

TURKISH EDUCATION SYSTEM'S UNDERSTANDING OF RISK:
THE CASE OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCED PARENTS THROUGH THE
EXPERIENCES OF COUNSELORS AND DIVORCED MOTHERS

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

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates how MoNE's definition of risk affects “children with divorced parents” who are among the categories in the “Students with Risk Symptoms” list, and it aims to answer the question of “are children with divorced parents exposed to discrimination in their schools because of their family type”. In this context, in-depth interviews were made with 3 Counseling and Research Center staff, 4 counselor teachers and 15 divorced mothers who has school-aged child/ren. Other than this and content analyses, also participant observation and ethnographic research were used since I observe and interact with participants in their real-life environment, i.e. their workplace for the counselors and their children's school for mothers. According to findings, divorce is still seen as familylessness in Turkish society and our school guidance system correlates divorce to child neglect and abuse. Since they are the most marked category in the risk list due to the deficiencies of the system, children whose parents are divorced draw attention and are exposed to discrimination. Prejudices against these children and especially their divorced mothers are institutionalized through these risk lists at schools. Children of divorced

parents are suffering from labelling and stigmatizing because of the state's "familialism" policy and perception of the "ideal family" at current education system. School guidance system needs an enhancement that embraces new families.

Keywords: divorce, discrimination, risk, children of divorced parents, family policies



ÖZ

TÜRK EĞİTİM SİSTEMİ’NİN RİSK ANLAYIŞI: REHBER ÖĞRETMENLERİN VE BOŞANMIŞ ANNELERİN GÖZÜNDEN, EBEVEYNLERİ BOŞANMIŞ ÇOCUKLAR ÖRNEĞİ

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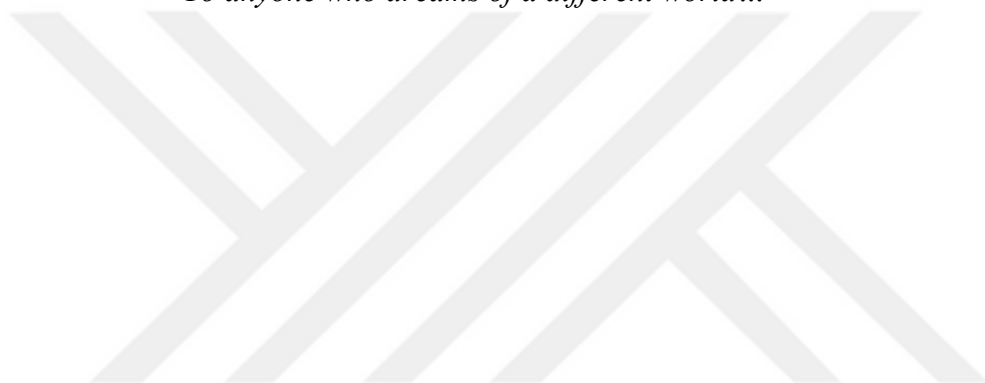
Bu çalışma, MEB’in risk tanımının, “Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenciler Listesi” maddeleri arasındaki, ebeveynleri boşanmış çocuklar üzerinde etkisini incelemektedir; anne babası boşanmış olan çocukların, okullarında, aile yapıları sebebiyle ayrımcılığa maruz kalıp kalmadığını ortaya çıkarmayı hedefler. Bu bağlamda, derinlemesine mülakat tekniği ile 3 Rehberlik ve Araştırma Merkezi görevlisi, 4 rehber öğretmen ve okul çağında çocuğu olan 15 boşanmış anne ile görüşülmüştür. Bunun ve içerik analizinin yanında katılımcı gözlemi ve etnografik araştırma yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Bulgulara göre boşanma Türk toplumunda hala ailesizlik olarak görülmekte ve okul rehberlik sistemimiz ebeveyn boşanmasını çocuk ihmal ve istismarı ile ilişkilendirmektedir. Sistemin eksiklikleri nedeniyle risk listelerinde en çok işaretlenen kategori oldukları için ebeveynleri boşanmış çocuklar dikkat çekmekte ve ayrımcılığa maruz kalmaktadır. Bu çocuklara ve özellikle boşanmış annelerine yönelik önyargılar, okullarda risk listeleri aracılığıyla kurumsallaştırılmaktadır. Mevcut eğitim sisteminde devletin “ailecilik” politikası ve “ideal aile” algısı nedeniyle boşanmış anne babaların çocukları damgalanmaktadır.

Okul rehberlik sisteminin yeni aile yapılarını kucaklayan bir güncellemeye ve iyileştirmeye ihtiyacı vardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: boşanma, ayrımcılık, risk, ebeveynleri boşanmış çocuklar, aile politikaları



To anyone who dreams of a different world...



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PCG: Psychological Counseling And Guidance

CRC: Counseling Research Center

MoNE: Ministry Of National Education



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"I have heard that your mother and father are divorced too. I am very glad about that! You can get along with my Kemal. He used to be very disappointed at his previous school." I work as a counselor teacher in a private secondary school and these sentences have been told to me by a grandmother of a student whose parents are divorced. I think it is a summary of the problem of many single-parent children who face their teachers' biases. Kemal is a very talented child in visual arts, who can draw what he has seen once in every detail but he is not very interested in fundamental academic classes. Regardless of his interests and wishes, his failure in most courses is directly attributed to his parents' divorce. His parents were even told that the child had too many problems to be successful due to the divorce issue and that they would not expect much from him. I had another conversation engraved in my memory like this with another parent of my students', he by the way, is a senior executive who admitted that he used to beat his own child and wife. "My daughter has started to be close friends with Asya in her class these days, but Asya's parents are divorced, and she lives with her aunt. This situation has scared me a bit. I do not want Asya to teach my child unfavorable things." This father's daughter wrote "My father and mother should not fight anymore in the new year please." as a new year wish last year. And he has told me that, for no other reason, he is uncomfortable with a student whose parents are divorced from being a friend of his own child. Yes, these are the dialogues that are still encountered today and concern a large part of society, but that we do not focus on.

It is straightforward to increase such informal examples, but more than that, it is also possible to give examples of official prejudices to children whose parents are divorced. At the beginning of each academic year, there is a list of students in the

“Risk Groups” among the documents that the Ministry of Education asks to be filled out online by the school counselor teachers. And one of the categories in this risk group is children with divorced parents. The teachers, who are already responsible for providing individual and group guidance to each student, are warned by the government to be more careful about the students in such groups and to rehabilitate them as necessary. Such an approach, which seems necessary and relevant to many people at first glance, makes these children more alienated, brings more bias than help, and treats children as potentially problematic adults.

In this thesis, I discuss how an institution’s definition of a concept affects the way its employees have developed to deal with the issue and its target groups. I address how the Ministry of National Education’s (MoNE) counseling system and understanding of “risk” affect teachers (practitioners) and parents and students (target groups). Namely, I aim to discuss if children experience bullying by their teachers because of their parents’ divorce. Therefore, this study seeks answer to the following research question:

How does the MoNE’s institutional definition of “child at risk,” which is based on the “ideal family” understanding, affect counselors’ perceptions, attitudes, behaviour, practices and the children of divorced parents and their mothers?

What is meant by risk, and guidance curriculum will be explained in detail in the following sections. Yet, in brief, the MoNE fictionalizes an “ideal family” understanding through “List of Students with Risk Symptoms” which also includes the children of divorced parents, and considers all characteristics not fitting this definition as “risky.” For example, a child who is an only child in the family or has more than 4 siblings is included in the risk group; therefore, families with 2-5 children are deemed ideal. Similarly, this understanding reinforces a perception of a biological family that is in the middle or upper-middle class, reinforces traditional gender roles, and is adorned with sexist stereotypes. The position of the children of divorced parents in this list is my main argument but whose categories will be touched upon in the following chapters, suggests that all other orders are excluded, except for a family order idealized by the system.

One group of children on this list is children with divorced parents. How are the reasons for qualifying these children as having risk symptoms explained by the Counseling and Research Center staff and school counselors? How does being qualified on this list affect children with divorced parents? How does it affect the relationship between divorced mothers and schools? Discussing and explaining these questions, the aim is to propose a counseling system free from biases and stereotypes so that the counseling system in our country can be more efficient for every child.

1.1. Research Questions and Main Objectives

The primary research question of this study: Does/how does an institution's definition of a concept affect the practitioners of that institution and the subjects of the definition? Thus, to elaborate this question, the questions I need to answer particularly in this study are:

How do the categories in the "List of Students with Risk Symptoms," which is prepared by the MoNE and requested to be filled by counselors every year, affect children on this list? Does the MoNE's understanding of risk lead teachers to create a bias to children in these categories? Are children with divorced parents exposed to discrimination in their schools by their teachers?

While scrutinizing these questions, I will address the view of Turkish society on the concept of family, and the concepts of marriage and divorce, respectively. Moreover, perceptions of father and mother figure in the context of the Turkish family, and parental relationship with the child will be discussed. In what ways does divorce affect the child? Does the divorce have to have a negative impact on the child, as most people predict? Is the child, whose parents are divorced, at higher risk for psychological or emotional abuse? Does the child whose parents are divorced pose a sociological risk to its environment by its lifestyle? How is the relationship of divorced mothers and fathers with their children affected?

I will consider the issues in the context of school since it is the greatest socialization area of children. What problems do children growing up with a single parent face at

school? Do/Should school counselors do extra activities with children whose parents are divorced? What are the most common problems that children whose parents are divorced have in common? What is the effect of living with a single parent on the child's view of school achievement, friendship, and the concept of family?

My main starting point is the school experience of the child and his/her divorced mother. What should be scrutinized are the MoNE's approach, the counseling system in the country, and the theoretical and practical aspects of this system.

1.2.Explanation of The Main Concepts

It is necessary to explain the main concepts used throughout the thesis to hinder any uncertainty.

The school counseling system is a system that is not old to Turkey. Since the very first years of the Republic of Turkey, teachers had been trained as the best-equipped ones who would teach society and raise the generations in the desired manner. The role expected of the teacher was to be "the one who knows everything." The courses in the curriculum being implemented in teacher training institutions were also in line with this philosophy. This perspective also showed itself in the courses taught in earlier teacher schools and village institutes (Üstüner, 2004). Teachers took education not only in their own branches but also in many fields, such as child psychology. Until the 1950s, there were no concepts such as school counselor or guidance teacher in our country because they were not needed.

The current Turkish counseling movement and its programs have been largely influenced by American counseling programs, models, and philosophy all of which were introduced in the 1950's when exchange programs were implemented as part of the Marshall Program for post WWII development (Korkut Owen, 2015). Over the years, the teacher training concept in Turkey has been changed in a stepwise manner, and counseling has also been practiced in schools.

The Ministry of National Education decided to generalize counseling services to all secondary schools over the entire country and to provide two counseling hours weekly for each grade level in the 1974–1975 academic year (Doğan, 1990). The main goal of the system is to protect students from negative psychological effects And Lead Them In The Next Academic Degree Professionally.

According to the Regulation on the Norm Staffing of Administrators and Teachers of Educational Institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, published in the Resmi Gazete dated 6/27/2019 and numbered 30814, all public and private secondary schools must be assign at least one counselor teacher for every one hundred and fifty student in Turkey. Those who have graduated from the departments of Psychological Counseling and Guidance or departments of Psychology with educational formation training, or who graduated from the department of Teaching Philosophy, Psychology and Sociology with five-year seniority and additional training in guidance have the authority to serve as a schools' psychological counselor formally.

The types of guidance services and the activities carried out within the scope of guidance services are clearly stated in the third section of the Regulation on Guidance Services of the Ministry of National Education dated August 2020. Counselor teachers have to provide individual and group guidance to their students, provide educational, vocational, and social guidance, guide by age and grade level, use psychological assessment and evaluation tools to know the individual and do activities to place students to the next grade or next level of school. In addition, services for psychosocial protection, prevention, and crisis intervention, counseling and precautionary practices, and family guidance are also the responsibility of the school counselor. Guidance services at these stages are carried out in the form of protective and supportive counseling under the Child Protection Act No. 5395. According to the fourth article of the second section of the same regulation (No:31213), "Guidance services in education within the framework of the general objectives of Turkish National Education aims to raise individuals who know themselves, evaluate the educational and professional opportunities offered to them, and take responsibility and aims for individuals to realize themselves by living as a

healthy individual in society." School counselors, together with the outputs of such tasks, have to recognize and report any physical, sexual, economic or psychological abuse that all their students may experience outside the school too.

According to Chapter 1, Article 2 of the School Guidance Regulation, school guidance and psychological counseling curriculum is the one that is prepared considering the type, level, and characteristics of the educational institution, the needs of students, the characteristics of the developmental periods, and the students at risk; implemented in a shared understanding and cooperation; evaluated on the basis of evidence. According to Chapter 7, Article 21 of the same regulation, the school counselor has 3 main responsibilities: progressive and preventive services, remedial services, and support services.

Another important concept that we will use throughout the thesis is the Counseling and Research Center. According to the sixth article of the 14th section in the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) Regulation on Guidance Services, Counseling and Research Center (CRC) is the institution that provides a coordinated execution of services by planning guidance and special education services. There is a CRC in each district, and the counseling units of the schools are affiliated to the CRC in that district. The Counseling and Research Centers carry out their activities in line with the directives submitted by the relevant ministry.

The term divorce mentioned in this thesis, according to the Civil Code of the Republic of Turkey, is the legal termination of the marriage bond between a man and woman who are married upon a civil marriage.

1.3.Theoretical Approach of The Thesis

It is necessary to scrutinize the concepts of “discrimination in education” and “so-called ideal family” concept to be able to answer the research questions of this thesis. Although the research interest in Turkey has rarely focused on the bias toward children of divorced parents, the above-specified concepts are among the hot topics of the relevant literature. First, it may need to comprehend the definition of the “ideal

family” of the state since the MoNE is now engaged in an ideal family fiction through the “List of Students with Risk Symptoms” which is one of my main objects. Moreover, I need to extend how the perception of “family” is reflected in institutional policies to be able to answer my general research question covering other research questions, “Does/how does an institution’s definition of a concept affect the practitioners of that institution and the subjects of the definition?”.

As Bourdieu (1996) states, the family is a category that many institutions, including the state, construct and where such constructs turn into reality (Beşpınar & Beşpınar, 2017). When I was 10 years old I was a primary school student and between the ages of 11-14, I was a middle school student according to our national education system in 2000’s. Yet, my father was a high school student when he was the same age, according to the system at his time(70’s). He and I were mandated to purchase the “Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English” for our English lessons at the schools we attended when we were in the age group which is to be studied in this thesis. The very first definition of “family” in his 1978 edition dictionary is *“any group of people related by blood or marriage.”* Yet, the first definition of family in my 1995 edition dictionary is *“a group of people who are related to each other; especially a mother, father, and their children.”* One may confirm on the website that the current version of the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English has the exact definition as its 95’ edition. What is uncovered as “family” as a result of this little inquiry that I did through hard copies of old sources is actually not just a simple definition. It may be an example of how the definition of family has become more restricted, although new family types have been introduced over the years. The first edition of the dictionary (1978) adopts a more inclusive perspective for “family.” Although such a perspective does not directly reflect the state’s perception of the concept, it is important since it shows the changing (in the opposite direction of social change) understanding of an English source, which was actively utilized in foreign language teaching in our country for at least two generations. Indeed, while family types are diversifying today, why is the definition of “family” insistently stereotyped within the trilogy of “mother-father-child” by states, institutions, and organizations? Recently, many institutions have defined their services through the traditional and patriarchal family understanding. I associate ideal family fiction and

traditional family imposition with what Deniz Kandiyoti calls masculinist restoration: men's endless efforts not to lose their vested rights (Kandiyoti, 2013). The political discourse and social policies of the "male state" consistently attempt to redraw a limited role for women by excluding them from employment and blessing their motherhood in the patriarchal family.

As Serpil Sancar states in her book, "The Gender of Turkish Modernization - Men Build State, Women Build Family", our society has profound experiences of masculine domination, structures, and resistance that shall not be easily shrunk. Against the mainstream normalizing or tending to ignore this situation, this thesis adopts a critical and feminist perspective on neoconservative familialism as a recent rising value in Turkey. At the 7th Family Council in 2019, President Erdoğan stated, "We are facing painful times in which the marriage is devalued, non-marital relations are considered normal, and divorce is almost encouraged." In various sections of his speech, he also aired such statements: "Strong nations consist of strong families"; "Every child is born with his/her sustenance"; "We exist with our mothers"; "The immoral lifestyle is showing its impacts in our country more and more every year"; "The legitimization of deviant relations contrary to human nature by certain circles is among the threats"; "They urged birth control, they urged family planning... As a son of this nation, I do not find this path right." At the end of his speech, he underlined the need to design social policies to promote the family institution. The sentences above seem to idealize and reinforce a society where a patriarchal, multi-child, married, traditional and biological family is positioned at the center; where the motherhood is blessed and where financial difficulties are ignored. Besides, this blessed fiction is just like the antimatter of the categories in the "Students with Risk Symptoms List" explored in this thesis. All other family variations that fall outside of this ideal family fiction necessarily show "risk signs." Ultimately, a realistic portrayal should be brought to the existing types of marriage and family to develop social policies to be able to meet the needs of individuals, spouses, and other family members in Turkey (Beşpınar& Beşpınar, 2017).

This study addresses the issue that a healthy family can be mentioned without the patriarchal family order. It questions the mainstream knowledge and system in many

different ways. It criticizes the balance of power in social rules accepted by society and explains social hierarchy. Feminist standpoint theory defends not only women but all marginalized groups. Because of all, feminist standpoint approach is the most suitable theory to analyse and to situate the representation of divorced women's and their kids' experiences and the creation of stereotyped perceptions about how divorce effects the kids. In addition, this study benefits from hidden knowledge of women's life experiences. I obtain an accumulation of diverse experiences of women. I analyze divorced mothers' experiences at their children's schools. School counselors' beliefs and thoughts about divorced mothers and their children are analyzed and discussed. Women's experiences are not considered in mainstream science; they are ignored, so one can say feminist standpoint theory is not common in mainstream studies conducted on issues such as family, marriage, divorce, and parenting. Nevertheless, I consider these issues from a feminist point of view because what is the most critical among my key concepts is the bias caused by patriarchal gender roles.

1.4. Research Design of The Study

I will use qualitative research techniques when searching for answers to my research questions.

I conducted in-depth interviews with divorced mothers, school counselors, and administrators in a CRC. As I am a school counselor, I am in constant contact with other counselors of various secondary and primary schools. I interviewed divorced women, mothers of my own students, and their friends who heard of and wanted to participate in this study. In this regard, I have used snowball technique.

In this study, I do not put a restriction on the variables of age and educational attainment of the participants; it is enough to have a child attending formal education at the time of divorce because children need to be going to school to enable us to see the effects of divorce on them, such as socializing and achievement. The factors affecting the changes experienced by the child increase in the high school level. Behaviors of the ones with primary and secondary school levels are more family-controlled.

With the interviews, I will analyze the literature on discrimination, divorce and children in our country and the world.

1.5.Assumptions and Arguments

The education system is already a system in which certain social norms are transferred to new generations. And psychology is a field in which being non-normative is considered problematic and tried to be corrected. The psychological counseling and guidance units in schools naturally remain in a position to support the classical family ideology and to define the problem over families that do not consist of mother, father and child coexistence. The state perceives the problem upon the termination of the “officially acceptable relationship” and order between the parents. The most important factor in determining how children respond to divorce is parental conflict. Research suggests that many of the long-term effects of divorce dissipate if conflict between former spouses is kept at a minimum (Afifi, 2015). Psychological counseling and guidance units in schools should support the child and the parent rather than labeling and excluding them during the divorce process. In the current situation, it is up to the discretion of the school counselor to teach the child that divorce can be a healthy and necessary decision between parents. Teachers generally depict this situation as if it had to be dramatic and unfortunate. Mothers should be helped to adapt to single life and should not be approached with any biases.

In married parents as well, fathers' participation rate in school activities and parent meetings is very low since the child is considered under the responsibility of the mother, whether married or single. Even though both parents are employed, the father is rarely contacted about child-related matters in the school. In married couples, while the father relies on his wife for the care of the child, he is more interested in the child after divorce in some cases.

The guidance system in schools in Turkey is far from objectivity. According to the codes of conduct, the psychological counselor cannot direct counselee according to its own judgment. The counselor should not make moral judgments but

psychological evaluations (Davis & Meier. 2006). However, personal and social values are prioritized for school counselors. Current PCG services project the stereotypes in certain groups of our society to children belonging to these groups and their parents. The children of divorced parents, especially their mothers, are marginalized and judged in schools. The best example of this is that children whose parents are divorced are included in the list of risk groups. The counselor is obliged to provide counseling with appropriate programs for children in the risk group within the scope of support services. However, how to support which children in the risk group is left to the counselor's initiative. The counselor decides on his/her own whether she/he will do special work for all of the students in the risk group or some among them, or what the special work will be. The school counselor approaches the student and parents from an individual perspective. Each teacher acts on her/his own initiative, but this situation, as will be discussed in detail in the analysis section, is different for counselors and may cause irreversible harm to students and parents.

The education system that is expected "to raise good citizens, good people, and to gain rational economic behaviors," according to Act No. 1739, could not renew itself in the field of guidance according to the requirements of the era. There are guidance surveys filled out by school counselors at the beginning and the end of each semester and sent to the CGC to which the school is affiliated. These surveys contain personal or demographic information about students. Guidance surveys are essential as they provide a nationwide data formation for students receiving formal education. For this reason, they should be filled out thoughtfully and carefully. The objectives of such surveys should be examined, and it should be discussed what consequences these surveys would have if they were filled out in a way that did not serve their purpose. It must be questioned how consciously they are filled out and how they are assessed by whom. These surveys should not be discarded after just statistical information is obtained.

Among the surveys we actively use, I consider the "the list of risk groups" as a practice that promotes prejudices and has more harm than benefit in terms of both preparation purposes and filling out processes. Children who are deemed by the state more likely to be neglected and abused and to exhibit inappropriate behaviors are

considered under the "risk group." There are "children whose parents are divorced," as well as gang members and drug addicts, in this list. However, during the time I have been teaching since 2015, any child that I have witnessed causing problems at school and harming the environment do not have divorced parents. In fact, many of the parents who have decided to divorce pay more attention to their children. However, even if the child with divorced parents has a delighted and decent life, it is common for other people to pity that child with divorced parents or to see him/her as a potential threat. The divorce of parents inevitably causes fundamental changes in the child's life, but if sound procedures are adopted during this process, there is no situation that pushes the child to dangerous or problematic behaviors. Divorced parents do not necessarily mean emotionally abusing their children. School counselors have to attend meetings twice a year throughout the province and district, and the ones working with the same age group in that district come together and exchange ideas. In these group meetings, I discuss the general characteristics of children who cause discipline problems at school and harm others and who are neglected or abused. In meetings with primary and secondary school teachers in Seyhan, the central district of Adana, and in meetings where private school teachers attend, counselor teachers talk about children with divorced parents as problematic. However, when I press the issue, they realize that most of the children causing trouble have married parents. This situation is profound evidence of how biased even school counselors can approach divorce.

The fact that children who use drugs, are exposed to constant violence, show consistently low academic achievement, have suicide attempts and stealing behavior, and become gang member and the children whose parents are divorced or who live with a single parent have the equal "risk" in the eyes of the state is totally the state-initiated projection of the bias of society towards divorce to the school setting.

School counselors' job is to recognize and intervene if any students are exposed to any abuse, even if they are not already on this list. If the students are covered by the items in the list of risk groups by being considered as children that should be taken care of by school counselors in order not to be exposed to any emotional, physical,

psychological violence, the title of the list should be updated with a non-alienating one or such children should be categorized differently.

This list of risk groups is one of the most formal examples that the society and the state regard the parents and their children as problematic in any case even if there are parents who have ended their marriages and maintain their lives and parenting smoothly. It is not the divorce of the parents that increases the rate of negative behaviors of a child but the fact that the moral structure of the society is involved in this personal separation. The child at the beginning or in adolescence undergoes the divorce process of his/her parents by trying to evaluate social pressures. In this process, the impact of the environment may cause the child to experience emotional problems with its family and itself. What increases the likelihood of such emotional abuse is adults' approach to divorce. Children whose parents are divorced are rarely exposed to peer bullying. In general, such children experience bullying with the inappropriate behaviors and words of adults. School counselors are the ones who easily observe the reactions of teachers and other parents to the students whose parents are divorced because they are in constant contact with the administration, teachers, parents, and students and witness the relations of these groups with each other. Yet, if the counselor considers divorce taboo, she/he will definitely normalize adverse reactions to the child. Therefore, she/he will not be able to identify the primary source of the child's distress and find a relevant solution. She/he will also blame the divorce, and the system will fall into a loop.

The adult group, which a child sees even more than its own relatives during the formal education since college, is its teachers. Teachers, administrators, and counselors are the closest role models for children and guide them. Unfortunately, not all faculties of education in our country have compulsory courses on child psychology. Even school counselors do not take compulsory courses on stereotypes or personal restrictions during their university education. Therefore, such counselors can exhibit highly unprofessional and disrespectful approaches to the divorce process.

Children, especially between 10 and 14 years, who care about the social environment including their peers rather than their parents' ideas and directions, may grow up by considering both parents as "wrong." The child forced to believe in the moral structure of the society and the necessity of the desired family concept becomes unhappy by creating distorted perceptions about its family, and therefore about itself and life. The mistake here is not divorce but representing the divorce to the child by its environment from a biased perspective. Including the children growing up with a single parent in the risk groups, the biases of teachers and administrators are reinforced by the MoNE.

I have witnessed several times that the administrators give some suggestions the parents who say that they have decided to divorce or that they are in the process of divorce, such as "Do not divorce in the sake of the well-being/happiness/success of your child," "What will you get by divorce?", "You should not divorce if there is no deception, alcohol or gambling addiction or violence." The administrators in schools adopt approaches exceeding the interpersonal space between parents and teachers or counselee and counselor and judging and guiding the other side with biased discourses.

Even in married parents, the care of the child is generally considered as the responsibility of the mother, and after the divorce, when the mothers come to the school, they are treated as defective, problematic, and incompatible. The majority of such women, who were raised with the ideology that "Men make houses, women make homes" consider divorce as their own failure. Therefore, the mother sees herself as the reason for any problem that the child will experience in this process. I often see mothers who do not want to attend parent meetings due to the change of surname or crying mothers saying, "Because we are divorced..." for even the slightest problem with the child. Regardless of age group or socio-economic status, women with children receive a great reaction from the environment in a way that they set a bad example for their children after the divorce. Especially girls' mothers are put into a difficult situation in their children's school, as well as in the circle of family or friends. Guidance units can also marginalize divorced mothers. These events cause the woman to lose her self-esteem and respect, constantly try to explain

herself, and to restrict herself and her child to avoid actions and words that may be objectionable.

Children, who have a low achievement or fail in their relationship with their peers when their parents are still married, maintain their behaviors after the divorce, but such failures are portrayed as if they were new or due to the divorce. In fact, the children of couples who are married but unhappy in their relationship increase their achievement after the divorce.

