WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF AGEING: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF GRANDMOTHERS PROVIDING DAYCARE

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF AGEING: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION OF GRANDMOTHERS PROVIDING DAYCARE

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Considering the demographic changes in Turkey, it has become inevitable to address the social dimension of aging. This study aims to show the effect of daycare provided to their grandchildren by aging women on their social participation. The concept of social participation is examined under three headings: community life, interpersonal relations, and leisure time activities. This study, conducted in light of Feminist Standpoint Theory, will show the effect of unpaid care work on social participation, which is very important in the aging process, physically, psychologically, and socially, by putting women at the center. In this study, parallel to the course of interviews with grandmothers, (i) demographic information; (ii) daily life practices in private and public spaces; (iii) comparative perceptions and experiences of child and grandchild care; (iv) social participation in the context of community life, interpersonal relations and leisure activities, and (v) the impact of the pandemic will be examined with descriptive analysis. Besides all these, social policies regarding childcare and aging in Turkey will also be examined. While the post-2002 social policies in Turkey emphasize the cooperation of the family in childcare, the measures taken for the elderly do not seem to be sufficient yet for their social participation.

Therefore, the socio-political background in the context of care and aging gives way to the social realities that are problematized in this study. Thus, the unpaid care work provided by grandmothers for mothers to employ greatly shapes the community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities of grandmothers during their 'workdays'.

Keywords: unpaid care work, grandmothers, aging, social participation

ÖZ

KADINLARIN YAŞLANMA DENEYİMLERİ: GÜNLÜK BAKIM SAĞLAYAN BÜYÜKANNELERİN TOPLUMSAL KATILIMI

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Türkiye'de demografik değişimler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, yaşlanmanın sosyal boyutunu ele almak kaçınılmaz olmuştur. Bu çalışma, ücretsiz bakım emeğini ikinci kez deneyimleyen ve yaşlanmakta olan kadınların torunlarına sağladıkları günlük bakımın toplumsal katılımlarına etkisini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Burada toplumsal katılım konsepti üç başlık altında incelenmektedir: toplum yaşamı, kişilerarası ilişkiler ve serbest zaman aktiviteleri. Feminist Bakış Açısı Teorisi ışığında yapılan bu çalışma, kadını merkeze alarak ücretsiz bakım emeğinin, yaşlanma sürecinde fiziksel, psikolojik ve sosyal anlamda oldukça önemli olan toplumsal katılımlarına etkisini gösterecektir. Bu çalışmada, 60 yaş üstü büyükannelerle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmelerin gidişatına paralel olarak (i) demografik bilgiler; (ii) özel ve kamusal alanlarda günlük yaşam pratikleri; (iii) karşılaştırmalı olarak çocuk ve torun bakımı algıları ve deneyimleri; (iv) toplum yaşamı, kişiler arası ilişkiler ve boş zaman aktiviteleri bağlamında sosyal katılım ve (v) pandeminin sosyal hayata katılım üzerindeki etkisi konuları, betimsel analiz ile irdelenecektir. Tüm bunların yanında, Türkiye'de çocuk bakımına ve yaşlanmaya dair sosyal politikalar da detaylıca incelenecektir. Çünkü,

Türkiye'de 2002 sonrası sosyal politikalar çocuk bakımı konusunda ailenin yardımlaşmasını öne çıkarırken, yaşlılar için alınan önlemlerde, toplumsal katılımlarına dair atılımlar henüz yeterli görünmemektedir. Dolayısıyla, ülkenin bakım ve yaşlanma bağlamında süregelen sosyo-politik arka planı, bu çalışmada sorunsallaştırılan sosyal gerçekliklere mahal vermektedir. Sonuç olarak, annelerin istihdam etmesi için büyükannelerin sağladığı ücretsiz bakım emeği, 'iş günleri' sırasında büyükannelerin toplum yaşamını, kişilerarası ilişkilerini ve serbest zaman aktivitelerini büyük oranda şekillendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ücretsiz bakım emeği, büyükanneler, yaşlanma, toplumsal katılım

To my wonderful grandparents for being the architect of my childhood, bringing me to these days, and making me smile with great longing every time I think about them…

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the Problem

As in all the world, demographic changes are also observed in Turkey. One of the most important of these changes is being an 'ageing' country. While only developed countries were ageing in the past, it is observed that developing countries are experiencing ageing now. It is stated that the elderly population in the world is going to be 2 billion and 80% of this population is going to be in developing countries. (WHO, 2012) Turkey is one of the countries that experience this condition over the past 5 years, especially (TURKSTAT, 2020). In particular, the proportion of people over the age of 65 in Turkey is estimated to be 13% from 10% from 2020 to 2023 (Şentürk, 2020). It is also assumed that this ratio will gradually increase. Looking at the literature and the general picture of recent researches, the participation of the current elderly population in economic, cultural, and social areas in Turkey is not sufficient yet. This situation shows that social policies, non-governmental organizations, and academic researches on ageing have gained more importance in recent years.

Under the title of ageing, numerous aspects, variables, or perspectives have been underlined by various studies. Participation in the labor force, participation in social life, health, care, and psychology are among them, and of course, it is possible to discuss them in broad contexts concerning gender, culture, class, etc. One of the most important outcomes of studying this topic is to see that such an interdisciplinary concept can give different answers from every angle. However, it is significant to note that such a large area has many subheadings that require studying academically. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the essential points of this field. This thesis problematizes the impact of the grandmother's caregiving

role and the implications of this role in Turkey on the social participation of elderly women.

In older ages, the conditions of the person change in relation to physical, social, psychological, economic, or many other variables, and it is not only the chronological age that changes. Each parameter in ageing can affect each other because they are all interrelated. In this thesis, the primary focus is the social dimension of ageing. Social ageing occurs with the process of interaction with the society in which a person lives and, of course, it shapes the individual according to the definition of the elderly in the society in which s/he is located (Şentürk, 2020). Therefore, individuals can create their pattern of socializing, which is also built by society. In old ages, the individual face many losses and shrinkage of his/her environment. Even if this is a difficult situation to deal with, one of the most important aspects of successful ageing is to remain socially active at an individual and societal level. Therefore, this dimension can be shown as one of the most important aspects, and it displays that aging is not just a health issue.

The sine qua non of social life is that we live with the assets of individuals outside of ourselves. And of course, in addition to all these technological developments, social relations also require face-to-face communication to a large extent. This social capital, which can be provided through family, kinship, friends, neighbors, or hobbies, is a way to make sense of life. Therefore, it is also essential to understand the social world of the elderly to reach the experience of ageing properly. As Baran (2008) said, keeping older people's social relationships alive improves their quality of life, but they can also face many challenges in staying socially connected, like acquired or lost roles. These challenges should be problematized in this context.

It is known that individuals lose a large proportion of their roles, but they also gain new roles with ageing (İçli, 2016). One of them, also one of the most important, is the role of grandparenting. Elders acquire this role, which is

achieved through grandchildren, by caring for their grandchildren and helping their development. From many different disciplines and perspectives, the returns and benefits of the role of grandparenting can be discussed in different ways. For example, while the numerous studies in the field of psychology see the role of grandparenting as the source of feeling useful, the discipline of social policy may argue that the changing role of women in the workforce and lack of care policies boost the role of grandparenting. There are different perspectives in sociology itself. For instance, while functionalists argue that this is a role that is a positive aspect of ageing and functional for sticking society together, the feminist approach views it as unpaid care work that women are burdened with for the second time in their life. These will be explained in detail in Chapter 2.

