Participants also mentioned that there is a lack of knowledge about bisexuality and that many people are confused about what bisexuality refers to. One of the participants mentioned her husband asking whether she became heterosexual because she was married to a man, assuming sexual orientation was something open to change depending on the gender of the current partner. Another participant mentioned the confusion regarding gender identity and sexual orientation, assuming bisexual women to be a woman and a man at the same time.

“They say, ‘Oh, then you’re both a girl and a boy.’ No, it’s not like that, it’s not this. They directly view it as non-binary. But as I said, it’s not related to that at all. ‘I feel like a woman,’ I said, ‘I feel my femininity.’ I’m aware of what kind of individual I am. I’m aware of my sexual orientation. And I’m aware of my gender.” (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

These pressures on bisexual+ women made them feel as if they needed to prove their sexual orientation both to other people and themselves. The participants mentioned that they felt the need to balance the number of men and women partners to prove themselves that they are bisexual+.

“But that Biphobia is everywhere...they say, ‘Are you straight or gay, make up your mind, you’re neither, pick one.’ Both heterosexuals and LGBTQ+ people do this, I think it’s related to that monosexism they talk about. It’s like they want you to have only one thing, one orientation. Or that constant need to prove your bisexuality, it’s like, even if you’re with a woman, or if you’ve only been with men, be with a woman. I mean, for me, even if I were to marry a man right now, it wouldn’t take away from my identity. But it’s like, it used to be more prevalent, I’ve let go of that now, it’s part of growing up. Like constantly feeling the need to balance between the two. Now it’s like, there were too many men on the scale, I should hang out with women

more. It was like that....But the expectations or the 'oh, so now you're straight?' thing from heterosexual circles is more exhausting, I think." (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

Hearing a lot of stereotypes led participants to question their sexual identity. One of the participants mentioned the internalized stereotypes and questioning her sexual identity.

" 'Oh, are you bisexual? It's just a phase before realizing you're lesbian or heterosexual.' I feel this perspective not only from what I would call phobic or people who are distant from the LGBTQ+ community and don't have queer people around them, but also from others. It's like I'm just experimenting, just trying something out. And at some point, it feels like I'll realize that this isn't the right path for me after all those experiments. This contributes to me feeling invalidated like my experience is being invalidated, as if my experience doesn't matter." (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

3.3. LEARNING TO ACCEPT THE BODY

This theme explores the participants' journeys toward self and body acceptance and making peace with their bodies. This theme details how participants navigate the challenges and pressures of being bisexual+ women and the adverse effects these challenges have on their relationship with their bodies. It sheds light on the positive experiences of participants that helped them to accept their bodies, culminating into three sub-themes, namely, a) acceptance within the LGBTQ+ community, b) social and personal support mechanisms, and c) critical thinking.

3.3.1. Acceptance within the LGBTQ+ Community

The first sub-theme encompasses the role of the LGBTQ+ community in participants' journeys toward self-acceptance and making peace with themselves and their bodies. As participants stated, the LGBTQI+ community had a great influence on their process of accepting, embracing, and making peace with their bodies. One participant explained how her big breasts were mocked at high school, and she felt as if she was carrying a sex object on her body that she felt the need to hide and could not walk straight. Engaging with queer people led her to embrace

her breasts when she observed that her body was accepted by her friends as well, and it was not a source of embarrassment anymore. Moreover, most of the participants mentioned that they were influenced by queer people in the way they related to their bodies.

“They were very supportive in helping me love my body. Truly, the ability to express my body as I want, to make peace with something sexual about my body and confidently carry it, like my breasts, came with a lot of support from the LGBTQ+ community. Along with that came the ability to break out of the standard way of dressing we talked about earlier, to express my body more as I want, and to try more marginal things. It allowed me to find my voice through experimentation. My experience here was not just about the space it opened for me but also about seeing so many people on their own journeys of existence. It inspires you, you know, like ‘Oh, I can try something like that,’ or someone carries their body in such a way that I feel truly inspired and learn a lot from it. It was an experience that triggered my creativity and encouraged me to be curious and engaged with my body.” (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

In general, participants mentioned the LGBTQ+ community as being accepting towards diversities, and different self-expressions. The LGBTQI+ community had a great role in many participants’ processes of valuing their bodies, feeling much safer and more accepted within queer circles. They expressed feeling that their bodies belong to themselves and that they would not be judged based on their appearances.

“I learned that I can be whatever I want. I learned that my body belongs to me. So, if I want to reveal a part of myself, I do it, or if I want to cover it up, I do that too. (laughs) I learned that. I feel better, more valuable, you know? How can I say it? In the LGBTQ+ community, for example, how you appear at a queer party doesn't matter. It's about who you are there. Really. What are you performing? How do you look, for example, there are very bohemian people, very gothic people, and so on. And they're all mixed together there.” (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

Moreover, some participants mentioned that witnessing the way queer people form relationships with their own bodies was inspiring for them and highly

influenced their perceptions and feelings regarding their own bodies and helped them embrace their bodies.

“I think at least in the queer community ... especially in drag shows, ... seeing the relationship they establish with their bodies, it always feels positive to me. In fact, I'm confronting my own phobias, and I enjoy them making me do that. Displaying bodies that could be seen as abject, very outside the norm, overweight bodies, hairy bodies, and so on, and even confronting my own phobias, made me really happy at that moment. ... Okay, being comfortable with who you are, and finding that sexiness within, because they're very sexy, you know. Seeing them create artistic things with their bodies, it really has an impact on me, like ‘wow.’ (laughs) In that sense, I mean, as I said, seeing how they use overweight bodies, hairy bodies, even disabled bodies, and so on, how they turn them into art, how they accept them, honestly makes me feel something. It makes me feel good in my process of making peace with my own body.” (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

“I learned a lot from my masculine lesbian sisters. They love themselves so much, they have fully accepted being masculine, and I really like that. I learned that being masculine is normal from TikTok, you know.” (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

3.3.2. Social and Personal Coping Mechanisms

The second sub-theme explains the role of participants' experiences with their partners and friends in managing body dissatisfaction and shame. Participants indicated they learned to accept and value their bodies through their social interactions. Moreover, this theme also sheds light on the importance of feeling not alone and being in touch with even unfamiliar people through social media had significance in making peace with their bodies. Lastly, this theme elaborates on the coping mechanisms participants developed to regulate their negative emotions toward their bodies. As indicated by participants, their interactions with their partners significantly impacted accepting their bodies. Some participants mentioned the positive impact of partners' compliments regarding the body. Feelings of being desired, found beautiful, and sexy were also mentioned. Additionally, some

participants stated feeling loved not based on appearance or beauty but the person they are was healing for them and made them feel at peace with their bodies.

“If it wasn’t for him (her partner), I probably wouldn’t think so positively about my body because having someone who likes you and appreciates you in every way is just wonderful. (laughs) He always says, ‘You’re beautiful even if you show up in a pajama and with a mustache.’ Or if you’re perfectly groomed, he still says ‘You’re beautiful’. He says, ‘You’re not beautiful because of the dress you wear or the grooming you do, I find you beautiful just the way you are.’ So, his complete acceptance of me in every aspect has healed me a lot, in many ways.” (İlayda, 19, cisgender woman)

Some of the participants mentioned that looking at their bodies naked was not a very comfortable experience. Many participants mentioned that they did not like seeing themselves in the mirror wearing bikinis or completely naked. Some of them said that they wanted to cover up their bodies after getting out of the sea as soon as possible. Participants also suggested that they learned to accept their bodies just as it is from their positive interactions with their partners. By feeling comfortable being naked around their partners, they eventually felt comfortable with the naked appearance of their bodies.

“I learned to accept my body more as just my own body (from my partners). It’s actually quite strange to learn that about yourself from others. But, you know... it really helped me... So, from different people, I learned to fully accept my body just as it is. Because, you know, I never wanted to sit down and look at myself completely naked. I didn’t want to look. I didn’t want to see it. Okay, I could look with clothes on and stuff, but that whole thing made me uncomfortable. Why would I suddenly want to look at myself completely naked, I didn’t want to. (laughs) Until a few years ago, at least. Now, I’m more comfortable (laughs) definitely... Maybe because of those people, I’ve made a little more peace with myself.” (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

One participant mentioned the positive impact of attending a nudist dance workshop, where she was with many different women with many different bodies. In contrast to constant exposure to idealized body images through social media,

seeing other women naked with different shapes and sizes was mentioned as an empowering experience.

“Seeing other women's bodies naked, not the perfectionist female bodies we see on social media, but a lot of women's bodies with all their rawness, all their postures, has been very supportive for me. Being with them once in an environment where I could exist naked anyway, afterward, the doubt of ‘what did I wear, how did I stand?’ completely disappeared. That also had a very positive effect on my dancing, my attitude, and my presentation of my body”. (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

Sexual experiences with women were also mentioned by some participants as having an important role in their journeys through making peace with their bodies.

“Because the roles assigned to women are the same when I'm with a woman, I'm sure she has been through this journey too. But the journey in masculinity is different. Maybe they come with different anxieties. But you start with the certainty that a man has never experienced the fear of not having his hair left (leaving some body hair), while you're sure that any woman has experienced it at least once. So that also gives you a different kind of comfort. It's like I don't have to be perfect next to a woman, and I can be accepted as I am. But with a man, it's like a journey that seems to require more perfectionism.” (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

Most of the participants mentioned that their interactions with their friends had a great impact on their self and body acceptance journeys. They said that, instead of judging or criticizing each other's bodies, most of the participants shared talking positively, and thus, embracing their bodies. As they observed that their bodies together with their personalities were accepted by their friends, they also learned to value and embrace their own bodies. They shared that they learned to feel as beautiful and valuable as they are from their friends.