Boys who live with their mothers see themselves as "men of the house" with the effect of the teachings of the environment and interfere with their mothers' lives. Especially at secondary and high school levels, boys can restrict their mothers. At the primary school level, boys are too much attached to their mother, such as asking to go to work together or asking to sleep together. On the other hand, girls who live with their mothers can be restrained by their mothers because the absence of the father figure leads to the concerns of mothers being "unprotected." Divorced mothers may encounter verbal or physical harassment of male administrators and teachers at their children's schools.

Counselors in public schools are involved in the divorce process if the parent requests to meet with them to explain this situation, while the teachers in private schools have to adopt closer relationships with children and their parents, so they realize the process and are involved in the process with their own efforts, if necessary. What is critical here is that the awareness levels of these two different groups of counselors are different from each other, which should be emphasized, because one of the groups I will interview during the study is composed of school counselors.

1.6. Significance and Contribution

No previous research in Turkey to date, has addressed the systemic bias toward the children of divorced parents. My study has great importance to note that society and social institutions do not normalize divorce although divorce rates are rising in our

country and to eliminate the bias of the Psychological Counseling and Guidance system in Turkey towards the children of single parents. It reveals the problems experienced by divorced mothers at their children's schools, which is an ignored topic. The present study adopted a multi-faceted perspective in terms of both including the undesirable experiences of divorced mothers at their children's schools and seeking the views of counselors and RAM staff representing the institutional side of the topic. Also it's a first in terms of being the voice of divorced mothers' experiences at their children's schools. Moreover, the fact that I, as a member of each group that is the addressee of this study, scrutinized such a subject may bring a seminal contribution to the literature.

It questions the teaching in the departments of psychological counseling and guidance in universities in our country and the efficiency of the current counseling system. Those having graduated not only from the psychological counseling and guidance program but also from all programs of education faculty, influence at least thousands of children therefore children's families, environment, country, and world throughout teachers' professional lives. With a single word, a teacher may ruin a child's world or open doors that will allow them to rise from ashes. As a teacher having grown up in a family engaging in education since my grandmother's grandfather, who was a headteacher of a school in the Ottoman period, I believe that being a teacher is a different profession from others in terms of its long-term impacts on the future because we directly effect on the new generation every day. And I feel great pleasure in building the future with my students every day. I want not only my students but all children in my country to be taught by open-minded, unbiased, and embracing-all teachers. Thanks to the present thesis, I will continue my effort to take a step toward allowing students in this country to have the opportunity above within the MoNE. Teacher education at universities may be better considering school counselors to be objective, unbiased, and professional. If relevant authorities have a chance to glance at my thesis, they may discover that not only the risk map of the current counseling system but also must courses in the psychological counseling and guidance programs need substantial transformations.

In the 2015 - 2016 academic year, I attended “in-service counseling training” within the MoNE. It was a full-time one-term training in which philosophy and sociology graduates were recruited to close the gap in the number of school counselors across the country. I attended the training as a philosophy teacher who had chosen all the elective courses in the field of psychology and graduated with a without-thesis master’s degree combined with a bachelor’s degree. At the same time, I had just been admitted to Gender and Women’s Studies (GWS) at METU. Although I could not maintain my studies at METU because I would continue this training, it was almost like a place where I went to collect data for GWS. I encountered extremely sexist and discriminatory content in the lectures given by the psychology of counseling professors from some of the most well-established state universities in Ankara and prepared for those who would serve at state schools across the country. When I complained to the head of the department at the time about this situation, supported by the notes I received in the classes, my findings were found to be “ill-founded.” Yet, I think I will be taken more seriously thanks to this thesis because I have much more data than my previous observations.

My goal with such a thesis is to raise awareness about the vital value of this subject that will affect the generations and to find solutions by identifying what the points in our national education system that we can make a difference in our students are.

1.7. Structure of The Thesis

This thesis will be composed of seven chapters: introduction, methodology, “The Place of Children of Divorced Parents in the School Counseling System”, “Problems of Divorced Mothers at Schools” and “Problems of Children with Divorced Parents at Schools” as findings, literature review, conclusion and recommendations for further researches.

The current chapter is the introduction. It starts with some anecdotes and a brief introduction to the context of the thesis. After an introduction about why I chose this topic, this chapter is divided into seven sections. In the research question and main objects part, the concepts and fields that will be addressed frequently are introduced

and it leads the other sections which are the explanation of the main concepts, the theoretical approach of the thesis, research design of the study, main assumptions and arguments, significance and contribution and the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter will be about the methodology of the study. In this chapter, the methodology of the study, research procedures, methodological limitations, and ethical considerations will be explained in detail. My data collecting methods and why I chose these methods will be discussed. Besides, research procedures and the process of reaching the participants will be explained.

Chapter 3 addresses what has been studied about groups which are excluded at school environments internationally and particularly in our country. Besides, the literature that this chapter scrutinizes is specifically on discrimination against children of divorced parents. Then, this chapter discusses the historical and theoretical knowledge of the discriminatory practices of official education institutions against children of divorced parents.

The chapter “The Place of Children of Divorced Parents in the School Counseling System” gives an insight into my findings from the present research and interviews in 6 main sections: 1) Reliability of Counseling Surveys, 2) Understanding the Risk Behaviour Assessment Scale, 3) Inclusion of Students with Divorced Parents in the “List of Students with Risk Symptoms,” 4) Perceiving Divorce as “Familylessness” (Counselors’ Bias toward Divorce, Perception of Ideal Family, “Divorce Leads Neglect, Neglect Leads Other Problems”)

The following chapters are “Problems of Divorced Mothers at Schools” and “Problems of Children with Divorced Parents at Schools”. These sections reveal the biases toward children of divorced parents at schools today, based on the interviews of their mothers and teachers. They point up what being a divorced mother in Turkey may cause one to experience at their children’s schools based on what mothers and teachers uttered.

The last chapter is going to include the conclusion and some recommendations will be made for further research.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the research process, data collection methods, and why I used them are explained in detail. I have explained how I answered my research question and why I chose these methods to answer it. This section provides relevant information about how I accessed participants, how I interviewed them, the descriptives of the participants, and how analysed the interviews. It also presents detailed explanations about the methodological limitations of the study. It consists of the methodology of the research, ethical considerations, research procedures and process, participants, data analysis, and strengths and limitations of the study.

2.1. Research Methodology

One of the main discussions of this study is that children with divorced parents and their mothers often encounter biases in the school environment. In order to research and understand this issue, I conducted in-depth interviews with divorced mothers, school counselors, and administrators in the Counseling and Research Center. In-depth interviews enable one to talk to people about their life experiences, feelings, confidential information, and true stories in detail. Memory analysis helps unleash more efficient studies in social sciences. It does not just show statistical numbers but tells a real life story and reveals a process.

The questions I would ask in the interviews should make me answer my research questions. Therefore, I had to prepare them in accordance with my research questions. The purpose of my thesis was to discuss whether the Ministry of

Education(MoNE)'s understanding and definitions of risk have an impact on students with divorced parents benefitting from counseling services in their schools. Accordingly, my research questions are:

1-How do the categories in the "List of Students with Risk Symptoms" which is prepared by the MoNE and requested to be filled by counselors every year, affect children on this list?

2-Does the MoNE's understanding of risk lead teachers to create a bias to children in these categories?

3-Are children with divorced parents exposed to discrimination in their schools by their teachers?

One can find the questionnaire I prepared to reach the answers to these questions, in the appendix. It is evident that schools were the only places where I could seek answers to these questions. The people I could get responses from were the counselors in these schools and the mothers of the children with divorced parents. In the sub-questions that would bring me closer to the main discussion, I also needed to access technical information, such as the infrastructure and objectives of the guidance system established within the MoNE. For this reason, there was another group I interviewed: the staff in Counseling and Research Center operating under the MoNE. This also helped me to discuss the objectivity of the counselors' answers to some questions.

One of the groups I interviewed was composed of school counselor teachers aka school psychological counselors. Counselors are obliged to provide rehabilitation or referral to a professional psychologist if needed. As a counselor employed in a secondary school, I can say that the counselor is a spiritual bridge among the administration, parents, and student groups. They should provide psychological support for every unit and cluster in the school, which naturally makes them a "keystone" in maintaining the school order. If research is to be conducted on another subject related to social relations within the school, researchers may obtain more data from counselors.

I have a good knowledge about counselor teachers in the internal functioning of a school without giving any reference because I have been working as a school counselor since 2015. Moreover, since my family has owned a private school since 1985, I have pretty much experience within a circle of teachers and educational institutions since I was born. I had a good grasp of both the administrative processes and how teachers behaved and talked about what subjects long before I attempted to initiate the present research. Therefore, I employed the participant observation method since I can observe teachers' national behaviour in a school setting. As I myself have been counseling and experiencing educational processes and sharing similar feelings with them for years, I also kind of used ethnographic research technique. I did not start teaching or was with teachers for the purpose of this study, yet my ongoing way of life just provided the opportunity to use participant observation and create ethnographic research. Furthermore, these designs and methods were very fruitful for my thesis. The same goes for my relationship with divorced mothers, the other group where I utilized in-depth interview technique, since my parents were divorced too.

The most crowded group I interviewed for this thesis which's primary keywords are "divorce" and "children", is mothers. I chose mothers instead of fathers because mothers generally take care of children's education in our country, even if they are married. For this reason, mothers will have more ideas about the school than fathers. And the reason I chose the ones with kids at school age is that they can compare their children's school life before and after the divorce.

As well as participant observation, ethnographic research method and in-depth interview, another research technique that I use for this thesis is content analyses. One of my main research questions is: Does the MoNE's understanding of risk lead teachers to create a bias to children in these categories? Thus I need to explain MoNE's understanding of risk, before. I had to go through the documents covering the definition of "risk" to understand how the MoNE defines a "student with risk symptoms". Therefore, content analysis was used in this thesis, albeit limited.

I reviewed the historical background of the counseling system in Turkey because I wanted to understand why our guidance system has been showing maladjustments to

our society. I also went through all the lists, directives, regulations, and decisions within the counseling systems where the MoNE currently uses the term “risk.” Thus, I clarified what is meant in the “Students with Risk Symptoms List,” which is among the main objectives of my thesis, and uncovered the “ideal family” understanding of the MoNE. Moreover, above my researcher identity, I took the opportunity to observe the teachers (implementers of the system), the staff of CRC’s (the institution to which the teachers are affiliated with), school administrations (the supervisor of the system), and children and mothers who were exposed to the system. Also, I conducted in-depth interviews with the relevant groups to be able to answer the question, “Are the children of divorced parents exposed to discrimination by their teachers at their schools?” I evaluated the experiences of the children based on both their mothers’ opinions and my own observations. Finally, I employed all the techniques specified above to answer the question, “How do the categories in the “Students with Risk Symptoms List,” designed by the MoNE and requested to be filled out by counselors every year, affect children on this list?”

Prof. Dr. Yıldız Ecevit whom I took the course "Contemporary Feminist Theory," used to suggest doing research by “listening to women and even asking yourselves first”. I also think it is critical to benefit from women's experience because the mainstream of any field does not consider or care about it. In order to achieve the purpose of this study, I must know what the children of divorced mothers experience in their kids’ schools, what teachers make them experience and how they interpret the events, and the purpose of the MoNE in counseling studies. Based on this understanding, my theoretical position in this thesis is The Feminist Standpoint Theory since I will base it on women's experiences and narratives. Doing in-depth interviews is a qualitative research technique, which I need the most for writing this thesis. Because we have to pay attention to what women tell us. In this technique, participants can provide profound and detailed data in a conversational mood with the help of the researcher's open-ended questions. Therefore, the feminist theory was deemed the most compatible perspective with this method. "A standpoint arises when people occupying a subordinate social location engage in a political struggle to change the conditions of their lives and so engage in an analysis of these conditions in order to change them." (Cipriani, 2020). Women experience problems also in

divorce that men do not experience or experience much less. If feminists are to make women's invisible problems visible and eliminate the false or poorly reflected social inequality of women, this study serves the purposes described. Feminist standpoint theory is a penetrating perspective in analyzing not only women but also groups that are discriminated against owing to their existence. If children are being put at a disadvantage by society because they grow up in a family order out of their will, it is also among the aims of this study to identify such problems and propose solutions for them.

2.2.Ethical Considerations

“Among the fundamental tenets of ethical social scientific research is the notion of do no harm” (Berg and Lune, 2017). Hence, I applied for ethical approval from the METU Human Research Ethics Committee to evaluate whether the questions I would ask people were ethically appropriate or not.

Ethics committee approval arrived by e-mail on March 16, 2020, the schools in Turkey were closed down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In that week, institutions were trying to identify the disease and planning how to take precautions against it. Therefore, some school counselors, who also had administrative duties, continued to go to their schools, albeit part-time. I was able to interview four counselors and four mothers between March 16-30. Then, all schools were closed down full-time for a while. Meanwhile, Counseling and Research Centers switched to flexible time work. Also some single mothers who were willing to participate in this study canceled the interviews due to concerns such as health problems and economic crisis, which led me to have difficulty finding participants for my study. Since I could not proceed, I took a term leave. After everyone got used to the “new normal”, I was able to complete my remaining interviews in November.

I had the participants choose the interview place in order for them to feel comfortable. We interviewed at the institution where the participants work, or at the schools of their children, or my office. After November, some of the interviews were face to face physically and some of them were held through video conversation via

Zoom or Facetime. In all interviews, I minded confidentiality, so only the participant and I had attended these interviews. I obtained their consent before recording their voices. And I kept the records carefully because these are sensitive data for some people's personal opinions and life.

It was a rather critical factor that the participants trusted me that they would be anonymous, which enabled me to collaborate with them. The real names of all participants, the institutions/organizations they are employed, the schools of their children are presented in the thesis with abbreviations.

2.3.Participants

Participants consist of 15 mothers, 4 counselors, and 3 CRC staff. The CRC staff were also counselor teachers who have worked in various schools before.

One particular common characteristic of the participating mothers is that they are divorced and have at least one child attending school at the time of their divorce. A divorced mother does not need to provide any other criteria to participate in this study. The participants have different professions, ages, and incomes. The youngest mother is 25 years and the oldest is 48 years old when they got divorced. And it has been a different number of years since they got divorced. Their educational attainments include Ph.D., masters, Bachelor's, and high school degrees. Their professions are lecturer, housekeeper, dentist, teacher, salesperson, housewife, architect, banker, journalist and psychologist. They all have one or two kids.

Age ranges and professions of the mothers did not affect the results of my research. As I predicted, divorced mothers of all ages, educational attainment, and income levels said they faced similar social reactions. As I will explain in more detail later, only the difference in their economic potentials is a factor in shaping their lives after their divorce like moving back to their own parents' house if economically needed. I listened to people who volunteered to participate rather than those to be intentionally selected.

There are clearly some reasons for identifying the ages of the children as criteria in this study. First of all, divorce is not a child-caused event, although it is a primary factor that affects the child's life order. Therefore, adults should correctly inform children about divorce in order for them to establish a healthy understanding of this process. As a child grows, the factors on his/her psychology and the stimuli around increase along with his/her own physical and mental development. A child who starts school means stepping into an intense social life. School, which is a miniature of adult business life, is the first place where individuals meet with the judgments and opinions in society. The pre-high school child is younger than fourteen years and is still under family control or direction in his/her choices. The students' personal life and home environment are directly projected in their academic achievement and position in friendship relations. Likewise, what he/she experiences at school is reflected in the home environment. The teacher, student, and parents must collaborate for the healthy pedagogical development of the student. For these reasons, I had to interview mothers with children attending a school to examine whether divorce had any real impact on the child. I had to see if they felt a change in the attitudes and behaviors of the teachers before and after the divorce. In addition, there are three primary school and one high school student's mother to compare how a child's reactions change by age.

COUNSELING RESEARCH CENTER STAFF

	Sex	Age	Teaching experience years (Including the time at CRC)	Years at CRC	Knowledge level on guidance surveys and regulations	Opinions on guidance surveys' efficiency
BÜLENT	Male	39	15	2	High	Efficient
ADNAN	Male	54	28	10	Low	Efficient
AYÇA	Female	44	20	7	High	Not efficient

SCHOOL COUNSELOR TEACHERS

	Sex	Age	Teaching Experience Years	Work place	Number of students at the school where they work	Number of students whose parents are divorced at the school where they work	Method of filling out the surveys	Did they go through a divorce on their own?	Did their parents go through a divorce?
HAKAN	Male	28	6	Public school	750	150	Class counselor fills	No	No
ESRA	Female	41	16	Public school	450	16	School counselor fills	No	No
BARIŞ	Male	35	11	Public school	650	50	Class counselor fills	No	Yes
SERPİL	Female	52	28	Public school	1200	50	Students or class counselor fills	No	No

DIVORCED MOTHERS

	Age at divorce	Years since divorce	Economic freedom at divorce	Job	Mothers' household after divorce	Marital status now	Age of children/child at divorce	Sex of children/child	Custody
ASLI	30	10	Yes	Teacher	(Her Own House) With Her Children	Single	3 - 8	Boy	Mother
ZEYNEP	39	11	No	Referee, Librarian, Pastry Cook	(Her Own House) With Her Mother And Children	Single	18 Months – 13years	Girl- Girl	Mother
BERRİN	32	5	No	Department Chief At Market	(Her New Husband's House) With New Husband And His Children	Married	10	Boy	Father
İDİL	25	6	No	Sales Person	(Her Father's House) With Her Father, Mother And Son	Single	7	Boy	Mother
GÖNÜL	44	6	Yes	Teacher	(Her Ex-Husband's House) With Her Younger Daughter	Single	16 - 21	Girl-Girl	Mother
BUKET	44	1	Yes	Teacher	(Her Own House) With Her Daughter	Single	10	Girl	Mother
HAVVA	43	5	Yes	Lecturer At University	(Her Own House) With Her Children	Single	11-11	Girl-Boy	Mother
HANDE	36	9	Yes	Housekeeper	(Her Parents' House) With Her Father, Mother And Children	Single	10-2	Boy-Girl	Mother

ILGIN	43	9	Yes	Dentist	(Her New Husband's House) With Her Daughter And New Husband	Married	7	Girl	Mother
FİLİZ	41	3	Yes	Psychologist	(Her Own House) With Her Daughters	Single	11-9	Girl-Girl	Mother
CANSU	39	9	Yes	Architect but not working now	(Her Brother's House) With Her Mother, Her Daughter, Her Brother And Brothers' Family	Single	12	Girl	Mother
ALEV	42	9	Yes	Banker	(Her Fathers House) With Her Boyfriend And Her Son	Married	8	Boy	Mother
ECE	26	6	No	Housewife	(Her Mother's House) With Her Mother And Son	Single	5	Boy	Mother
NEVİN	36	1	No	Cook	(Her Mother's House) With Her Mother	Single	11-15	Boy	Father
GÜNEŞ	48	4	Yes	Journalist	(Her Father's House) With Her Brother And Her Son	Single	9	Boy	Mother

2.4. Research Process and Analysis

After obtaining approval from the METU Human Subjects Ethics Committee, I first interviewed the participating mothers. I also work as a counselor and of course there are children at my school whose parents are divorced. My students' parents were also very willing to talk to me about this issue; however, I realized that they might not be honest and comfortable enough with me with some questions. Even if the student has graduated from my school and is attending another school right now, the mother does not want to say anything negative when talking to me about the events her child went through while at our school. Or they can speak the way they think I would like to hear because they know my personal opinions and teaching style. Therefore, I did not include the interviews with some mothers in the analyses and had to interview more parents, although they voluntarily participated in this study. When I had such a problem with my own students' mothers, I continued my research by selecting participants from their friends and acquaintances or those who heard about and wanted to participate in this study. In this respect, the snowball technique was also used to find participants. Snowball technique bears the following handicap: people who are around each other may give similar answers. Nevertheless, I did not face such a problem. As I explained in detail in the previous section, I had a wide variety of participants.

School counselors constitute the other group I interviewed. I informed the participating counselors working in various primary schools as much as the introduction of the preliminary information form about the study.

Nothing about the study was hidden from the participants. However, the volunteer forms were prepared for mothers and teachers in two different ways. What is written in the volunteer forms are as follows:

In the volunteer form prepared for mothers:

The aim of the study is to investigate how the children of divorced parents are affected by the divorce and whether the divorce of their parents has caused any change in the approach of counselors to the children and mothers.

In the volunteer form prepared for counselors and CRC staff:

One of the surveys prepared by the Ministry of National Education and requested to be filled by the counselors every year is the List of Students with Risk Symptoms. How do the categories on this list affect children in this list? How does this study of the MoNE influence the approach of counselors to these children? The aim of this study is to discuss these questions and to propose a counseling system free from biases and stereotypes so that the counseling system in our country can be more efficient for every child.

Teachers did not need to grant permission from the school administrations, as their names and the schools they worked in would not be known. No additional permission was obtained for the participation of the CRC staff too.

The first part of the questionnaire is intended to obtain information from the counselors about their profession and their own view of their profession. Then, questions are asked about counseling surveys, specifically the List of Students with Risk Symptoms, and about single-parent children. It ends with questions about their own personal information. The first part of the interview form prepared for the mothers includes questions about their personal information, the divorce process, and the possible impacts of divorce on the children. The questions directed to the CRC staff are generally technical ones about counseling surveys and their practices rather than subjective ones.

I recorded the interviews and then transcribed them down so that it would be easier to notice similar and different aspects of the records. I will discuss the analysis of these interviews by combining it with the literature.

While analyzing the participants in the study, I compared the responses of the CRC staff, counselors, and mothers to the questions on the same topic. I categorized the participants by their attitudes on the subjects I would consider in the literature review. In particular, I discussed the questions to which mothers had difficulty responding or all gave the same response. Also, in the answers I got from

participating mothers, I noticed that some of them also adopted the ideas that come with "divorced mother stereotype" and they judged themselves cold-heartedly. I also separated the mothers who reflect their problems to their children or hold their children responsible for the problems and the ones who really hold a healthy process.

I also noticed in the analysis process that all the mothers whose young children were not attending school stated those children's views of divorce changed with starting primary school. I grouped the mothers by the age of their children so that I could evaluate the differences in children's reactions and the social factors that might affect their reactions.

The responses in the interviews mainly infer that if the woman does not have an individual income and only depends financially on the father of her child during their marriage, she may need the financial support of her family at least for a while after the divorce. She moves to her own parents, which makes her family increasingly comment on the issue of divorce. Grandparents also have a relative dominance over the children in these cases. It was not among my questions whether the mothers used to work when they had been married, but they indicated it while explaining the divorce. One of my criteria in the analyses was that the woman had economic independence when divorcing.

Through the counselors' responses to the questions of their own divorce or the divorce of their parents, I also discussed their approaches towards children with divorced parents.

Mothers were generally eager to talk in the interviews. Those who heard about me and my research and wanted to participate in the study were more than the number of participants required for the research. They took my questions thoughtfully and made an effort to understand what was wanted from them. They gave even more detailed information than expected at times. Although I was listening with interest, some apologized for taking too much time, thinking she was talking too much. On the other hand, the counselors and CRC staff frequently looked at the clock as if asking the questions to end as soon as possible, and some asked how many questions

remained during the interviews. They asked several times before starting the interviews to make sure that their school and their names would be kept confidential. I was not too insistent, but I had to try to persuade them to participate in the study.

At the review process counselors thought it would be fine to search this topic but no need whether there were or not, and CRC staff was not even that enthusiastic. Nevertheless, when I started to interview the mothers, I felt that this work was significant. The mothers needed to tell and to be heard so much. When they felt that they had found a free-talk safe space where they would not be judged, they were able to evoke different issues, sometimes breaking away from the questions. Although I had to direct them to the subject in such situations, I generally did not get involved because I did not want to spoil the moment when they felt intimate. Also, the things they were revealing could be the answer to my other questions. There were mothers who thanked me for such a study. One of them said that she was surprised that this problem was even noticed and her hopes for equal social life rights blossomed. They were hoping to contribute to change things and just wanted to think that this work would have concrete evidence in which the theory could influence practice.

2.5.Strengths and Limitations

First of all, one of the strengths of this research was being able to create a mutual trust with the participants. My being a student of Gender and Women's Studies seemed like a mainstay for the women. I could understand they felt safe and talked more comfortably when they heard this. However, my department and being a METU student were perceived as a threat by both the counselors and CRC staff. I felt that there was a bias against METU and Gender and Women's Studies, and my work was found marginal for them. There were teachers who did not want to participate; they politely, jokingly, refused. But I found participants in these groups who would trust and speak candidly. This situation did not turn into a problem for my research.

While conducting this study, apart from my researcher identity, my individual characteristics had different impacts on three different groups of participants. It was

not just because of the department I was a student of. Likewise, me being a woman with divorced parents was a factor that made divorced mothers feel comfortable during the interviews, but for the counselors, it was sometimes the opposite. Since I am both a woman living in Adana and having experienced school environments, mothers opened their souls to me, thinking that I listened to them with care. The counselors, on the other hand, could not comfortably express their opinions, thinking that I would be offended because my parents were divorced. Hence, I tried to find counselors who are not familiar with my background in detail. Interviews that I used in the paper are these ones.

I think that ensuring participants feel comfortable and their experiences deserve credit and providing trust should be the most substantial aspect of qualitative research.

In addition, the fact that I work actively in a school environment and being in constant contact with teachers from all branches of various schools is one of the strengths of my research because I can directly observe what the problems are in reality.

Although a well-structured content and the evaluation of the events from two perspectives (since I am both a counselor and a child of divorced parents) can be shown among the strengths of the study, active counseling made my writing process difficult. The long breaks I took from the thesis, because I was working, caused me to be apart from the academy and disconnect from the subject. More than a year between data collection and analysis made it difficult for me to understand the data to perform relevant analyses. Indeed, there are two major reasons why the analysis was more difficult. Firstly, since it was so long since the interviews, I re-listened to the audio recordings in case I missed something, re-read the transcripts, re-examined the charts, and these activities took considerable time. Second, my perception and thoughts on the subject significantly deviated from those when I first collected the data. To put it another way, the experiences I gained in the school where I have been working as a counselor teacher led my perspectives to change. My thoughts on the bias toward divorce at schools and my thoughts on our counseling system did

definitely not change. Yet, active counseling led me to modify my response to the question, “Do counselors need to take extra care of students of divorced parents?” When I first chose my thesis subject, I was a less experienced teacher and faced far fewer cases. Also, as a child of divorced parents, I was freshly angry at the reactions to my mother-a teacher- and my sister-a high school student- at their school during the divorce process. I still argue that children of divorced parents and single mothers experience biases from their teachers, administrators, and even other parents. Yet, when I started my journey, I did not think that a counselor should take special care of children of divorced parents. I will not relate this idea to my own experiences since I was already a 21 years old college-going adult and was studying abroad when my parents divorced. I didn’t even know that they were divorced until returning to Turkey. I received training for “Therapy on Adaptation to Divorce” and “Cognitive Behavioral Counseling with Children” in 2018. I used to think that a child is not likely to be adversely affected by divorce based on my educational background and what I experienced in other divorces in my own limited circle. However, as I gained experience in counseling, I understood more clearly that theory and practice do not necessarily overlap every time. Now, I believe that it would be beneficial for the children in the divorce process to be under the supervision of a counselor within a labeling-free, pedagogically appropriate approach because divorce is a life-changing phenomenon for children. Even if the new life is better, it is different. So they may need unbiased support during the adaptation process. Yet, I do not think that this means that they pose a “risk” to the community, their environment, or themselves; thus, they should not be included in the above-specified list in terms of the title of the list and its categories. No one can predict that these children will act against the law; there are no findings showing that these children are suicidal; they do not necessarily be naughty or unsuccessful; there is no scientific indication that their social skills will be poor. As a woman with divorced parents who undertakes both counseling and administration in my school, I am in a position to get involved in all the objects and subjects of the thesis and I believe that this study will be a key step for our counseling system.