Aside from all these, traditional gender roles are crucial in generating the research problems of this study, because these roles continue to exist, even if there are few changes in old age, according to previous studies. To explain with an example, 60+ women were found to be involved in household duties 4 hours more than men (Samuels, Samman, Hunt, Rost & Plank, 2018). Hence, the significant part of the literature assumes that women identified with the private sphere suffer more loneliness, especially if they work as unpaid domestic workers in their lifetime, are less able to engage in social activities, with the responsibility that extends into their later ages. Therefore, to sum up the problem here, although volunteer caregiving by grandparents is very much at the forefront depending on the culture, it has been observed that grandchildren care greatly reduces women's participation in social activities, which play a vital role in their aging process (Albertini & Kohli, 2009).

As in other countries in the world, the change in the structure of the family in Turkey is also undeniable. In the family, which has transformed from a traditional extended to a nuclear structure, the role of women is transforming, and employment rates increase in parallel. In addition, not only the transformation to the nuclear family; but also many changes are observed in the family structure. For example, lone parenting is included in this situation, and

such family structures different from the ongoing traditional structure are also closely related to the issue of care. Of course, this situation has necessitated alternative ways on child care. Social policies on childcare in order to support women's employment in Turkey did not show much development, and this issue is left to the responsibility of the grandparent. As mentioned above, due to the lack of social policy regarding childcare as Dedeoğlu (2009) said, and the implications of the traditional family structure, if there is no private nursery service, or caregiver service that the family can take advantage of and there is a grandparent living in the same province, it results with the 'voluntarily' acceptance of daycare on the part of the grandparent. However, as Taşkın and Akçay (2019) say, the bottom line of this voluntary and devoted answer is full of discourses such as 'worrying about their children, obligation, responsibility, not trusting another person'. Therefore, the effects of labor given under the guise of volunteering and emotional care on the lives of aging women are worth examining.

1.2. The Objective and Significance of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to explore the social participation in elderly women, which is significantly affected by the role of grandparenting. What is meant by the concept of social participation here is person's involvement in activities that provide interaction with others in society (Dehi Aroogh & Shahboulaghi, 2020). This concept will be examined in the context of community life, interpersonal relationships and leisure activities. A significant part of the literature declares that social isolation increases with ageing. It is mostly caused by the inability to keep up with rapid changes in the social structure, cultural codes, the roles that society builds, and losses of significant others, jobs, health, etc. However, elderly people who are conscious of successful ageing are not very much affected by this condition (Akbaş, Yiğitoğlu & Çunkuş, 2020). Therefore, it is important to be aware of and focus on this issue, because, as Kalınkara (2016) said, one of the important variables that negatively affect the harmony of society is the elderly who are not sufficiently

involved in social life. In addition, it should not be forgotten the effect of the subject on the individual and its importance in his/her remaining life.

This issue is investigated because individuals over 60 seem to be struggling to cope with many losses. These can be exemplified as loss of a friend, loss of jobs, decline in health, loss of a spouse, and, most importantly, loss of existing roles. All these lead to a decrease in social participation, a further increase in time spent alone at home, and can cause lifetime learning to stop. However, ignoring the social dimension of ageing, as in biological, psychological, social, and economic parameters, can be considered equivalent to taking away one of the biggest pieces of the puzzle. Therefore, it is necessary to address this issue and investigate its causes, especially in an aging country.

Another aim of the study is to show that, like many things in our lives, this is a gender-related issue. Considering the feminist approaches used in ageing studies, a woman's male-centered life in a patriarchal society is also maintained in old ages in economic, cultural, and social issues. Therefore, there is a tendency to create a title called the women's problem within ageing research, because it is obvious that women experience ageing differently (Şentürk, 2020). Previous studies have shown that grandfathers are more involved in the care of their grandchildren than caring for their children, but the greater responsibility is again taken by the women identified with the personal space. (Jensen, Quaal & Manoogian, 2018) This is important in women’s studies, as it will shed light on the issue of unpaid care work, which grandmothers experience for the second time in their life. As mentioned above, this care work accepted as responsibility, obligation, or volunteer work affects the participation of elderly women in social life.

As seen above, the aim of the study is to underline the social dimension of ageing and the responsibilities that gender roles also burden women in old age. However, explaining this without taking the larger cultural and political infrastructure into account will make this study incomplete. Therefore, to

mention the cultural and political axis of the study, it is necessary to see the family discourse created by the government's conservative stance and policy, as mentioned by Akkan (2017). The government's social policies from 2002 that Turkey experiences aim at the continuity of the traditional family institution, and naturally put the family in a 'sacred' position, while the woman again exists with adjectives such as 'blessed mothers', 'devoted care providers', as Akkan (2017) indicates. In this context, just like motherhood, grandmotherhood is seen as an important and rewarding role, and there are responsibilities that are assigned to grandmothers.

Of course, the care policies that have largely reflected this pattern need to be mentioned. Major care policies in Turkey include center-based preschool education; monthly payment for working mothers' childcare expenses; steps taken in NGOs; private options; and Grandmother Project which is a salary payment made for grandmothers who provide care for their grandchild launched by the Ministry of Family and Social Security in March 2017. However, it seems that this is not enough. Aybars, Beşpınar and Kalaycıoğlu (2018) indicated that "The family is still the primary caretaker and increasingly since there are no alternatives at hand, and since the government policies and measures are increasingly oriented towards home and family-based care."

On the other hand, projects such as the 'Grandmother Project' are also relevant to this thesis, because these steps show that grandmothers' ageing experiences should not be defined by unpaid care work. However, the steps taken which directly aim at contributing to keeping the care work within the family, and maintaining the conservative perspective and traditional gender roles. Therefore, one of the goals of the study is to observe the social experiences of ageing of grandmothers who received their share of this family-based childcare system from a feminist perspective, and to observe how this structure is reflected in these women's experiences.

As a significance of the research, with the awareness of increased ageing rates, it is understood that the social parameters of ageing should be taken into account, so that, it is necessary to approach the issue through an academic lens. Based on the changing employment curve of mothers, cultural codes of Turkey in terms of family roles, acquiring or losing roles in ageing, the lack of social policies in Turkey, and problematizing this grandmother role from a feminist perspective have been deemed important in terms of examining the social dimensions of ageing. Thus, the emphasis that ageing does not only consist of withdrawal, consumption, or loss of functions will be framed with its unaddressed aspects.

Looking at the literature, it can be seen that many different studies problematized women and ageing. To put it briefly, many social policy reviews and studies regarding aging have been conducted in recent years. Although it is hard to find a very specific focus on caregiving in these studies, When the words women and aging come together, the care that they take or their health status comes to the fore rather than the importance of maintaining social participation or the care they currently continue to give. Therefore, it has not been easy to reach literature that does not examine care policies and the impact of these policies on the social life of the elderly woman in the aging process. Kılıç, Yazıcı and Yoltar (2009) frequently mentioned "women-oriented" local policies in their suggestion report on expanding child care services.