“When I came to university, I learned that (from her friends) I need to love myself. I learned that I am valuable. So, whether I am overweight or skinny, I learned that I can be beautiful.” (Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

“We often have moments where we share everything with our friends and try to heal each other, so I'm lucky in that sense. I have a more conscious and loving

circle. But I think we always talked about the weight issue in a positive light.”
(Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

Furthermore, some participants mentioned the way their friends formed relationships with their bodies was inspiring for them, and through these observations, they learned different ways to form relationships with their own bodies.

“I realized with these people that my weight didn't create any status for me. I mean, it didn't make me any less ugly or anything. We had a quite overweight friend, for example. She's not around anymore, she moved out of town. I say this comfortably because she used to describe herself as a fat woman. And we adored her, you know. Both men and women considered her the most attractive person among us because she was so well-rounded, so beautiful, so knowledgeable, and so on. So, I understood from that probably this could also be valued, beautiful, and attractive.”
(Derin, 23, cisgender woman)

As most of the participants mentioned, body image experiences were mostly experienced in isolation, and they were intrinsically related to feelings of inadequacy and insecurities. Therefore, sharing experiences and feeling not alone had immense importance in coping with negative emotions that resulted from pressure on women's bodies. Thus, whether through social media or friend groups, sharing these emotions was very important for women to not feel alone.

“At this age, you know, maybe because of the people I choose to follow and engage with, I see and learn a lot of beautiful things...I realized that the things I've been trying to hide, see as flaws, dislike, or feel disgusted about are not actually flaws but very natural things and that everyone's body is like that.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

Most of the participants mentioned that their friends never judge them as they judge themselves. While they expressed being very critical of themselves and their bodies, they stated that they would never criticize or judge anyone else's body as they judged their own. Some participants shared that it is not easy to change the inner voices criticizing their bodies that they learned from their families and society in general until this age. However, their interactions with their friends had a very

important role in seeing their bodies in different ways and not criticizing as harshly as they did before.

“I learned from my friends that I definitely need to treat myself better. (laughs) Because, you know, especially when I was in high school, I was incredibly critical of myself. I would say things like, ‘I look bad like this, I look bad like that, my legs are too thick, my stomach is sticking out,’ you know, things like that. Of course, my friends never say anything bad like that about me. (laughs) So, because they approached me with a kinder and sweeter tone, I saw myself differently through their eyes than through my own.” (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

“I learned that people don’t judge my body as harshly as I did myself. I learned that there isn’t one way to relate to my body. I learned that there are many ways to relate to your body, in different ways and with different methods, and that there are many ways to change how you view your body. I learned that if you want to make a change in your body, it’s not the world’s biggest sin, you can do it, if you’re very uncomfortable, you can change it, and there’s no harm in accepting that.” (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

Additionally, participants mentioned that they found and internalized many different coping strategies to regulate their negative emotions as they grew up. As they experienced adverse feelings about their bodies for a long time and were under the pressure of body and appearance norms, they learned strategies to manage their feelings of body dissatisfaction. While some participants mentioned they preferred denying their negative emotions about their bodies, some participants mentioned many different coping strategies such as doing breathing exercises, writing a poem, and dancing.

“I write a lot. It could be anything—poetry, creative writing, or something like a journal. Just to let my emotions out, to let my thoughts out. Sometimes I write, and sometimes I don’t even have the energy for that. I just stare at the ceiling, listen to music, and zone out.” (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

“Dancing always makes me feel good. I try to dance whenever I can. I swim, for instance. I love swimming. It’s one of my favorite sports. It’s more holistic, you

know. You're not just working out one muscle, you're swimming full body.” (Gizem, 28, cisgender woman)

“I do breathing exercises, meditation, going for walks, or doing some sports to release tension from my body.” (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

“Lately, I've learned about self-care. Doing things that make me feel good, like doing a facial mask, washing my face, talking to my close friends, and taking notes for therapy. Sometimes, I do this thing where I record myself talking. I don't just do it when I feel bad about my body, but I did it last time when I felt bad about my body. (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

3.3.3. Critical Thinking

The final sub-theme elucidates participants’ critical perspectives on the objectifying male gaze, as well as the control and discipline imposed on women's bodies and existence. For example, one participant mentioned her realizing that feminine body ideals are all European standards.

“It starts with educating myself and of course, studying sociology in Türkiye. It starts with educating myself about racism, colonization, and so on. Like what? I didn't like my nose, I didn't like my hair, I didn't like being short but having a big butt and a slim waist, I would say ‘No, I should be tall and, you know, not like this.’ Then as I read more about racism, exploitation, and colonization, I said, ‘Our entire beauty standards are actually based on European standards,’ and at first, I felt like when I was 18, or 19, I said, ‘Huh, not liking my nose, my hair, being brown-skinned, it's pretty racist.’ Of course, my mom and dad, they're Anatolian, right? I would of course resemble them. Being 1.80 meters tall wouldn't be possible....Accepting myself, being okay with where I come from, accepting myself with this phenotype.” (Deniz, 25, cisgender woman)

Moreover, all of the participants were engaged in feminist circles which had a great impact on them both not to feel alone and develop a critical standing toward the norms of society.

“I think the queer and feminist movements definitely had a big impact. Because, you know, my surroundings, the workshops I attend, the lectures I listen to, the

books I read, they're all actually a part of it. Yeah, I think the success of these two movements made me less preoccupied with my appearance and accept and love my body.” (Deniz, 25, cisgender woman)

Lastly, growing up, many women stated that the visual features lost importance for them, as they developed a critical perspective on body ideals. Rather, they learned the value of strength, well-being, health, and functions of their bodies, and these values gained prominence. One participant mentioned she used to perceive her body from an outsider’s perspective. However, over time, she was able to develop an insider perspective towards her body. She realized that if she did not quit perceiving her body from an outsider’s perspective, she would always need approval from other people regarding acceptance of her body. Through time, with the help of therapy and personal growth, she developed a critical stance toward the outsider perspective.

“My relationship with my body has definitely changed. I used to feel like I saw my body from the outside all the time. It’s like I was trying to see my body the way others see it, or I felt like I was seeing it that way. Now, I feel like I’ve started to see it more as my own space, something that belongs to me. There has been a change, I can say that. But as I mentioned, the body is a complex thing, closely tied to one’s sense of self and identity. So, I can’t really say how much progress I’ve made or how much healing has occurred in my relationship with my body, but I’m sure it has changed somewhat.... If I continued to look at it from the outside, it wasn’t going to end up good for me. I wouldn’t have been able to accept myself in any way. And I would have constantly tried to present my body for someone else’s approval. I think it happened a little when I started to notice those aggressions (experiences of being bullied) and realized how much harder life was for me when I took them seriously. And it also happened when I realized in therapy that being so dependent on external validation wasn’t a sustainable solution.” (Asya, 28, cisgender woman)

Another participant stated that her relationship with her body changed over the years. Feeling strong and energetic gained importance. One of the most

important factors in this change was developing a critical stance towards the objectifying male gaze, and the reduced impact of the male gaze.

“If I’m healthy and my body is like ‘oh, my arm can lift things, can hold things, how nice,’ you know, then nothing else really matters.... Even if we’re not satisfied with something about our bodies, it’s just about wanting to be stronger, more energetic, you know? It’s like we want those things. Other than that, visual things don’t matter anymore, they’re not in the foreground, and they don’t have any importance.... Once, I don’t feel the need to appeal to the male gaze anymore, and I think many women are slowly starting to feel this and break free from it. Overall, there’s a growing societal awareness of this issue, as well as many other issues. The social structure is changing, and I think we’re benefiting from it. Perhaps children, the ones growing up now, might be seeing it from childhood, or maybe not, I’m not entirely sure. But for us, I think even at this age, there has been a change, allowing me to have a more positive relationship with my body. I think this is generally about breaking down those perceptions. However, since it’s deeply ingrained, it can never be fully broken, I believe. But at least, it’s less of a concern now, and I notice that topics like extreme weight loss are no longer as prevalent. I haven’t been on a diet for like 3 or 4 years now, which I think is really good because, before that, I was always on some kind of diet, always watching what I ate. Now, for a while, I just eat whatever I want without thinking about it, and I think that’s a really good thing...It doesn’t feel guilty at all (due to eating). It’s enjoyable, I never deprive myself of the food I want to eat.” (Nehir, 26, cisgender woman)

Another participant stated that she experienced adverse life events in her life in which she felt a loss of control. For her, her body’s capabilities, what her body was able to do, and lift were empowering in the sense that she felt in control of her body.

“I enjoy going to the gym with my friends, for example, to lift weights. Because it’s like, we kind of compete with each other. I can lift as much as they do. They’ve been doing it for years and when I can compete with them, it reminds me that I’m strong...Last year, I used to go kickboxing all the time. That really made me happy. And I go to this thing. I always go to a women-only studio. So, the trainers and all,

they're super sweet and they always talk positively. 'You hit really well,' 'You did this and that,' they always say positive things. That really made me feel good. I'm a bit of a person who easily gets annoyed, so it helps. Punches, things like that. It was good for my personal emotional regulation." (Esra, 23, cisgender woman)

Lastly, one participant mentioned she used to live without being mindful of her body and as if she was dissociated from her body. According to her, she could not respond to her body's needs enough. Over time, she learned to listen to her body and respond to her bodily needs. She also started to do exercises not for appearance purposes but rather for her well-being.

"At first, when I was exercising, I was doing it for that (appearance) purpose too. To get fitter, you know, to lift my leg like this, raise it like that. When I started exercising for the sake of feeling good about my body, the quality between those two things changed a lot." (Sibel, 26, cisgender woman)

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study explored the body image experiences and the psychosocial factors contributing to body image development among ten bisexual+ women in Türkiye. Based on the data gathered from semi-structured interviews, three primary themes emerged from the analysis. These themes were: 1) The Pressures on the Feminine Body, 2) Pressures on the Bisexual+ Identity and Body, and 3) Learning to Accept the Body. These three themes summarize the participants' feelings, thoughts, and perceptions regarding their bodies in a patriarchal and heterosexist society, where women's bodies, especially sexual minority women's bodies, are objectified to a great extent.