When I come to the limitations, first I thought that the number of interviews in this research is not enough to generalize the results. But since it is qualitative research,

this thesis does not claim to be a representative study. The sample of this study was not a homogenous group; I reached out to people of various ages, different socioeconomic statuses, and varying educational attainment and listened to mothers, teachers, and RAM staff. Based on my personal and professional experience, I did not include the interviews where the participants gave distorting responses to the questions and performed new interviews with new participants. My study did not require any additional budget since what I wrote about is already a part of my professional life. Therefore, I frankly admit that I could not find significant limitations to my study; I think the thesis was robustly structured. The only problem I had was the time constraint, hindering me from penetrating the relevant literature enough. In addition, although particularly taking care to remain neutral, my experiences in my parents' divorce may have influenced the analyses and comments.

During the research, although not included in the subject I researched, I made significant findings that could inspire other researches. From what was told through the in-depth interview, I identified common problems that need to be investigated in detail. For example, although the counselors I interviewed hold diverse perspectives of their profession and had different ages, they agreed on one issue: schools in Adana need support for Syrian students. War victim families and children need not only financial but also psychological and sociological support. The schools also need the support of required language-speaking personnel. In some schools, the number of counselors is not sufficient for the number of students. In addition, a system emerged that teachers agreed and certainly needs to be emphasized and improved: the counselor must be secured to fill the guidance surveys efficiently and appropriately. As I will explain in detail in the conclusion and recommendations section of the thesis, counselors may not report some cases because they do not feel safe. For this reason, the data in Counselor Research Centers may not be reliable. To what extent this situation should be checked in schools in other cities and districts. Further studies may scrutinize what was found in my study.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews educational theories and research covering the keywords inclusive education, discrimination, social equality, exclusion, social exclusion, family types, new families, divorce and social biases. I reviewed the papers investigating the relationship between these concepts and education, particularly primary and secondary education. In this way, I will have an insight into research on those discriminated against at schools anywhere in the world recently or over a period of about forty years, which is likely to be helpful when analyzing the data collected.

Among diverse types of discrimination, I am concerned with the discrimination against single parents and children of divorced parents, which is rather specific and prevalent more in conservative countries like ours. The broader literature where I will explore the topic is discrimination and exclusion in education. As a sub-research, I will discuss the groups of children who are despised and biased by the education system or the practitioners of the system at schools. I will discuss groups excluded from schools in one paragraph for each and elaborate on my topic, divorced mothers and their children, in detail. So far, the literature has touched upon discrimination against students and parents in the following themes: race, religion, low income, LGBTI+, gender, people with disabilities.

The previous research on these topics suggests that the excluded people have appeared in different groups in different countries over the years. Sociological changes naturally show themselves in the studies. For example, while the children of divorced parents were extensively studied in the 1980s in Europe and America, the contemporary literature is full of studies on the children of LGBTI+ parents. In Turkey, on the other hand, many theses have discussed the problems of the children

of Syrian immigrants at schools since 2018. Although different groups are discussed more in different places and times, “exclusion at schools” has always been a major topic for social sciences.

This thesis is basically about the discrimination of divorced mothers and children of divorced parents at schools. Literature in Turkey hosts quantitative studies on divorced mothers, and children of divorced parents. Family and School in Social Change (2007), Comparative investigation of guidance needs of children, who are attending primary school in complete and shattered families (2013), Comparison of attitudes toward violence and aggression in the children of separated and married parents (2019) are some of these studies and also one can find lots of quantitative master thesis like The examining of the adaptation to divorce and depression levels of the 9-12 year old children whose parents are divorced or in the process of divorce (2019), The assessment of self-esteem and mental health variables of the parental divorce children in comparison to the non- parental divorce children (2017), Investigation of self-esteem depression and perception of acceptance-rejection of children in divorce process with respect to various variables (2014).

Because of their methods, these studies focus on the result, not the process. Ultimately, my qualitative study will open the way for understanding the reasons for the findings in these previous quantitative researchs. In addition, my work will contribute much to the literature since documenting the views of people both discriminated against and discriminating against others.

3.1.Discrimination In Education

Diversity at schools is described in eight categories by Lodge and Lyncy (2004) and these are: gender, sexual orientation, religious believe, age, race, disability, traveler community, family and marital status. These aspects, conceived of as subdimensions of diversity, could have also been the subdimensions of a possible study to be titled Discrimination at Schools. In the research titled “Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination”, Göregenli (2012) uses almost the same aspects when describing discrimination not only at school but also in all domains of life. Accordingly,

discrimination always hits women constituting half of the world population, people belonging to different ethnic origins, religious beliefs, and sects, people with different skin colors and sexual orientations other than heterosexuality, those without physical characteristics dictated by the century or even decades, those hindered due to their physical characteristics, and dissidents. Discrimination is often so normalized that the above-specified groups are not aware that their fundamental rights are violated. Even they sometimes perceive such violations as their destiny (Göregenli, 2012). Because of schools' function; rising discrimination, exclusion, bias, and labeling at schools means that these being transmitted to new generations. Therefore, discrimination at school appears as a significant issue in every community. The groups previously investigated the most for getting discrimination by other students and teachers in education systems or schools are as follows: people with disabilities, minorities, immigrants, people with different race and religions, the low-income, LGBTI+, women and single parents.

Discussing discrimination against these groups at school can not be independent of bullying since exclusion, ignorance, neglect, making fun, and humiliation all are considered within emotional, social, and relational bullying. Goodstein (2013) describe emotional bullying as deliberately damaging one's self-perception. Thus, emotional bullying may cover such attitudes as insulting a particular race, ethnicity, and religious belief, nicknaming, making fun of one's disability, gender, and sexual orientation, humiliation, intimidation, and challenging in public (Goodstein, 2013). Also acts of aggression such as staring, suggestive squinting, frowning, sighing, pursing lips, laughing sarcastically, and using threatening body language are also considered emotional bullying (Eminoğlu, 2018). Scholars often show the groups having discrimination at schools as also same examples of peer bullying. Emotional bullying turns into rejection and repetitive rejection turns into social anxiety (Calvete, 2014), and children with social anxiety are also prone to emotional bullying (Atalay, 2010). In this sense, these children enter a vicious circle in their social relations at school. This vicious circle of "bullying- rejection - social anxiety - bullying" is characterized by discrimination, labeling, stigmatization, and stereotyping in its causes or consequences. Because it should always be remembered that treating a person or group unequally/differently because of a certain

characteristic is defined as discrimination (National Research Council, 2004). People discriminate against and label “others” who are different from them. The labeled ones are no longer “us” but “they” and lose their status due to being left out of the group (Link & Phelan, 2001). The loss of status leads them to reenter a similar vicious circle mentioned earlier. According to Goffman’s (1963) stigma theory, people or groups are highly affected by stigmatization, and the stigmatization is always related to their status, relationships and behavior within society.

In the entire literature, regardless of season or region, the group that the most extensively studied regarding discrimination at schools includes students affected by physical or mental disorders. The discrimination here usually appears as institutional discrimination beyond bullying between children. Schools do not prefer to teach groups that are thought to be more costly or require more effort to be educated (Bergman & McFarlin, 2018). The point that Bergman and McFarlin touched upon also applies to our country. In Turkey, within the scope of “inclusionist/ integrationist education practices,” students with physical or mental disabilities have to be taught at schools together with their healthy peers through some additional practices and precautions specified in the relevant regulation (Özel Eğitim Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Kararname, 1997). To provide special education support for these students, schools may need to arrange auxiliary classrooms, special education materials, and necessary measures. Since all the practices above mean more effort and expenditure, some schools may not want to admit such students. In 2016, as physically or mentally incompetent students in need of special education encountered problems in enrollment in private schools, the MoNE issued a warning bylaw that private educational institutions have an obligation to admit children with special needs.¹ Even if this institutional discrimination disappears, students who have a mental or physical difference, especially among younger students, may be intrigued and offended by their peers.

While disability may be temporary or happen to anyone, the race is something inherently accompanying one till the end of life. In this regard, inborn and permanent

¹ (<https://www.meb.gov.tr/ozel-okullara-engelli-ogrenci-kaydi-uyarisi/haber/10826/tr>)

characteristics often lead to situations with more frequent stigmatization (Coleman, 1986). And when it comes to the educational context, teachers may also have racial or class biases, whether they are aware of it. Their such biases, in turn, affect teacher-student interactions and, thus, students' views of the school, education and society. As a counselor, I can repeatedly assert that school can be considered a simulation of adult life. Suppose children permanently take for granted negative perceptions about their own selves, such as their ethnic origins. In that case, it may be difficult to correct these perceptions in the future, even with professional support. Bias not only adversely affects the child's social relations but also can reduce their academic self-expectation and thus achievement. A study, "Same work, lower grade? Student ethnicity and teachers' subjective assessments", highlighted that teachers do have lower expectations from minorities and negative attitudes. "Expectations and attitudes may indirectly induce minorities to perform poorer" (Ewijck, 2010). The data in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study - Kindergarten (ECLS-K) in the USA also revealed that teachers tend to give a better grading to children of their own racial and ethnic origin (Ouazad, 2008). Many ethnic groups already live together in our country. Nevertheless, the education of Syrian children, who have been fleeing to Turkey due to the war since 2011, has been the subject of hundreds of studies since 2016. Inevitably, schools are the places that can facilitate the adaptation of those having fled the war to life in a new country. In his thesis, "Building Bridges Through An Inclusive Education System: The Case of Syrian Refugee Children in Hatay/Turkey," Hilal Keleş found that almost half of the Syrian refugee population in Turkey consists of school-age children, which is an alarming situation for refugee education. Education plays a key role in helping refugee children cope with the undesirable situations they have been exposed to and adapt to the destination country. Yet, nationalist and xenophobic approaches at schools will ruin their social adaptation.

Other than having a different race, also being a member of a low-income family may also lead children to experience prejudice at school. Family income is highly affected on the physical, intellectual, psychological, and emotional well-being of individuals. Families with higher income levels can invest more in their children, increasing their chances of being successful and healthy (Conger & Dogan, 2007). However, it is not

strange to see students hitting exceptional academic achievements despite the most adverse conditions (Condly, 2006). Therefore, teachers and school administrations should not hinder low-income families' academic expectations from their children.

In the field of education, one can observe that stereotyping is most obvious under the title of gender in Turkey. In Turkey, there are rather apparent expectations and stereotypes by gender of students and teachers. Teaching is still associated with babysitting, which is still often attributed to the female gender. Even just being a woman is not enough; parents prefer teachers of their children to be mothers. The MoNE's 2022 data highlight that 65% of teachers appointed in the last five years are women and that 93% of preschool teachers, 56% of primary school teachers working in public schools are women. As of 2003, the rate of female teachers in schools was 67%, while the rate of female school principals was 4%. Males held 92% and 99% of administrative seats in primary and high schools, respectively (Köroğlu, 2006). In many well-known chain private schools across the country, male teachers are not recruited for younger age groups. Additionally, even the brand names of schools competing with chain schools mostly include a female name (e.g., Nesibe Aydın, Yasemin Pakkan, Süheyla Tokyay). Even the aspects listed may confidently imply how stereotypical a school setting is, but the problem is not only about stereotypes of male and female teachers. According to the Education Reform Initiative's calculation of the annual enrollment rates (2021 and before), girls always remain behind boys in attending school at all grade levels. It is also apparent that there is still the bias that girls will still achieve lower achievement in math, science, and sports even if they are able to enroll in a school and that the number of female students in technical vocational high schools is much less.

If people have negative expectations for a group or if society and institutions adopt discriminating attitudes toward that group, members of that group will substantially fail. This situation will turn into trouble for our future, particularly when it is witnessed in educational institutions.

3.2.Bias Toward “New Families”

In this thesis, the most significant group often confronting exclusion at schools is “new” families. It is still not unusual in our country that children from families that do not fit the “usual” family structure experience exclusion at their schools because of their way of life. According to Levy (1967), family relationships do not affect one’s relationships outside the family in modern societies, while the family determines the out-of-family life of individuals in non-modern communities. There are hardly any recent western sources discussing the potential implications of the lifestyles of children of divorced parents and the negative attitudes of their teachers or schoolmates. Yet, this does not mean that western states have adopted every family structure. The children of divorced parents have recently ceased to be the hot subject of research, thanks to the normalization of divorce, but have been replaced by the children of LGBTI+ parents. It is needed to consider the link between research in different countries and the family policies of those states. The ongoing divergence between the policies of states and what people want for their family life suggests that states always fall behind the times when it comes to the family (Daly, 2005).

Research on the association between teachers’ commitment to cultural expectations and their capacity to adopt different family structures and the problems that may arise from such an association should be valuable for every community, albeit in different time periods. However, it is not surprising to encounter the sources of bias equating divorce with danger in our country, which is extensively fed by the family-priority policies. For example, as in Şentürk’s(2008) study titled “Current Risks Toward Family Institution,” most of the articles in the Journal of Social Policy Studies, the official publication of the MoFSS, are full of “academic” discourse of bias toward divorce and “divergent” types of families.

Was the idealized classical family as peaceful and efficient as it was praised? In the study, *The Way We Never Were*, Stephane Coontoz (1992) emphasized that the ideal family is just fiction. It is a comforting nostalgia for the largely mythical past of “traditional values” and a trap that can only cripple our capacity to resolve the issues of the present (Coontoz, 1992). Such a dangerous “nostalgia” does not offer solutions

to contemporary problems but brings unprecedented burdens to new families. Divorced parents are the most crowded group of members in this new family style in Turkey. And both socially and legally, we relentlessly stigmatize single parents as bad parents who have broken, incomplete, dysfunctional families which result in predictably disastrous consequences for their children. (Dowd, 1995)

Upon ceasing to be stuck in the past and shifting the focus on contemporary family, one is likely to discover there is no uniform life order. Even so, personal choices can be judged in our country on the grounds that they appear “contrary to social order and social morality.” In this regard, even rights and freedoms can be interfered with (Yaşar, 2015). Children are the most obvious group whose within and out-of-family lives are inevitably intertwined. Since they are too young to bear most of the responsibilities in life, these responsibilities are often undertaken by their parents at home and teachers at school, which requires constant communication between parents and teachers. Thus, their family structure and “professional” life become nested. If teachers do not approve of the life order that parents prefer or have to maintain, they may reflect their non-approving attitudes on children adversely.

The teacher’s opinion was considered an objective and reliable ground in the research trend in the 60s and 70s until the bias of teachers toward children of divorced parents was discussed by Blettchman (1982). Dozens of studies investigating the impacts of divorce on children utilized teachers’ assessments as indicators of students’ overall achievements. However, there were substantial differences between the findings of these studies and the research not relying on teachers’ assessments. While the first group of research often concluded the failure of children in single-parent homes, those based on school adjustment scales or achievement tests reported no significant differences between children growing up in a household with and without a father (Guttman, Geva, & Gefen, 1988). Indeed, studies after 1982 revealed the stereotypes and biases among teachers. In that study, *Teachers’ Generalized Expectations of Children of Divorce*, before meeting students, the teachers predicted that girls living with only their mothers would fail at 14 basic life expectancies than those living with both parents (Ball, Newman, & Scheuren, 1984). Moreover, the teachers expected children of married parents to do better

academically, socially, and emotionally than their peers of single parents or if the parents were married to another person (Guttmann & Broudo, 1989). As stated before, although the research in the western literature scrutinizing the bias toward children of divorced parents has been replaced by studies such as *Do Schools Discriminate Against Homosexual Parents? Evidence from an Internet Field Experiment* (2015), the replication of a study carried out in 1988, unfortunately, concluded the same findings concerning teachers in 2008. What was different than the situation 20 years ago as a result of the study titled *Teachers' and School Children's Stereotypic Perception of the Child of Divorce: 20 Years Later* was just one thing that children did not have a bias toward their peers of divorced parents anymore (Guttman, Lazar, & Karni, 2008).

On the other hand, more recent studies have shown that despite an increasing trend, the acceptance of single-parent households does not embrace this new family form as an ideal but halfheartedly acknowledges its existence as a reality (Díaz Serrano & Flamand, 2020).

Teachers are the adults that children interact with most often. Most children observe the behavior of their teachers more than their own parents. While single parenting is popular worldwide, teachers' low expectations of children from such a family structure are likely to put children at a disadvantageous position, according to the version of the Pygmalion effect adapted to education by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968). Children may be estranged from education not because their parents are divorced but because of bias and discrimination.

3.3. Definition of Risk

The discrimination occasionally manifests itself in risk definitions in situations where the existence of new types of families is acknowledged but not normalized.

Spikin (2013) opens the article, *Risk Management Theory*, by uttering that the existence of risk and the effort to address the risk are inevitable in human life, as Hillson (2006) states. Upon addressing the concept of risk from a sociological

perspective, it appears as a cultural way of responding to threats to the boundaries of a group, organization, or society, to definitions of reality, and to the ways through which the social order is preserved. Therefore, the risk is primarily understood in the difference between “self” and “other” (Zinn, 2006). In this case, each definition of risk is also a definition of “other.” The “List of Students with Risk Symptoms,” one of the main targets to scrutinize in this thesis, offers a definition of risk by the MoNE; hence, it also means the MoNE’s “other” ization of the students in this list.

The definition of a risk group varies by its context. For example, the “risk group” often heard in the news these days is most likely to be the group vulnerable to the fatality of COVID-19. For a bank, customers with surety or similar relationships that may result in insolvency constitute a risk group. According to the Compulsory Earthquake Insurance Communiqué of the Resmi Gazete dated 7 April 2019, the risk group is identified using the Turkey Earthquake Hazard Map, ground conditions, and building attributes. It is likely to multiply such examples in different areas, yet two major issues concern this study about risk: 1) how the Turkish National Education System defines a risk group and 2) in which aspects children of divorced parents are recognized in the risk group.

It may be appropriate to touch upon the “risk group” in the Turkish national education system. Considering the definitions suggested throughout this study, the risk group often refers to “individuals at risk” or “groups at risk”. I think that the categories in the “MoNE’s List of Students with Risk Symptoms” are designed to overlap the behaviors in the “List of Risky Behavior”. I air “I think” because the MoNE has no clear directive on or definition of this subject. However, as discussed in the following sections, counselors do not agree on if the children on this list are “at risk” or “pose a risk.”

Supposed recognizing that the child of divorced parents is at risk, one may read an average of 30 years of western literature on this subject. Besides, the literature is mainly occupied by two interrelated topics associated with risk: “neglect” and “abuse” of the child. Bletchman (1982), Hetherington (1999), and Wilson (2000) previously discussed if children of divorced parents are at risk. Exploring these

studies in detail, the point that needs to be noted leads to the main reason for neglect and abuse. The findings of these studies overlap the issues discussed in the previous chapters of this theses. Accordingly, children of divorced parents are not an insignificant part of society. The probability of undesirable events happening to them will inevitably increase if they are alienated by the state, excluded by society, and imposed by their environment to be unsuccessful and unhappy. So the reason is not about being a child of divorced parents but being discriminated in society. In the national literature, the reseach in sociology does not often consider children of divorced parents as a risk group, but it is not the case for educational research. Children of divorced parents are rarely considered in risk groups-oriented studies of non-governmental organizations for risk groups. Also the studies of the Ministry of Family and Social Services and the MoNE always describe such children as a risk group. Overall, it may imply again that the definition of risk substantially differs by scholar or field.

On the other hand, there is longitudinal and far-reaching evidence against the MoNE's erroneous point of view that children of divorced parents may "pose a risk" to themselves, their environment, or society. Barton's (1981) research, "The Effects of One-Parentness on Student Achievement," revealed that the problem is not single-parentness but the transition to the low socioeconomic status that comes with divorce. If the child's standard of living has changed significantly following the divorce, poor student achievement is rather likely. In addition, the study, "Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce on Young Adult Male Crime," suggested no association between young adult male crime and parental divorce. However, young adult male crime is linked with social class and father's criminality (Mednick, B., Reznick, C., Hocevar, D., & Baker, R.,1987).

The definition of risk group should be clarified in our counseling system to avoid a dichotomy between teachers' understanding of this term. The "List of Students with Risk Symptoms" is an inappropriate title, as any definition of risk also identifies an "others" group, and school counseling services must embrace everyone.

3.4.Divorce Counseling in Turkish Schools

According to Article 28 of the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989, the States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity.

Regarding the legal principles on the right to education in our country, the following articles are included in the second part of the Turkish National Education Law, titled Basic Principles of Turkish National Education, published in the Resmi Gazete dated 06.24.1973 and numbered 14574:

Article 4- Educational institutions shall be open to everyone regardless of their language, race, gender, disability, and religion. No privilege shall be granted to any person, family, group, or class in education.

Article 7 – It is the right of every Turkish citizen to attend primary education. Citizens shall benefit from education institutions after primary education to the extent of their interests, talents, and abilities.

Article 8 – Equal opportunities and opportunities shall be provided to all men and women in education.

The right to education in Turkey is equal for everyone on paper, as apparent in the conventions to which Turkey is a signatory or in its own laws. However, in practice, the school environment does not welcome every child on equal terms.

The MoNE’s categorizing some students as “students with risk symptoms” and integrating such a practice in the counseling system inevitably generates a negative perception among counselors toward the children categorized in this list. On the other hand, the list is proof of the institutionalization of the state’s “familialism” policy and perception of the “ideal family” at schools. Formulation of family policies often relies on the issues such as maintaining family integrity and increasing divorce

rates. Yet, it should also consider economic, socio-political (reducing the expenses of family needs), gender equality (women's economic and social disadvantages), and children's welfare (ensuring a legal framework for children's needs) (Kaufmann, 2000).

Children categorized in the list of students who has risk symptoms, or their families, as discussed in detail in the following chapters, are perceived beyond the roles in the general social order. Although not assuming the roles of the general public is not a legal crime, it can be perceived as social deviance. Deviance is defined as the inability to conform to certain norms accepted by a significant number of people in a community or society (Giddens, 2008).

In our country, school counseling services offer no additional practices to explain divorce to children and help them understand the process. However, it is deemed effective for school counseling services to support both parents and children during divorce (Freeman & Couchman, 1985). One of the most productive practices in divorce counseling is to utilize the works of children's literature describing divorce (Beekman, 1986). Although the stories and images in Turkish children's literature always have a "leaving one" who is mostly the father, there are books written to explain divorce to children (e.g., Babasının Başka Evi Var, Çocuklardan Boşanılmaz, Tafi'nin Artık İki Evi Var, Babam Taşınıyor...). Even if their contents are rather positive and productive, no book of this type is resorted to as an auxiliary resource in our school counseling system.

Yılmaz & Sipahioğlu (2012) recommend that school counseling services in Turkey engage in practices with children of divorced parents using protective factors. The study also recommends that school counseling services take precautions before adverse events occur and adopt an explanatory attitude toward children, as in the examples abroad.

Our counseling system should support the change process in the children's life order, instead of stigmatizing them as potentially suicidal, dependent, and aggressor and

marginalizing both the children and divorce concept with approaches aimed at “integrating children into society.”



CHAPTER 4

THE POSITION OF CHILDREN WITH DIVORCED PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE SYSTEM

4.1. Reliability of Counseling Surveys

This thesis discusses the systemic bias and discrimination against children of divorced parents in school counseling services. The research questions are directly linked with the “Students with risk symptoms” and the system hosting this list. Therefore, first of all, the functioning of the counseling surveys at schools should be understood, and the counseling system should be well defined. Based on the findings of the interviews, I identified five systemic errors that cast doubt on the reliability of counseling surveys, including the list above. The first part of this chapter describes these systematic errors.

Regardless of the affiliated provincial directorate of national education, counselors in schools have to fill out the “Risky Behavior Assessment Scale” via Guidance and Research Center (GRC) Transactions Module. The scale consists of four forms: “Risky Behavior,” “Number of The Students with Signs of Risk,” “Disciplinary Committee Form,” and “Protective Factor Practices.”

-Risky behavior is divided into three as 1) Suicide, 2) Addiction, and 3) Aggression/Violence/Bullying.

-The second form is “signs of risk” which is thought to lead to the above-mentioned behavior. The purpose, content, and conclusion sections of this list will be problematized in detail in the following sections. However, it is initially needed to consider the system where the contents of the lists are covered.

Public schools in Turkey are affiliated to the local GRC in their guidance-related practices while being affiliated to the district directorate of national education, the

provincial directorate of national education, the district governorship, the governorship, and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), respectively. Official correspondence between these bodies and the school administration, annual teaching plans, and grading of students are carried out through online computing systems. While “MEBBIS” (MoNE Information Systems) and “e-okul” are the ones used throughout the country, local information systems (e.g., Adana Provincial Directorate of National Education Information System (ADABIS), Ankara Provincial Directorate of National Education Information System (ANKBIS), Seyhan District Directorate of National Education Information System (SIMMIS)) are all specific to that province/district. Although user interfaces and surveillance units of these systems are all different, they offer the same content to users in every province/district.

The above-mentioned Risky Behavior Assessment Scale is also covered by the provincial systems. All school counselors recruited to interviews within the present study are all responsible for filling out these forms on ADABIS, and GRC staff are obliged to evaluate the filled ones. Yet, neither group is sure of the reliability of these forms.

Above all, a counselor must know all students and their parents in person to be able to fill out the scale efficiently. Although this is viable for schools with a balanced staff and number of students (e.g., a counselor for a maximum of two hundred students), this would be an almost impossible expectation for schools employing a single counselor for seven hundred or a thousand students. Hakan, serving as the only counselor in a school with 750 students, airs his solution to this issue as follows:

Our school has a total of 21 classes. I hand out the forms to the teachers of these classes and then combine them all since the school is rather crowded. I can't know people all, and I can't fill out the forms randomly... I am the only counselor at the school, so it is impossible... I hand out the forms to the teachers. Some fill the forms themselves; some have the students fill them out... So they've been filled correctly as much as it can be...

Since the teacher cannot know all 750 students, he prefers to distribute the printouts of the “Students with sign of risk” form to the teachers. While some teachers fill out

the forms themselves, others have the students fill out them. Then, the counselor completes necessary transactions in ADABIS based on the forms submitted by the teachers. Yet, it is always doubtful to what extent the children or teachers have filled out the forms appropriately. The first mistake in the functioning of the system is that counselors remain unsatisfactory for the school population. Although causing the forms not to be filled out appropriately, it is not the only reason. Even if counselors fill the form themselves, they may enter the data incomplete or incorrectly on purpose.