To give an example about the aging of women, the article of Artan and Irmak (2008) stated that aging progresses differently between men and women and is a multi-faceted process that is not limited to physical changes, and examined the problems of elderly women under headings. Besides, Samuel et al. (2018) addressed elderly women's burden in terms of unpaid care work and domestic work in the 'Between care and work report' and achieved significant results.

While there are researchers who focus on the burden of grandparenting role in the ageing process of elderly women, like Dowdell (2004), Turkey also has started to conduct several studies which examine the issue in the gender context.

The most prominent examples of this are Uğur's (2019) study, which deals with the participation in grandparent experience and care activities in the context of gender, and Taşkın and Akçay's (2019) study of the meanings attributed to grandmothers in Turkey and the social isolation of these women in the care process.

At this point, although there are not many studies linking these experiences with social participation, Hazer and Aslan's (2010) article on the importance of social participation in the aging process and Çetin, Kara and Kitiş's (2014) quantitative data on the subject are instructive. Finally, as an intersectional study, Quirke, König, and Hajek (2019) take an important place in this thesis with the relationship it establishes between grandchild care and social isolation. As a result, this thesis fills a gap in the literature because it examines the importance of social participation in aging from a feminist perspective, with the grandmothering concept that is difficult to question in socio-political and cultural terms. Thus, the thesis contributes to the women's and ageing studies while it tries to show the socio-political infrastructure of Turkey in terms of family and care.

1.3. Research Questions

The main research question of the study is defined as follows: What is the effect of the grandparenting role on the social participation of elderly women? While many researchers use concepts such as social networking, social capital, and social connectedness in their aging studies, the concept of social participation concept is preferred in this thesis. This involvement which creates social capital greatly impacts life satisfaction, health, or cognitive functions during the aging process. Thus, the concept of social participation is deemed appropriate for the thesis.

Dehi Aroogh and Shahboulaghi (2020) define social participation as "a person's involvement in activities that provide interaction with others in the society or the

community and expresses interpersonal interactions outside the home." If there is a divergence between individuals and society in ageing, the decline of skills and shortening of remaining life can be seen (Pinto & Neri, 2017). Social participation can be studied with different sub-categories in many studies, but when looking at the topics most relevant to this study based on the literature: (1) community life (such as participation in religious activity); (2) interpersonal relationships (such as visiting friends or relatives); and (3) leisure activities (such as physical activities) can be emphasized. (Howrey & Hand, 2019)

It can be effective to give some thought to subtopics to examine the question. First, the role of grandmothers, their unpaid care work experiences, and its construction in Turkey should be taken into account in detail with a feminist perspective on ageing, followed by the socio-political context of Turkey in relation to childcare and elderly women. Finally, the social parameter of ageing must be explained in order to show that it is just as important as physical dimensions. Looking at the sub-dimensions of this, community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities are important points. These subtopics can give a direction to the interview questions.

As stated in the part of *Statement of the Problem*, there are many studies in the literature on ageing, women and unpaid care work. However, this study aims to examine the pattern in the light of a very specific aspect of it. Therefore, examining the effect of the grandparenting role on the social participation of elderly women at the intersection of gender and ageing by considering socio-political context of Turkey, is going to fill a gap in the literature.

1.4. Definition of Main Concepts

Ageing: Ageing can be described as a progressive loss of function accompanied by decreasing fertility and increasing mortality with advancing age (Kirkwood and Austad 2000, p. 233), or a universal process leading to a reduction in all functions. However, it is wrong to see ageing only as a biological/chronological

process. Ageing is a holistic concept that includes chronological, biological, physiological, psychological, socio-cultural, economic, and social ageing.

Social Ageing: Social ageing is formed by the process of communication and interaction that an elderly person enters into with the society in which they live. The individual shapes his/her life according to the definition of the elderly of the society in which s/he is located (Şentürk, 2020). When it comes to social aging, the changing roles and relationships of the person should be taken into account. Activities, especially with friends and family, or participation in social life in any way, define social aging.

Social Participation: Social participation has been a concept used in many aging studies. Dehi Aroogh and Shahboulaghi (2020) define social participation as a person's involvement in activities that provide interaction with others in society or the community and express interpersonal interactions outside the home. This study also has taken social participation as involvement in activities that allow social communication with others, in the context of community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities.

Feminist Approach on Ageing: The feminist approach asserts that there is a gender-based construction of ageing, and it should be evaluated within the context of gender. According to the theory, the quality of life of the elderly is greatly affected by their living as 'women' until they get old. Women who are exposed to gender discrimination in their social structure get old with many disadvantages. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent the "de-genderization" of ageing in an academic context.

Grandparenting Role: Like many concepts in sociology, it is possible to examine the role of grandparenting at three different levels: macro, meso, and micro. When we look at the macro level, it is possible to talk about its construction, functions, and norms in society; at the meso level, the point is the care and many other supports which they provide; and the micro level is

interested in its meanings and significance for the elderly themselves. This role is also shaped by how society treats this concept culturally. According to Musil (1998), the role of grandparenting can be exhibited in three ways. The first is by living in the same house and receiving primary responsibility; the second is by living in the same house and not receiving primary responsibility, and the last is by providing daycare which this thesis is interested in.

Traditional Gender Roles: Traditional gender roles mean expectations of society that determine how to behave, talk, dress, and live according to the sexes of people, in short. In other words, society constructs these roles based on biologically determined sexes. For instance, women tend to be seen as a caregiver.

Unpaid Care Work: "Unpaid care work" typically contains everyday activities, such as cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping for own household, as well as care of children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled (Folbre, 2006).

1.5. Scope of the Study

This thesis aims to explore the patterns of social participation of elderly women which are affected by the role of grandparenting. The term social participation in this context refers to a person's involvement in activities that allow for social connection with others, and it is looked at in relation to community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities in this thesis. The qualitative methodology has been preferred in this thesis because it is one of the most efficient ways to obtain deeper and more detailed information about the experiences. Also, it is considered that it may help to reveal things that stayed latent in developing this research. The state of being latent meant here can be seen in many qualitative studies that have a feminist standpoint. For example, this study, which can be seen as an ‘emotional care experience’, may show the women's over-burdened labor under the grandchild's care experience, the socially

affected aging experience, or the reflections of family-based care practices required by the socio-political context.

In this thesis, the feminist approach has been adopted. One of the most important reasons for adopting feminist methodology is that it gives elderly women the opportunity for their voices to be heard. This is important because apart from being oppressed as women, they are included in another vulnerable group with ageing.

As Russell (1987), who sees ageing as a feminist issue, mentioned, burdens of care for others increase in direct proportion to the ageing of women, and in order to study this issue, the researcher should avoid the masculine view of social reality and avoid repressive communication. Hence, feminist gerontology has also been a growing branch. The main focus of feminist methodology is to change our understanding of events, to emphasize specific oppression experienced by women, and to show the importance of being a woman. Of course, what makes research feminist is how the researcher poses the question, how s/he analyzes the data, and what s/he finds important.