The first main theme, "The Pressures of the Feminine Body", addressed the pressures, criticisms, and judgments participants experienced to conform to the standardized beauty and body ideals for women. The ideal feminine body norms were imposed upon the participants by people close to them, including their families, friends, and partners. These widespread norms were also heavily imposed through traditional and social media, and society at large. Participants shared the adverse outcomes and negative feelings about their bodies, such as being ashamed of and dissatisfied with their bodies as a consequence of these pressures coming from different sources. The four subthemes elaborated on the different pressures bisexual+ women experience, named as "The Pressure to be Thin," "The Pressure of Feminine Appearance," "The Pressure of Feminine Behavior," and "The Pressure of Constant Scrutiny." The topics covered in this theme focused on societal body norms that are especially centered around thinness and attractiveness and the challenges women experienced. Furthermore, together with appearance norms, there were also feminine behavior norms that were imposed on women. This theme also captured the women's experiences with their bodies in the face of constant regulation and control by society. Women shared feelings as if their bodies did not belong to themselves but to society as a result of persistent surveillance.

The second main theme, "Pressures on the Bisexual+ Identity and Body", focused on the pressures bisexual+ women experience in relation to their gender

identity and sexual orientation. The four subthemes were “Objectification and Fetishization,” “Ideal Bisexual+ Body and Appearance,” “Discrimination and Harassment,” and “Stereotypes about Bisexuality and Biphobia.” This theme mainly discussed pressures participants experienced that are unique for having a bisexual+ identity and body, and the impact of these pressures on their relationships with their bodies. The last theme, “Learning to Accept the Body”, revolved around women’s journeys toward self and body acceptance and making peace with their bodies. The role of different factors was identified that helped women to cope with stressors associated with being bisexual+ women and their body acceptance experiences. These factors were explained in three sub-themes, named as “Acceptance within the LGBTQ+ Community,” “Social and Personal Support Mechanisms,” and “Critical Thinking”.

The following section explores three themes in connection with the existing literature on body image. Subsequently, clinical implications are derived from previous research and the findings of the current study. Thirdly, the limitations of the present study are addressed. Finally, recommendations for future research are provided.

4.1. DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

4.1.1. The Pressures on the Feminine Body

The first sub-theme explored the participants’ experiences in the face of pressures to be thin. As discussed in the literature review, there are two opposing ideas regarding the level at which sexual minority women are affected by culturally established norms of thinness. While Brown (1987) argued that sexual minority women are protected from the pressures of thinness since they reject heterosexist ideals, Dworkin (1988) suggested that sexual minority women are not exempt from cultural ideals of thinness and heteronormative femininity, as they are raised and socialized within this cultural setting (Huxley et al., 2013). The findings of this study supported Dworkin’s observations since all participants shared their concerns regarding their body weight and shape, and thus, experienced body dissatisfaction due to their weight. Most of them stated they are much more at peace with their

bodies compared to the early years of their lives, even so, they would like to lose weight.

There are various sources of the sociocultural pressure to be thin, including explicit and implicit messages conveyed through the media, and significant others such as parents and peers (Thompson et al., 1999). The combined influence of these sources has been suggested to be a more powerful predictor of body weight and shape concerns than any individual factor alone (Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009). In a supporting vein, all participants mentioned that they experienced pressure to be thin starting from an early age, within the family context, and this pressure continued throughout their lives, with the pressures coming from different sources, as suggested by the sociocultural model of body image (Tiggemann, 2011). Most participants stated that their parents did not want them to be overweight, commented on their weights, and controlled the food they ate starting from an early age. Levine, Smolak, and Hayden (1994) proposed that pressure to be thin that is directly coming from parents is correlated with weight concerns and food restriction. Such direct ways include parents making comments on body weight, as was evident in the present study. One participant shared her being ashamed of her body at home since her parents were commenting on her weight and intervening with the food she ate. Another participant shared she was uncomfortable wearing a bikini when her parents were around since they were commenting on her weight gain.

In addition to direct influences of commenting on weight or controlling the food, parents also indirectly influence their children's body image development. Such indirect ways encompass parental dieting or expressing dissatisfaction with their weight and body (Abraczinskas et al., 2012). Most of the participants stated that their mothers were dissatisfied with their bodies and weight. As one participant mentioned, she did not remember a period in which her mother was not on a diet. Another participant mentioned that her father was involved with the food she ate, saying that if she continued eating this way, she would be fat like him. The findings of this research support both the direct and indirect influence of parents on body

image development, showing that pressure to be thin coming from parents has a role in participants' desire for thinness.

Although some of the participants mentioned their father's comments and influences on their body image development, the influence of their mother seemed to be more prominent. According to the participants, their mothers were more involved with their weight and eating behaviors compared to their fathers. Whereas most of the participants did not mention any significant influence of their fathers on their body-related feelings, all participants shared maternal influences on their perceptions and feelings regarding their bodies. Abraczinskas (2012) suggests that, in the development of body image ideals and perceptions in girls, mothers have the most significant influence since body image concerns affect women more than men (Kluck, 2010). In addition, mothers are the main role models in the development of body image for girls (Bäck, 2011). Jones and Young (2021) found that daughters' experiencing body dissatisfaction and desire to lose weight are associated with their mothers' engaging in discussions about weight and performing behaviors to lose weight. The current research contributes to the existing literature highlighting maternal influences on their daughter's body dissatisfaction. Furthermore, some participants who have brothers mentioned dissimilar parental pressures regarding their body weights. One participant stated while her mother wanted her brother to gain weight, she wanted her daughter to lose weight. In line with this, research results reveal that compared to boys, girls were found to report experiencing more criticism from their mothers and engaging in more weight-loss-related talking with their mothers (Baker et al., 2000; Vincent & McCabe, 2000). This indicates the gendered impact of parental attitudes and communication on body image, particularly on thinness for girls.

Most of the participants could not recall many memories from their childhood regarding their body image experiences. Most of them stated they were at peace with their bodies as a child, and body image was not a major issue for them. However, it is important to mention that most of the participants were thin as children. On the other hand, some participants mentioned being overweight as a child and not being satisfied with their bodies. One participant mentioned being

bullied at school due to her weight, and at times, she did not want to go to school because she felt ashamed of her body. Previous research findings suggest that the desire for thinness is likely to begin around the age of six, and body image-related concerns are not irrelevant for young girls (Ambrosi-Randic, 2000; Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006). The findings of this study also revealed that even young girls are not exempt from being dissatisfied with their body weights.

Moreover, adolescence appeared to be a challenging time for all participants concerning their body image experiences with increasing changes in body shape and size. Adolescents are highly susceptible to societal pressures to conform to the thin ideal. These societal pressures create a disparity between reality and unrealistic body standards, which in turn, contributes to feelings of body dissatisfaction (Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009). Appearance-related bullying is very prevalent among both children and adolescents (Burke et al., 2012). All the participants mentioned they were bullied about their appearances in many ways, and one of the most prominent bullied features was their weight. Results of a correlational study suggest a significant relationship between teasing about weight and disordered eating among adolescents (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2002). Weight-related teasing was found to be associated with binge eating behavior among overweight girls, and thus, further increasing the risk of gaining weight (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2002). Parallel to this research finding, participants also mentioned at times engaging in binge eating behaviors, when they struggled to cope with weight-related negative emotions, and when they were bullied about their body sizes. Furthermore, body dissatisfaction significantly predicts weight control behaviors (Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009). Like these research findings, some participants shared engaging in weight control practices as adolescents. One participant mentioned that she was preoccupied with her weight, calculated calories of each nutrition every day, and refrained from consuming high-calorie nutrition. She did not let herself eat intuitively but restricted high-calorie intake for years. She and several other participants revealed that although they were thin, they did not feel thin enough and wanted to lose more weight. Many research findings indicate that the feeling of not

feeling thin enough is prevalent among women (Grogan, 2008; Piran & Cormier, 2005).

All participants mentioned the negative influence of media on their body image experiences, stating that they should hate their bodies if they take media seriously. Some participants stated that there are no media representations of overweight and even slightly overweight women in traditional media, and if they are represented, they are lynched and mocked harshly. Grabe, Ward, and Hyde (2008) also mention the discrepancy between thin and overweight women's representation in media, suggesting that while thin women are overly represented, overweight women are underrepresented in traditional media such as in TV series. Furthermore, over time, even thinner women began to be represented, especially in media that targeted young women and adolescents (Grabe et al., 2008). Similarly, there is no overweight women representation on social media, according to the participants. Among social media platforms, image-based social media is much more popular compared to other platforms having text-based or other content (Griffiths et al., 2018). Social media is easily accessible through smartphones and image-centric applications are highly popular, and this leads to increasing exposure to idealized thinness over time (Griffiths et al., 2018). Most of the participants mentioned using Instagram and TikTok, which are photo and video-based applications. Some of the participants mentioned Instagram being "toxic" about bodies since there were mainly ideal feminine body representations and people deviating from the norm are highly criticized and mocked about their bodies. A study finding suggests that Instagram usage predicts feelings of body dissatisfaction and intensifies attending to own's appearance (Baker et al., 2019; Hendrickse et al., 2017). Furthermore, a study finding mentioned that participants did not consider the "body positivity" movement on Instagram as beneficial because they suggested that the photos are not realistic and not relatable to their experiences since most of the photos are edited (Baker et al., 2019). In the current study, one participant also tapped into this issue and suggested that the body positivity movement on Instagram is not reliable for her, since photos of an overweight woman are perfect somehow,

like she has flawless skin and is beautiful. However, some of the participants found body positivity movement helpful for them.