Most of the items in the form literally stand there for nothing. Neither children nor teachers mark those items since no one wants to take a risk. Once those items are marked, the counselor should notify the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP), police, and juvenile division. How much responsibility will the teacher take, or what will happen when these complaints are notified? For example, the teacher knows that one of the children suffers a lot of violence at home. Do you think the teacher will refer to this situation on the form? If so, they may get into trouble. Therefore, completing the forms actually does not serve the ultimate purpose. Of course, there are cases where it works. I see things about parents or children whose parents are convicted or divorced.

According to Article 21 of Section 7 of the Guidance and Psychological Counseling Services Regulation of the MoNE, within referral practices, if a counselor needs help in a field of expertise other than the intervention area of the guidance and psychological counseling services or their professional competencies, the counselor obliged to refer the individual to more competent specialists, institutions, or organizations that are thought to be able to provide relevant services. For example, students needing psychological support beyond the counselor's competence should be referred to a psychologist, or those with a physical or mental disability should be referred to a doctor. Very low income or continuous absenteeism should be reported to the school administration, or any suspected child neglect or abuse should be reported to the police. However, unfortunately, teachers are unwilling to report, even noticing such problems that need to be reported to a higher office or relevant bodies. They believe that such disclosures will not help the child and even may put them at life-threatening risk. The system does not have a mechanism to protect the counselor reporting any neglect and abuse and the victim child from the abusive parent(s). Thus, the counselor teacher tends to mark certain items in the form that they will not need to give a testimony, prove the case, or put themselves in a difficult situation. As

I quoted below, teachers may (even have to) prefer marking the items correctly if there are some facts about the case that would save teachers from suspicion (e.g., parents' being convicted or divorced). Yet, other items that are not clearly connected with evidence are the variables with ambiguous reliability. Connecting the child's problems to a fact makes the teacher's job easier while increasing the pressure on the child. Thus, the way the system works increases the pressure and discrimination on the children of divorced parents.

It should be noted that there are counselors reporting suspicious or adverse cases to the school safety police at the expense of the parents' reactions. Yet, teachers employed in private schools bear considerable pressure to avoid reporting undesirable cases to relevant units, besides being potentially endangered. According to Levent, a police chief in the juvenile division, "The administrators in private colleges do not allow teachers to report anything adverse, so there will not be bad publicity against their schools. We may not know about the cases until rumors grow or they show up in the news." As a counselor regularly attending provincial and district-wide group meetings in Adana, I should underline that private schools are not less prone to neglect, abuse, addiction, and bullying than public schools. Yet, private schools often do not allow their teachers to report such cases to an authorized person or organization. Similarly, the forms that may disturb parents or students may not be administered in these schools, leading to ineffective preventive practices.

While all these reasons for filling out the forms incorrectly/incompletely raise doubts, the surveillance/supervision mechanism of the system is extremely ambiguous. CRF staff often slide around this situation with the words "it is all up to the conscience/initiative of teachers."

What we can control are only the practices that the teacher "claims" to have done... We have no way of checking whether the teacher actually has done it. It is all up to their initiative.

The MoNE is the unit conducting supervision and inspection of counseling in schools, as well as teaching and administration. Apart from the three reasons mentioned above, filling out counseling forms carelessly or incorrectly may produce

irreversible consequences. And there is no clear supervision of the practices teachers claim to have done in the forms.

...There are, of course, many who fill out counseling forms just for the sake of completing a “daily task.” In our CRC, we witness how misleading the results can be... Teachers generally do not report substance use, violence, or vandalism; they are either afraid of reporting such cases or don’t care about it. I cannot blame them, I put myself in their shoes...

According to Article 18 in the Regulation, the school principal is primarily responsible for the execution of the guidance and psychological counseling services at the school. The vice-principal and the principal are authorized in the counseling commission and must survey the work of the counselors. Since the so-called “initiative” that is valid for the counselor is also valid for the school administration, RAM staff are suspicious of the reliability of the data from schools and, therefore, the necessity of their work. Since the work carried out upon the survey results is not monitored, the only point of administering such instruments seems to be nothing other than the idea that the MoNE will create more or fewer statistics based on the relevant data or provide financial support to low-income families. I even interviewed actively working counselors who believe that the forms are not evaluated in any way and that they are just filled out to create a social state illusion. Even though there are points that counselors think are not evaluated, some of the data required to ensure the functioning of the social assistance system in Turkey actually comes from schools. It is significant particularly for the low-income group since school-based data is inevitably needed to determine which families need support. Therefore, it should be remembered that teachers fill out the forms correctly not only to protect the child from the parents but also to support families when necessary.

Overall, the “Students with Risk Symptoms” form does not provide reliable data due to the five main deficiencies of the system. These five systemic errors that I established as a result of my interviews are briefly summarized as follows:

- 1- In the case of an insufficient number of counselor teachers, they may not know and satisfy the needs of the students.
- 2- There is no mechanism to protect the teacher/counselor and the child when an adverse case is reported to a higher office.

3-Private schools may hide adverse cases or not implement surveys/preventive practices for fear of bad publicity and losing parents.

4- Teachers do not believe in the necessity of forms and consider filling out them as a chore.

5- The system has an ambiguous surveillance and supervision mechanism.

4.2. Understanding the Risky Behavior Assessment Scale

Let's assume that the system's reliability is ensured and the counseling surveys are filled out appropriately. Even if the implementation phase of the counseling surveys were straight, the results would still not be satisfactory. The only problem with the surveys is not that they manipulate the results because of the way they are filled out. Their contents are full of not exactly undefined terms and items implicitly manipulating the thought of the addressee.

As specified in the previous section, all counselors have to fill out the "Risky Behavior Assessment Scale" via provincial counseling information processing systems. The scale consists of four documents: "Risky Behaviors," "Numbers of students with risk symptoms," "Disciplinary Committee Form," and "Protective Factor Practices" Since the disciplinary committee form and the protective factor practices are school-specific without multiple options, what I am concerned with in this thesis are the risky behavior list and the students with risk symptoms list. What MoNE defines as "risk" and how counselors interpret risks need to be uncovered because I seek an answer to the question, "Does the MoNE's understanding and definition of risk trigger teachers to create biases for children of divorced parents?" This second section of the findings, discusses how risk behavior is identified and what "student with risk symptoms" means.

1-RİSKLİ DAVRANIŞLAR

1- Aşağıda belirtilen riskli davranışlardan okulunuzda var olan vaka sayısını yazınız. (İntihar ve intihar girişimi bölümlerine davranışın nedeni de yazılacak, nedeni bilinmiyorsa intihar eden veya intihar girişiminde bulunan toplam öğrenci sayısı içindeki dağılımı olarak nedeni bilinmiyor kısmına yazılacak)

Riskli Davranış	Riskli Davranış Nedeni	Öğrenci Sayısı	
		K	E
ÖLÜMLE SONUÇLANAN İNTİHAR	İntihar Nedeni:		
	Nedeni Bilinmiyor:		
İNTİHAR GİRİŞİMİ	İntihar Girişimi Nedeni:		
	Nedeni Bilinmiyor:		
BAĞIMLILIK	Uyuşturucu Madde:		
	Sigara:		
	Alkol:		
	Teknoloji:	2	8
SALDIRGANLIK, ŞİDDET, ZORBALIK (Okul Zorbalığı: Bir çocuğa bir veya daha fazla öğrenci tarafından kasıtlı olarak sürekli saldırgan davranışların uygulanması ve çocuğun bunlara karşı sürekli olarak korumasız durumda olması)			

Above is a screenshot of a sample table on ADABIS. In the table, risk behavior is divided into three as 1) suicide, 2) addiction and 3) aggression/violence/bullying. When the “suicide” item is addressed as a suicide resulting in death and a suicide attempt, there, then, are four items defined as risk behavior in the counseling system of MoNE: ending one’s own life, attempting suicide, being addicted, being aggressor/bully. The system demands the reasons for suicides resulting in death and suicide attempts in writing. Yet, others need to be indicated only in numerical data separately for boys and girls.

2-RİSK BELİRTİLERİNE SAHİP ÖĞRENCİ SAYILARI

2- Aşağıdaki risk belirtilerine sahip öğrenci sayılarını yazınız.

Aşağıdaki Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenci Sayıları	Kız Öğrenci Sayısı	Erkek Öğrenci Sayısı
Sürekli aile içi şiddet ve fiziksel cezalar		
Ebeveynlerin boşanması veya ayrı yaşaması	17	17
Çocuk ihmali		
Çocuk istismarı		
Aşırı yoksulluk		
Oturulan yerleşim yeri sorunları		
Nedeni bilinmeyen sınıf içi uyumsuzluk		
Sık sık okuldan kaçma veya uzun süreli devamsızlık		
Akranları tarafından reddedilme veya akran istismarı		
Çete üyeliği		
Kavgacılık		
Sürekli çok düşük akademik başarı gösterme		
Anne-baba veya bir yakının kaybı	5	
Ailenin düşük sosyo-kültürel-ekonomik düzeye sahip olması		
Öğrencinin tedavi edilmemiş fiziksel hastalığı veya engelinin olması		
Terkedilmiş veya evsiz olma (Sokakta yaşayan veya devlet tarafından korumaya alınan)		
Çekingenlik	10	5
İletişim sorunu, hiç iletişim kurmama		1
Diğer		

The second document, the Number of Students with Risk Symptoms List, includes the following categories, as in the table above:

- 1- Continuous domestic violence and corporal punishments
- 2- Parents' divorce or separation
- 3- Child neglect
- 4- Child abuse
- 5- Extreme poverty
- 6- Problems with neighborhood
- 7- In-class maladjustment of unknown cause
- 8- Frequent truancy or prolonged absence from school
- 9- Peer rejection or abuse
- 10- Gang membership
- 11- Quarrelsome
- 12- Continuous poor academic achievement
- 13- Loss of mother, father, or a relative
- 14- Low parental socio-cultural and income level
- 15- Untreated physical disorder or disability
- 16- Being abandoned or homeless (living on the street or under government protection)
- 17- Shyness
- 18- Communication problem, not being able to communicate at all
- 19- Other

The list covers various undesirable characteristics, as well as an “other” category. Indeed, the list does not inquire who belongs to these categories but how many students fall into which category. When I asked the Guidance Research Center staff how they think the categories in this list are identified, their responses were relatively similar to each other:

Children in the categories on the “Students with risk symptoms” are those vulnerable to neglect and abuse... Experts and professors from various fields are brought together to prepare regulations for counseling, as in other regulations. They undergo inspections. ... They are delivered by the MoNE.

Although the MoNE does not have an official directive regarding the selection of categories in the list, it has published a directive for another “risk” document. There is a form called “School Risk Map” in the file “Forms and Measurement Tools”

within “Monitoring and Evaluation Forms” on the official website of the MoNE.

This 33 item, more detailed form consists of the following categories:

- 1- Mother having primary school education at most
- 2- Father having primary school education at most
- 3- Only child
- 4- Five siblings or more
- 5- Parents separated
- 6- Parents divorced
- 7- Living only with mother
- 8- Living only with father
- 9- Mother not alive
- 10- Father not alive
- 11- Martyr's child
- 12- Living only with grandparents
- 13- Living only with other relatives
- 14- Under the supervision of a foster family
- 15- Staying in a Children's Home
- 16- Staying in a Child Welfare Services Agency
- 17- A chronic disease in the family
- 18- Addicted individuals in the family (alcohol/substance)
- 19- Convicted individuals in the family
- 20- Seasonal workers in the family
- 21- Exposed to domestic violence
- 22- Having a diagnosis of giftedness
- 23- Having a special education report for incapacity
- 24- Having a chronic disease
- 25- Having a mental disorder
- 26- Having a counseling injunction
- 27- Having education injunction
- 28- Having financial difficulties
- 29- Constantly absent
- 30- Employed in a paid job
- 31- Having poor academic achievement

32- Included in a peer group at risk

33- Other

The directive on the official website of the MoNE denotes the purpose of use of this risk map is:

It is used at schools/institutions to identify the status of students in risk groups and to decide on relevant practices on a group/individual basis.

Moreover, the same directive submits the following explanation under the heading “Matters to Consider:”

The risk areas in the risk map are designed considering the situations subjected to objective evaluation. In addition, students, who are decided on to be in the risk group upon observations, interviews, and individual recognition techniques, are also included in relevant practices. For example, these students may be those with a lack of self-confidence, antisocial behavior, a tendency to violence, alcohol, substance, or technology addiction, negative behavior due to their parents’ attitudes, lack of social life due to family opportunities, and negative attitudes toward school and who are excluded and exposed to peer bullying, abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, economic), and neglect (emotional, physical, education, health), etc.

I could not provide a clear definition of risk from the MoNE’s directives or the GRC staff. However, as a counselor, I think the MoNE considers “students with risk symptoms” as if they were willing to show “risky behavior.” On the other hand, no research findings showed anything leading one to imagine these students to do “risky behavior” in the future.

As a school counselor who has witnessed what is aired at the provincial counselor meetings, I know that most of the other counselors perceive the association between these two forms as I do. In other words, the experts designing the system must have considered students with risk symptoms are inclined to demonstrate risk behavior (suicide, addiction, aggression) in the first list more than their peers. Although the counselors who are responsible for filling out the forms, that is, the implementers of the system, did not perceive the forms separate from each other, I noticed in the interviews that the “risk” understanding of the counselors differed. Although the

term “risk” often refers to students at risk, the opinion of Serpil who was a school counselor for 28 years, is as follows:

Children are at risk, of course... They are children, after all... Yet, they will pose a threat to the state... The children on this list are against the social order and divergent in the school order. These are divergent in society. Know what I mean? Those children are sharpened against the community for what they don't have and their deficiencies. They are children who grow up defending the wrong because they don't have the right one. Therefore, they will always be a threat to the state and the social order.

These words alone suggest how the children on the list, as I assume, can be subjected to biases and discrimination by their counselors. A school counselor needs to be the most proximate “counselor” of children. Prior to telling them about a problem, children must first feel safe with them and know that they are understood. Without trust, students may be less likely to meet with school counselors, ask questions, and take their advice (Holland, 2015). If counselors, with whom children will share the conditions that have led them to be on the list and from whom they expect a solution, already labels them as a “threat to the state and community” and declares them as potential criminals just because they think they are “divergent,” then these children will actually be at risk and even vulnerable. Those I investigate in this study are children aged 10-14 years; that is, they attend middle schools according to the current Turkish national education system. Preadolescence, covering this age group, is considered a critical transition for children. Many researchers point out the characteristics of personality development among children in this period. According to Kohlberg, the development of the self-awareness of children aged 10-13 years is at the conventional level. Guided by the principles of other people, they may stick to a symbolic role. It is important for them to get the approval of their behavior from the adults. To the end of this period, their judgment shall be based on the established order, with respect to rules and regulations, submission to authority (Kohlberg, 1984). (Prereadlescent age: the formation of the interconnections in the personality structure, Slavutskaya E.V., Slavutskii L.A. 2020) Therefore, the negative attitudes and exclusion by their counselors may cause even more damage to these children than what makes them be in the risk group.

The last thing I would add regarding the understanding of the “Students with risk symptoms” list will be the suggestions to the “other” category from the counselors. As explained in the previous sections, the system portrays an ideal family through the characteristics not included in the list. For example, if a child does not meet the criteria of married parents, 2-5 siblings, and a middle or upper-middle income, that child then shows signs of risk. Regardless of all categories and the practice, I care about the “other” category, for which I have requested the opinions of counselors since it has revealed whether the counselors really understand children’s needs. If a child in this list is more inclined to show risk behavior and more extensive counseling needs to be done, counselors should have something to say about the problems. While two of the counselors I interviewed did not make any suggestions for the “other” category, the other two suggested that children of foreign origins and war victims should be considered in this category. My suggestion to that category, as a counselor, is uncontrolled internet use if unbiased, objective, protective, supportive, and solution-generating counseling is to be provided. Smartphones and internet use now starts before primary school age, which is often not supervised by most parents because they thought it’s the kid’s private life. In the case of insufficient or inappropriate counseling, we may encounter terrible events among middle school children, such as interaction with malignant strangers on the Internet, sharing photos and videos or personal and confidential data, and experiencing cyber bullying. Money may be not important compared to such events but sometimes thousands of liras are being swindled from parents’ credit cards or accounts, or spent on purpose.

To sum up, what I found within “Understanding the Risk Behavior Assessment Scale” are as follows: 1) Students with risk symptoms list does not have enough instructions and clear explanatory definitions for the categories. Therefore, counselors may bring diverse interpretations to the categories or list. 2) Counselors may not be able to provide efficient and objective counseling suggested in relevant regulations due to their personal opinions. 3) The list can be updated by seeking the contributions of school counselors to the “other” category in the list.

4.3. Inclusion of Students of Divorced Parents on the Students with Risk Symptoms List

Each item in the list implies either major traumas (continuous domestic violence and corporal punishment, neglect, extreme poverty, problems with the neighborhood, low parental socio-cultural and income level, chronic disease, disability, homelessness, abandonment, peer rejection, orphanage, abuse) or undesirable situations whose causes should be explored (quarrelsome, gang membership, maladaptive behavior, shyness, non-communicativeness, frequent absence, poor academic achievement). Interestingly in the same list, these categories come with “parental divorce.”

A study, titled “*The Effects of Parental Divorce on Teenage Children’s Risk Behaviors: Incident and Persistence*,” investigated the rates of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use among teenagers of divorced and married parents. The author explains the resulting 10% difference as follows: In the literature, divorce is generally linked to a stressful life transition, which normally requires certain adjustments by both the adults and the children. Causes of this stress may include decreased material well-being and less time spent with one of the parents. (Gustavsen, 2015) Therefore, there is no indication about that the child is adversely affected by the divorce if that does not cause a financial crisis and that will not hinder the parents from continuing to take care of the child. Indeed, I revealed in my interviews that children do not have any negative behavior tendencies emerging due to divorce if the mother has financial independence at the time of the divorce or if one of the parents does not stop seeing the child after the divorce. Divorce does not necessarily bring significant changes to the child’s social life, behavior, friendship relations or academic achievement because there is nothing shrinking from their living standards or leading to more unfavorable conditions than before. In contrast, as I will explain in more detail in the following sections, children may have a more peaceful home environment than before. Despite these, the reason for the prejudice that children of divorced parents will be potentially addict, suicidal or aggressive can only be explained by the state’s familialist policies. For example, an article, “Current Risks to Family Institution”, in the 14th issue of the Journal of Social Policy Studies (an academic publication of the Ministry of Social Services) held an extremely negative approach to “the increase in

single-parent households.” The study considers single-parent families deprived of the function of performing the cultural transfer and the child who lives with one parent has deficient psychosocial support and possibly models the gender roles of one parent. Also in this study, the children of divorced parents were lumped with the children losing their fathers in the Second World War. A similar perspective can be traced in counseling surveys of the MoNE in a way that children of divorced families have signs of risk. However, the school should not exclude any group or individual due to its status and duties, should not be left behind any social change and should be supportive and solution-oriented.

The researches in the early 80s in the USA presented full of chaotic ideas about what the increasing divorces would bring about. Unfortunately, such chaos still continues in Turkey in 2022. As mentioned by James Garvin (1984) who offers a more inclusive approach than the prevailing view of his time, if the family structure changes, schools have to adapt to such a changing structure. The stereotypes that only the father makes income, extended families prevail, or the parents are “happily ever after” are no longer commonplace. Yet, such changes do not make families “less of a family.” As a small-scale society, a school has to adapt to all such changes. Family values have changed rapidly, and many schools are years behind in recognizing the changes (Garvin, 1984); in support of this statement, the interviews I held also revealed that counseling at schools is still behind the age. Even the young counselors seemed to be trapped. Hakan, a counselor with only six-year experience, asserted not observing any difference, positive or negative, in academic achievement or friendships between students of divorced and married parents. Yet, contradicting himself about the risk symptoms, he said:

Well, a shattered family already has lots of problems. It may not occur to divorced parents to be concerned with their child’s education.

Children of divorced parents often attract more attention of school counselors, as they are listed on the “List of Students with Risk Symptoms.” When counselors are asked about the problematic groups in their schools, almost all of them give the same answer: children of divorced parents. Because, as explained in the previous sections, they are the most marked in the “List of Students with Risk Symptoms.” However,

when these same counselors are asked for examples and details, they realize that almost all students with disciplinary problems, disordered friendships, or persistent academic failure are children of married parents. A study “Children of Divorce – A Challenge for Middle School Teachers”, represented children of divorced parents as those who constantly watch out the window, lie down on the desk, get angry quickly, experience mood swings, and have lost their self-confidence (Garvin, 1984). Today, children do not have such common symptoms. A divorced mother, Güneş, reported that when she met with the counselor of her 4th-grade son while in the divorce process, she learned that her son had said the following to his teacher:

I’m visiting you because my mom wants me to talk to you. I got through their divorce, but my mom didn’t get through that I got through their divorce. If they’re going to get divorced, they’re going to divorce. So what? I don’t understand what the big deal is.

Today’s children have not already been born into a world order where the father is the breadwinner and the mother deals with the inside of the house. It is not unusual for them that the mother is the breadwinner or the parents have different houses or marriages. Even if the child’s family is traditional, they do not have a limited view of their environment thanks to the internet. Adaptation of the children to divorce is not affected at all unless there is a major financial change in their life or a source of trauma, such as parents’ rejection of the child. A child born after 2000 is now a member of the most global and unlimited generation in history we know. This is perhaps their most apparent difference from the previous generation, which may grant them the ability to adapt to something easier. Although children are not affected by divorce, it is not logical that our school counseling system expects it to affect children adversely.

There is no clear written evidence about what year since which the List of Students with Risk Symptoms has been used, and the CRC staff I interviewed also had no knowledge of the issue. Nevertheless, I know that it is actively utilized today and suggest that it should be updated.

Based on the interviews with the counselors, with my observations, and with experiences of divorced mothers, I can confidently assert that the term “risk” is

incorrectly defined for children of divorced parents. In contrast, these children do not pose a threat to society, themselves, or their environment. If they are at more risk than those whose parents are married, it is most likely because the environment still excludes these children due to the vested bias toward divorce. However, what the systemic errors explained in the previous sections bring is that they are the most marked group of students in the specified list. Therefore, the first group to appear in teachers' minds when it comes to "problems" includes those of divorced parents. Overall, I concluded that institutionalization of the traditional mindset leads school counselors to adopt the fictional "ideal family" concept of the state.

4.4. Perceiving Divorce as "Familylessness"

The marital status of the parents (married, divorced, separated, in an open relationship, or whatever) does not have to affect the bonds they have with their children. Regardless of the nature of the parents' relationships, the child may or may not receive care; may or may not have a happy family life. The child may be experiencing something different from what it seems in any lifestyle. Problems originating from other mechanisms are often ignored in schools and "divorce" is blamed for any problems instead of their underlying mechanism(s). As noted in the previous section, our counseling system directs counselors to do so. Since "divorced parents" is an exact fact, marking it puts counselors in no trouble. Therefore, it is the item that is marked the most, and the group ranking first when it comes to "problem" is children of divorced parents. However, the above-mentioned situation is not the only reason for considering divorce the cause of every problem. The institutionalization of the ideal family perception in our society and the continuation of the bias toward divorce drive these children to be discriminated against in schools. Ultimately, children of divorced parents and living with a single parent are described as "without a family."

Whatever, even if the family experiences poverty and occasional tense moments, the togetherness of parents sets the balance at that house. This is the law of nature: man and woman complete each other. If one of them is missing while raising a child, it means that the child is growing up deprived of the concept of family. Doesn't it mean that the number one cornerstone that makes our society different from other societies is displaced? Then, even the worst family union is better than no family.

The statement above, by counselor teacher Esra, may be considered the abstract of the perspective on which this thesis was built. This perspective basically rejects current forms of the family and does not accept the single-parent family structure as a family but as a threat to society. A household consisting of parents and children is considered a “family” no matter what happens within it. In other words, this perspective may ignore violence, unrest, mutual distrust, abuse, or economic difficulties for the sake of seeing this household as an “ideal” family. The only important thing is togetherness. Yet, this perspective discredits any other structure out of a family consisting of legally married parents and a child(ren) living under the same roof. It is thought that all orders other than the family structure desired by this perspective may pose a threat not only to the child but also to the whole society. Thus, one of the starting points of this study was to explain that people living in any structure are also accepted as a family and to discuss that different family structures are not a threat to but a part of society.

The participating counselors used the phrase “shattered family” when talking about the students of divorced parents and emphasized their belief that these children do not have a family life. For example, while answering the question about contacting the parents, counselor Hakan unwittingly explained a domestic order that he defines as a “normal family” :

Let’s say not a shattered family but a normal one: the father works, and the mother is a housewife...

There are three points I want to address in this utterance: the teacher’s bias toward divorce, the perception of “normal family,” and the definition of “shattered family” to be discussed further.

First of all, it may be rather challenging in a school environment to protect the counselor-counselee relationship in a professional manner where counselors will not reflect their stereotypes on counselee. Especially when the counselee is a student. Because a teacher spends at least an average of six hours a day at school; thus, their life is intertwined with students who experience the reflections of their teacher’s

personal views. This situation may eliminate the possibility of a counselor approaching students as a completely unbiased figure. A school counselor is not a psychologist but she/he is the nearest psychological counselor for children and has to put aside their own view of life and support everyone equally. If the child feels that the counselor disapproves of their family structure, they will not be able to share anything with the counselor openly and confidently. Besides, when I asked the participating counselors whether their own parents were divorced, the three of them laughed as if divorce would never happen to their parents and could only be a joke, unfortunately. The fourth, who did not respond to the question without laughing, actually had divorced parents.

Secondly, I want to analyse what is meant by “normal family” in this quote. Indeed, it may be prudent to put forward a shared definition of “family” for every society. At the *Başka Aileler Vardır Çalıştayı (Other Families Exist)* which held on 3-4 April 2021, Fatma Umut Beşpınar stated, “there is no such thing as the “real family,” it is only a fiction.” However, although not sociologically, there is legally an “actual family,” which is also reflected in social policy texts (Turgut, 2016). Also, there is a “family” concept under constitutional protection in our country: “family is the foundation of Turkish society” (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Chapter 3, Article 41, published in the Resmi Gazete. 11.09.1982). The family is indeed one of the most basic units of social organization, but the definition of family differs by society, region, culture, class differences, and time. In this sense, any state should not cause discrimination by creating its own “ideal family”, surving it as “the real family” and make people normalize it. Equality in American and Canadian laws covers the following keywords: “Race, color, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, age or lawful source of income of that person or class of persons, or of any other person or class of person” (No Room For New Families?, Lauster, Eisterbrook, 2011). Thus, discrimination against new family types is clearly illegal. The mindset, declaring children living with only one parent as “familyless” in our country, seems to not consider a household with an economic and social unity from being a family only upon classifying the relations between its members. Thus, the deployment of people adopting this mentality at schools as counselors will inevitably bring adverse

psychological impacts on children, according to the statements of the mothers who I interviewed.