The reason feminist gerontology relates to this thesis is that women who have provided lifelong care pay a price in terms of time and loss of opportunity, as in this thesis. At the same time, as Freixa, Luque, and Reina (2012) said, "Older women create powerful networks of friendship, neighborliness, and community that involve spaces of support and solidarity that give sense to their design of life." The aim of this thesis is to make visible the care practices, gender roles and socio-political background that prevent this.

In-depth semi-structured interview is the most appropriate technique to use in relation to the research topic in order to focus on grandmothers' emotions, experiences and ideas in detail. The interviews have been conducted with 19 elderly women. The participants have been gathered by snowball sampling.
The following characteristics in participants were sought after:

- Participants consist of women over the age of 60, living in the urban, providing daycare to their grandchildren.
- The mothers of the children must be working.
- In order to get detailed information about the effect, they must have been providing care for at least two years. The reason this is set to be at least two years is that social participation before the pandemic was completely different.
- Technological literacy is sought in the participants because, in a pandemic condition, this group, who can be described as a risk group, may beware of a face-to-face interview.
- They also must be living in the same city with their children because providing care by living in the same house by coming from different cities has completely different effects on their lives.
- The grandmothers should not be working in order to provide daycare and they need to provide at least three days a week, otherwise, it cannot be named active childcare.
- The grandchildren of the participants should be preschoolers to see the effects of daycare by grandmothers.

Under normal conditions, it is known that individuals over the age of 65 are considered elderly. The first reason why this study was conducted with participants over the age of 60 is that the grandchildren of individuals over the age of 65 are older. Whereas, in this study, grandchildren should be pre-schoolers as they receive daycare from grandmothers. On the other hand, due to the beginning of life changes such as loss of role, loss of relatives, and retirement, the required sample has been reached. It is important that mothers are working because an employed woman needs support in daycare.

Interviews have been prepared in line with subtopics and certain themes. While these themes guide the interview, they have also been shaped according to the demographic characteristics of the participant. The interviews include

demographic characteristics of the participant, everyday life practices in private and public spaces, grandchildren care practices, perceptions about their children and grandchildren, social participation in terms of community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities, and the effect of the pandemic. As Uğur (2019) also mentioned, grandmothers who are repeating the role of parenting for their grandchildren, by continuing the traditional gender roles and care practices in the private space, are overburdened with the physical care work of their grandchildren. The reason for the use of 'physical care' here is that although grandfathers are more involved in the care of grandchildren rather than child care, they appear to contribute to instrumental care work such as financial support and education rather than physical care. The reason this distinction is important is that it does not affect social participation patterns in the same way, obviously. The interviews sought to collect information on the effects of women's aging experience on their social participation in the light of the subtopics used in this 'second phase' of unpaid care work experience.

It seems appropriate to carry out the study in Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara. Increased urbanization and the acceleration of the aging rate in Turkey have increased the proportion of elderly people living in the metropolis. Moreover, urbanization is a phenomenon that affects the aging process of elderly individuals. Simmel (2013) mentions that this urban life forces people to have fast, agile, and punctual behavioral patterns. This situation should be taken into consideration as it may present an extra physical and psychological difficulty for the social participation of the elderly individual. Therefore, this can be seen as an additional threat to the environment of support and solidarity that the elderly woman creates for herself, as mentioned above. Another reason for the study of these three big cities is that each of them is rapidly aging cities and the municipalities are accelerating their work on aging. Finally, although this rate has stalled after the pandemic, women's participation in the labor force in large cities has steadily increased with the level of education after the 2000s. (Keskin, 2018) Therefore, the combination of this situation with inadequate care policies

has increased the need for grandparental care. This can be shown as an important reason for working on this issue in three big cities.

Apart from the interview method, as secondary data, it is efficient to take advantage of local data in Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara, social policies, and projects made by municipalities, because these data can actually lead us to understand the socio-political context of the topic, to see real-life practices, and to notice obstacles and opportunities that elderly people experience.

Another important point of the methodology, especially for the analysis part, is discourses because caring for grandchildren is not seen as unpaid care work for a grandmother in this culture, but as volunteer work. With the principle of 'the sanctity of the family' in Turkey, it would not be easy to say these effects on some points of their lives. For instance, it is quite challenging to state the effects such as the woman's getting tired while providing this care and hindering her social participation. However, it does not always have to be said clearly to understand discourses embedded in interviews. This can also be proof of why this issue should be studied with a qualitative approach. Another focus of discourse is political discourses on aging and on women in Turkey. Because these discourses can also show the starting point of the problem while forming the socio-political infrastructure of the subject of the thesis.

1.6. Overview of the Study

In this thesis, Chapter 2 will provide a theoretical framework and literature review of the thesis. First, feminist standpoint theory and unpaid care work is going to be defined in detail. It is examined with the concept of unpaid care work multiple times, the roles of grandmothers in the family, and the perception of Turkish society on grandchildren care. Afterward, the socio-political background of the family in Turkey will be discussed under the headings of childcare policies and actions taken for elderly women in Turkey. Finally, the main problem of the study will be explored by taking advantage of literature, mainly focusing on the

social participation of elderly women through the case of grandmothers by examining their community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities.

In Chapter 3, the methodology of the thesis will be introduced under five headings. In this section, design and method, ethical considerations, research procedures/ access to respondents and conduct of interviews, key characteristics of respondents, data analysis, and limitations of the study will be mentioned in order.

In Chapter 4, the findings of the fieldwork conducted will be analyzed under four headings, including the everyday life of ageing women in Turkey, the perception of grandmothers about grandchildren care and childcare, care practices, and social participation. In other words, detailed information about the findings and their analysis in the thesis will be obtained from this chapter.

Chapter 5 will be the conclusion part which discusses the findings in accordance with the knowledge based on all these above-mentioned chapters, and the answer to the research question asked by the thesis will be sought. This part of the thesis consists of the final brief summary, conclusion and discussion of the findings, and implications of the study roughly.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

“What is the effect of the grandparenting role on the social participation of elderly women?” Since the theoretical framework and literature review of this study, which started with the question, covers too many subjects, it has to proceed in a systematic way. Thus, to construct the framework, it was necessary to outline the feminist standpoint and to begin with this theory's view of the concept of care. Afterward, since I took grandmothers as a sample, the fact that unpaid care work is experienced more than once in a woman's life until the older ages and the role of the grandmother in the family were discussed. At this stage, Turkey's perception and cultural background regarding grandparental care have been important.

Then, the social policy reflections of the subject in the current context, namely in Turkey, were examined first through the family, then through child care, and elderly women. This is done because the current government's stance on family and care issues influences the way families make decisions.

Finally, the concept of social participation is discussed. Definitions and studies on this subject are listed. This work has operationalized social participation in the context of Turkey with the concepts of community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities. The theoretical framework and literature review were written following this outline.