The results of the current study were very similar to those of previous research on body image regarding the idealization and pressure of thinness. Making weight-related comments, weight comparisons were found to be very prevalent, although it might be expected that older generations, mothers, would not want their children to be thin in Türkiye. Mothers' level of involvement with their daughters' weight was an interesting finding. Maybe their level of involvement can be explained by the fact that mothers' being raised in an era when television started to become very popular in Türkiye. The daytime TV shows mostly targeted women, and most frequently discussed health topics that centered on healthy eating and nutrition and included ideal body measurements. In most daytime TV shows, methods for weight loss, ways for avoiding weight gain, fat burners, diuretics, or belly fat burners were promoted (Bölüktaş & Durak, 2019; Etiler & Zengin, 2015). As introduced in the literature review, Türkiye adopted Westernized body standards for a very long time, and broadcasting diet culture in TV shows may have influenced the participants' mothers' body standards.

The second sub-theme explored feminine appearance norms that are imposed on women in addition to the thin ideal. Participants shared the influences of feminine appearance norms on their body image experiences. The idealized feminine beauty norms revolved around being flawless and smooth, such as having no body or facial hair, having smooth skin without any acne on the face or the body, and many other features (Thompson et al., 1999; Tiggemann & Hodgson, 2008). As one participant said, women are expected to be everything at once, they should be thin but not too thin, be long but not too long. There are many standards women are expected to conform to, and as participants stated, it is very tiring for them to be constantly exposed to messages and images dictating how they should look, appear, what they should wear, eat, and not eat. Research mostly focused on the relationship between body dissatisfaction and body weight, and other appearance features have been mostly disregarded (Dittmar et al., 2000).

Like the pressure to be thin, participants stated that feminine appearance pressures also come from different sources starting from an early age. Interestingly, most of the participants stated that their mothers were stylish, well-groomed women who were attentive to their beauty. Some of the participants' mothers often made aesthetic operations, fillings, or botox. In addition, some participants mentioned that their mothers were involved in their choice of dressing and wanted their daughters to dress in a feminine way, and criticized when they were dressed "like a boy". One study examined parental responses to gender-nonconforming behaviors of their children. The results suggested that parents who held traditional views on gender roles reported feeling discomforted by their children's gender-nonconforming behaviors (Spivey et al., 2018). Since preferring "masculine" clothes can be regarded as gender-nonconforming behavior, the findings of the current study are in line with this research findings. In Türkiye, a binary understanding of gender prevails. Most parents want their female children to conform to feminine standards as much as possible, such as their children to play with gender-appropriate toys (Sertoğlu, 2021). The findings suggest the influence of traditional gender binaries on parents' attitudes toward their children's bodies in Türkiye. It can be also said that since beauty and attractiveness have been equated with being good, having good personality traits, and success (Dion, 1972; Frederickson & Roberts, 1997), parents may want their daughters to be beautiful and more feminine for them to have these qualities.

Another characteristic of feminine appearance that created pressure on some of the participants was their breasts. One of the participants mentioned that she entered puberty early and her breasts started to grow earlier than her peers. Her big breasts became a source of stress for her, and she became an easy target for bullying and teasing. She mentioned feeling as if she was carrying a sex object on her body that she needed to hide. It has been suggested that during adolescence, compared to girls who develop on time or later, girls who develop early and have rounder bodies experience increased stress (Petersen, Sarigiani, & Kennedy, 1991). Some study findings revealed that early-developing girls experience more body-related concerns (Tobin-Richards, Boxer, & Petersen, 1983). The present study findings

align with previous research findings, suggesting that early physical development can be a risk factor for developing body image concerns. Early development also increases the risk of appearance-related teasing among peers (Tobin-Richards et al., 1983; Petersen et al., 1991). Teasing breasts is an example of objectifying the female body, which may further increase the risk for female adolescents to self-objectify themselves and may result in body shame and dissatisfaction.

The third sub-theme elaborated on the pressures of feminine behavior norms that arise from traditional gender norms. According to participants, there are many behavioral expectations for women that they are required to conform to, including being desireless sexually, not enjoying sex, smiling all the time, not expressing their upsetting emotions, and acting modest and humble. Most of the participants mentioned their sexual experiences and how hard it was for many of them to feel relaxed and enjoy sex. Traditional femininity stereotypes include women as being docile, passive, sexually reserved, and submissive (Siegel & Meunier, 2018). These stereotypes were found to hamper women being satisfied sexually for women (Siegel & Meunier, 2018). As Bartky (2014) also argued, women internalize traditional gender norms without being consciously aware of them. Consequently, these internalized norms are practiced involuntarily. Fortunately, as women gained a critical stance and became more aware of these internalized norms, they developed their agency in expanding the limiting norms of society, which will be detailed in the third theme.

The behavior norms around the feminine body are a result of women's bodies being scrutinized and regulated by disciplinary powers of society which are elaborated in the last sub-theme explaining the pressures of constant scrutiny. According to participants, their bodies are regulated and controlled by society resulting in them experiencing as if their bodies do not belong to themselves but to society. There are many rules around what women can and cannot do with their bodies, suffocating their feelings and desires. All participants' narratives were in line with Bartky's (2014) arguments regarding the construction of femininity in patriarchal societies. Within patriarchal modern societies, disciplinary power operates in a such way to control women's bodies and be sure traditional gender

roles are maintained (Bartky, 2014). According to participants, while women's bodies are regarded as private and not something to talk about, it is at the same time disciplined, being looked at, commented on, and monitored by everyone. As it was introduced in the literature review, objectification theory suggests that objectification of women and self-objectification leads women's bodies to be regarded as objects as if it is a sight for others to look at (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). All the participants mentioned familiar and unfamiliar people gazing at their bodies and commenting on their bodies without hesitation. One participant mentioned that her parents never talked about menstruation with her, an issue that she was anxious about. However, they were making a lot of comments regarding her appearance. This situation is a great example of the contradiction about the body being regarded as private and not something to talk about, yet it is scrutinized and commented on all the time. Some topics related to the body are not acceptable to talk about. Historically, menstruation has been regarded as something dirty and requiring concealment (Ussher, 2006).

This theme clearly illustrates the paradoxical pressure of gender norms on bisexual+ women. On the one hand, they receive messages to be feminine, beautiful, and thin. On the other hand, they are exposed to messages telling them that they should not be sexual or masculine. These messages are conveyed through numerous sources. Within this paradox, participants expressed feelings of alienation, body dissatisfaction, and shame. It seems like whatever a woman does, she will not be enough, as if there is an established boundary of femininity, which includes many distinct qualities. Every woman is expected to fit into these established molds. In this context, it is very hard for women to embrace their bodies and feel that their bodies truly belong to themselves, and thus, feel body dissatisfaction.

Türkiye being a collectivistic and patriarchal society should be taken into consideration when interpreting these research findings, since individualistic and collectivistic cultures have diverging influences on body image (Du, 2015). For example, Asian women are stated to experience more body dissatisfaction resulting from the values of a collectivistic culture prioritizing social conformity, social

approval, and awareness of public scrutiny (Makino et al., 1991). One participant compared her experiences in Türkiye and England. She mentioned that gazing and commenting on other's bodies are not acceptable in England since people respect the boundaries of each other. However, when she came to Türkiye, even a grocery store clerk commented on her weight. She further reasoned this may stem from the cultural differences as Türkiye is collectivistic and England is an individualistic culture, and that everyone minds their own business in England. Therefore, especially the last two sub-themes may be representative of the pressures on women living in Türkiye, and collectivism may influence the level of scrutinization of women and women becoming more body conscious.

4.1.2. Pressures on the Bisexual+ Identity and Body

This theme addressed the unique pressures bisexual+ women experienced concerning their gender identity and sexual orientation. Bisexual women are exposed to many adverse life experiences that are related to sexual misbeliefs, stereotypes, and stigmatization of their identities (Serpe et al., 2020). As a result of stigmatization, they often face unique sexual objectification that is different from monosexual individuals (Serpe et al., 2020). The first sub-theme addressed the experiences of objectification and fetishization of bisexual+ participants. According to the participants, bisexual+ women are sexually objectified to a great extent, especially by men, since most people encounter bisexual+ women in porn or in different mediums of media where they are represented as hypersexual individuals. Previous research also reports such stereotypes and problems of representation with respect to bisexual+ women (Brewster et al., 2014; Serpe et al., 2020).

Bisexuality is not a visible identity. The present findings suggest that majorly being represented as hypersexual paves the way for bisexual+ women to be dehumanized and reduced to sex objects. A qualitative study conducted by Serpe and colleagues (2020) investigated bisexual women's experiences of objectification and the mental health outcomes of these adverse experiences. The study findings are very parallel to the current study's findings regarding the sexual objectification

experiences of participants. In their study, participants also mentioned the great influence of the media on stereotyping bisexual identity through pornographic and hypersexualized portrayals of bisexual identity (Serpe et al., 2020). Furthermore, in the current study, many participants mentioned that bisexual+ women were perceived as the third party of the group sex, and many people, especially heterosexual men, asked them whether they would participate in a threesome with them as soon as they revealed their bisexual+ identities. In a similar vein, the participants of Serpe and colleagues' (2020) study stated that when couples learn about their bisexual identity, they immediately ask for group sex. They have described their experiences as being perceived as sex and fantasy objects, and thus, feeling dehumanized. The results of a qualitative study conducted by Chmielewski and Yost (2013) reported similar findings regarding body image experiences of bisexual women. Those study participants also mentioned their bodies immediately being sexualized by men, when they came out as bisexual women. They mentioned men being excited with the idea of women-women sex, leading participants to feel objectified, which prevented them from establishing a positive relationship with their bodies (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013).