Now, coming to the third and main point, “shattered family” is a term often uttered in many academic publications in Turkey. In this study, the term mostly evoked a perception that a single-parent household is not considered a family. They also thought that the problem arises from neglect and believed that the child would not be adequately cared for in single-parent households. In this sense, they suggested the following relationship: a single parent leads to neglect, and neglect will bring other problems. The interviews may imply several reasons for such a cause-effect relationship. The first may be that divorced parents already have too many issues to care for the child; thus, they will remain deprived of care and affection. The second idea may be that the child will again be deprived of adequate care since the mother has economic difficulties after the divorce, regardless of her profession, which will lead her to no longer be able to support her child sufficiently. The third idea is that the child will be “longing for a warm home environment” and need care since separated houses are considered to be more unpeaceful than those of married parents. And the final idea is that the child will be deficient because of the lack of complementing gender roles in the family. All the four ideas incorporate a bias as if the divorce had to be contentious, the father was no longer in the child’s life, the mother could not have adequate economic resources, and the divorce would ruin the child’s life. From this perspective, since divorce cannot be projected without these conspiracies, the divorce shatters the family in a way of ceasing the conception of a family consisting of the child and the single parent.

Overall, the family has undergone multifaceted changes thanks to the transformations in social structures. However, it seems that there are prevailing opinions among counselors that divorce will bring “familylessness” and that “even the worst family union is better than no family.” Despite the increase in the number of divorces, the bias toward divorce is still fed. The illusion that divorced parents always neglect the child, which will make the child vulnerable to abuse, drives teachers to adopt different attitudes toward such students compared to children of married parents. Unfortunately, such attitudes toward children of divorced parents,

rather than supporting them, cause discrimination against such children and adversely affect their academic life, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections.



CHAPTER 5

THE PROBLEMS OF DIVORCED MOTHERS AT THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOLS

The national education and counseling in our country is covered with state-level familialism policies and social, moral patterns. Since children of divorced parents are included in the “List of Students with Risk Symptoms”, teachers are warned to be more careful with these children. Thus, their inherent biases are stimulated; otherwise, a bias is created. Moreover, discriminatory, exclusionary and disturbing practices emerge in schools against both such children and their mothers pinned with the entire responsibility of their children.

The major problems experienced by divorced mothers at their children's schools were discussed in the following four sections according to the in-depth interviews: “Uncertain Motherhood” (where I discussed what happens when the mother and her child have different last names), “Selfish, Incompetent, Bad Mother” (where I discussed the idea that divorced mothers cannot be good mothers), “Less of a Woman” (where I discussed why divorced mothers are made to feel incompetent and flawed), “Widow, Vulnerable to Harassment” (where I discussed the sexual objectification of divorced women).

5.1. Uncertain Motherhood

For women, what apparently changes with marriage or divorce is their names. Life pattern, place of residence, and household may change in marriage and divorce. Yet, these are only environmental changes but are not directly associated with a woman's own self. Unlike these, the change to the woman's last name may lead to the perception and feeling that she is now someone else. In addition, a new family name,

or reassuming the old one, is a concrete indication that she is now a member of another family. One's family name carries a function of belonging, as it indicates their commitment to a community that has been and continues to be called by this name (Abik, 2005). On the other hand, leaving the common use of "family name" may be one of the important factors making the concepts of "shattered family" and "familylessness" visible.

Disruption of the marriage union is not a change that the woman could conceal. It is also a declaration of the change to all people who know her. Nevin, a divorced mother, expounded her perspective on how the change to her family name is a declaration of divorce:

I couldn't change my last name on Instagram for a while since anyone who hadn't heard of my divorce would have, too. I didn't feel ready for this for months.

Most of the participating divorced mothers reported that they hesitated and went through difficult times to reassume their pre-marriage last names, not only on their social media but also on many platforms, from doorbell tags to their professional work IDs.

I lived 21 years as Gönül xxxx (her father's family name) and 23 years as Gönül yyyy (her husband's family name). One may not be conscious for the first 21 years since these years cover childhood and adolescence. The name one uses as a hallmark of her existence when she creates herself, immediately changes. How hard is it to even get used to that name.

The greatest problem with the family name may appear when the mother lives with her child if the child carries her/his father's last name. Although the mother has the custody, responsibility, care and schoolwork of the child(ren), she is mandated to prove to be the mother of her child(ren) at schools, as in all public offices, since she does not have the same last name with her child(ren).

While entering the school's online homework system, it constantly popped up an error. Since my child and I have different last names, it did not accept the image of my ID as parental proof. I remember being so nervous and breaking into tears.

It is possible to report more of such examples with mothers experiencing stereotypes and stigmatization not only with digital device codes but also in social life:

The school held an organization where parents could enter for free and other guests for paid tickets. That day, the words of the attendant, “How do I know that you are his mother. You don’t look alike at all, and your last name is different” distressed and made me upset.

Having to prove to be the mother of their child(ren) generates great distress and sadness among divorced mothers. According to the mothers, it also creates confusion and embarrassment in children about their parents.

Rüzgar didn’t want me to sign his homework, which made me think that he didn’t do his homework either. However, I learned that later, one day his deskmate saw that my last name was different in the signature on the assignment. He asked some questions which made Rüzgar embarrassed.

Although the divorced mothers stated that they experienced anxiety and loss of self-confidence with the name change, the participating counselors were not aware of this issues importance. But as a counselor teacher myself, I can also say that there were mothers who stopped attending parent-teacher meetings in my school following the change of their last names. And when I talked to them, one of them stated that she felt obliged to explain the situation to all the teachers and did not want to deal with it. And the other one stopped coming to the school meetings due to her concerns that when somebody sees her name different from her daughter’s name on the attendance sheet in the meetings, they may label her child as a “child from a shattered family.” Since they have to live in an order suggesting that they may be judged even by teachers and other parents at school, the mothers tried to conceal the change to their last names as much as possible. Because the most concrete reflection of divorce is the change of surname. Nevertheless, divorced mothers have the right to change their child(ren) ’s last name, too, if having problems with it.

In Turkey, divorced mothers can give their child(ren) their own last name. However, although all but two of the participating mothers had the custody of the child(ren), none of them had the same last name as the child(ren) and never had such a request. The Constitutional Court concluded on 12.08.2011 that the provision:

In cases of dissolution of marriage and divorce, the child takes the name chosen or to be chosen by the father even if the custody is handed over to the mother,” should be canceled since it is contrary to Article 41 of the Constitution suggesting that the family is based on equality between spouses, Article 10 of the Constitution stating that women and men have equal rights, and, therefore, Article 13 specifying that fundamental rights and freedoms cannot be contrary to the word and spirit of the Constitution, the requirements of the democratic social order and the secular Republic, and the principle of proportionality.

Even if more than half of the participating mothers were not aware of such a decision, those who did had also never made request to give their last names to their child(ren). Among the prominent reasons for not making such a request is the fear of the father’s reaction and their unwillingness to be misunderstood by those who they have met after divorce. What is meant by “misunderstanding” may be a loss of social status for both the mother and the child(ren) if the mother is single and does not share the same last name as the child. Besides, child(ren) may have the last name of their single mother in two other situations that will not be acknowledged by social morality. First one is if the children whose parents are not married or the second one: whose father is unknown (Dursun, 2017). Dursun (2017) also reported that these children may have disreputable status because they are born as socially non-endorsed.

Even though the phrase, “the head of the family is the man” was removed from our laws in 2003, even the subject of “last name” implies the man’s social power and legal supremacy in the household and over the child. Women experience a much more drastic transition in divorce than men just because their changing last names means disclosing the change to their life patterns publicly. Moreover, if the divorced mother and her child(ren) do not share the same last name, both of them remain suppressed at school. At least, teacher-parent communication should be ensured on trust to avoid such negativities at schools. Moreover, school counseling services need to offer practices free of biases and stereotypes.

5.2. Selfish, Incompetent, Bad Mother; Despite All The Devotion

Divorced mothers are questioned about whether they are the mother of the child(ren), as well as being a good mother. Even they feel that their motherhood is challenged the most at school since their child(ren)'s school is a place where they exist with their "motherhood." After all, a woman may be someone's granddaughter or aunt in a family environment, someone's manager or assistant at work, or someone's friend or lover in another place, but she is recognized at her child(ren)'s school just because she is someone's mother. If the motherhood, her only social role in that institution, is judged because of her private life, the mother will not feel safe in the school environment.

Aslı, a divorced mother and also a teacher, summarized the "teachers' room biases" toward divorced mothers and the warnings suggested by teachers to each other about parents in a few main topics:

It didn't happen to me, but you know the teachers' room. In the lounge, I hear conversations about divorced parents: "They didn't pity their child" or "She looked as if being a decent woman." Their views of that woman immediately change. I can say that even they spare less right to speak to such women at parent-teacher meetings. I hear warnings like, "That woman is divorced and has problems. If you don't want her to get you into trouble, you shouldn't let her talk at meetings."

I would like to address the three expressions above one by one. First, the expression, "They didn't pity their child," is directly the subject of the "6.3. Pity" section. The main reason for the emergence of pity with the child, as expounded in the "4.4. Perceiving Divorce as Familylessness" section, is the perspective predicting that the child is now in a neglected position and becomes vulnerable to abuse. Besides, the other two expressions reported by Aslı can be considered the subject of this chapter: "She looked as if being a decent woman." and "That woman is divorced and has problems. If you don't want her to get you into trouble, you shouldn't let her talk at meetings."

Supposed that a "decent woman" is considered a figure living in a socially and morally accepted life order, then a divorced woman cannot be "decent" because this

point of view conceptually recognizes divorce as the deterioration of the “fundamental building block of society.” The teacher quoted by the interviewee is someone who considers the mother “decent” until they find out that the mother is divorced. However, the teacher is also surprised that the divorced mother still looks “decent.” This is how the divorced mother stigmatization shows itself in parent-teacher relationships at schools. The stigma, “a divorced mother is not a decent woman,” is followed by a restriction: “If you don’t want her to get you into trouble, you shouldn’t let her talk at meetings.” Parent-teacher meetings are the meetings parents and teachers come together and exchange information about the child(ren)’s development and educational progress. Thus, “preventing a mother from talking at the meeting” just because she is divorced is an example interference with her rights. According to Article 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, “Everyone has the right to express and disseminate their thoughts and opinions individually or collectively through speech, writing, pictures, or other means.” Divorced mothers have the right to express their opinions without having to confront any bias in their child(ren)’s school, but no one has the right to restrict them simply because they cannot normalize family diversity and adopt changes to family structure. Moreover, the fact that teachers of their child(ren) may be the agents of such restrictions on adult mothers, unfortunately, is likely to be an indication of the possibility that they can also restrict children when there are no other adults around, much more confident and without being questioned, according to their stereotypes.

Having witnessed such conversations among teachers as a teacher, Aslı was likely to know that she would confront such biases while getting divorced. As a matter of fact, she implied thinking that such things would happen to her: “No one said anything to me in person, but lots of people must backbite me.” When asked if she had an undesirable conversation about her divorce at her child’s school, her response indicated that she felt uneasy at the school. A school is never a safe space for her now with the identity of a “divorced mother,” as she knew teachers’ overall ideas and conversations about a divorced mother.

The school environment may not always be a safe space for a married mother because it may not be easy to prove that she is a “good mother.” Yet, considering the

differences between married and divorced mothers by how they are perceived in a school environment, a response from a participating mother implied that divorced mothers were perceived as “selfish mothers.” No matter what they have gone through, being convinced of divorce, or desiring to divorce may mean that they will disrupt their child(ren)’s life for their own wellbeing, which draws a selfish mother profile prioritizing herself rather than her child(ren).

The counselor teacher suggested that I should wait for some more time before divorce until my child’s adolescence period was over, or at least for the exam year. The counselor displayed an attitude as if I shouldn’t do it in such a critical period, even if I decided to ruin my child’s life. However, I didn’t visit the counselor to seek advice. I would ask him to inform me as well if my daughter shared something with him, but I couldn’t do it because he declared me selfish because I wouldn’t postpone the divorce till my daughter graduated from her school. What should I ask of such a man?

It will be more appropriate that a school counselor should not be involved in family relations unless it is an issue directly concerning the child. A counselor is not the psychologist of the parents; therefore, interventions in the private lives of parents are beyond the realm of a counselor’s authority. Suggesting a parent who considers divorce should not divorce unless a situation that will harm the child(ren) exceeds a counselor’s jurisdiction. Even if the divorce may harm the child(ren) to some extent, the counselor should not interfere with the parents but inform the authorities (e.g., CRCs, social services, school police...).

The mothers reported engaging in such “intervention” conversations, which are rather unprofessional, usually with older teachers or administrators. Havva, a mother whose children attended different schools, expressed that her problems usually happening with senior teachers from older generations:

Teachers’ attitudes differ by school or teacher’s personality. The staff in XXX (revealing the school’s name) may be a little more vulgar, especially older teachers and administrators. We are divorced but visit our children’s schools together, which surprises experienced teachers. They wonder whether we are divorced on paper; there are those thinking that we are divorced on paper due to debts, etc.

Berrin, one of the participating mothers, told that she was half-jokingly accused by a private school administrator, who was even older than her own mother, as follows:

XXX teacher was angry with me and saying, “Are you not involved in this kid? Look, his grades are always fluctuating; he has a ruined achievement pattern.” She also said, “Why did he divorce a beautiful woman like you, is he crazy?” “Can’t you make up with him, my daughter? You know how much we care about your child, but this is his outcome. The child needs order at home.

Overall, the following main points are apparent from the quotations of the two mothers above. First of all, one can recognise the verbal and behavioral faults of the administrator. School administrator being “angry” and accusing the mother of neglect, does not comply with the professional parent-administrator communication; so does making jokes about the marital status and relationship of the parents. Also instead of adopting a respectful address and professional manner, administrator imposes a subordinate-superior relationship by addressing the student’s parent as “my daughter”. Not only does she mention or imply these things, she also tries to interfere with the private relationship of the parents directly. And in fact, commits a legal crime by breaking the regulation with trying to situate the parents into certain stereotypes pretending to have good intentions. In the first quotation, the statements expressed by the teacher are not clearly given, but we see the stereotype of seeking another story under the relationships between divorced parents. And they both directly attribute the changes to the child’s achievement pattern to the divorce.

As exemplified in the section “4.4. *Perceiving Divorce as “Familylessness”*,” young teachers may initiate similar problems, too. Yet, the interventions become much more evident due to the age and generation differences. When considered within social change, generation X, Y, and Z women’s views on marriage and divorce differ (Yıldırım, 2021). Considering baby boomers are still able to teach in Turkey, it may not be unreasonable to encounter happenings such as the “older/experienced teachers” mentioned by the mothers being surprised to see any close relationships between divorced parents or trying to discourage parents from getting divorced. While the rate of divorces in Turkey was 0.34 per thousand in 1981 (Eyce, 2002), it increased to 2.07 per thousand crude divorce rate in 2021, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute data. It is highly expected that baby boomers cannot adapt to this change and adopt different views on marriage and divorce than the generations X, Y, and Z.

Elaborating on the misunderstanding of “co-parenting,” implied among the six items above, mothers continuing their relationships with their ex-husbands are often found strange. They reported that spending time together for the sake of their children is perceived as a sign of reconciliation by their friends, relatives and kids’ teachers. School events (e.g., parent-teacher meetings or end-of-year performances), where ex-spouses get together the most, are also the setting in which this co-parenting appears the most. Thus, teachers should not act as if there was something unusual so that both parents and children are not disturbed.

In addition, teachers tend to see the mother as responsible for the child, even if the parents jointly undertake all the material and moral needs of the child. Similarly, children are always considered under the responsibility of the mother at schools, even if the parents are married. Besides, fathers of children of married couples are also not rather involved in school activities. All the participating counselors reported that they usually contact the mothers for their children, confirming the assumption above. The response “mother” is followed by “grandmother” and “aunt.” When I sought a reason for it, the counselors uttered that men do not know how to take care of the child; thus, they prefer to contact the closest woman in the family when they need to report a problem or make an announcement. In the case of divorce, it becomes even more evident. While the mere presence of the father is well-enough to define him as a good father, the slightest behavioral disorder or academic failure of the child is considered the mother’s inadequacy.

The participating mothers often underlined that the pressure on them was not the case for the fathers.

After all, there is no such thing as a divorced father. You can not say “You’re divorced!” to a divorced father. It doesn’t work that way. A married man is not regarded as “He is married!” either; he is just a man. There is no such thing as a divorced man, a married man, or a single man. Yet, marital status just matters so much in women.

Considering how the social perspective summarized above by Hande, a divorced mother, reflects at schools, it may be evident what the perspective of “just being there is enough to make somebody a good father” brings to divorced mothers.

Private schools adopt a so-called “gender equality.” That’s why the staff tries to pay extra attention to what they say, but it is so obvious that it is actually for show. Even though their father and I are there, the teacher always looks at me when discussing what my children should do. However, they know that we are co-parenting. My children see their father whenever they want, but the teacher believes as if a divorced mother was the babysitter of her children. It’s like a divorced dad is someone seeing his kids on the weekend, takes them to a burger place, teaches them how to drive and drops them back to me.

Although the ex-husband of this mother did not have the characteristics mentioned here, many divorced mothers suffer from a divorced father figure that fits what is described above. It is probably the reason why the teacher thought Aslı’s ex-husband to be similar to the figure above, although they were doing co-parenting. Mothers dealing with all the problems of their child(ren), providing care, and even sometimes not getting alimony are considered to be guilty of everything in the slightest disruption in their child(ren)’s life. In an environment where the mother can be treated as a guilty, selfish, incompetent and “bad” just because she is divorced no matter what she does; fathers who are merely present, do not entirely leave his children after divorce, identified as fulfilled their duties, and are declared good fathers. As a result of the interviews I did, it turned out that this concept creates the “Mc Donald’s father” figure. “Mc Donald’s father” symbolizes a man who is known as a good father by doing nothing but making the child have fun once a week, in a divorced family where the mother shoulders every burden of their child but still mentioned as a bad mother. This “Mc Donald’s Father” concept is prevalently used by divorced mothers but would find a place in the written literature for the first time in this thesis.

I quoted below from four mothers blind to each other who used the concept most prominently:

To be honest; I was afraid that he would be a McDonald’s father. In the last months of the marriage, he did not come home to avoid me. He was always late. That’s why

he stayed away from Ezgi. Yet, it was over after the divorce. Now, he cares everything about Ezgi.

In the above excerpt, there is a mother who is worried that after the divorce, the entire burden of the child will fall on her shoulders. And the excerpt below is from a mother who actually experienced the situation the mother above feared.

Fathers don't have a care in the world. It is more apparent among divorced fathers. For example, my ex-husband is a highly educated engineer, a sophisticated gentleman, an intellectual, a yoga lover... But after divorce, he now sees his child a couple of hours a week. He doesn't even see his child as much as McDonald's fathers.

The most complained feature of this father figure which they call "McDonald's Father", is that they break the rules of the mothers. As all the participant guidance teachers expressed, this is also a problem for me as a guidance teacher: if the mother and father do not direct the kid in the same way, it becomes very difficult to teach the child any social skills. One of the divorced mothers who is also a teacher, referred to this situation as follows:

I'm not advocating that every divorce goes smoothly. I tried so hard not to affect our boy. I also see as a teacher that children experience difficulties at school when their parents do not get along. The child gets confused about what to do particularly if the father is a McDonald's father. They spend six days of rules with the mother and a day of play with the father. What will appeal to the child? Well... He's better off never being in the child's life. Then, at least the child will know what to do.

Even if the "McDonald's Father" does not break the rules of the mother, the fact that he is just a fun figure who is constantly without rules, pressure the mother who is trying to establish a life order:

The mother has to take care of their children and eventually wears out. Yet, the father has fun. Then, he gets bored after a while and comes up. He becomes a McDonald's father. So what happens? Father is the fun figure. And the mother is angry, impulsive, always talking about responsibility... The father is the figure of freedom... He also stopped by the school a few times. Do you know what the teachers said to me? I get nervous when I remember: "Ms. Alev, you should stay at the same side with Mr. Fatih toward Can. Mr. Fatih is very positive, but you remain negative, your kid's psychology may be adversely affected." Come on! Could I explain what I mean?

Mothers are under such a burden that they cannot make room for themselves because it is normalized that fathers take less or no responsibility. Our patriarchal social dynamics accept the child under the responsibility of the mother. Yet, the father's not being entirely out of the child's life after the divorce is considered a "favor by the father." On the other hand, mothers are treated as "incompetent" at school, which is the only social and institutional environment where they appear just in the role of mother. Mothers are held responsible for all the problems that their children may have for any reason. Teachers and administrators may dare to restrict their rights and interfere with their private life, from taking away their right to speak to giving relationship advice.

5.3. Less of a Woman

The claim that females desire to have a child when tuning a certain age because of their biology, hormones and instincts is the one that is no longer supported even by any branch of science. It only appeared because of social policies and should lose its importance as a rumor. Mothers are not born but are produced by cultural incentives (Tong, 2006). Unfortunately, a large group of people in Turkish society still consider women's ultimate life goal and duty to be a mother. So much so that, in his keynote at the opening of the KADEM building, President Erdoğan uttered such words: *"A woman who abstains from motherhood because of being employed in fact denies her womanhood. A woman rejecting motherhood and giving up managing her home is less of a woman, is a half-woman, no matter how successful she is in her working life. To reject motherhood is to give up half of humanity."* These words, said by the highest level administrator of the state at the opening of a facility of women's association, imply once again how much womanhood is still associated with motherhood in our society.

Nevertheless, as discussed in detail in the previous sections, some criteria are necessary for one's motherhood to be acknowledged. I can exemplify these criteria, such as being a biological mother, having more than one - less than five children, being married to the father of the children and having at least middle-class income. Divorced mothers do not reject motherhood or prefer a career to motherhood. But

they still are not socially accepted ideal mothers regarding their marital status and lifestyle. When womanhood is considered a complement to motherhood (and socially-approved motherhood), divorced mothers feel more pressure and discrimination.

According to the discriminating point of view, the reason for existence and primary duty of women are “to manage her home and be a mother.” Therefore, a divorced woman is a figure who “could not hold her household together” and her motherhood is “questionable.” In other words, from this point of view, a divorced mother has also failed with her female identity. She is thought to be in need of help because of being failed. Hence, people have an attitude of “Let’s support this woman; she is already an flawed person,” making her feel completely incompetent and inadequate.

Havva expounded how these “irrelevant” efforts of people are perceived by the mother as follows:

There were teachers calling me to ask whether they could do anything for me. When I was married, I was busier, more tired and more troubled. There were times when I personally asked teachers for help. In times when I was gone for a seminar; my husband was abroad; the children stayed with their grandmother; they had exams... Teachers didn’t tend to be supportive even when I personally asked for my child. Of course, now this sounds fake to me. It is not to aid somebody but seek something to gossip.

The most apparent reflection of familism at schools is that one perceives a household where parents are married as acceptable despite all the problems and sees the child living with the divorced mother as flawed in every condition. The fact that teachers always offer help to divorced mothers and ignore them when they are married may suggest that since children of divorced parents are covered in the “List of Children with Risk Symptoms”, teachers may perceive these children as potential sources of problems and try to give them special attention (i.e., a situation that may have much more institutional foundations than “seeking gossip” like the mother’s version). However, this unnecessary attention and so-called supportive efforts turn into practices discriminating against the children and their mothers.

Economic power is another point that women are seen as lacking. It is assumed that the divorced mother will experience financial difficulties regardless of her occupation or income level. It is also believed that such a woman will not be able to support herself and her family financially and, thus, provide adequate care for her children.

The counselor was surprised to learn that I was the custodian of my daughter. She thought her father paid for her school. It's not unusual for a single mother to send her child to a private school. Interestingly, she also knew I was a well winning psychologist.

Regardless of their educational attainment, occupation or income level, single mothers are unnecessarily expected to survive with the support of their ex-husbands, new husbands or their own fathers. When the father contributes to the child(ren)'s school expenses, then there will be the image of a heroic father who "takes care of his child despite everything" against the mother who "could not keep her husband", "could not maintain her family order", "could not perform her womanly duties."

I was late for a parent-teacher meeting. I was going to meet the new English teacher for the first time. Upon meeting me, the teacher said, "Oh, when I saw Mr. Tan, I never imagined his ex-wife to be like you." Then, I responded, "How so?" To be honest, I was caught unawares at that moment. She surprisingly said, "I imagined you more despotic, more sullen." Divorce is always the woman's fault for a certain sociocultural level. If the father is considered a decent man, the mother becomes definitely a terrible person.

There is a social understanding and social policy order in which divorce is seen as a crime and the offender as a mother. Half of the participating mothers, regardless of their educational attainment or age, preferred not to tell the divorce anyone, including their own families, until the procedure was over. They did not want to deal with the reactions and discouragement they thought they would confront during the divorce phase. In addition, those who shared the situation with the school counseling services were not welcomed with any supportive way. In general, the mothers are made to feel lacking womanhood after the divorce at schools as well as in a society where womanhood is identified with motherhood and divorced mother stigmatization prevails.

5.4. Widow, Vulnerable to Harassment

It is not just psychological or verbal abuse that divorced mothers experience at their children's schools. The point of view that makes divorced women sexual objects is addressed as "oversexualization" by Uygun (2016). The author uses this concept to explain the stigmatization of divorced women as seducers, in need of sexual intercourse and therefore dangerous for other couples (Uygun, 2016). It may have been because of the situation described above that most of the participating mothers reported being abused. Among the interview questions, question 19 is "Do you think a divorced mother and a married mother are treated differently at their child(ren)'s school? If so, how is the difference?" The responses from almost all mothers suggested that they were subjected to various sexual harassment at their children's schools after the divorce.

For example, Zeynep expounded how the attitudes of a vice-principal toward her changed in a short time after her divorce even though he never attempted such a thing while she was married:

...One day, while having a quick word with the vice-principal, out of nowhere he said, "You did not match with your ex-husband at all. You didn't belong with each other. Your ex-husband couldn't carry you." Then, he held my hand. I'm so sorry to say that he put my hand on his penis. He pulled me toward himself like this. I said, "Hey, what the hell are you doing?" I remember running away from there.

Whereas being a woman in a patriarchal order is difficult enough, "divorced woman", "single mother" and "widow" labels are adding other difficulty levels. I considered having a "divorced woman" title and "widow" title as separate levels of the challenge for women because the adjective "widow" is often adopted in society to refer directly to a person who is officially not a virgin. This, in turn, is directly linked with the "oversexualization" mentioned in the first paragraph of this section. Yet, a widow who has lost her husband appears to be a more innocent figure than the divorced widow which is the subject of this thesis. While the first figure has no fault, the latter "could not keep her husband", "could not save her family", "is selfish and mistaken". In every social and institutional setting, the patriarchal structure perceives divorced women as "non-compliant" and "objectors of family order." Both society

and state-level social policies marginalize divorced women. The point where the exclusionary approach of social policies is apparent is, for example, that divorced women cannot benefit from the cash aid program for widowed women (Gül & Bayram, 2018). In the social sphere, the change of perspective starts with the perception of seeing divorced women as “unclaimed.” Divorced mothers are quite aware of such perceptions and approaches but cannot prevent them no matter what they do. Cansu explained that she came up with the following solution for this problem:

I said to myself, if I had been married, they probably wouldn't have come on to me that much. Then, I started wearing my old wedding ring when going out some places. You may not believe it but one of these places is my daughter's (saying her child's name) school. I was so disturbed that I had to wear the ring of the man I cut out of my life. Then, all their disturbing acts ceased surprisingly right away.