2.2. Feminist Standpoint Theory and Unpaid Care Work

This thesis is written on the basis of the Feminist Standpoint Theory. One reason for this is to listen to the experiences of women, who are the subject of the study and who have to continue their practices and discourses in the light of dominant ideologies, and who live in the socio-political background of the dominant ideology, in their own voices. The second is to tell the experiences defined with a patriarchal point of view, based on the feminist standpoint epistemology and methodology, and by benefiting from these studies, by taking the woman as the subject. This is where the social participation experiences of grandmothers who have grandchildren come into play. Because the socio-political and cultural background in Turkey, repeated unpaid care work, and women's aging in the context of social participation need to be studied with this approach.

Standpoint theory, as Smith (1987) mentioned, aims to make women the object of knowledge, without ignoring the woman's experience. As a result, it is desirable to highlight 'sociology for women' here, not 'sociology about them'. As can be understood from this thesis, the Feminist Standpoint Theory should be used to make sense of women's everyday experiences. Because, ultimately, women's issue is a concept that exists in everyday life, not always in visible oppressions. And again, everyday life hides extraordinary details in practices that seem simple. These details should be defined by women, rather than institutions and definitions of existing mainstream approaches.

Haraway, one of the important narrators of Feminist Standpoint Theory, puts forward similar ideas. As can be seen in this study, the researcher's self and experiences are included in the research and a purely objective and positivist science does not make sense, as Feminist Standpoint Theory tries to tell the "true" story. (Haraway, 1988, p. 581; Harding, 2004, p.128)

The present thesis offers a good example to underline the fact that the researcher self is one of the sources of the study. As a researcher, I was raised by my

grandmother, and knowing the practices I will listen to in the interviews gives me the gatekeeper feature from the beginning. In addition, it was not difficult to make sense of the issue with my experience and to realize that the care of grandchildren is an issue in the social life of elderly women. Beyond being an insider, Feminist Standpoint Theory's attitude towards eliminating hierarchy in methodology contributes to learning the story on the subject.

Unpaid care work, as it is known in feminist literature, is one of the most important building blocks of women's studies. The most significant reason for this is that childcare is matched with women in the context of traditional gender roles and is seen as the responsibility of women. In the context of unpaid care work, where mothers spend much more hours than fathers, it is seen that grandmothers show the same pattern compared to grandfathers. Another major point in this thesis is that grandmothers have experienced this care work more than once.

In this context, it is important to underline that "Feminist standpoint theories replace the essentialist perspective of views of caring with a constructed perspective that arises from women's socially constructed standpoint" (Hallstein, 1999). Care, which is a neutral concept in itself, occupies an important place in feminist theory as it is stubbornly gendered according to Himmelweit and Plomten (2014). However, as critical approaches to care studied within the scope of this theory continue, social policies that are currently being implemented and that will be discussed in the next sections lag behind.

Cultural background greatly influences the perception of care. According to Tronto (1993), care perceived as emotional labor does not even show the payment as an option due to family relationships that have become taboo. Of course, different geographies show different patterns in this regard and Turkey lags far behind in this inequality. For example, while the time gap between men and women for childcare is more than 80 minutes in Turkey, this difference is around 13 minutes in Sweden. (FGB, 2009; UN, 2010) Therefore, while the

Feminist Standpoint Theory identifies culture and social policy as the most important premises behind the issue, it also sees social policy as supportive for informal caregivers. (Graham, 1991) In the context of this thesis, the informal caregivers subtly supported by the social policy are grandmothers.

2.2.1. Women Experiencing Unpaid Care Work Multiple Times

Unpaid care work is a prominent women's problem problematized by many disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and the economy. Unpaid care work, which is a central aspect of this thesis, is an experience paired with women in the context of traditional gender roles. Although there are significant attempts to address this situation in developed countries, mothers in many countries experience much more unpaid care work than fathers, and the same is true for grandmothers. As Harding (2004) said, "How does it occur that a double day of work, one day of which was unpaid, was considered as normal and desirable for women?" The question to be asked in this study is beyond unpaid care work, which is a greater burden on women's shoulders, the issue here is the experience of unpaid care work 'multiple times'. The sample we have is, of course, the grandmothers who care for their children, sometimes their spouses, their parents, and currently their grandchildren.

This issue, which has been problematized many times, as defined in the BMFSFJ (2020) report, is the unequal distribution of spending time on unpaid care work, that is, the gender care gap, which does not leave women of any age behind. The fact that women aged 30-40, previously called the sandwich generation, care for both their children and their parents, gains different dimensions with the rise of longevity. As the average age increases, grandmothers join this sandwich generation, as they too have to care for their older parents, while their grandchildren are added. In other words, these women who have given care at least three times can be described as triple-decker sandwiches.

Many role changes can occur during the aging process. Although traditional aging studies always explain this situation with withdrawal or loss of role, aging can also cause role gains for people. In this thesis, the role gained is the caregiver role. Likewise, women who care for their aging spouses can start to care for their parents, some relatives, and most importantly their grandchildren, as mentioned above. (Moen, Robinson, Fields, 1994, p. 177)

Of course, as Franks and Stephens (1992) mentioned, performing so many roles together can cause physical or psychological stress. On the other hand, if we take it psychologically, it is necessary to know that the way each role affects every woman is different. Moreover, these differences should not be ignored in a study that is backed by a feminist standpoint. The situation encountered in the thesis is one of the main proofs of this, because grandchild care can also contribute to well-being, both physically and psychologically.

As Lumsdaine and Vermeer (2015) mentioned, women can arrange their own lives just because of unpaid care work. For example, they may quit their jobs and retire to take care of their parents. At this point, I see no harm in talking about my own family. My mother and aunt, who were teachers in Izmir, retired as soon as they were entitled to retirement when the health problems of my grandmother and grandfather began. Because they thought they could not run two ‘jobs’ at the same time, and they were even happy that it was time to retire. However, as they later declared, they said that they had the energy and stamina to work harder, but that this would not be possible at this pace. Therefore, as Moen, Robinson, and Fields (1994) said, this situation is seen as 'taken for granted' that women can change their employment status for unpaid care work they will do more than once. However, men do not do such a thing, this is also not demanded of them. The point that is ignored in this issue, which has found its place in feminist literature, is grandchild care. The issue of arranging this life is one of the many effects that multiple care practices have on grandmothers' lives. As a result, all of this are the major reasons why women cannot make independent decisions about their own lives due to unpaid care work.

2.2.2. The Roles of Grandmothers in Family

In the literature on the sociology of the family, parenthood studies rather than grandparenthood draw attention. However, studies on grandparenthood are slowly increasing, as it has been realized that the role of grandparents in the family may be too important to ignore. Addressing grandmothers in the context of this subject contributes to both women's and aging studies as well as family studies. Krasnova's (2002) study on the family lives of grandmothers living in big cities, which is very much overlapping with our subject, stated that this role may change according to certain variables while examining the role of the grandmother in the family. These variables can be seen as education, age, frequency of meeting, or living arrangement. To explain these variables, the education status changes how much a woman takes part in the roles she undertakes and in the care process. Role confusion can be experienced in families with low education level and it is seen that the grandmother can make decisions instead of the mother; Women with a high level of education only accepts the responsibility demanded from her and generally argues that life decisions should belong to the primary caregiver. In both cases, however, the decision to provide care is made. When the age variable comes into play, it is seen that health problems, fatigue, and social losses increase in direct proportion to age. Therefore, the responsibilities they can take and experiences in terms of social participation also change accordingly. The frequency of meetings, as the name suggests, also shapes the role assigned to the grandmother, as it reflects how relationships in the family are constructed. Last but not least, living arrangement is an important variable. This can vary in every family. For example, living in the same house with the grandmother, aging in place, living with the lone parent, or living in separate homes and providing daycare become a very important physical factor both for the elderly woman and for the distribution of roles within the family.