The second sub-theme elaborated on the ideal bisexual woman's appearance, body, and behavior and examined the experiences of participants regarding being caught in between heterosexist and LGBTQ+ cultural appearance and behavior norms. As it was discussed in the results section, LGBTQ+ culture expands the traditional gender norms and creates a new set of standards. Most of the participants mentioned that there is no distinctive ideal body for bisexual women that is different from any other women regarding body weight and shape. According to them, bisexual people are not exempt from the pressure to be thin and many other idealized shape-related features. These body-shape norms result from the gender socialization and internalization of the standardized women's body norms as discussed in the previous section. However, participants reported that bisexual women's appearance and manner are expected not to be too femme or too masculine but they should be in the middle since they are attracted to more than one gender. Different from the body-shape norms, these set of appearance norms are unique to

bisexual+ identity. In a similar vein, in Rothblum's study (2010), bisexual women described themselves as being a little femme and a little butch as they are bringing heterosexual feminine and lesbian masculine components together within their appearances.

Furthermore, the present study results suggested that bisexual women being too feminine is not welcomed, and they were discriminated against within the LGBTQ+ community. Some participants stated that bisexual women's bisexuality would be questioned if her appearance is too feminine, or she may be mislabeled as being heterosexual. A qualitative study conducted by Taub (2003) reported very similar findings. In her study, one of the themes explored bisexual women's experiences of pressure to appeal to the standards of lesbian sub-culture. Those participants reported feeling criticized when they conformed to traditional feminine standards, such as when they removed their body hair or wore makeup (Taub, 2003). Similarly, in the current study, some participants reported considering the expectations from bisexual women to be "natural", wear no make-up, be at peace with their bodies, and not need any modifications. As some participants suggested, bisexual women are expected to form a different relationship with their bodies and should not experience body dissatisfaction since they challenge traditional feminine beauty and body norms. On the other hand, according to the participants, they also desire male attraction, and for males, standardized feminine norms are more acceptable. They expressed that men would judge things that are associated with masculinity such as if they do not remove their body hair.

Thus, the norms around bisexual women's appearance can be summarized as being not too feminine and not too masculine, being in the middle. However, according to the participants, it is not a clearly defined norm, which does not have clear boundaries. For example, they stated that being butch is associated with lesbian women, and being too feminine is associated with heterosexual women. Being in the middle is not well-defined. For some participants, this situation creates a fluid space where they can experiment with different self-expressions. Many participants mentioned that they sometimes dress in feminine, other times in masculine ways according to their moods. Hayfield and colleagues (2013) also

suggested not having inflexible norms around appearance and clothing may create a free space for bisexuals to express themselves in any way they want. However, according to participants, if they deviate towards the edges of the spectrum of masculine and feminine, they may not be appreciated by both heterosexual men and the LGBTQ+ community, and their bisexual identity can be questioned.

Although being in the middle is not well defined and does not have clear-cut boundaries, bisexual+ women mentioned several stereotypical clothing and adornment that are associated with bisexual+ women, and thus, signaling their sexual orientation. Most of the participants frequently mentioned clothing and adornment that bisexual women embrace, including piercings, mostly nose piercings (septum), tattoos, a marginal haircut, a piece of dyed hair, and short nails. They suggested that these stereotypical bisexual women's adornments have been globalized through social media. Hayfield and colleagues (2013) also reported similar features mentioned by their participants as bisexual people having an alternative style, including tattoos, dyed hair, and piercings.

The third sub-theme explored the discrimination and harassment participants experienced in relation to their bisexual+ body and identity. As suggested in the literature review, Türkiye is a heterosexist and patriarchal society. Herek (2004) stated that, within heterosexist cultures, sexual minorities are perceived as being dangerous, deviant, and sinful. According to participants, the hostility towards LGBTQ+ people is an increased trend, especially with the anti-LGBTQ+ policy of the government. Participants also mentioned that the LGBTQ+ community is perceived as a terrorist organization by the majority of society, in line with Herek's (2004) argument that sexual minorities are perceived as threatening. Participants mentioned overt hostility they experienced in public spaces that made them feel unsafe and scared. Herek (2004) argued perception of sexual minorities as deviant, sinful, and threatening justifies the aggression and hostility against them. Participants shared many experiences and observations related to such discriminatory attitudes, although they did not always explicitly discuss the influence of these attitudes specifically on their body image. Rather, the experiences of discrimination and harassment created an unsafe environment where they

endeavored to express their bisexual + identities and formed an image of their own bodies.

The last sub-theme explored the stereotypes attached to bisexual women and their experiences of biphobia both in the LGBTQ+ community and in society at large. The prevalent societal perception of bisexuality has often been characterized by denial, erasure, and stigma both from the heterosexual and LGBTQ+ communities (Anderson et al., 2016). There is a long list of literature examining stereotypes and biphobia, and even literature on bisexuality is filled up with issues on erasure, invisibility, and invalidation of bisexuality (Nelson, 2020; Ochs, 1996; Serpe et al., 2020), which is the rationale behind the current study's examining bisexual women's experiences. In line with current study findings, bisexuality is perceived as a stage before people discover their true identities as either heterosexual or lesbian (Nelson, 2020). In addition, as stated by the current study's participants, bisexual people encounter discourses telling them to "pick a side" and they are perceived as being indecisive. Most participants said that when in a relationship with a woman, people told them that they were lesbian, and when they dated a man, others assumed them as heterosexual. According to participants, these rely on the monosexist assumption that bisexuality is an invalid sexual identity. Another study also reported the same findings that bisexual women are assumed to be lesbians when dating women and vice versa (Serpe et al., 2020).

Nelson (2020) proposed that bisexuality and cheating are regarded as identical words. In the present study, all participants mentioned bisexual people being stereotyped as cheaters, untrustworthy, not monogamous, greedy, and ready to be involved with anyone. Furthermore, one of the participants mentioned that she used to identify herself as a lesbian, and then she discovered her bisexual identity. After she came out as bisexual and started to have male partners, her lesbian friends told her that she ditched them and treated her as if she was not involved with the LGBTQ+ community as much as before. She was "dismissed" from the community, in her own words. Together with this participant, other participants also mentioned that lesbian women found bisexual women's identity as less valid and regarded bisexual identity as a more privileged identity. In line with current study findings,

Yoshino (2017) described a common approach toward bisexuals being seen as traitors, and as their primary aim is to hold on to their “heterosexual privilege” while using and discarding their same-sex partners. Participants stated that being stereotyped as cheaters or being untrustworthy people is very upsetting for them. They mentioned the LGBTQ+ community is of course a safer space for them compared to any other community. Therefore, being exposed to microaggression or biphobia within their safe spaces leads to feeling misunderstood and othered. Some of the participants suggested that they either became immune to the stereotypes coming from heterosexual men or they more easily ignored them. However, the microaggressions or discrimination they experience from the LGBTQ+ community is more hurtful and results in feelings of isolation. Some participants mentioned that they felt more comfortable in their bisexual+ sub-groups since they felt more understood. It seems that within the LGBTQ+ community, different power dynamics exist and monosexism prevails for some groups.

A study finding reported that participants talked about the internalization of bisexual erasure and stated that they are at times questioning their sexual identities and asking themselves whether they are gay enough (Serpe et al., 2020). Another study reported bisexual people experiencing sustained uncertainty and interrogating whether their identity is valid and whether they are truly bisexual or not (McLean, 2007). In a similar vein, some participants in the current study also shared they were questioning themselves and feeling not queer enough by their appearances and by their behaviors or personalities. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that they find themselves in constant need to prove their bisexuality both to themselves and others, to calculate how many women and men they dated, and as if the number of women and men they dated should be similar. Other researchers also documented this misconception and suggested that bisexuality is understood as having the same level of attraction and sexual experiences with men and women (McLean, 2007; Weinberg et al., 1994).

This theme clearly illustrated the challenges of bisexual+ women regarding their sexual orientation, gender, and experiences of body image. Bisexual+ identity and body add one more layer to the pressures that were discussed in the first theme

under feminine body pressures. While women are in a more disadvantaged status in Türkiye because of the patriarchal structure of the country, bisexual+ women have an even more disadvantaged and marginalized status due to a mixture of patriarchy, heterosexism, and monosexism (Demirbilek & Erdem, 2020). Within this cultural setting, discovering their sexual identities is a challenging experience for bisexual+ women, which also influences their body image experiences. As participants stated, once they state their sexual identities, they turn into sex objects in the eyes of some people, especially men. The hypersexualized perception of bisexual+ women is very dangerous, especially in a country where harassment towards women is widespread. In Türkiye, LGBTQ+ individuals are exposed to physical and social violence in public and private settings (Bakcak, 2014). There is an absence of legislation that prohibits discrimination and human rights abuses related to sexual orientation and gender identity (Bakacak, 2014). Dehumanization of bisexual+ women by considering them as sex objects may justify men harassing bisexual+ women to a greater extent. Those who believe there is a lack of legal support may feel compelled to stay silent due to fear of their sexual identity being revealed (Bakacak, 2014). This lack of faith in legal support may put bisexual+ women in a challenging position and feeling unsafe in Türkiye.

4.1.3. Learning to Accept the Body

Finally, the last theme addressed participants' positive experiences and journeys toward self and body acceptance in the face of the numerous pressures of having a bisexual+ woman's body. This theme examined how participants managed to form a peaceful relationship with their bodies, and the positive relationships and experiences that accompanied them in their journeys. The first sub-theme reviewed the role of LGBTQ+ community involvement in embracing their bodies. Participants stated that queer people helped them to accept and embrace their bodies. In contrast to the present study findings, in the qualitative study conducted by Smith and colleagues (2017), participants shared that the LGBTQ+ community involvement did not buffer against experiencing body dissatisfaction. Although they stated that queer people are more accepting of different body shapes and

appearances, they nevertheless felt the pressure to conform to traditional female body norms, especially the thin ideal. The participants of that study suggested that the butch-femme appearance is disappearing and there is a current shift towards a thinner look. Those participants also mentioned the normalization of homosexuality in recent years, they experienced more discrimination in earlier times, and there is more acceptance now. They draw a parallel between the normalization of homosexuality and fading off the butch-femme appearances, resulting in an elevated pressure to adapt to the heterosexual body standards (Smith et al., 2017).