Her words infer that she barely escaped being abused at her child's school when she created an image of having a relationship with someone. There may be different mechanisms underlying this situation. First, the abuser may find the presence of a man in the woman's life much more respectable than what a woman wants. The second may be that he is afraid of any reactions from the man she is in a relationship with rather than the woman's reactions. The third may be that when “manlessness,” which may be believed to make a widow attractive, disappears, then her attraction is over for the abuser.

One day, in her senior year, a teacher shouted at my daughter (saying the child's name) and pushed her off. I went to the school in a hurry to call him to account for how he could do such a thing. The man said, “It's quite normal for you to be nervous these days. Your divorce is very recent. I'll take you out to dinner and take your tension off.” You idiot! I am nervous because you beat my kid. Can you believe what's on his dirty mind? He thinks I was not nervous and angry because of his fault but because of my divorce.

The perception of “manlessness” mentioned in the previous paragraph is clearly evident in the quote above. A divorced woman is thought to have some sort of unfulfilled sexual desire. Even if she has clear other reasons to be angry, her getting angry about something is attributed to her divorce and possible sexual tension. As seen in the example, the teacher at her child's school could explicitly harass the parent based on the understanding above.

The participating mothers reported not being backed up by other women in the same environment while they were harassed by men. On the contrary, other women make divorced mothers a gossip topic and think that divorced mothers will capture their husbands.

There is a perception in our society that a widow starves a man and have an eye on other women's husbands. Married parents stopped greeting me. I had to leave the School-Family Association in a short time; I used my mother's illness as an excuse. The problem is not limited to the women trying to protect their husbands from me but their husbands... I caught some eyes at me despite being with their wives. Some others said, "Oh, I was so sorry about your divorce. If you need something private, here is my contact number." Disgusting... So widows don't seduce your husbands, your husbands trying to seduce widows.

Some participating mothers reported desiring to take their own father or a friend with them while attending parent-teacher meetings or school events because needing the support of someone trusted at that moment. Overall, divorced mothers are afraid of being abused when talking to a male teacher, a male administrator, or the male parent of another student. Besides, they are worried if a female teacher, a female administrator, or the female parent of another child will see them as a "husband hunter." In Turkey, women already live a life stuck in fear, even when they go out or laugh out loud. They cannot experience their rights and freedom granted on paper in daily life practices. And on the top of it, this study revealed that mothers are harassed even in schools, which are perceived as among the most reputable institutions and should be the safest place for children and everyone.

Even if motherhood is not a concept embraced by feminist literature as much as womanhood, it has always been advocated that everyone should have their own way on motherhood and not be judged. Whereas the child cannot naturally be owned by only the mother, the primary parent of the child is considered the mother in the current social order; therefore, mothers are more in touch with their child(ren)'s school than fathers. And the children spend at least half of their awake time at school every day. One may understand why a safe school environment is essential for mothers, considering all that together.

CHAPTER 6

PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN OF DIVORCED PARENTS AT SCHOOLS

For children who were born in a period when the internet is a huge part of people's life, it is widespread to be aware of other life orders than theirs or to adopt a culture other than the one in their close circle. Therefore, even if they have never seen a divorced couple in their social environment, despite the increasing divorce rates in our country and the world, they do not react greatly or negatively to their parents' divorce unless they are guided by the grown-ups. Today's children acknowledge divorce as something that can happen at any time and to anyone. However, when people at school find out about their family life order, it may generate bundle of problems promoted by our counseling system.

I addressed these problems in four main sections: 6.1.Naughty/ Spoiled/ Unsuccessful /Misfit Child Bias and Labeling, 6.2.Discrimination and Exclusion, 6.3.Pity, 6.4.Shaping and Leading in to Gender and Moral Patterns

In this section, the experienced I mentioned are based on the interviews with counselors and children's divorced mothers.

6.1. Naughty/ Spoiled/ Unsuccessful/Misfit Child Bias and Labeling

The child is far from our family structure. He does not know how to be a family, to share and negotiate. Couples cannot get along and immediately divorce in current marriages. They do not try to compromise. They are not willing to get along. Would the child raised by such people be willing to get along? Of course, not.

These sentences indicate that the "crime" committed by the parents is reflected on the child. And this is coming from a counselor who has been assigned by the state as

the “closest psychological counselor of the children.” The stereotype that children with divorced parents are more rebellious, naughty and spoiled than married ones is widely accepted. Because the mother who raised them is thought to have these characteristics. According to the assumptions of the people with this viewpoint, if the mother were adaptable, not selfish and settled with what she had, there would not already be a divorce under any condition. Two of the divorced mothers expounded this situation in these statements:

They don't care that expectations from marriage can be different and the things between the couple may be so wearisome. 'We were unhappy in our marriages, too; but we didn't get divorced; because we are perfect mothers. We are so woman and such ladylike...' These are, of course, the things that cannot fit in the frame of logic, but you slowly go crazy when you hear it all the time. Especially in the early days, I kept on thinking, 'Did I really make a mistake? Am I a bad mother?' This is not a viewpoint I adopt, but this is the viewpoint of the society. That is that. Now that I cannot change this all by myself, and this will not change suddenly; so yes, my children will be exposed to this because of me! They will also be judged due to the things I have done. It has such a side.

...God knows what problem she had... otherwise why he would divorce her? There will already be no joy from the child raised by that woman... And counselors still think that mothers are supposed to raise the child! But I'm not going to open that door.

Female administrators and teachers, who boast about they maintain their marriage despite being unhappy in it, are more likely to judge divorce mothers and their kids. It is predicted that the divorced parents must form two hostile sides to each other and may enter into rivalry with one another to provide more inviting opportunities to attract the child. As a result of that the child get spoiled and has non-saturating expectations about anything. The school administration or teachers judge them through children's family life, although they do not know the child personally. They greet with astonishment if they know him/her and the child has no concrete negativity compared to those whose parents are together.

The teachers said these for instance; “despite the divorce, he is very fine” and “despite the hard times you have come through, he is very strong.” ... It seems as if there was an expectation of something bad will happen. They stay on alert after the divorce, to see what the child is going to do.

Women say that they are tired of hearing the advice "Do not divorce, think about your child's future" during the divorce phase. There is a bias that the child has to be traumatized during the divorce process and behavioral disorders will develop as a result of this. Mothers with daughters are told that their daughters can not marry if they get divorce. In the child's school, postponements such as "wait for the end of adolescence", "wait for the end of the exam year", "wait for them to stand on their own feet" etc. are recommended by the school counselor, class counselor or school administrator. If the divorce has taken place despite all this, your child is now a "shattered family child" with "all their bad features".

Normally, I wouldn't transfer a student who can do math, to the language department but since you got divorced this year, the child's lessons will go upside down anyway. She will take the university exam next year. You ruined her..." I had a fight with that administrator who told these words. Oh, I did well! Impertinent man... There has been no change in the success of my child.

According to respondents, a well-managed divorce does not have to be a stress factor for the child. But there are key points for the child to have a healthy process. There will be none of these negative expectations coming to light, if the concept of divorce is explained correctly to the kids. Also, abandonment of a parent, a sharp decrease at income and emotional abuse from school or extended family should be prevented. If these conditions can be provided, the child would not need extra attention, so s/he will not misbehave at school. And since the home life will be peaceful, to study and academic achievement would not occur any problem. But as we have seen in the examples above, there is a common stereotype at schools that every family experiences divorce very dramatically and divorce is very traumatic for every child.

Three out of 15 divorced mothers I interviewed were teachers. The most obvious difference of these mothers from the others is that they can predict what they and their children will encounter at school after the divorce, since they know the school environment and teachers' room conversations. Buket is also a divorced mother who is a teacher and was also worried about what would happen at school after divorce. Since it has only been a year since her own divorce, Buket says she has not observed the reactions of her child's teacher toward her child yet, as it coincided with the

coronavirus and the start of distance learning. However, she is anxious about returning to face-to-face education due to her observations as a teacher for 22 years:

One of my biggest constraints about divorce, in fact my only constraint, was that they would ascribe the child's actions to that, because I knew the school environment. To be fair, I have fear of the school being opened now. I actually am concerned that they would attribute every attitude she does to divorce. In fact, there is such stigmatizing. I don't mean that I am doing this to others or I have experienced something like this, but I have observed it all over the years in my teaching experience. I even resisted in the meetings. Why do we ascribe children's bad behaviors to this? Well, lots of children do inappropriate behaviors, be naughty. But when those children do something, we immediately label them as divorced parented children. I think that this is also an idea for counselors to adopt, because it makes it easy for them to blame the divorce. They take the easy way out. They don't feel the need to investigate why the child really exhibits unwanted behavior.

As I explained in the previous chapters, when teachers are asked about problematic groups at school, the first category that comes to their minds is children whose parents are divorced; since they are the group most easily marked because of the operating way of the List of Students with Risk Symptoms. When the social infrastructure to regard everything about divorce negatively, confederates with the Risk Group List, these children has no any other chance but being judged as potential rule breakers at school. Children whose parents are divorced become very remarkable even if they do nothing at school with the functioning of our guidance system and the combination of social bias. But when we take a look into the real experiences, we cannot see anything mirroring those stereotypes. When the children's friendship relations, academic success and school life were questioned, mothers generally stated that everything got better after the divorce. Almost all of them confided expressions similar to the sentence "The child is relieved because the unrest in the house is over" while answering these questions. Children who see unhappy parents in an unsettled marriage in the same household become anxious and unhappy. If their parents are happier in different homes, children become happier and more successful.

6.2. Discrimination and Exclusion

The present prejudice can lead to stigmatization and social or institutional discrimination. For example, I witness in city-wide guidance teacher meetings, there

are administrators who force teachers create lists with the names of “children with divorced parents”. Also one of the participant teachers declared that he argued with the principal at the beginning of the year because he rejects to label the kids by making such a list. But he encountered with the words of “it’s for their sake to keep them under control”. Schools have developed various methods other than that. Such as pre-warning by the classroom counselor teacher so that children with divorced parents do not cause problems, before they have done anything bad. However, the biggest and most remarkable labeling I have heard, came from one of the divorced mother-teachers who participated in the present study. The information that she gave and then I investigated and confirmed is as follows:

We mark children whose parents are divorced in each class attendance list with those highlighter pens, in yellow. At XXX Secondary School (a public school in the center of Adana), this has become a tradition and has been accepted by everyone. Not a single person came out and said that you can’t do something like this. In my early years, I was never taken seriously when I said, “We are literally labeling these children. We are obviously discriminating these children.” In the class I teach, when I enter the classroom, I see a student with bumps and bruises on his head and black eyes. This usually happens with the same kids at uncertain intervals. Go examine this first; what is going on with these children, do they fight, do they get beaten, does this happen at home, where does it happen? But no! They just highlight the divorced ones with a marker... They said “that’s the rule, teacher”. They said “this will be done”. The attendance list is in the hands of other children too. It immediately stands out. There is no privacy, everyone at school knows about the children’s family life. Our new principal is a more sane man. He said, “Is something like this possible, it is a crime against humanity.” Thankfully, he stopped this practice that had been going on for years.

The discrimination and labeling on the mentioned practice is quite striking and evident. This labeling is witnessed by all the teachers, the students who got their names highlighted on the attendance list, and the other students. And it has an impact on an individual basis. Though it does not occur to their mind at first, teachers might be in expectation of observing misbehavior or failure from these kids in time because every day, they see those names highlighted. Another example from other divorced mothers is when those children are held more responsible for misbehaving which all children actually do. The reason behind is again, since they are the children of divorced parents. If we look from the viewpoint of the other children in the classroom, there is a “blacklist” they see for the first time in respect of their age. This is an incident that will leave its mark on children for how unfavorable divorcing is

perceived in the society. On the other hand, when the children see that their own names are highlighted on everyday's attendance list just because their parents are divorced, they realize their way of life is not approved by the environment they are in. Other children may make a mock of this or insult them. In that case, the children are exposed to bullying by means of the school administration. Also, as the divorced mother-teacher claimed earlier, the fact that no action was taken for "the same children coming to school after being subjected to violence at different times" is vital. If the school administration's main purpose had been highlighting these potentially prejudged children to prevent the possibility of being subjected to neglect and abuse, they would have taken action with goodwill on children who were clearly exposed to violence. The people responsible for the violence towards these children would have brought to daylight and a solution would have been found to this. Since there is no attempt to protect these students, it means that there is also no protection attempt for the children who have no apparent problem with their parents' divorce. Given that every single child whose parents are divorced were shown a specific type of protection, it would be cause of prejudice and stigmatization. No matter what the underlying reason is, exposing personal information of children on an easily accessible attendance list is both unnecessary and inappropriate.

Children with divorced parents are not only under the school administration and teachers' eyes, but also the other parents. They see the children as morally corrupt and bad influences for their own. Visiting such children's house to play with or having them over their place is thought more dangerous than the ones whose parents are married. Especially daughters whose parents are married are warned against girls who grow up with a single mom. There have been many mothers giving such examples, I would like to quote one of them who considered the matter from a different angle:

Other mothers tend to look badly not only at the divorced mother but also at her child. Bahar realized that divorce was a bad thing many years after our divorce when she started school. Her friends asked her "Where is your father? Why doesn't he live with you?" In fact, the children ask innocently, when playing or doing something, but the condition changes when they talk about it at home. Do I make myself clear? Other mothers interrogate the teacher by asking questions about Bahar's father, when they learn that we are divorced. They start to keep their children away from Bahar. They advise them not to play with her. Bahar used to feel dirty because of whatever

they told her while dropping or taking kids from school. She used to wash her hands constantly in the first year of primary school. Her hands were all pink and injured due to the constant washing. When I talked to the counselor teacher, I was told that the divorce might have caused this obsession. As if the constant washing is due to the divorce... She was an 18-month-old baby at the divorce process. She did not have any problems for the first six years of her life. Did the effects of the divorce emerge when school began?

The child of divorced parents feels unguarded and guilty because of the attitude of other parents at school. It may go a step further where the child gets afflicted with obsessive compulsive disorder. Some married parents do not allow their children to see divorced parents' children. They are left out. Through the answers of the mother to my other questions, I know that the child's father is alive and he sees his kid often. However, it is mentioned that the child has "no father" due to divorce. In the meantime, the school counselor joins discriminating and judging instead of preventing the parents who meddle in the children's relationship. The child was 18 months old when her parents got divorced but according to her teacher, the reason for this obsession that developed after starting school at the age of 6, is divorce. The child did not have any bad experience with divorce until she started school. On the other hand, there is nothing affecting her since it is the only lifestyle she experienced. There is an internalized social mechanism functioning by school, that harms, abuses, excludes and despises this child. This mechanism may increase the pressure on the child if one parent marries another person:

When I was getting remarried, her friend from school, she already had just one friend whose house she would go to, and her parents asked questions. "Your mother's getting remarried. What's that going to be like? What if you have a sibling from another father, a stepsibling? What if that new husband guy hurts you?" What do these people gain by upsetting a little child's mind? ... When I asked for support from the school counselor in this case... I do not remember whether she did anything or not. What I remember is the source of the problem. I don't exactly remember the solution. But, as I recall, it worked itself out gradually. The more Damla understood that I would not do anything to put her in danger; the more she trusted me, the more she trusted my new husband. ... There were times when the rumors started by those around her school, shook my child's trust in me.

The mother who declared this example, is trying to create a good life for herself and her child. But the married mother of her daughter's school friend made her daughter upset with the stigma of being the child of divorced parents. This friend's mother never welcomed her daughter at their house again after she remarried. In other

words, she is excluded from a social environment. We can see visits to school friends' homes in every age group. Children want to spend time together during holidays and on weekends too. But it is not the child whose parents are divorced that turns these home visits into danger. On the contrary, this example shows us that these can be dangerous for a child whose parents are divorced, because we can see that she is exposed to psychological violence by another parent.

School should be the safest place for every child. If it turns into a troublesome place for a child, it means that millions of individuals who do not conform to the socially accepted ideal family type are in danger of psychological violence at schools. Not fitting into traditionally desirable patterns should never result in being excluded from school or discriminated at school. Mothers are distressed because their children are exposed to psychological abuse due to their divorce. They really need to have their voices heard on this issue. I would like to close this section with the following sentence that one of them sincerely said:

Divorce does not make our children lepers. If you can clarify this in your study, I thank you in advance on behalf of thousands of people.

6.3.Pity

The aforementioned children have one more problem other than the bias claiming they would be naughty/spoiled: people's prejudice on how introverted, miserable, dependent they would be. Of course, as in the bias of being naughty, this point of view has also its core in the idea of being unsuccessful both socially and academically.

When a couple with a baby gets divorced, a normal way of life for the baby is having two separate houses while growing up. A well-handled divorce and separation process prevents the child from having any drawbacks in their life. For this reason, children claim that they do not feel the absence of having parents that live together (according to mothers). There might be neglected children during divorce process or psychologically abused ones after the divorce. However, not every divorce causes

neglect and abuse afterwards. Children of married parents might also suffer from such problems. Nonetheless, teachers who see divorce as familylessness, disregard the possibility of a happy child with divorced parents, as they do the same to an unhappy child of a married couple in their household.

My child's only problem is the first "Poor you!" reaction of people at school when they learn that we are divorced. The way they pity... Regarding my child as crippled. There is no other problem with my kid.

Contrary to popular opinion, divorce does not always harm children. In most cases, especially when there is intense conflict between spouses, both parents and children do better after the divorce (Benson, 2014). Hence, assuming that divorced parents' children are unhappy and inadequate is useless, humiliating and dishonorable.

The way teachers try to give special interest to such children comes to other students' attention. In some cases, teachers practice positive discrimination towards the children since they are seen as a part of the disadvantageous group. The teachers try to show great interest and affection to the child since they think the child is deprived of a mother or father. Such an attitude unbalances the classroom dynamics. It always draws attention when a teacher shows more affection towards a specific child in the classroom. Let alone the affection and interest, even calling upon one student to speak more offends the eye. If one specific student is shown more interest, the teacher loses their authority and friendship levels in the classroom decline. Also, the child's family life is talked about among other children, making the child unhappy as a result of these circumstances. School counselor Barış expresses such situations as:

Teachers cause emotional abuse while trying to help the child with divorced parents. How? They overemote. Saying "Oh sweetie! Honey!" all the time, they try to show that they are caring and supportive so that the child does not feel left behind. One example is Hanife Teacher. In her class, the way she paid extra attention to Kerem when his parents divorced drew the attention of the other kids. After that the kids start to make Kerem uncomfortable...

The same counselor emphasized the fact that the children whom the class counselor teacher pitied and tried to "eliminate the shortcomings" were not quite different from the others. When I asked if he observed any difference between the children of married and divorced parents, he said the following:

I have never encountered a behavioral problem due to this difference, no. If you asked me if they are more aggressive in their friendships, I'd say no again. I mean, look at the aggressive kids at school; they are always the children of the married parents. There is nothing more absurd than linking such behaviors with divorce. Troublesome children are linked with family relationships but not with marriage. Being married does not mean there is no trouble (laughs). I have seen a kid wishing that his parents would split! I have seen another, asking me to lead and guide his parents across the divorce process (laughs).

Yet there is a large mass feeling sorry for the child of divorced parents. As I mentioned in the literature chapter, like in children's books, teachers have this general view: "In case of divorce, the father leaves." However, divorced mothers claim that the fathers used to less take care of the child during marriage compared to post-divorce. There is a group of mothers expressing that the father would come home late and spending less time with their kids since their relationship with his wife was bad. Fathers who did not used to look after their kids since they put all the responsibility on mothers' shoulders are also mentioned. What I try to explain is this; fathers attend to their children's school activities more after divorce since mothers' attendance would be enough for them when married. But now, fathers think they have to attend because they feel more responsible towards both their children and their children's school.

In a brief, staying married does not mean that the child is living in a happy household. The fact that the mother and the father are not married to each other does not have to mean that the child is lonely, neglected, attention deprived, emotional or introverted either. Treating children in parallel with such stereotypes is humiliating and irritating for them.

6.4. Shaping and Leading in to Gender and Moral Patterns

Among the mothers I interviewed, only 2 out of 15 said that the father has the custody of the child. "There is no father near them" was one of the most common sentences I heard during the interviews I did for this research. It is believed that having no father in charge will cause trouble in two different ways among girls and boys. There is this opinion that because the children observe only one gender role, it

will affect their sexual orientation or they will prefer an immoral life. As a result, the children are directed towards the “desired” model under the name of “reintegrating the children into society”. It is common to experience this kind of stereotype and directing at schools as well.

One day, her English teacher invited me to the school and said that my daughter was being really close friends with boys. Seriously, they invited me to tell me this. They wanted to ‘warn’ me. ‘There is no father in charge, be careful. I am telling this for your sake.

In this excerpt, it is found inconvenient for a girl to have a male playmate since there is no father in the household. Traditionally, not living in the same household with a father means indiscipline and defenselessness for a girl, which brings moral corruption along. Leve & Fagot (1997) states that families with single mothers are less traditional than the ones with single fathers or both parents. Until recently, the father was in a more authoritarian position in patriarchal societies like ours. Childcare was the mother’s duty.

Participating mothers in this thesis are born between the 70's and 90's, and ex-husbands of them are their own age. Despite seeing the new generation fathers, especially in the last decade, have been more involved in child development than the older generation, there are people still seeing the father only as a discipline mechanism and a protector. When he is not in the house, the child, especially his daughter, is left unprotected and idle.

The social circle comes up with different types of burden for the son who does not live with his father, no matter how often they see each other. One of them is the responsibility of “you are the man of this household”, and therewith society might feature the son as “the protector of the mother”. The second one is the idea that he will become immoral and will never become successful due to the lack of authority. The third one is the pressure of “you do not have any man figure that you can look up to”. In this case, his relationship with the mother’s father or mother's brother though he is seeing his father is always questioned. In the incident Ece mentions, we can see that the counselor teacher is trying to fit the child into gender stereotypes by appointing his uncle, talking about his lack of a father figure.

Tunç has long, blonde hair. His counselor teacher asked us to give him a haircut many times, talking about how everybody mistakes him for a girl. At first, I got embarrassed, yet I wanted it to stay that way since my son likes it so. Everybody has long hair nowadays. I like it as well. Then one day, the teacher warned his uncle saying that God forbid, Tunç might get influenced and attracted to boys. One day my brother went to the school to pick him up and this teacher asked him to take care of my son since there is no father in charge and get Tunç a male haircut.

The marital status of the parents of LGBTI+ and heterosexual men is compared, it is seen that living with a single mother is not a determining factor for sexual orientation (Kazak, 2018). Yet, there is still such a stereotype in our society.

In addition to these, the biggest and maybe the most detrimental direction towards children with divorced parents is to make them alienated from their parents. When convinced that their parents' chosen way of living is erroneous or they do not consider what is best for their children, the children start to have trust issues towards their parents. The mother and the father are the first people a child is in a close relationship with and the way the child communicates with them affects all future relationships. Children who have trust issues towards their parents go through various psychological and social problems that might last in the future. Like other people or institutions, the school also has no right to do such harm to children. İdil declared that how her son's attitude changed after he heard the comments of his Social Sciences teacher about being a family:

The case of questioning if we are living as a good example... After that incident, divorce became a thing he had a hold on us. You did not do your own homework! I mean it's like... You did not behave, so I won't either. I don't know how to say... You are divorced, epic fail! So, I am not calling my grandmother to celebrate her holiday. This is nothing compared to what you have done, kind of things...

When children realize that their parents are not approved by society, the relationship between them becomes unbalanced. When this happens, children try to lead their parents by having that sense of power. With the suggestions they hear from their peers who most probably hear from other adults, children start to interfere in the relationship between their mother and fathers so as to make them get back together. Children are not in a deal-breaker position in their parents' romantic relationship. As some of the women I interviewed for this research also mentioned, having the

perception “having a baby will save the falling apart marriage” is still valid in our society. Though children do not save or end marriage. Telling children to get their parents back together does not do any good other than putting a burden on their shoulders.

The fact that families with a single parent is a complete one and understanding how gender roles work is still not accepted in our society. Consequently, children of single parent families are still exposed to prejudice, stereotypes, labeling, stigmatization and discrimination at schools, especially the widest socializing area. Children have difficulty not because of their parents’ marital status or which parent they live with, but because of the effects of the views pointed towards their way of life

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSUION

The aim of this study is to find out how the Ministry of National Education's (MoNE) counseling system and understanding of "risk" affect teachers (practitioners) and parents and students (target groups). Furthermore, this study discusses if our national education's counseling system is free from biases and stereotypes and if children experience bullying in their schools because of their parents' divorce. In addition, this study seeks answers to the following research questions: How do the categories in the "Students with Risk Symphoms List," designed by the MoNE and requested to be filled out by counselors every year, affect children on this list? How does this practice of the MoNE affect the approach of counselors to these children? How does the MoNE's institutional definition of "child at risk," which is based on the "ideal family" understanding, affect counselors' perceptions, attitudes, behavior, and practices and the children of divorced parents and their mothers?

The study also addresses the view of Turkish society on the concept of family and the concept of divorce. Fallowing questions are explored and answered in this thesis. Does the divorce have to have a negative impact on the child, as most people predict? Is the child, whose parents are divorced, at higher risk for abuse or neglect? Does the child whose parents are divorced pose a sociological risk to its social environment by its lifestyle?

Schools were the only institutions that have answers to my questions. To collect data I conducted in-depth interviews with 3 administrators in the Counseling and Research Centers, 4 school counselors and 15 divorced mothers. Since my family

includes many teachers and I am also one of them, I have had pretty much experience within a circle of teachers and educational institutions since I was born. I had a good grasp of both the administrative processes and how teachers behaved and talked about what subjects long before I attempted to initiate the present research. Therefore, I employed the participant observation method since I can observe teachers' national behaviour in a school setting. As I myself have been counseling and experiencing educational processes and sharing similar feelings with them for years, I also kind of used ethnographic research technique. As well as participant observation, ethnographic research method and in-depth interview, another research technique that I use for this thesis is content analyses. To explain MoNE's understanding of risk, I had to go through the documents covering the definition of "risk". Therefore, content analysis was used in this thesis, albeit limited. Various findings have been obtained using these techniques. And findings were analysed by connecting with the literature.

All the school counsellors in Turkey, have to fill out the "Risky Behavior Assessment Scale" via provincial counseling information processing systems. The scale consists of four documents: "Risky Behaviors", "Numbers of Students with Risk Rymptoms", "Disciplinary Committee Form" and "Protective Factor Practices". Since "the disciplinary committee form" and "the protective factor practices" are school-specific without multiple options; what I am concerned with in this thesis are "the risky behavior list" and "the students with risk symptoms list".