Apart from this, of course, even if it is an indispensable statement of a sociological study, as Goodman and Silverstein (2002) stated, cultural

background and traditions are also among the determinants of the role. For example, while the roles of the grandmother are discussed, the articles published in the USA literature focus heavily on the level of stress, while there is no mention of stress in Turkey. This can be explained by the sacredness of the family and the identification of the care work with the help of the family, as mentioned earlier. In short, grandparental care is already 'taken for granted' in Turkey.

However, I see no harm in looking at the issue in the context of women's issue. As mentioned above, women and mothers, who assume the role of caring under the imposition of traditional gender roles in the patriarchal order, start motherhood again as grandmothers in their old ages for a second time. We can summarize this situation with the sentence of Dolbin-MacNab (2006), “Grandparent caregivers have parented before and bring previous experiences, success, and failures for a second time.” This statement shows that women go through the same processes in experiencing childcare for at least the second time. Therefore, it is possible to talk about the caring role of grandmothers without ignoring the variables mentioned above. Of course, this issue is also a result of whether the country in which one lives takes measures in socio-political terms.

As mentioned above, even if the frequency of meeting and the place of residence are essential variables, the grandchild becomes a part of the grandmother's routines and everyday lives, no matter how much the grandmother is involved in the life of the grandchild and her child. (Musil & Standing, 2005) This happens sometimes by preparing for school, sometimes by taking care of his/her health, and sometimes by doing various activities. Therefore, the experiences of these grandmothers, who cling to the role of caregiver, definitely affect the routines they maintain, even if they are not primary caregivers. This shows that the roles, responsibilities and expectations of grandmothers in the family are not just about themselves, but a concept that families are involved in. Because, there is also process of decision with their child. This interaction was again reported by Musil et al. (2006). As they said, grandmothering affects the family interaction quite a

lot, no matter how. The woman expands and makes the parenting role more inclusive and provides support for the functioning of the family. One of the most important results here is their contribution to women's employment. It is obvious that childcare is one of the biggest obstacles to women's employment. However, with this caregiving role, they try to solve a women's issue with another women's issue.

Finally, according to a study conducted with Feminist Standpoint theory, Roberto, Allen, and Blieszner (2008) describe that grandmothers' self-perceptions affect the perception of their role in the family. We can summarize this with the following quote:

> Many women in our study were aware of the competing needs between self and other and expressed creative ways of resolving this tension by balancing both. The accounts of these women suggested that they were comfortable with whom they were as individuals and with the generative work they do for their families (Erikson et al., 1989/1994).

Of course, this quote gives us a micro perspective. However, the important thing here, as in every feminist study, is to present a study by not ignoring the differences in women, but not forgetting the sociological background.

2.2.3. The Perception of Turkish Society on Grandchildren Care Given by Grandmothers

As stated many times before, social changes in Turkey, women's participation in the workforce, and social policies have had to increase grandparents' care for their grandchildren. Of course, it may be useful to define the care mentioned here. The care provided by grandparents is divided into two: primary care and secondary care. Primary care for grandparents provides full-time care when parents are unable to provide care due to prison, drugs, or chronic illness; daily care, such as supporting children's participation in the workforce, is called secondary care. (Gökçearslan Çifci & Tören, 2019). The care covered in this

thesis falls mostly into secondary care. Moreover, it is quite possible to see the positive and negative effects of grandparent care in secondary care.

It is known that grandchild care contributes to grandmothers' well-being in the psycho-social context. As Moore and Rosenthal (2014) said, this can be explained by seeing life as worth living, being productive, and contributing while giving secondary care. Of course, all these effects may differ according to the demographic or social background of the person. On the contrary, there are studies showing that the care of grandchildren is directly proportional to depression. This increase in the rate of depression and stress is explained by the fact that they take on heavy responsibilities as they get older. (Dowdell, 1995) However, this situation is closely related to how the grandmother perceives it. To give an example from this thesis, grandmothers' perceptions of grandchild care are mostly divided into two poles: the meaning of their life vs responsibility. The conversations that follow these answers change according to these perceptions.

One of the most important points of grandparental care is the social life of aging women. To briefly summarize their social participation, which will be explained in detail later, it is seen that social life is affected by grandchildren in many studies in the literature. In this regard, the level of 'isolation' progresses in direct proportion to the hours of care for grandchildren in many studies. (Fuller-Thomson, Minkler, Miller & Driver, 2000; Gladstone, Brown & Fitzgerald, 2009) This isolation sometimes occurs in groups of friends that are frequently contacted, and sometimes it occurs when they are separated from their daily routines because it causes them to go out less.

The perception of grandparental care, especially in studies conducted in Turkey, is based on intergenerational transmission. Intergenerational cultural knowledge and value transfer emerge as an important function as it is a channel that keeps society alive. In the studies conducted with grandmothers in Turkey, this transference reveals that grandmothers perceive the care of grandchildren as a source of satisfaction. (Çiftçi, 2008; Altan & Tarhan, 2018) In other words, as

Erikson (1959) said, contributing to and creating a new generation can make the aging process a positive experience. Again, as Altan and Tarhan (2018) said, taking care of grandchildren in Turkey is a very important experience for grandmothers, because it will be good for them to see their own importance and to be accepted by those around them in a process where they think that they are experiencing social and individual withdrawal.

In addition to all these, according to the study conducted by Taşkın and Akçay (2019), while grandmothers in Turkey attribute positive meanings to the care of grandchildren, it was possible to listen to the difficulties they experienced in this process in in-depth interviews. These difficulties may be related to the aging process in general, the other household and care work they have to undertake, and the concern to ensure the continuity and functioning of the family. Grandmother care is seen as a natural process in Turkey, so decision processes generally develop naturally rather than actively. However, the 'natural' formation here may cause the unpaid care work provided to be perceived as invisible. (Taşkın & Akçay, 2019, p.604)

Finally, it is clear that grandparenting is perceived in the context of gender roles. According to studies, it is possible to see that participation in this care differs between grandparents and women take more responsibility. (Uğur, 2019, p. 122) At the same time, as Arpacı and Tezel Şahin (2015) mentioned, grandmothers make more breakthroughs in care support and undertake the responsibility of protecting the family. Therefore, this family-based care system in Turkey gives the grandmother this caregiving role culturally, along with traditional gender roles, in psycho-social terms, and with social policies.

2.3. Socio-Political Background of Family in Turkey

The progress of globalization all over the world has had an inevitable effect on the perspective and policies towards the family, as in every situation. According to some perspectives, globalization is eroding the structure of the family.