It has been suggested that the trend towards normalization of homosexuality results in homosexuality being less stigmatized. Therefore, LGBTQ+ individuals feel less need to refuse the heteronormative body norms, since embracing a butch appearance has been associated with the refusal of beauty norms of the heteronormative culture (Nguyen, 2008; Smith et al., 2017). This is a very interesting and important finding, regarding the cultural differences in stigmatization of LGBTQ+ individuals. In Türkiye, rather than normalization, LGBTQ+ people are currently discriminated against, stigmatized, and excluded in harsh ways (Yükler, 2020). The hostility towards LGBTQ+ individuals is widespread in society. According to participants, for many LGBTQ+ individuals, the LGBTQ+ community is the only place where they feel like themselves and embrace the person they are. The solidarity in the LGBTQ+ community in Türkiye may be stronger than in other countries where people do not feel anxiety about their basic human rights. One participant said that in Canada being bisexual is regarded as very cool and another participant mentioned the same thing in England. Yet another participant mentioned the level of freedom in Germany and the normalization of LGBTQ+. A participant said that she could not feel she belonged to the LGBTQ+ community in England, as their LGBTQ+ experience in England is very privileged when she thought about the struggles LGBTQ+ individuals in Türkiye experience every day.

Thus, it can be speculated that since LGBTQ+ individuals are highly stigmatized in Türkiye, the LGBTQ+ community may buffer against body dissatisfaction stemming from distancing itself from the heteronormative beauty

standards. Therefore, the current study supported Brown's (1987) suggestion that LGBTQ+ community involvement acts as a protective factor against the pressures of heteronormative beauty norms (Smith et al., 2017). Another qualitative study examining bisexual women's body image experiences revealed similar results to the current study. Chmielewski and Yost (2013) proposed that bisexual women find LGBTQ+ communities as accepting of bodies and welcome different self-expressions. However, those participants also mentioned that they do not feel accepted by some lesbian women and experienced binegativity, and therefore, participants' relationships with lesbians were conflicted. Furthermore, those participants stated men were sexualizing them, regarding them as "hot bisexual babe", similar to the study findings of the current research that was discussed under the sub-theme of objectification and fetishization (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013, pp. 233).

Furthermore, the second sub-theme explored the role of participants' social interactions and their coping mechanisms in managing their feelings of body dissatisfaction and shame. Together with participants' friends and partners, people they follow on social media had a great influence on them to not feel alone and make peace with their bodies. Participants' partners desiring them and finding them beautiful had an important influence on their body acceptance. Rothblum (2002) suggested that bisexual women experience more pressure to conform to heterosexual body ideals when they have male partners. In the current study, most of the participants mentioned their experiences with their partners having a positive influence on them regardless of the gender of their partners. Most of the participants shared that they prefer their friends and partners to be like-minded people as they are. Some participants mentioned they were used to being more vigilant about their bodies in the past, monitoring their bodies when they were naked with men and checking whether their legs looked thin or cellulite was visible. Another participant mentioned she used to think about how her body looked when she was having sex and could not enjoy the moment. However, those participants stated that as they dated more people, and they felt desired, attractive, and appreciated, they became much more comfortable with their bodies.

Moreover, most of the participants mentioned their friends' positive impact on accepting their bodies. Most of the qualitative research conducted with LGBTQ+ participants examined the influences of LGBTQ+ community involvement and partners on bisexual women's body image experiences. Blair and colleagues (2019) examined the elements that promote positive body image among lesbian, bisexual, and queer women. The quantitative study findings revealed that women who felt positive support from their friends and others reported increased levels of self-esteem and resilience, and thus, were found to be more appreciative of their bodies (Blair et al., 2019). Tiggemann (2015) also highlighted the importance of unconditional acceptance from others, including friends as a crucial factor for positive body image. Feelings of acceptance and love from people for the person's authentic self rather than her appearance are important. Current study participants also mentioned that they felt loved, and accepted for their personality and their appearances were not important for their friends.

The last sub-theme explored participants' critical stance toward the objectifying male gaze and traditional feminine body ideals. Participants mentioned the importance of feminist and LGBTQ+ movements' impact on their critical thinking and making peace with their bodies. The current study findings are in line with the literature suggesting that feminist ideology is a protective factor against experiencing body dissatisfaction (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Murmen & Smolak, 2009). Participants mentioned that while they had an outsider perspective towards their bodies, they developed an insider perspective by gaining a critical perspective through education, affiliation with feminism, and the LGBTQ+ movement. Through gaining this perspective, rather than their appearances, the inner feelings of their bodies gained importance, and over time, they learned to value the strength and capabilities of their bodies. Participants' accounts are in line with previous research on positive body image. Tylka (2011) presented the features of positive body image including appreciation of the functions of the body, health, and listening to the needs of the body and trying to meet those needs. One participant mentioned she used to do exercise for appearance purposes, but now she exercises when she feels her body needs stretching, to meet her body's needs.

Overall, this theme addressed the journey toward self and body acceptance. However, as participants stated, it is a never-ending journey, it is not as if the journey toward body acceptance is ever completed, and they would never feel body dissatisfaction again. On the contrary, not feeling body dissatisfaction is not possible and not necessary. As they mentioned, being okay with feeling body dissatisfaction without making a big deal out of it is important by itself. According to most of the participants' accounts, adolescence was a very challenging time and they perceived their bodies mostly in a negative manner. After adolescence, the journey toward self and body acceptance started for many of them, and ever since, their relationships with their bodies have been transforming through changing the outsider perspective towards their bodies into an insider perspective. After internalizing many ideals and norms throughout their lives, transforming these internalized messages requires an active effort. Although they may not find the motivation to transform these messages all the time, participants developed many coping strategies to cope with overwhelming emotions. When they cannot cope with these emotions by themselves, they have people they can turn to at these moments. Gaining awareness of their body image experiences and acting on this awareness in the face of various pressures both regarding their gender identity and sexual orientation is very hard to underestimate.

4.2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The current study's findings reported significant issues related to bisexual+ women's feelings and thoughts regarding their bodies and the psychosocial influences on their body image development in Türkiye. Participants' accounts were found to be in line with Dworkin's (1989) claim that being socialized in a culture where traditional feminine body standards are prevalent, bisexual+ women, like all women having different sexual orientations, experience pressures to conform to these ideals. Starting from early childhood, all women are exposed to these messages which over time are internalized by women, resulting in feelings of body dissatisfaction. Research conducted through prospective and longitudinal studies has consistently identified body dissatisfaction as a major risk factor for

eating disorders and significantly predicted depression, low self-esteem, and obesity (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). Grabe and colleagues (2008) highlighted that negatively perceiving the body can start early in life. Body dissatisfaction is experienced even by children who are 7 years old regardless of their body size. As stated above, young girls are not protected from the cultural ideals of thinness. In their study, Dohnt and Tiggemann (2006) examined body image concerns and awareness about dieting among girls aged between 5 to 8, and they concluded that even young girls experience concerns over their weight, living in an appearance-dominated culture. Study findings also revealed that if they gained weight, young girls would engage in diet restriction (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006). Diet restriction may adversely influence children's physiological and psychological development. Therefore, families and school personnel bear great responsibility in recognizing diet changes, or mood disruptions in children that are related to body image concerns.

Participants' accounts suggested that parental influences had one of the greatest importance in body image development. Family attitudes and comments regarding weight and appearance are very critical for children to internalize cultural body standards. Although over time participants managed to critique the ideals imposed on them, they stated that it can still be challenging for them to transform the inner voices and the internalized messages that they heard from their parents during their developmental period. Therefore, the most important step in preventing body dissatisfaction from becoming overwhelming for children is to help parents gain awareness regarding their own body image, their body ideals, and the impact of those ideals on their body image. Through psychoeducational seminars and activities, parents can be informed about how their thoughts on body ideals may impact their children. Parents can benefit from parent counseling to gain knowledge about body image experiences. Furthermore, school counseling services can also support and educate parents about body image development.

The present findings are significant to consider in developing preventative measures against children experiencing body dissatisfaction, who also become more likely to be bullied at school due to their weight. Experiencing adverse events

and emotions during early years has the potential to make individuals vulnerable in the face of upcoming adverse life events, therefore children who already have body image concerns can be more at risk in adolescence to develop body image disruption. During adolescence, the discrepancy between the idealized body and the actual body shape increases, and thus, in Western societies, elevated levels of body dissatisfaction and weight concerns are common, especially during adolescence and young adulthood (Rodgers & Chabrol, 2009). As stated above, appearance-related bullying is very prevalent among both children and adolescents and has many adverse outcomes. Being the target of bullying can be very upsetting for children and adolescents contributing to experiencing negative emotions and disrupted body image. Since adolescence has long been identified as a challenging and stressful time for most individuals, it is important to identify youth who experience adverse emotions and may not be able to cope with the unique stressors that are associated with adolescence. An extensive level of physical changes occurs during adolescence that is accompanied by an increase in self-awareness and an individual's attention turn towards the self (Faust, 1983). Thus, school counseling services have a great role in detecting students who are bullied and also experiencing overwhelming feelings related to their body image concerns. Preventive programs that challenge unrealistic body ideals and introduce notions of body acceptance and respect for one's own and others' body integrity can also be developed and implemented in order to stop bullying and change norms toward more inclusivity.