Some of the data required to ensure the functioning of the social assistance system in Turkey actually comes from schools. It is significant particularly for the low-income group since school-based data is inevitably needed to determine which families need support. Moreover, these surveys also provide statistical data to the state and make it easier to see possible problems and find solutions. Therefore, these guidance questionnaires must be filled correctly. However, "Students with Risk Symptoms" list does not provide reliable data due to the five main deficiencies of the system. These five systemic errors that I established as a result of my interviews are briefly summarized as follows: 1- In the case of an insufficient number of counselor teachers, they may not know and satisfy the needs of the students. 2- There is no

mechanism to protect the teacher/counselor and the child when an adverse case is reported to a higher office. 3-Private schools may hide adverse cases or not implement surveys/preventive practices for fear of bad publicity and losing parents. 4- Teachers do not believe in the necessity of forms and consider filling out them as a chore. 5- The system has an ambiguous surveillance and supervision mechanism.

Also the name “List of Students with Risk Symptoms” is an inappropriate title, as any definition of risk also identifies an “others” group, and school counseling services must embrace everyone. Concept of the risk is being used is not the only problem with the title. It is also a problem that the meaning of "risk" is not clear. It may be misleading. Are these children at risk or do they pose a risk? Students with Risk Symptoms list, does not have enough instructions and clear explanatory definitions for the categories. Therefore, counselors may bring diverse interpretations to the categories or list. The system is under the initiative of the teachers, as all CRC officials have stated. Therefore, counselors may not be able to provide efficient and objective counseling suggested in relevant regulations due to their personal opinions.

One of the groups of children who are thought to have a risk symptom is those whose parents are divorced. In Turkey, prejudice against divorce has not shrunk even though the rate of divorce has increased to 2.07 per thousand in 2021, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute. In addition to the absence of the mechanisms that would prevent teachers from externalizing possible prejudices within our counseling system, there are multiple practices which can be reasons to increase discrimination. Unlike the other items in the list, having divorced parents is a fact; therefore, marking this item would not pose any problems for teachers. For that reason, the item in question is marked the most. When school counselors are asked about the group of students with whom they have the highest number of problems, at first they call the group that consists of the students “whose parents are divorced”. However, from a more detailed perspective, it becomes clear that the marital status of the parents of children is not essentially a determinant factor when it comes to commit a disciplinary offense. When the participating school counselors were asked about the children who committed disciplinary offenses, they realized that most of the problematic kids had married parents.

Combined with the social belief that divorce is a sign of rebelliousness and familylessness, discriminative policies as well as uncertain directives and insufficient supervision mechanism of our counseling system serve no longer as a safe space for the divorced mothers and their children who's majority cannot be neglected.

The interviews that I conducted suggested that the prejudice against divorce is still present in Turkish society. Women of different professions, educational status and income levels are consciously or unconsciously stigmatized by their social and professional environments after they get divorced. The most institutional and concrete problem experienced by divorced mothers at their children's school is that they do not bear the same surname with their children. Those mothers have difficulties proving that they are the guardians of their own children at school because they and their children have different surnames. Although this identity issue does not affect the relationship between children and their mothers, it still causes mothers to feel losing their dominance over their children and question how sound their family is.

Another major problem of mothers is about the concept of "being a family." The proverb saying that "men make houses, women make homes" still reflects the general perspective towards this matter in Turkey. A divorce between partners indicates the failure of the woman in saving the home. Due to what this perception brings along, a divorced mother is considered quarrelsome, clumsy, incompetent and selfish. A divorced woman reflects a profile that does not fit into the socially approved pattern, that is rebellious, and does not provide care to the children. According to the social judgement, women should not get divorced no matter what happens if they care about their children.

One of the problems mothers mention considering the period before and after divorce is that they are considered "unprotected and vulnerable" after getting divorced. Regardless of their social environment's educational and income status, divorced women are considered as sexual objects. In order not to be harassed at the school of

their children, divorced mothers make efforts to generate different solutions such as using the company of their own fathers or putting their old marriage rings on.

The prejudice against divorce and divorced mothers, reflects on these mothers' children as bias, labeling, discrimination and pity. From a traditional perspective, children are raised by their mothers, and the children of women who do not accept the social rules will also fail about fitting in the order. Certain stereotypes exist for the children whose parents are divorced. These children are believed to be more vulnerable to negligence and abuse. However, the end of the marital relationship does not indicate that the children will be neglected or be more vulnerable to abuse. On the contrary, mothers affirm that fathers provide care to their children at a higher degree after they get divorced. Because they do not participate in the efforts of providing care to their children thinking that they have different domestic roles while they are married. Also academic achievements of children are believed to decrease after their parents get divorced but according to the counselor teachers and divorced mothers, the contrary is often the case because divorce means the end of non-peaceful domestic environment. These children will likely have a more comfortable and healthy domestic life, resulting in a positive impact over domestic order as well as the academic and social life.

Every undesirable behavior that children do is associated with the divorce of their parents. Two opposite perspectives exist in this matter. One of them is that "the children whose parents get divorced disturb the order of the school and tend to be immoral". Every rebellious act these children perform is related to divorce of their parents. The other perspective is that "the children whose parents are divorced become introverted and alone." Any sorrow of these children is thought to arise from the divorce of their parents. The teachers of these children make efforts to make sure that the children fit into the socially approved domestic and ethical patterns set by the government. Despite the absence of any exemplary case proving the aforementioned point, girls growing up with their single mothers are believed to become immoral while the boys accompanied by their single mothers are believed to become gay. To take measures in this regard, authorities at schools demand support from the masculine figures from mother's family such as uncles or grandfather.

The interviews that I performed demonstrated that divorce does not necessarily mean the emergence of problems for children. Children whose parents are divorced suffer from problems not because of the divorce of their parents but because of the reactions they receive due to the social prejudice against divorce. Owing to the “prejudice against divorce” in our social structure and institutional systems, people consider themselves righteous in making certain interventions to both mothers and their children. The problematic events arising from these interventions may cause trauma.

This study is expected to contribute to the literature of gender and women studies as well as the disciplines of sociology and education. Harassment and stigmatizing experienced by divorced mothers at their children’s schools is mentioned based on the relevant documents as well as interviews with counselors and mothers for the first time through this study. The discrimination suffered at school by the children whose parents are divorced is associated with our counseling system for the first time. In addition to being a significant thesis helping mothers get heard, an objective attitude was displayed since mothers were not the only ones who were interviewed, meaning assessment was not one-sided. Authorities of the Counseling and Research Center as the representatives of the institutional structure, teachers as the practitioner of the educational system, and mothers representing the children who are the target group were interviewed in the present study.

Some deficiencies were noticed in the education policies of our country, in working process. I suggest that pediatric psychology and pedagogy should be included as obligatory classes of education faculties. State-supported practices should be performed to ensure that the school counseling system becomes more equalitarian for everybody. Counseling surveys should be updated to suit the current social needs. Divorce should not only be a risk factor in our education system. Since divorce is a part of our lives, an impartial divorce guidance can be provided with supportive studies determined in accordance with age groups. In this way, children can be prevented from being affected by negative reactions from the social environment. In addition, not only divorce, but also concepts such as birth (having a sibling) or death

(eternal loss of a loved one) can be enlightened by age-appropriate guidance. But ofcourse even without these additional work, the number of guidance teachers should be increased in Turkey.

Despite this diligent and well-rounded study, the points that have yet to be clarified are suggested to be investigated by further studies. Numerous studies can be conducted to examine how the prejudices of teachers affect the children; to question the prejudices of teachers in Turkey; to reveal how the communication between school administrations and guardian parents is and should be; to investigate the children groups suffering discrimination in Turkish schools. Well-managed divorce process effects on children can also be researched. In addition, studies can be conducted on divorced fathers and how do they get affected by discriminatory practices in their children's schools.

In spite of the absence of a direct relationship with the subject of the present thesis, the interviews made with the teachers and RAM authorities indicated the presence of major problems that have arisen from the cultural and linguistic differences with the children of Syrian war victims. And due to incomplete institutional preparations, Syrian children have negative effects on the general educational activities at various schools in Adana.

All in all, counselor teachers and divorced mothers declarations for this thesis present that, if parents do not exclude the children from their lives after divorce, if the living standards of children do not suddenly decrease in a financial and social perspective, and if the process is properly explained to them, divorce does not create any problems for todays children. These children are the members of the most global generation with the impact of actively using the internet since their birth. They normalize different relationship forms as they see such on an online platform even if they do not witness in their limited face to face environment. Yet they are still suffering from labeling and stigmatizing. The main reason behind the transformation of parental divorce into possible trauma is not the divorce itself but the reflections of the prejudice against divorce.

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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

 ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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16 MART 2020

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç.Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Süheyla TOKYAY'ın "Ebeveynleri boşanmış olan ilköğretim öğrencilerine okullarındaki rehberlik hizmetlerinde MEB'in risk anlayış ve tanımlarının etkisi" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 109 ODTU 2020 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.


Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLI SOY

Başkan


Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN

Üye

Doç.Dr. Pınar KAYGAN

Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT

Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şerife SEVİNÇ

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ

Üye


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KABASAKAL

Üye

B. VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION FORMS

ARAŞTIRMAYA GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU

Bu çalışma ODTÜ Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Süheyla Tokyay tarafından yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir?

MEB tarafından hazırlanan ve her yıl rehber öğretmenlerin doldurması istenen anketlerden biri de Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenci Listesi'dir. Bu listedeki kategoriler, risk belirtilerine sahip çocukları nasıl etkilemektedir? MEB'in bu çalışması rehber öğretmenlerin bu çocuklara yaklaşımını nasıl etkilemektedir? Amaç bu soruları tartışarak ülkemizdeki rehberlik sisteminin her çocuğa daha verimli olabilmesi için önyargı ve kalıp yargılardan arınmış bir danışmanlık sistemi önermektir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, sizden rehberlik sistemimize dair bazı soruları cevaplamanızı isteyeceğim. Vereceğiniz cevaplara göre süresi değişebilmekle birlikte bir saat sürmesi beklenmektedir. Sorulara vereceğiniz yanıtlar, yalnızca araştırmacı tarafından dinlenilecek bir ses kaydına alınacaktır.

Katılımla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler:

Bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Herhangi bir yaptırıma veya cezaya maruz kalmadan çalışmaya katılmayı reddedebilir veya çalışmayı bırakabilirsiniz. Çalışma, kişisel rahatsızlık verecek sorular içermemektedir. Ancak araştırma esnasında cevap vermek istemediğiniz sorular olursa soruyu atlayabilirsiniz. Sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplamaı bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çalışmayı uygulayan kişiye, çalışmadan çıkmak istediğinizi söylemek yeterli olacaktır.

Araştırmaya katılanların kimlik bilgileri ve çalıştıkları yerler kesinlikle tamamen gizli tutulacaktır. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları bilimsel ve profesyonel yayınlarda veya eğitim amaçlı kullanılabilir.

Araştırmayla ilgili sorularınız olursa:

Görüşmemiz sonrasında araştırmayla ilgili soru, yorum ve eklemek istedikleriniz için [] adresinden bana, [] adresinden tez danışmanım Doç. Dr. Fatma Umut Beşpınar'a ulaşabilirsiniz. Şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum.

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

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ARAŞTIRMAYA GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU

Bu çalışma ODTÜ Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Süheyla Tokyay tarafından yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir?

Çalışmanın amacı, boşanmış ebeveynlerin çocuklarının boşanma sürecinden nasıl etkilendiklerini, ebeveynlerinin boşanmasının okul ve rehber öğretmenlerin çocuklara ve boşanmış annelere yaklaşımında herhangi bir değişikliğe neden olup olmadığını araştırmaktır.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, sizden çocuğunuzun okuluna ve boşanma sürecinize dair bazı soruları cevaplamanızı isteyeceğim. Görüşmenin bir saate yakın sürmesi beklenmektedir. Sorulara vereceğiniz yanıtlar, yalnızca araştırmacı tarafından dinlenilecek bir ses kaydına alınacaktır.

Katılıminızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler:

Bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Herhangi bir yaptırıma veya cezaya maruz kalmadan çalışmaya katılmayı reddedebilir veya çalışmayı bırakabilirsiniz. Çalışma, kişisel rahatsızlık verecek sorular içermemektedir. Ancak araştırma esnasında cevap vermek istemediğiniz sorular olursa soruyu atlayabilirsiniz. Sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplamayı bırakıp çıkmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda çalışmayı uygulayan kişiye, çalışmadan çıkmak istediğinizi söylemek yeterli olacaktır.

Araştırmaya katılanların kimlik bilgileri kesinlikle tamamen gizli tutulacaktır. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları bilimsel ve profesyonel yayınlarda veya eğitim amaçlı kullanılabilir.

Araştırmayla ilgili sorularınız olursa:

Görüşmemiz sonrasında çalışmayla ilgili soru, yorum ve eklemek istedikleriniz için [] adresinden bana, [] adresinden danışmanım Doç. Dr. Fatma Umut Beşpınar'a ulaşabilirsiniz. Şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum.

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

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C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Rehber öğretmenlere sorulacak sorular:

1. Cinsiyetiniz?
2. Yaşınız?
3. Kaç yıldır rehber öğretmen olarak görev alıyorsunuz?
4. Rehber öğretmen olarak görevleriniz nelerdir?
5. Okulun velilerle ilişkilerinde size biçilen rol nedir?
6. Öğrencilerle ilgili bilgi alışverişinde veli olarak genelde kimlerle iletişim kurarsınız?
7. Velilerle irtibata geçmekte zorlandığınız durumlar oluyor mu?
8. Okulda sorun yaşadığınız veli grupları oluyor mu?
9. Rehber öğretmen olarak sizin öğrencilerde sorun olarak tanımladığınız şeyler nelerdir?
10. Ders öğretmenlerinin öğrencilerle ilgili sorun yaşadığı durumlar nelerdir?
11. Rehber öğretmenle ders öğretmenlerinin sorun tanımlarında farklılıklar var mı?
Varsa bunun nasıl sonuçları oluyor?
12. Bu sorunların içinde olan öğrencilerin ortak özellikleri var mıdır?
13. Rehberlik ve Araştırma Merkezi'nin yönlendirmesiyle rehberlik anketleri doldurmanızın amacı nedir?
14. Doldurulmanız istenen bu rehberlik anketlerinin verimli olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
15. Bu anketlerin sonuçlarının nasıl değerlendirildiğini düşünüyorsunuz?
16. Rehber öğretmenlerin cevaplaması istenen anketlerde öğrencilerin ailelerine yönelik bilgileri doldururken hiç sorun yaşadığınız oldu mu?
17. Sorun yaşadığını tecrübe ettiğiniz öğrenciler MEB'in "Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenciler Listesi"ndeki maddelere mensup mu?
18. Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenciler Listesi'ndeki risk faktörlerinin en çok hangisiyle karşılaşıyorsunuz?

19. Risk grubundaki öğrencilerinize diğer öğrencilerden farklı çalışmalar yapıyor musunuz?
Evetse nasıl çalışmalar?
Tüm maddelerdeki çocuklara mı yapıyorsunuz?
Eğer tamamına değil bazı gruplara bu tür çalışmalar yapıyorsanız neden o grubu/grupları seçtiniz?
20. Sizce risk belirtilerine sahip öğrenciler listesindeki çocuklar risk teşkil mi ediyor yoksa risk altındalar mı? Neden?
21. Risk teşkil etmekle risk altında olmak arasında ne tür bir fark olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?
22. Risk grubu listesindeki kategoriler sizce neye göre seçilmiş olabilir?
23. Bu listedeki maddeler arasında bağlantı olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
24. Liste sonundaki “diğer” kategorisi için bir öneriniz var mı?
25. Bu listeye eklenmesi gerektiğini düşündüğünüz bir madde var mı?
26. Görev aldığınız okulda kaç öğrenci var?
27. Öğrencilerinizden kaç tanesi tek ebeveynle yaşıyor?
28. Tek ebeveynle yaşayan çocuklar, anne babası evli olan çocuklarla kıyaslandığında ne tür farklılıklar olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?
29. Tek ebeveynle yaşayan çocuklar için özel bazı riskler söz konusu mu?
30. Anne babası ayrı olan öğrencilerinizle anne babası birlikte olan öğrencileriniz kıyaslandığında okuldaki arkadaşlık ilişkilerinde gözlemlediğiniz farklılıklar var mı?
31. Anne babası ayrı olan öğrencilerinizle anne babası evli olan öğrencileriniz kıyaslandığında akademik başarı durumunda bir fark gözlemliyor musunuz?
32. Evli misiniz?
33. Hiç boşandınız mı?
34. Çocuğunuz var mı?
35. Sizin ebeveynleriniz evli mi?
36. Ebeveynlerinizin başından boşanma geçmiş mi?

Boşanmış annelere sorulacak sorular:

1. Yaşınız?
2. Son mezun olduğunuz okul seviyesi?

3. Mesleğiniz?
4. Şu anki medeni durumunuz?
5. Kaç çocuğunuz var?
6. Çocuğunuz/çocuklarınız kaç yaşında?
7. Çocuğunuzun/çocuklarınızın cinsiyeti nedir?
8. Çocuğunuzun/çocuklarınızın velayeti kimde?
9. Hanenizde kimler yaşıyor?
10. Boşandığınızda kaç yaşındaydınız?
11. Boşandığınızda çocuğunuz kaç yaşındaydı? Okula gidiyorsa, kaçınıcı sınıf öğrencisiydi?
12. Boşanma sürecinde aileniz ve çevrenizden “çocuk ve boşanma” konusunda herhangi bir yorum geldi mi?
13. Boşanma sürecinde aileniz ve çevrenizden “çocuk ve boşanma” konusunda herhangi bir öneri geldi mi?
14. Boşanma sürecinde yargılayıcı ifadelerle karşılaştınız mı?
Evetse nasıl?
15. Boşanmanız konusunda kendi çocuğunuzdan aldığınız olumlu/olumsuz tepkiler var mı?
Varsa, bu tepkilerde çocuğunuzun sosyal çevresinin etkisi olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
Evetse nasıl?
16. Boşandıktan sonra çocuğunuzda akademik başarı konusunda değişim olduğunu gözlemlediniz mi?
17. Boşandıktan sonra çocuğunuzda sosyal ilişkileri ve davranışları konusunda değişim olduğunu gözlemlediniz mi?
18. Çocuğunuzun okulu ile siz mi ilgilenirsiniz, baba mı yoksa birlikte mi?
19. Sizce boşanmış anne ile evli anneye, çocuğun okulunda farklı davranılıyor mu?
Davranılıyorsa nasıl?
20. Boşanmış baba ve boşanmış annenin çocuğun okulunda aynı yaklaşımla karşılandığını düşünüyor musunuz?
21. Boşanmanın anne-evlat/ baba-evlat ilişkisine olumlu ya da olumsuz etki ettiğini düşünüyor musunuz?

Evetse nasıl?

Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezi (RAM) görevlilerine sorulacak sorular:

1. Rehber öğretmenlerin doldurulması istenen rehberlik anketlerinin amacı nedir?
2. Bu anketler sözünü ettiğiniz amaca ulaşmakta yeterli oluyor mu? Olmuyorsa neler yapılabilir?
3. Rehber öğretmenlerin, bu anketlerinin sonuçları doğrultusunda neler yapması bekleniyor?
4. Rehber öğretmenler bu anketler sonucunda nelere karar verebiliyor?
5. Rehber öğretmenlerin bu anketler sonucunda yaptığı uygulamalar kim tarafından ve nasıl değerlendiriliyor?
6. Risk belirtilerine sahip öğrenciler listesindeki kategoriler nasıl hazırlanmıştır?
7. Listedeki kategorilere giren çocuklar risk belirtisine sahip görülmelerinin sizce nedeni nedir?
8. Rehberlik anketlerini hazırlık grubunda hangi meslekten yetkililer bulunmaktadır?
9. Risk grubu listesinin güncel versiyonu hangi yıldan beri kullanılmaktadır?
10. Risk grubu listesindeki çocukların bu listeye girmeyen çocuklardan farklılıkları olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
Evetse ne tür farklılıklar?
11. Risk belirtilerine dair farklı kategoriler arasında çakışmalar olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?
12. Bu listedeki maddeler arasında birbiriyle bağlantılı olanlar var mı?
13. Risk grubu listesi kim tarafından değerlendirilmekte ve takip edilmektedir?
14. Risk belirtilerine sahip öğrenci listesi diye belirtilen grupta çevreden zarar görme riski altında olan çocuklar mı yoksa etrafına risk teşkil eden çocuklar mı bulunmaktadır?
15. Bu gruptaki çocuklara yapılan koruyucu/ önleyici uygulamalar var mı?
Varsa bu uygulamalar nelerdir? Kimler tarafından gerçekleştirilmektedir?
16. Koruyucu/ önleyici uygulamalarda ailelerin rolü nedir?
17. Liste sonunda yer alan “diğer” maddesi ne olabilir? Sizce başka hangi çocukları risk grubuna alabiliriz?

D. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

TRK EĖİTİM SİSTEMİ’NİN RİSK ANLAYIŞI: REHBER ĖRETMENLERİN VE BOŞANMIŞ ANNELERİN GZNDEN, EBEVEYNLERİ BOŞANMIŞ OCUKLAR RNEĖİ

Bu tezin temel objelerinden biri olan rehber Ėretmenin temel iř tanımı, alıřtıĖı okuldaki Ėrenciler iin en yakın psikolojik danıřman olmaktır. Ėrencilerini yakından tanımali, onları dinlemeli, ocukların kendisiyle hibir řeyi gizlemeden paylařacaĖı ve ona gveneceĖi bir ortam yaratmalı, olumsuzluklara mdahale etmeli, onları ilgi alanlarına ve yeteneklerine gre ynlendirmelidir. Aynı zamanda sorumlu olduĖu Ėrenciler iinde sıra dıřı bir durum fark ettiĖinde, eĖer bu durum kendi eĖitimini ve yetkisini ařan bir problem teřkil ediyorsa okul polisi gibi st makamlara bilgi vermek veya Ėrenciyi psikiyatriye sevk etmek rehber Ėretmenin sorumluluĖundadır. Bu sebeplerden dolayı rehber Ėretmen, zellikle toplumun genelinin perspektifinden dezavantajlı konumda kalabilecek gruplar ve bireyler iin nemli rol oynamaktadır. Ben de Adana’da bir zel okulda rehber Ėretmen olarak grev alıyorum ve aktif alıřmaya bařladıktan sonra dikkatimi eken en byk zelliklerden biri, anne babası bořanmiř olan ocukların ve ailelerinin, benim de ebeveynlerimin bořanmiř olduĖunu Ėrendiklerinde kendilerini benim yanımda ok daha rahat hissetmeleri ve mutlu olmalarıydı. Srekli maruz kaldıkları n yargıları benden grmeyeceklerini ve onları anlayacaĖımı dřnmeleri velileri de ocukları da ok rahatlatıyordu. EĖitimli velilere sahip sekin bir zel okulda grev alan bir rehber Ėretmen olmama raĖmen, evli olan ebeveynlerin, ebeveynleri bořanmiř ocuklarla kendi ocuklarının arkadaşlık yapmasını istemediklerine defalarca kez řahit oldum. stelik yařadıĖım rneklerden birinde, anne babası ayrı olan Ėrenci gayet bařarılı, mutlu ve sorunsuz bir ocukluk geirirken bu talepte bulunan evli velinin ocuĖu yeni yıl dileĖi olarak “Babamın artık annemi dvmemesini istiyorum.” yazmıřtı. Buna raĖmen gzlemlerime gre, toplumun byk kısmının bakıř aısında “tam bir ailesi olan”, evli ebeveynin ocuĖuydu.

Bu gibi birçok yaşanmışlığın yanında aynı zamanda kurumsal boyutta da önyargı ve ayrımcılık olup olmadığını sorgulamak istememe sebep olansa Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın her eğitim öğretim yılı başında çevrimiçi rehberlik sistemleri yoluyla doldurulmasını istediği çeşitli formlar olmuştur. Bu tez, bu formlar üzerinden MEB'in, bir ayrımcılığı kamçılıyor olup olmadığını tartışmaktadır.

Türkiye'deki tüm okullar bulundukları ilçelerin Rehberlik ve Araştırma Merkezi'ne, üst olarak İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü'ne, İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü'ne, kaymakamlığa, valiliğe ve Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'na bağlıdır. Bu birimlerin tamamı ile okul idaresi arasında geçen resmi yazışmalar, öğretmenlerin yıllık planları ve öğrencilerin notlandırılması çevrimiçi bilgi işlem sistemleri üzerinden yürütülmektedir. “MEBBİS” (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Bilişim Sistemleri) ve “e-okul” ülke genelinde kullanılan sistemlerken Adana İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü (ADABİS), Ankara İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü (ANKBİS), Seyhan İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü (SİMMİS) gibi yerel bilişim sistemleri, o il ve ilçeye özgüdür. Bu sistemlerin yazılımları ve bağlı oldukları denetim birimi farklı olsa da içerikleri her ilde aynıdır.

Hangi il milli eğitim müdürlüğüne bağlı olursa olsun tüm okul rehber öğretmenleri il bazındaki sistemlerin içindeki RAM (Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezi) İşlemleri Modülü üzerinden “Riskli Davranışları Değerlendirme Ölçeği”ni doldurmak zorundadır. Bu ölçek içinde “Riskli Davranışlar”, “Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenci Sayıları”, “Disiplin Kurulu Formu” ve “Koruyucu Etmen Olarak Yapılan Çalışmalar” olmak üzere dört form vardır. Riskli davranışlar 1-“intihar”, 2-“bağımlılık” ve 3-“saldırganlık/ şiddet/ zorbalık” olarak üçe ayrılmıştır. Bir sonraki form olan “Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenci Sayıları Listesi ise “diğer” maddesi ile birlikte 19 maddeden oluşmaktadır. Bu maddeler:

- 1.Sürekli aile içi şiddet ve fiziksel cezalar
- 2.Ebeveynlerin boşanması veya ayrı yaşaması
- 3.Çocuk ihmali
- 4.Çocuk istismarı
- 5.Aşırı yoksulluk
- 6.Oturulan yerleşim yeri sorunları

- 7.Nedeni bilinmeyen sınıf içi uyumsuzluk
- 8.Sık sık okuldan kaçma veya sürekli devamsızlık
- 9.Akranları tarafından reddedilme veya akran istismarı
- 10.Çete üyeliği
- 11.Kavgacılık
- 12.Sürekli çok düşük akademik başarı gösterme
- 13.Anne-baba veya bir yakının kaybı
- 14.Ailenin düşük sosyo-kültürel- ekonomi düzeye sahip olması
- 15.Öğrencinin tedavi edilmemiş fiziksel hastalığı veya engelinin olması
- 16.Terkedilmiş veya evsiz olma
- 17.Çekingenlik
- 18.İletişim sorunu, hiç iletişim kurmama
- 19.Diğer

Listenin içeriği incelenmeden önce başlığı ele alırsak ilk problemin burada olduğu görülmektedir. Okul rehberlik birimlerinin hiçbir ayırım yapmaksızın herkesi kucaklaması gerekirken rehberlik sistemi içerisinde öğrencilere dair bilgilerin girileceği bir “risk listesi” oluşturulması, toplumdaki her riskli ayrımının bir “diğerleri” grubu yaratması sebebiyle uygunsuzdur. Ayrıca risk kavramının ne anlamda kullanıldığının net olmaması ve buna dair açık yönergeler bulunmaması da büyük bir sorundur. Burada “risk semptomu gösteren” şeklinde başlıklandırılan gruplar farklı öğretmenler tarafından “risk teşkil etmeye yatkın” olarak ya da “risk altında olma ihtimali fazla” olarak iki farklı şekilde anlaşılabilmektedir. Ben rehber öğretmen olarak, başlık itibarıyla bu listedeki kategorilere uyan öğrencilerin ilk listedeki riskli davranışları göstermeye MEB tarafından daha yatkın bulunduğunu düşünmüştüm. Fiil olarak “düşünmeyi” kullandım çünkü net bir tanım ve yönerge mevcut olmadığı gibi RAM görevlilerinden de genel geçer bir açıklama edinememiştım. Tanım ve yönergeler net olmadığı zaman sistemin, uygulayıcısına tabi olma oranı artmaktadır. Benim gibi tüm rehber öğretmenlerin değerlendirme şekillerinin farklı olma ihtimali vardır. Ucu açık bir uygulama sonucunda psikolojik danışmanlar kişisel görüşlerinin etkisi ile, yönetmelikte belirtilen etkili ve objektif danışmanlığı sağlayamamaktadır.