According to this point of view, this affects the functions of the family that is thought to be fulfilled in society. To the attitudes of the countries, the family policies formed against this situation are also shaped. This attitude also states that globalization has also widened the gap economically. Thus, starting a family is more difficult than ever because access to education, housing, or care is the right of those with money, and only they are able to start a family. Another concern is that with the erosion of the family, the cultural transmission will also be interrupted. As İçağasıoğlu Çoban and Özbesler (2009) said, mass communication undertakes this transmission rather than family.

On the other hand, the feminist standpoint states that attitude towards globalization may ignore the preferences, needs, and decisions of individuals regarding individuation. However, strict protection of the family and ensuring its continuity with social policies means assigning a role to women and shaping their decision-making processes about care, even if it is thought that it is going to work functionally. That is, it is observed that while worrying about the function of the family, there is not always concern about the increasing roles of women and so on.

The fact that this situation does not display a holistic attitude in Turkey can be summarized as follows: Social policy which is a process developed by the state as planned and programmatic can be divided into two as implicit and explicit. Here, implicit ones affect the family even if they do not target the family. Dumon (1991) states that there are three attitudes in family politics in both ways. These may aim to strengthen the family, comfort the family, or take the place of the family. Considering the first, implicit policies are used to strengthen the employment of a family and cash aid is not enough to maintain a family. In the second option, counseling centers can be given as an example and cannot be said to be accessible and inclusive in Turkey. Finally, attempts are being made to take its place, but it is still not accessible due to high wages as most of them are privately owned. (İçağasıoğlu Çoban & Özbesler, 2009, p.33) Therefore, we do not reflect the three attitudes mentioned on family policies. From a feminist

standpoint, the attitudes and actions of the Ministry of Family and Social Services again support the ‘return to the family’ and do not take holistic progress that puts women in the center.

Of course, countries’ policy preferences can be very different in this sense. However, childcare policies in working families in today's world are very important all the time and everywhere. As Lewis (2007) says, policy makers can sometimes overlook the 'gendered division of labor'. As Aybars, Beşpınar, and Kalaycıoğlu (2018) mentioned, implicit familialism is observed in Turkey. This means that although there is no active attempt to do so, the family's responsibility to take care of is promoted, resulting in the concept of 'familialization of care'. Family-based care has become inevitable, as there are problems in accessing child care, which is not adequately supported by policies, due to class, spatial and similar reasons. Family-based care is largely performed by grandmothers, as has been repeatedly stated in this thesis.

2.3.1. A Look at Childcare Policies in Turkey

Social and demographic changes, urbanization, globalization have changed the family structure in Turkey, as mentioned in the previous section. However, as Çarkoğlu and Kafescioğlu (2013) mentioned, due to the dominance of a collectivist structure in Turkey, the cultural and socio-political background does not always seem very compatible with these changes. On the other hand, parental control and support continues even though autonomy is higher in the urban part of the country (Kağıtçıbaşı, Ataca & Diri, 2010). Both the culture of the country and the socio-political infrastructure do not allow this enough. According to the report of UNICEF TURKEY (2010), early childhood care services are very few in Turkey. In this case, too, if the financial situation of the family is not sufficient, if another relative, such as grandmothers, does not live nearby, the system obliges the mother to stay with the child. Therefore, is the right strategy being followed to increase the employment of women? From a financial point of view, it does not seem possible for low-income families to have access to private

nurseries, but it is expected that a monthly subscription will be paid under the name of the need list in the institutions of the state.

One of the important details of this thesis conducted from a feminist standpoint is that the female member of the family fills these deficiencies mentioned in childcare policies. (Kağıtçıbaşı, Ataca & Diri, 2010, p. 251) Therefore, family policy is made, but the policies make women vulnerable and put the responsibility on their shoulders. According to Akkan (2017), GONGOs and NGOs have a different discourse than these, highlighting the priorities of women and their participation in social life. However, it should not be forgotten that Kandiyoti's (2015) statement here is that feminist groups do not always reflect the value of society. Because, while the socio-political background tabooed and sanctified motherhood, issues such as abortion or care facilities that NGOs emphasized were not given enough space.

To take another example, Kazanoğlu (2019) mentioned strengthening the family, modifying maternity leave, and adding items such as cash assistance for childbirth in the context of The Family and Dynamic Population Structure Conservation Program. However, as Akkan (2017) said, when viewed from a feminist standpoint, it is seen that regulations are initiatives that push women to provide care. As a result, a care arrangement based on motherhood dominates Turkey, including grandmothers. Caring for pre-school children continues to be perceived as a concept where relatives and families can lend a helping hand, rather than developing institutionalization as an alternative in Turkey.

In this case, as is often repeated, gender, social and economic inequality hinders access considerably, given the limited opportunities available. Of course, the following issue should not be overlooked, it is an important concept for child development as well as women employment. Take, for example, Sweden here which is a country that has the best childcare service. While maternity leave in Sweden is quite developed compared to the whole world, there is a preschool option for children aged between one and five. All children are entitled to a free

preschool after the age of three. Thanks to this facility, children who need activity and who are at the age of play benefit from professional contribution to their social, emotional, and cognitive development with activities and games. (Lamb, Sternberg, Hwang & Broberg, 1992, p.30)

As a result, to briefly look at the childcare facilities in Turkey, private and public kindergartens, practical kindergartens, and projects for children aged between three and six can be mentioned, which are organized by the Ministry of National Education. However, the ratio of the Ministry of National Education's expenditure on pre-school education to its own budget is 1%, which is quite an insufficient rate. (TÜSİAD, 2009) Apart from this, there were kindergartens and daycare centers within the body of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency, but this practice was abolished in 2006. However, a 5% slice is reserved for the children of families with financial difficulties in daycare centers and private nurseries. Apart from this, there are kindergartens for children aged 0-12 in need of protection. Finally, NGOs and foundations are trying to show different activities in many districts of Turkey, taking into account the deficiencies that need to be filled. (Kılıç, Yazıcı & Yoltar, 2009)

In terms of care, the responsibilities of private workplaces are also defined in policies. Regardless of their age and marital status, in workplaces with 100-150 female employees, it is obligatory to establish a breastfeeding room separate from the workplace and at a distance of maximum 250 meters from the workplace, for breastfeeding employees to breastfeed their children. At the same time, regardless of their age and marital status, in workplaces with more than 150 female employees, it is obligatory for the employer to establish a dormitory close to the workplace, separate from the workplace, to leave and care for children aged 0-6, and for breastfeeding employees to breastfeed their children. If the dormitory is more than 250 meters away from the workplace, the employer is obliged to provide a vehicle. However, the number of companies that do not comply with these conditions is too large to be underestimated. Women can

defend their rights in this regard, but economic concerns often prevent them from seeking this right.

As a result, social policies in the field of childcare, are important economically, in terms of gender, in terms of the development of the child, and in terms of the responsibility of women in the family -which can be mother, grandmother, or another female member of the family- have remained in the background to a large extent in Turkey. In some cases, even the rules determined by law are not implemented. Family-oriented discourses of government since 2002, three child policies, all kinds of discourses on protecting the family, and familialization of care can also be the cause of these.

2.3.2. Actions Taken for Elderly Women in Turkey

The concept of 'population aging', which is observed all over the world, is also seen in Turkey. Of course, this change points to changes in social policies, social attitudes, and actions to be taken. In all these areas, it is useful to consider the social, cultural, psychological, or economic aspects of the biologically inevitable aging situation.