Furthermore, media influences were identified as significant factors for experiencing body image disruptions starting at an early age. Although societal messages are not possible to be prevented from reaching children, if parents carefully transform these messages and facilitate children to gain a critical eye starting from early childhood, children can be prevented from introjecting these messages. In addition, the social media content that children are exposed to requires regulation by their parents together and media literacy should be taught starting from the early years of life. It is also very important for schools to notice the importance of feelings and thoughts regarding the body and include educational

materials that would contribute to children gaining a critical perspective towards the societal body ideals. Especially media literacy can be included as educational material, whereby children and adolescents may develop skills to criticize and filter the messages they come across in traditional and social media.

The results clearly showed that being a bisexual+ woman in Türkiye is a challenging experience. As participants suggested, LGBTQ+ individuals are under attack by the government, and they become the target of hate speech. The challenges of bisexual identity start at an early age. Participants mentioned that they experienced great confusion regarding their sexual orientation as a child and could not make sense of their attraction toward women. Some participants were confused to the point where they questioned whether they were male. Growing up believing there are no other options than being heterosexual, being exposed to definite gender norms, and having no one to share their feelings can be suffocating for children and adolescents. The absence of media representation of LGBTQ+ individuals exacerbates the situation and sexual minority individuals become lonely in their experiences. As participants mentioned, discovering sexual identity is a lonely experience, and within a heterosexist and patriarchal society, it is even experienced in more isolation. Although society-wide change does not seem to happen soon and cultural shift is hard to hope for in Türkiye, schools should include seminars and lectures about sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender in age-appropriate ways. In addition, parent education programs should be made about these topics to educate parents and support them to understand their children. Furthermore, sexual minority children and adolescents may face stigmatization due to their sexual orientation. Some participants shared that sexual minorities were bullied due to their orientation, and they were pointed at and discriminated against. Observing these attitudes led some participants to hide their sexual orientation, sometimes even from themselves. Therefore, school counselors need to identify students bullied due to their sexual orientation and refer students to mental health professionals if needed.

Mental health professionals should consider various clinical factors when working with bisexual+ women. Bisexual identity is not well-acknowledged and many specific stereotypes are attached to bisexuality. Mental health professionals

who are willing to work with bisexual+ women should educate themselves about the unique pressures and discrimination bisexual+ women experience. As the current study results revealed, bisexual women experience different pressures regarding their body image, and they are objectified to a great extent. This objectification can create discomfort and shame regarding their bodies, leading to a disconnection from their own bodies. Therefore, it is very important to examine the effects of objectification on bisexual+ women's body image experiences and their well-being overall (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013). The psychological toll of discrimination and harassment includes increased levels of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Meyer, 2003). These mental health issues further complicate body image concerns, as individuals may struggle with self-worth and body acceptance. The stress associated with anticipating or experiencing discrimination can lead to negative coping mechanisms, such as disordered eating or body dysmorphia. (Convertino et al., 2021; Meyer 2003) Therefore clinicians should attend to experiences of discrimination and harassment and the potential impact of these adverse experiences.

Furthermore, it is important to inquire about the level of community involvement and their social support mechanisms. It would be helpful for therapists to examine bisexual women's relationships with their partners on their body image experiences. American Psychological Association's (APA, 2012) guidelines for working with LGBTQ+ individuals include the necessity for mental health professionals to know their own beliefs and knowledge about LGBTQ+ individuals (Serpe et al., 2020). It is important for mental health professionals to be aware of the effects of their biases or beliefs about bisexuality on their clients. It would also be helpful for mental health professionals to work in a culturally sensitive way and to consider the contextual factors that may impact bisexual+ women's experiences of body image, including the effects of heterosexism and patriarchy. Toward that goal, clinical psychology programs can offer courses on diverse sexual identities, gender, and culture to enhance future mental health professionals' knowledge and skills on multicultural competence and inclusive practices, and to support their self-awareness on these issues.

4.3. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research aimed to understand the body image experiences of bisexual+ women and the influence of psychosocial factors on their body image development in Türkiye. Some shared characteristics of the participants may restrict the diversity of the perspectives represented in this study. Most of the participants were born and raised in Istanbul, and most of them still live in Istanbul. Moreover, all participants completed at least a university education and belonged to middle to upper socioeconomic status levels. Participants were aged between 19 and 29. Participation in the study was voluntary, and therefore, participants were willing to share their perspectives and reflect on their body image experiences. Talking about body image experiences and bisexuality can be uncomfortable for many people, and therefore, choosing to participate in this study may be indicative of the personality traits of participants, such as being assertive and expressive. Considering the common features of participants, very different results could be reported with participants coming from different backgrounds since experiences are embedded in social and cultural contexts. Therefore, future research should examine the body image experiences of bisexual+ women from different backgrounds. Future research can investigate younger and older bisexual+ women's body image experiences, and also women from different socioeconomic statuses. The norms surrounding feminine appearance can vary significantly among women from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The prevalence of the thin-ideal may be less pronounced, and body ideals can differ according to one's socioeconomic status. Therefore, future research should examine body image experiences of bisexual+ women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Women from different education levels can also reveal diverse perspectives. The participants of this research were interested in feminism, and therefore, the level of affinity with feminism can also be considered in future research. Additionally, it is important to investigate the influence of partners of different genders on the body image experiences of bisexual+ women, specifically. Future research should explore how both previous and current partners impact their experiences.

Moreover, there is very limited research conducted on bisexual+ individuals in Türkiye and there are many adverse experiences bisexual+ women experience. Future research can examine the experiences of bisexual+ women in Türkiye, the unique stereotypes attached to them, and their effects on their well-being in order to develop therapeutic interventions that can address challenges unique to them. One suggestion for future research would be to specifically investigate the effects of discrimination and harassment on the body image of LGBTQ+ individuals and explore how such experiences shape their relationships with their own bodies. In addition, most of the research on body image focused on body weight and other feminine body norms are disregarded. Future research can examine the beauty standards and appearance norms of bisexual+ women. Moreover, future research can examine the effects of family structure on the body image experiences of bisexual+ women. In this study, the participants' families were not conservative. The experiences of women from conservative families where they experience higher pressure regarding their sexuality and sexual orientation could be different, and therefore, it would be important to examine this in future research. Additionally, it may be important to investigate how they cope with these pressures.

Furthermore, the current study participants were more or less psychologically adjusted. Thus, it would be important for future research to examine the experiences of bisexual women who are struggling with eating disorders or body dysmorphic disorder and investigate their coping mechanisms. In the current study, the influences of mothers on participants' body image experiences were higher than their fathers' influence. Future research can examine these processes in an in-depth fashion. In addition, the influences of partners on bisexual women's body image experiences can be examined in depth.

Finally, since this research was qualitative, it inevitably involved some level of researcher subjectivity, with the research process being influenced by the researcher's own perceptions and understanding of the topic. Therefore, another researcher might have interpreted the data differently. It is important to consider the characteristics of the researcher and her perspectives mentioned in the reflexivity section while interpreting the findings. In addition, the coding process was done by

one researcher. Although the codes and themes were discussed with the thesis advisor, the involvement of a second coder would increase the reliability of the coding. Therefore, it is recommended for future research to involve two researchers in the coding process.



CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand body image experiences and the psychosocial influences on the body image development of bisexual+ women in Türkiye. Although survey results suggest that there is an increased number of people identifying as bisexuals, bisexuality has been neglected and overlooked in the academy and the broader social context. There is a scarce number of research conducted on bisexuality even in Western countries, and the challenges of bisexual+ individuals have recently started to be acknowledged. In Türkiye, all sexual minorities are inadequately represented in scientific studies, although they are one of the most stigmatized and marginalized groups in society. As bisexual+ women are one of the most disadvantaged sexual minority sub-groups, this research aimed to represent their unique experiences. The bisexual+ identity should be acknowledged as a distinct identity category rather than regarding it as a combination of a lesbian and heterosexual identity, and therefore, bisexual+ women's experiences need to be examined separately. There is a limited number of research conducted on bisexual+ women about their body image experiences, although they are at high risk for developing eating disorders and suffer more from other mental health problems.

The results of this study revealed that bisexual+ women are exposed to many pressures due to their gender identity and sexual orientation, which influences their body image experiences. Like many women, bisexual+ women also grow up by internalizing heteronormative standards of beauty, which influence their body image experiences to a great extent. The combined pressures of the feminine body and unique pressures of bisexual+ identity and body put bisexual+ women in a challenging position. Although challenges of bisexual+ identity have also been mentioned in Western societies, and monosexism also prevails in Western societies, Türkiye's heterosexist, patriarchal structure creates more burden on bisexual+ women. The objectification and fetishization of bisexual+ identity leads bisexual+ women to be perceived as sex objects and their media representation deteriorates this situation even more. Within this climate, bisexual+ women discover ways to navigate the pressures and learn to accept their bodies such as through their social

support mechanisms and LGBTQ+ community involvement. All participants mentioned important coping strategies and positive changes resulting from their experiences. However, it's important to note that all participants came from similar backgrounds, limiting the representation of diverse viewpoints. Therefore, future research with a more diverse sample is necessary to provide comprehensive insights. These findings could inform the development of prevention and intervention policies, and support bisexual+ women in Türkiye.