Maddeler incelendiğinde, MEB tarafından risk belirtilerine sahip olduğu düşünülen; istismara maruz kalma, sürekli şiddet görme, evsiz olma gibi çeşitli travmalar ve çekingenlik, çete üyeliği, sürekli devamsızlık gibi çeşitli olumsuz sonuçlar arasında, üstelik de ikinci sırada, “ebeveyn boşanması veya ayrı yaşaması” görülmektedir. Ebeveynlerin boşanması veya ayrı yaşaması gerçekten de buradaki diğer maddelerle aynı listede olmalı mıdır? Yoksa devletin kabul ve idealize ettiği aile yapısına uygun olmamak “riskli” bulunmak için yeterli midir?

Devletin ideal ailesi 33 maddelik sınıf risk haritalarında daha net görülmektedir.

- Anne en fazla ilkokul mezunu
- Baba en fazla ilkokul mezunu
- Tek çocuk
- 5 ve üstü kardeşi olan
- Anne babası ayrı yaşayan
- Anne babası boşanmış olan
- Koruyucu aile gözetiminde olan
- Akrabalarıyla yaşayan
- Ailesi mevsimlik işçi olan
- Ailesinde cezai hükümlü olan

...

gibi maddelerden oluşan bu listede Risk Belirtilerine Sahip Öğrenci Sayıları Listesi’ndeki gibi sadece sayı değil; çocukların ismi de istenmektedir. Bu maddeler incelendiğinde rehberlik sistemimiz için “risk” teşkil eden aile yapıları üzerinden, bu özelliklere sahip olmayan ideal aileyi görebilmekteyiz. En az iki en fazla dört çocuklu, ebeveynlerin devlet tarafından kabul edilen resmi nikah ile evlenmiş ve aynı çatı altında yaşıyor olduğu, anne ve babanın en az ortaöğretim düzeyinde eğitim öğretim kurumlarından resmi olarak mezun olmuş olduğu gibi kriterlere uyan bir aileye mensupsa çocuğun yaşadığı ortam, kurgusal ideal aileye uyuyor demektir.

Tezin temel araştırma sorusu şudur: MEB’in ideal aile anlayışına dayanan “risk” tanımı rehber öğretmenlerin boşanmış anneler ve onların çocuklarına dair bakış açısını, tutum ve davranışlarını nasıl etkilemektedir? Bunu takiben oluşturulan alt sorular ise şunlardır: Risk semptomları gösteren öğrenci olarak damgalanmak, bu

listedeki maddelerden biri olan anne babası ayrı çocukları nasıl etkilemektedir? Rehberlik uygulamaları, anketleri ve formları, öğretmenlerin bu listelerdeki öğrencilere bakış açıları üzerinde etkili midir?

Bu soruya cevap bulabilmek için dört farklı araştırma yönteminden faydalanılmıştır. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı rehberlik sisteminin detaylı anlaşılması ve değerlendirilmesi için içerik analizi yöntemine başvurulmuştur. Kurumsal yapının temsilcisi olan Rehberlik ve Araştırma Merkezi (RAM) görevlilerinin, sistemin uygulayıcısı olan rehber öğretmenlerin ve hedef grup olan, ebeveyni boşanmış çocukları temsilen annelerinin tecrübeleri detaylı olarak dinlenmiştir. Üç farklı gruptan görüş alınarak on beş boşanmış anne, dört rehber öğretmen ve üç RAM görevlisi ile detaylı mülakat yapılmıştır. Bunun yanında, araştırmayı yürüten kişi olan benim, araştırma öncesinde de 2015 yılından bu yana rehber öğretmenlik yapıyor olmam ve sürekli okul ortamında bulunmam, il bazındaki rehberlik zümre toplantılarında yaşananlara şahit olmam, idarecilerin ve öğretmenlerin günlük iş yaşamındaki davranışlarını ve doğal ortamlarını görebilmem sayesinde katılımcı gözlemi kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca yine rehber öğretmen olarak aktif görev alıyor oluşum ve boşandıklarında çocuk olmasam da benim de anne babamın boşanmış olması ile iki tarafla da aynı tecrübeleri yaşıyor ve hissediyor olmam gerçeğiyle, bu tezde etnografik araştırma tekniği de kullanılmıştır.

Derinlemesine mülakatta katılımcı seçiminde tek kriter boşanmış annelerin okul çağında çocukları olmasıdır. Annelerin bunun dışında belirgin ortak özellikleri yoktur. Yaşları, meslekleri, eğitim seviyeleri, ekonomik koşulları, çocuğun velayetinin kimde olduğu, güncel medeni halleri farklılık göstermektedir. Katılımcı rehber öğretmenler Adana'nın merkez Seyhan ilçesindeki devlet okullarında görev almaktadır. Yetkilileri ile görüştüğüm rehberlik ve araştırma merkezleri de Adana ilinde bulunmaktadır. Katılımcıların isimleri tezde değiştirilmiştir. Katılım gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Görüşmelerden önce tezin konusu katılımcıya açıklanmıştır.

Yapılan mülakatların değerlendirilmesi “eğitimde ayrımcılık” ve “ideal aile” kavramlarına dair literatür ile ilişkilendirilerek ele alınmıştır.

Eğitimde ayrımcılık ve ideal aile kurgusunun yanı sıra risk kavramı ve rehberlik sistemimiz de incelenmiştir. Rehberlik sistemimizde ilk göze çarpan bulgu, rehberlik anketlerinin güvenilirliğinde sorun olmasıdır. Öncelikle bir rehber öğretmenin Risk Belirtileri Gösteren Öğrenci Sayıları formunu verimli doldurabilmesi için tüm öğrencileri ve ailelerini tanıyıp olması gerekir. Maksimum iki yüz öğrenciye bir rehber öğretmen düşecek şekilde kadrosu ve kontenjanı dengeli olan okullar için bu, uygulanabilir bir düzen olsa da bine yakın mevcutlu olmasına rağmen tek rehber öğretmenle çalışan okullar için bu, gerçekleşmesi imkansız yakın bir beklenti olmaktadır. Çalışma için görüşülen öğretmenler formları doldurmalarını sağlayacak olan çeşitli rehberlik anketlerini sınıf rehber öğretmenlerine ya da öğrencilere doldurttuklarını açıklamıştır. Rehber öğretmenin okul mevcuduna yetersiz kalmasının yanında gerekliliğine inanmayarak bu anketleri angarya olarak görmesi ve eksik doldurması da güvenilirliği sarsmaktadır. Öğretmenler, anketleri önemseyip, sorunlu durumları doğru tespit edip istedik şekilde doldurmak için çaba sarf ettiğinde ise okulun kötü reklamı olmaması adına, özellikle özel okullarda idare tarafından engellenebilmektedir. Ayrıca öğretmenler, çocuğun cinsel istismarı gibi rehber öğretmenin bilgi ve yetkisini aşan büyük sorunları üst makama bildirdiğinde; şikayette bulunan öğretmeni ve istismara maruz kalan çocuğu, suçu işleyen kişiden gelebilecek olası tehlikelere karşı koruyan bir mekanizma yoktur. Bu da öğretmenlerin kendilerini riske atmak istememelerine sebep olmaktadır. Ayrıca, okul rehberlik servisini denetlemesi gereken mekanizmanın ucu açık bırakılmış olup, RAM yetkilileri tarafından “öğretmenin vicdanına kalmış” cümlesi araştırma boyunca sıkça kullanılmıştır. Sosyal devlet işleyişinde, devlet tarafından belirlenen çeşitli maddi yardımlar veya kurslar, seminerler gibi bölgesel, mahallese eğitim destekleri için kullanılan datanın büyük kısmı okullardan gelen anket sonuçlarına göre sağlanmakta ve dağıtılmaktadır. Bu yüzden okullardan üst makama giden bilgilerin doğru olması özellikle alt gelir seviyesi ve düşük eğitim seviyesi için çok anlamlıdır. Yalnızca risk haritalarında değil; tüm rehberlik sistemi uygulama, anket ve formlarında doğru veri elde edilmesi için sistemde değişiklikler yapılmalıdır.

Önceki paragrafta bahsedildiği üzere; şiddet, istismar, ihmal gibi öğretmenin gözlemi sayesinde çocuğun ailesine devlet tarafından müdahale edildiği zaman bu ihbarı

öğretmenin yaptığı ailenin bilgisi dahilinde olacaktır. Anne babasının boşanmış olması ise risk listesindeki diğer maddelerin aksine, herhangi bir gözlem ya da yorumlama gerektirmeyen bir gerçeklik olduğundan dolayı bunu işaretlemek öğretmen için bir tehlike teşkil etmemektedir. Bu yüzden de risk listesinde en çok bu madde işaretlenmektedir. Dolayısıyla bir rehber öğretmene okulda en çok sorun yaşadığı grup sorulduğunda ilk aklına gelen, “anne babası boşanmış çocuklar”dır. Fakat detaylı sorular yöneltildiğinde, okulda problem yaşatan çocukların anne-babasının evlilik bağının belirleyici bir faktör olmadığı ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu durumda görebiliriz ki rehberlik sistemimizde öğretmenlerin olası önyargılarının önünü kesecek hiçbir mekanizma bulunmadığı gibi, ayrımcılığı destekleyebilecek işleyiş ve uygulamalar mevcuttur. Günümüzde tek tip bir aileden bahsetmek mümkün değildir fakat rehberlik sistemimiz “kurgulanmış sözde ideal aile” mensubu olmayan öğrencileri marjinalize etmektedir.

Rehberlik sistemimizin ayrımcı politikaları, muallakta yönergeleri ve eksik denetim mekanizması; toplumumuzda boşanmanın kurlsızlık ve ailesizlik olarak görülmesi ile birleşince okullar, toplumumuzun azımsanamayacak bir grubu olan “boşanan anneler ve onların çocukları” için güvenli bir yer olmaktan çıkmaktadır.

Yapılan görüşmeler ışığında saptandı ki Türk toplumunda boşanmaya olan önyargı devam etmektedir. Çeşitli meslek gruplarından, çeşitli eğitim seviyelerinde, çeşitli gelir düzeylerinde kadınların tamamı boşanmalarından sonra farkında olarak ya da olmayarak sosyal ve profesyonel çevrelerince damgalanmıştır.

Boşanmış annelerin, çocuklarının okullarında yaşadıkları en kurumsal ve en somut sorun, çocukları ile aynı soy ismi taşınamalarından doğmaktadır. Çocuklarının ve kendilerinin soy ismi farklı olduğu için anneler çocuklarının okulunda velisi olduğunu evrakla ispatlamak zorunda bırakılmaktadır. Bu kimlik sorunu anne ile çocuk arasındaki ilişkiyi etkilemese de annenin kendi çocuğu üzerinde hakimiyet hissini yitirmesine, “aile oluşlarını” kendisinin de sorgulamasına yol açmaktadır.

Annelerin bir diğer büyük sorunu yine “aile olmak” konsepti ile ilgilidir. Türk toplumunda bir atasözü de olan “yuvayı dışı kuş yapar” tabiri hala genel bakış açısını

yansıtmaktadır. Bir boşanma yaşıyorsa toplum gözünde bu demektir ki o evliliğin “dişi”si başarısız olmuştur ve “yuva”sını kurtaramamıştır. Bu algının getirdikleri yüzünden boşanmış anne geçimsiz, beceriksiz, eksik ve bencil kabul edilmektedir. Toplumsal ahlakın onayladığı bir kalıp içerisine sığamamış, dolayısıyla isyankar, çocuğunu düşünmeyen bir profil çizilmektedir. Çünkü bu bakış açısına göre, çocuğunu düşünen anne, her ne olursa olsun boşanmamalı, erkeğin boşanmak istemesine sebep olmamalı, erkek boşanmak isterse kabul etmemeli ve onu ikna etmeli, “aile bütünlüğü”nü cansiparane korumalıdır. Boşanmış anneler, okullardaki evli velilerin, öğretmenlerin ve idarecilerin yargılamaları ve müdahaleleri ile karşılaşmaktadır. Bu konuda okullarda sorun yaşanmasının bir majör sebebi de genel olarak 1946 - 1964 yılları arası doğumlu “baby boomer” kuşağının en genç üyelerinin Türkiye’de hala öğretmenlik yapabiliyor olması ile ilişkilidir. Boşanmış anneler kendilerine kalıp yargılarla müdahale eden idarecilerin büyük çoğunlukla ileri yaştaki kadınlar olduğunu dile getirmiştir. X, Y, Z kuşaklarının evliliğe ve ilişkilere bakışı arasında farklar varken (Yıldırım, 2021), baby boomerlar ve şu anki öğrenciler olan alfa kuşağı arasındaki fark, yeni aile yapılarını benimseyen çoğunluğa olumsuz yansımaktadır.

Annelerin boşanma öncesi ve sonrası arasındaki en büyük fark olarak dile getirdikleri sorunlardan biri de artık toplumda “sahipsiz ve savunmasız” görülmeleridir. Boşanmış kadınlar her eğitim ve gelir seviyesinde cinsel obje haline getirilmektedir. Katılımcı annelerin neredeyse tamamı çocuklarının okulunda sözlü ya da fiziksel, cinsel tacize maruz kalmıştır. Boşanmış kadınlar doyurulmayan bir cinsellik ihtiyacı duyduğu kurgusu ve bu nedenle diğer çiftler için tehlikeli ve baştan çıkarıcı olduğu fikri ile damgalanmaktadır. (Uygun, 2016) Çocuklarının okulunda tacize uğramaktan kurtulmak için boşanmış anneler, veli toplantılarına kendi babaları ile gitmek, eski alyanslarını takmak gibi çözümler üretmeye çalışmaktadır.

Boşanmaya ve boşanan annelere olan önyargılar, onların çocuklarına da okullarında ön yargı, etiketleme, ayrımcılık ya da acıma olarak yansımaktadır. Çünkü toplumsal cinsiyetçi bakış açısında çocuğu anne yetiştirmelidir ve bu çocukların annesi toplumsal kuralları benimsemiyor kabul edilmektedir. Bu durumda çocuk da

benimsemeyecektir. Anne babası ayrı olan çocuklara dair belli başlı kalıp yargılar vardır.

Öncelikle bu çocukların ihmal ve istismara daha açık olacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu düşüncenin birincil sebebi boşanmanın ailesizlik olarak görülmesidir. Katılımcı rehber öğretmenlerin dörtte ikisi, ebeveynleri boşanmış olan öğrencilerini “parçalanmış aile çocuğu” olarak, biri anne baba hayatta ve çocukla aktif ilgileniyor olmasına rağmen “ailesi yok” olarak nitelemektedir. Boşananları parçalanmış aile olarak ifade edenlerden biri ayrıca anne babanın evli olduğu hane yapısını “normal aile” olarak nitelemiştir. Rehber öğretmenlerin bunun gibi kendi kalıp yargılarını öğrencilere yansıtmayacağı profesyonellikte, danışman – danışan ilişkisini koruması bir okul ortamında, özellikle de danışanlar çocuk olduğunda çok zordur. Çünkü en az çalışan öğretmenin bile günde yaklaşık altı saati okulda geçmektedir; hayatı çocuklarla iç içedir ve teneffüslerde de iletişim halinde oldukları çocuklar öğretmenlerin kişisel görüşlerinin yansımalarını tecrübe etmektedir. Bu da rehber öğretmenin çocuklara tamamen dışarıdan tarafsız bir figür olarak yaklaşabilme ihtimalini ortadan kaldırmaktadır. Rehber öğretmen bir psikolog değildir fakat çocuklar için en yakın psikolojik danışmandır ve kendi hayata bakışını bir kenara bırakıp herkese eşit yaklaşarak destek vermek zorundadır. Eğer çocuk rehber öğretmenin, kendi aile yapısını ve yaşam düzenini onaylamadığını hissederse güvenle paylaşımda bulunamayacaktır. Rehber öğretmenin yanında güvende hissetmemesi ise başına gelen olası tehlikeleri de paylaşmaya çekinmesi anlamına gelir. Bu, çok büyük bir sorundur çünkü ailesinin gerçekten ihmal ve istismarına maruz kalan çocuğun güvenilebileceği bir okulu yoksa toplumda hiç kimsesi yoktur.

Ülkemizde yalnız tek ebeveyniyle aynı evde yaşayan çocukları ailesiz ilan eden zihniyet ekonomik ve toplumsal birliktelik içinde olan bir hane halkını, üyeleri arasındaki ilişkiler açısından sınıflandırarak aile olmaktan dışlamaktadır. Tek ebeveynin ilgisizlik doğuracağı, ilgisizliğin de diğer sorunlarla birlikte geleceği şeklinde bir ilişkisellik kurulmuştur. Bu neden-sonuç ilişkisinin kurulmasının birkaç farklı sebebi vardır. Bunlardan ilki, boşanmış ailenin zaten yeterince çok sorunu olduğu ve çocukla ilgilenmeye fırsat bulamayacağı, dolayısıyla çocuğun ilgisiz kalacağı görüşüdür. İkincisi, annenin mesleği ne olursa olsun boşanma sonrası

ekonomik sorun yaşayacağı ve artık sadece kendi sorumluluğunda kalan çocuğu yeterince destekleyemeyeceği, sonuç olarak çocuğun yine ilgisiz kalacağı fikridir. Üçüncüsü, boşanmış kadın veya erkeğin evi, mutlaka evli kadın erkeğin evinden daha huzursuz olarak düşünüldüğü için çocuk “sıcak bir yuvaya hasret” olacaktır ve ilgi ihtiyacı olacaktır fikridir. Ve dördüncüsü, anne-babanın aile içindeki toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinden birinin çocuğun hayatından eksileceği ve “birbirlerini tamamlamadıkları” için çocuğun yine ilgisiz kalacağı düşüncesidir. Bu dört düşünce işleyişinde de boşanma çekişmeli ve zor olmak zorundaymış, baba artık çocuğun hayatından çıkıyormuş, annelerin güçlü ekonomik kaynakları olamazmış, anne babanın ailede farklı görevleri varmış ve boşanmayla çocuğun tüm yaşamı kötüye gidermiş gibi önyargılarla dolu bir felaket kurgusu vardır. Boşanmanın bu denli dramatize ve diskriminalize edildiği bir bakış açısına göre, boşanmayla birlikte aile parçalanmakta; anne-çocuk ve baba-çocuk da aile olmaktan çıkmaktadır. Anlaşılması ve rehberlik sistemimizde yer bulması gerekense, anne ve babanın karı koca ilişkilerinin bitmesi demek çocuklarını ihmal edecekleri veya çocuğun istismara açık hale geleceği anlamına eşit olmadığıdır.

Önceki paragraftaki görüşün aksine, katılımcı annelerin ifadelerine göre babaların boşanmadan sonra çocuklarıyla ilgilenme oranı artmaktadır. Çünkü evliyken anne ile bir rol paylaşımı yaptıklarını düşünen babalar çocukla ve okuluyla ilgili konulara pek dahil olmazken boşandıktan sonra, çocuğun okul aktivitelerinde yalnızca annenin olması artık kendisini de temsil ediyor olmayacağı için baba okulda, toplantı, gösteri gibi anlarda daha fazla bulunmaktadır. Anne aracılığıyla değil doğrudan iletişim kurması gerektiği için zorunda olarak da çocukla daha fazla ilgilenmektedir.

Boşanma ardından, çocuğun akademik başarısının düşeceği önyargısının da gerçeği yansıtmadığı saptanmıştır. Boşanma öncesinde başarısı yüksek olan çocuklar yine yüksek olmaya devam ederken, başarısı düşük olan çocuklar boşanma sonrasında daha yüksek notlar alabilmişlerdir. Burada belirleyici unsur anne babanın medeni hali değil; çocuğun ruhsal ve ekonomik statüsü değişmeksizin, sağlıklı yaşam alanı sağlanmasıdır. Boşanma ile huzursuz ev ortamı sonlanıp, daha rahat ve sağlıklı bir aile hayatı, yeni ev düzeninin stabilliği sağlandığı takdirde çocuğun, akademik ve

sosyal hayatı sürekli sorun yaşanan ev ortamı sonlandığı için, olumlu ivme almaktadır.

Çocuğun boşanma sonrası okulda karşılaştığı bir diğer büyük sorun, içinde olabileceği her olumsuzluğun sebebinin boşanmaya bağlanmasıdır. Bu konuda da toplumda birbirine zıt iki temel farklı görüş vardır. Bunlardan ilki “anne babası boşanan çocuk okul düzenini bozar, şımarıktır ve öncesinde değilse bile boşanma sonrası yaramazlık yapmaya başlar” görüşüdür. Çocuğun yaşı gereği ya da farklı sebeplerden dolayı yaptığı her taşkınlığın sebebi boşanmaya bağlanmaktadır. Diğeri ise “anne babası boşanan çocuk içine kapanır, depresyona meyillidir ve yalnız kalır” görüşüdür. Çocuğun her mutsuzluğu boşanmaya bağlanmaktadır. Sorunların temel sebebinin aramaksızın, zaten somut bir gerçeklik olan boşanmayı suçlu ilan etmek, öğretmen için kolaya kaçan bir çıkış yöntemidir. Çocuklar minyatür yetişkinler değildir; gelişim çağında, dünyayı anlamaya çalışan, özellikle de bu tezin konusu olan 10 – 14 yaş aralığında ilk gençliğe adım atan, ergenlikle mücadele eden, küçük yaşta sınav stresi edinen, kişilikleri gelişme sürecinde olan bireylerdir. Dolayısıyla birçok farklı sebepten davranış bozukluğu gösterebilirler. Okullarsa onların ailelerinden sonraki ilk sosyalleşme ortamları olarak toplumun her kesiminden her çocuğun kendini son derece güvende hissedeceği, her açıdan sağlıklı bir ortam sunmalı ve rehber öğretmenler, danışan çocukların sıkıntılarının temel sebeplerini bulup çözüm üretmelidir.

Bunu destekleyen hiçbir örnek olay görmemiş olmalarına rağmen anne ile büyüyen kız çocuğunun toplum ölçülerine göre ahlaksız, erkek çocuğunun ise gey olacağı fikri hala gündemde olabilmektedir. Katılımcı annelerin ifadelerine göre bu konuda önlem alınması için okul tarafından; dayı, dede gibi annenin ailesinden erkek akraba figürlerden destek isteyebilmektedir. Bu gibi davranışlar okul idarecilerinin ve rehber öğretmenlerin yetkilerini ve sınırlarını aşması, damgalama, etiketleme, kalıp yargı içermektedir.

Bu çalışma için yapılan detaylı görüşmeler ve kaynak taramaları sonucunda boşanmanın çocuk için bir sorun yaratmak zorunda olmadığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Ebeveynleri boşanan çocuklar anne babası boşandığı için değil, sosyal çevrelerinde

boşanmaya olan önyargı yüzünden aldıkları tepkiler sebebiyle sorun yaşamaktadır. Boşanma ailesizlik olarak görülmektedir. Aile, sosyal yapı içinde etkileşimlerle çok yönlü bir değişim süreci geçirmiştir ve geçirmeye devam etmektedir. Buna rağmen rehber öğretmenlerde boşanmanın ailesizlik yaratacağı ve tehlikeli şekilde “en kötü aile bile ailesizlikten iyi” olduğu fikri hakimdir. Profesyonellikten uzak, şahsi fikirlerin hakim olduğu tutumlar öğrencileri desteklemekten çok, ayrımcılığa sebep olarak rehberlik listelerinde damgalanan çocukların okul hayatlarını olumsuz etkileyebilmektedir. Hem sosyal yapımızda hem de kurumsal sistemlerimizde gördüğümüz kalıp yargı ve damgalamalar yüzünden insanlar hem boşanan kadına hem de çocuğuna çeşitli müdahalelerde bulunmayı kendilerinde hak görmektedir. Bu sebepten gelişen süreçler, hedef kitle üzerinde travma yaratabilmektedir.

Bu tez hem toplumsal cinsiyet ve kadın çalışmaları hem sosyoloji hem eğitim alanlarında literatüre önemli katkı sağlamaktadır. Annelerin sesinin duyulması açısından çok önemli bir yere sahip olsa da olaylar tek taraflı değerlendirilmemiştir. Hem kurumsal yapının temsilcisi olarak RAM görevlileri, hem sistemin uygulayıcısı olan öğretmenler hem de hedef grup olan çocukları temsilen onların anneleri dinlenmiştir. Anne babası boşanmış çocuklara okullarında yapılan ayrımcılık ilk kez rehberlik sistemimiz ile ilişkilendirilmektedir. Boşanmış annelerin, çocuklarının okulunda maruz kaldığı taciz ve damgalama ilk kez gündeme gelmektedir. Annelerin günlük kullanımında kendine sıklıkla yer bulsa da Mc Donald’s Fathers terimi ilk kez yazılı bir kaynakta kendine yer bulmaktadır.

1739 sayılı kanunla “İyi vatandaş, iyi insan ve rasyonel ekonomik davranışlarda bulunacak elemanlar yetiştirmesi beklenen” eğitim sistemi rehberlik alanında kendini çağın gereklerine göre yenileyememiştir. Eğitim fakültelerinde kalıp yargılar ve kişisel sınırlara dair zorunlu dersler olması bu tezin sonucunda önerilmektedir.

Tezin bulguları ışığında; boşanma ile ebeveynler çocuğun hayatından çıkmazsa, çocuğun yaşam standartları ekonomik ve sosyal olarak birden bire düşmezse ve eğer süreç kendilerine doğru açıklanırsa günümüz çocukları için boşanma hiçbir olumsuzluk ifade etmemektedir. Bu çocuklar interneti doğduklarından beri aktif kullanmalarının etkisiyle, bilinen sosyal hayatın en global kuşağına mensuptur.

Farklı ilişki biçimlerini kendi kısıtlı çevrelerinde olmasa bile herhangi bir çevrimiçi platformda gördükleri için normalize etmişlerdir. Ebeveyn boşanmasını travmaya dönüştüren başlıca sebep boşanma değil; boşanmaya olan toplumsal yargıların çocuğa yansımalarıdır.



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