To conclude, the participants of the study and the researcher of the study sought to deepen our understanding of the body image experiences of bisexual+ women, which is largely overlooked in research. During the interviews, participants expressed enthusiasm for contributing to the study, they were very interested in the study topic and appreciated that someone was examining bisexual+ women's experiences. Conducting research with bisexual+ participants communicated that they are not invisible and their identities are not invalid. Therefore, examining their experiences by itself is important, and requires more discussion and further research on bisexual+ women's experiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

BİLGİLENDİRİLMİŞ ONAM FORMU

Araştırmanın Yürütüldüğü Kurum:	İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın Adı:	Türkiye’de Genç Yetişkin Biseksüel+ Kadınların Beden İmgesi Deneyimleri
Araştırmacının Adı:	Dilara Dikencik
Araştırmacının E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Araştırmanın Danışmanı:	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anıl Özge Üstünel
Danışmanın E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:	[REDACTED]

Bu araştırma, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Gülten Dilara Dikencik tarafından Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anıl Özge Üstünel danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, biseksüel+ kadınların beden imajı deneyimlerini derinlikli bir şekilde incelemektir. Araştırmanın biseksüel+ kadınların beden imajlarının gelişimine etki eden psikososyal faktörleri inceleyerek, ruh ve beden sağlıklarını destekleyecek klinik çalışmalara katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde, yaklaşık 60-90 dakika sürecek bir görüşmeye katılmanız beklenecektir. Bu görüşmede, kendi bedeninizle ilgili duygularınız, düşünceleriniz ve gelişimsel deneyimleriniz hakkında bazı sorulara yanıt vermeniz istenecektir. Yanıtlarınız, sonraki analizlerde kullanılmak üzere ses kaydına alınacaktır.

Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmakta ve katılımcıların kişisel bilgilerinin gizliliği esas alınmaktadır. Ses kayıtları araştırma süresince yalnızca araştırmacının ve danışmanın erişimi olan bir harici bellekte muhafaza edilecek, araştırma sona erdiğinde silinecektir. Araştırma bulgularının sunumu ve raporlamasında kişi isimleri kullanılmayacak, bulgular görüşmelerde ifade edilen ortak konuları özetleyecektir. Görüşmede paylaştığınız görüş ve deneyimlerinize ilişkin örnek cümlelere bulguların raporlanmasında yer verilecek, bu cümleler isminizle ilişkilendirilmeden anonim şekilde bilimsel yayınlarda kullanılacaktır.

Bu arařtırmaya katılmak tamamen isteęe baęlıdır. Grřmeye katılmanın zerinizde herhangi bir olumsuz etki yaratması beklenmemektedir. Ancak grřme sırasında yanıt vermek istemedięiniz, size kendinizi rahatsız hissettiren sorular olursa bu soruları yanıtlamadan geebilirsiniz. Grřme sırasında diledięiniz zaman kaydın durdurulmasını isteyebilirsiniz. Grřme bařlamadan nce, grřme sırasında veya sonrasında diledięiniz zaman soru sorabilirsiniz. Katılmayı kabul ettięiniz takdirde alıřmanın herhangi bir ařamasında herhangi bir sebep gstermeden arařtırmadan ekilme hakkına sahiptir. Arařtırmadan ekildięiniz durumda verdięiniz bilgiler deęerlendirmeye alınmayacaktır.

Grřmenizin sonuları, arařtırma sonlandırılmadan nce gzden geirmeniz iin sizinle mail yoluyla paylařılacak ve geri bildiriminiz doęrultusunda gerekli deęiřiklikler yapılacaktır. Burada ama, sizin grřlerinizin ve deneyimlerinizin en doęru řekilde anlařılmasını saęlamaktır.

Arařtırma ile ilgili bilgi almak, soru sormak veya yorumlarınızı paylařmak isterseniz, arařtırmacı Glten Dilara Dikencik ile iletiřime geebilirsiniz.

Eęer arařtırmaya katılmaya onay veriyorsanız, ařaęıdaki metni mail yoluyla arařtırmacıya iletebilirsiniz.

Bu alıřmaya tamamen gnll olarak katılıyorum. Bana anlatıları ve yukarıdaki aıklamaları anladım. alıřmaya katılmayı ve verdięim bilgilerin bilimsel amalı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Sosyo-Demografik Bilgi Formu

Yaşınız:

Eğitim Durumunuz:

- a) Mezuniyetim yok
- b) İlkokul mezunu
- c) Ortaokul mezunu
- d) Lise mezunu
- e) Üniversite öğrencisi
- f) Üniversite mezunu
- g) Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi
- h) Yüksek Lisans mezunu
- i) Doktora öğrencisi
- j) Doktor

Çalışma Durumunuz:

- a) Yarı zamanlı çalışıyor
- b) Tam zamanlı çalışıyor
- c) Çalışmıyor

Çalışıyorsanız mesleğiniz:

İlişki durumunuz:

- a) İlişkim var
- b) İlişkim yok

Cinsiyet: Kadın/ Erkek/ Belirtmek istemiyorum

Cinsel Yönelim: asexual/ biseksüel/ gey/ lezbiyen/ heteroseksüel /diğer

- Diğer ise lütfen belirtiniz:

Yaşadığınız il:

Gelir Düzeyiniz:

- a) Düşük
- b) Orta
- c) Yüksek

Güncel olarak (son bir ay içerisinde) akut psikolojik stres belirtileri (örn. Yakın zamanda yaşanan travmatik bir olayın anılar veya rüyalar aracılığıyla tekrar yaşanması, hissizlik veya dalgınlık, huzursuzluk hali vb.) yaşıyor musunuz?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

Güncel olarak (son bir ay içerisinde) herhangi bir psikiyatrik tanı aldınız mı?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

Hayatınızın herhangi bir döneminde bir psikiyatrist tarafından herhangi bir yeme bozukluğu tanısı aldınız mı?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

Hayatınızın herhangi bir döneminde bir psikiyatrist tarafından Beden Algısı Bozukluğu (Vücut Dismorfik Bozukluğu) tanısı aldınız mı?

- a) Evet
- b) Hayır

APPENDIX C: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Görüşme Soruları

A. Tanışma

1. Kendinizi biraz tanıtır mısınız?
 - a. Günlük hayatınız nasıldır? Neler yaparsınız?
 - b. İş/ okul dışında neler yapmaktan hoşlanırsınız?
 - c. Sosyal yaşamınız nasıldır?

B. Biseksüel+ Olmakla İlgili Deneyimler

2. Şu anda Türkiye’de biseksüel+ bir kadın olmak nasıl bir deneyim? Nasıl tarif edersiniz?
 - a. Sizin yaşadığınız biseksüel+ deneyimini tarif eder misiniz?

C. Biseksüel+ Olmak ve Beden Algısı

3. Bedeninizle ilgili olumlu duygular hissettiğiniz bir anı anlatmanızı istesem aklınıza neler gelir?
 - a. Nerede, ne zaman, kiminle, hangi olumlu duygular gibi açıklayıcı sorularla detaylandırılması istenir.
 - b. Bedeninizle ilgili neler hakkında olumlu hissedersiniz?
4. Bedeninizle ilgili olumsuz duygular hissettiğiniz bir anınızı anlatmanızı istesem aklınıza neler gelir?
 - a. Nerede, ne zaman, kiminle, hangi olumsuz duygular gibi detaylar istenir.
 - b. Bu olumsuz duygularla başa çıkmak için neler yaparsınız?
 - i. Bu şekilde başa çıkmayı nasıl/nereden öğrenmiş olabilirsiniz?
 - ii. Bu gibi duygularla baş etmenizde yardımcı olan deneyimler nelerdir?
 - c. Bedeninizle ilgili herhangi bir şeyi/ yeri değiştirmek ister misiniz? Nasıl?

D. Biseksüel+ Olmak ve Beden Algısının Gelişimi

5. Bedeniniz hakkındaki duygu ve düşüncelerin zaman içerisinde nasıl gelişmiş olabileceğini anlamak istiyorum.
 - a. Çocukluğunuzda beden algınız nasıldı? Neler hatırlıyorsunuz?
 - b. Ergenliğinizde beden algınız nasıldı? Neler hatırlıyorsunuz?
6. Genel olarak düşündüğünüzde bedeninizle ilgili algınız, duygu ve düşünceleriniz nasıl gelişmiş olabilir?
 - a. Ailenizden bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
 - b. Arkadaşlarınızdan bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
 - c. Partnerlerinizden/ partnerlerinizle bu konuda nasıl deneyimleriniz var?
 - d. Toplumdan bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
 - e. Medyadan bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
 - f. LGBT+ topluluğu içinde bedenle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
 - i. LGBT+ topluluğu içinde sizi biseksüel+ bir kadın olarak zorlayan şeyler var mı?
 - ii. Varsa, ne gibi deneyimleriniz oluyor?
7. Zaman içerisinde bedeninize dair duygu ve düşüncelerinizde bir değişim olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
 - a. (Evet ise) Nasıl bir değişim olduğunu tarif eder misiniz? Ne yönde bir değişim oldu? Bu değişim nasıl olmuş olabilir?
 - b. (Hayır ise) Nasıl? Bir değişim olmamasını nasıl anlamlandırıyorsunuz?

E. Biseksüel+ Olmak ve İdeal Beden

8. Size göre biseksüel+ kadınlar için ideal beden diye bir şey var mı?
 - a. Eğer varsa, ideal bedeni nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - b. Eğer varsa, sizce böyle bir bedene sahip olmanın nasıl avantajları vardır?
 - c. Eğer varsa, böyle bir bedene sahip olmanın nasıl dezavantajları olabilir?

9. LGBT+ toplulukta biseksüel+ kadınlar için ideal beden diye bir şey var mı?

Varsa tanımlayabilir misiniz?

- a. LGBT+ toplulukta ideal beden konusunda bir fikir birliği olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
- b. Bu ideal beden tipi nasıl oluşuyor olabilir?
- c. LGBT+ toplulukta ideal beden tipine uymayan kadınlara yönelik genel tutumu nasıl tanımlarsınız?

10. Medyada biseksüel+ bireylerin bedenleri nasıl temsil ediliyor?

- a. Medyadan biseksüellikle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?

F. Sonlandırma

11. Bugün burada konuşmak, bu görüşmeye katılmak size nasıl geldi?

12. Benim sormadığım, ama önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz bir şey var mı?

13. Bana sormak istediğiniz herhangi bir şey var mı?

APPENDIX D
ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

Ethics Board Approval is available in the printed version of this dissertation.