As İçli (2002) argues, traditionally, in Turkey, elderly people are respected and seen as an authority in the family. However, problems such as loss of a spouse, increase in health problems, and problems of adaptation to social life are also expected situations with old age. It has been noticed that this withdrawal is seen more in men than in women, because the concept that will prevent all these withdrawals is to be useful, and women can continue this role in old age, especially through caregiving. On the other hand, equating usefulness with care would not be compatible with the stance of this thesis. Because it is a perspective that exists with the care it gives to this woman, in which both the actions taken on women are expected to be multifaceted and reductive, and the issue of care is expected to be dealt with in a holistic way not only being useful, but also in its physical, psychological and sociological aspects.

According to TURKSTAT (2020) statistics, it is estimated that the elderly population, which was 8.2% in 2015, will increase to 10.2% in 2023. Therefore, if more than 10% of the population consists of elderly people, as declared by the United Nations, the country can be called an ageing population. (Karacan, 2017) It is very soon for Turkey to enter this category. Therefore, policies are developed regarding care services, social services, social benefits, and various pension systems. (Tuncel & Uzun, 2019)

Nursing homes, elderly care, and rehabilitation centers, 'Home Care Services' to support their daily lives, Care Center for Alzheimer's Patients, and SSI pension are shown under Social Services. (Ministry of Family and Social Policies National Action Plan, 2013) While making these policies, no gender-based categorization or factors to be taken into account were observed. However, more complications are observed in women than in men. The other and most important issue is that all of the actions taken in this action plan are related to health and care. There was no interference in social, psychological, or physical activities. However, Arpacı (2005) says that while there are withdrawals in social roles, self-confidence, and sense of authority in old age, the fear of being useless and being alone is at the forefront. Therefore, in order to make life meaningful, the concept of volunteering and sports should enter our lives under the title of social and environmental factors, although the concept of sports has not been considered before. To look at Karacan's (2017) suggestion, local governments should create activities according to the demographic characteristics and interests of the elderly, and social responsibility projects or social policies should be more inclusive.

Even though they were not opened specifically for the elderly, public education centers, trainings or courses of local governments and districts have become much more accessible than before. Even if there are these, as Berkün (2017) said, it is possible to offer services such as hobby centers to every age group. Because women may hesitate to participate in these activities, sometimes

because they did not address them, and sometimes because they could not find their own age group. Therefore, the idea of structuring according to the demographic characteristics mentioned above seems meaningful here.

Being elderly and being a woman already puts the person in the vulnerable group, while being an old woman make them experience this twice. Therefore, understanding the social problems of older women is invaluable psychologically, sociologically, economically, as well as in terms of social policy, because gender discrimination is common at this age, in the first place. “For women who are relatively more deprived in terms of human and social capital, this can be considered as a sign that their old age will potentially be more problematic.” (Özkul, Kalaycı & Aslan, 2017) In that case, it was thought that it would be useful to examine the lives of the elderly women in detail, if it is necessary to consider this disregarded issue of gender with a feminist standpoint. As Özkul, Kalaycı, and Aslan (2017) say, a part of the lives of the elderly women can pass alone with losses and spouse deaths due to age difference. Therefore, it is essential to implement conscious, planned policies for leisure activities, psychological and cognitive adjustment.

Finally, I think it is necessary to talk about the action that has the most connection with the thesis: The Grandmother Project. Altan and Tarhan (2018) announced the Grandmother Project for Supporting Women's Employment as a European Union funded project that will last between 10 and 12 months in 2017. This project was created by targeting the mother's employment, not the grandmother, but it also provided employment to the accepted grandmothers. On the one hand, when we look at this project, which boosts the feeling of 'usefulness' as mentioned above, with 'woman' in the foreground, it can be understood that it was not actually for the elderly woman. Because the project supports the elderly woman to re-enter the care cycle that she has repeated throughout her life. Moreover, these old women have been practicing caregiving for generations, even without wage support. In this project, it is not observed that there is any attempt on the social life, physical activities, or psychological well-

being of these women. The point to be noted here is the legitimization of grandparental care, which is not explicitly expressed in policies in Turkey. In this project, which was carried out with the slogan of 'Grow with confidence and love, Turkey', legitimation was made by pointing out weak points such as 'trust' and 'culture transfer'. Supporting women's employment has become another woman's responsibility. Therefore, it should be considered as an issue that needs to be addressed.

As a result, it is seen that the steps regarding elderly women in Turkey were taken without any precautions according to estimated statistics which declare Turkey as an aging country. These actions should take into account the needs of the vulnerable group, which falls under the category of 'elderly women'. However, the steps taken focus on health and self-care, regardless of gender. However, it is obvious that this group, whose own care is brought to the fore, still gives care. The importance of their social participation, which will be discussed in detail in the next section, has not been realized by Turkey's social policy, and adaptation problems and bias about withdrawal have not been destroyed.

2.4. Elderly Social Participation and The Case of Grandmothers

To make a general introduction to social participation, which is the main theme of the thesis, as Dehi Aroogh and Shahboulaghi (2019) said, it is necessary to distinguish social participation from similar concepts such as social capital, social support, and social network. Social participation, according to the ICF (2001) definition, actions and tasks required to engage in organized social life outside the family in the community, and in the social and civic areas of life. Of course, this takes place in our lives as a concept that will be created by the person himself/herself and fed by external factors. According to the social participation conceptualization of Dahan-Oleil, Gelinas, and Mazer (2008), social participation is influenced by personal factors such as demographic

features and environmental factors such as accessibility. Social participation can be also fed by characteristics such as health, class, and ethnicity.

When it comes to elderly social participation, of course, nothing changes in the definition, but it is essential for them to maintain their community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities in order for their survival and social roles to continue. As Sepulveda-Loyola et al. (2020) said, social participation is very important in aging because it improves physical activity and social interaction and reduces the risk of depression by preventing social isolation that should be avoided in aging. From a feminist standpoint, this study is quite fruitful because it clearly states that social participation in aging leads to different experiences in men and women. Of course, one of the most important reasons for this is that they experience their interactions with the environment differently. Again, as Sepulveda-Loyola et al. (2020) said, social participation has a positive effect on the health status of elderly women.

By looking at the qualitative studies of Goll et al. (2015), ageism, adopting to aging, and lack of confidence can be explained as barriers to social participation, which we can define as involvement of a life situation. It is very common for elderly people who are coping with the loss of family members, spouses, or friends, and their community to refuse to take advantage of social opportunities. These reservations often exist with the fear of rejection. The fear of the presence of younger people in places where they can socially participate, which is often mentioned by women in this study, supports this situation.

As it is often mentioned in this study, the effect of domestic life on women's social participation cannot be ignored. (Dahan-Oleil, Gelinas & Mazer, 2008) Here, of course, it is possible to talk about traditional gender roles that continue even when they get old. This includes household chores, unpaid care work, etc. At this point, it is possible to talk about grandmothers who care for their grandchildren. When talking about the importance of social participation of an elderly person, it would not be right to consider it separately from the fact that

this person's gender and providing daycare during their 'workdays'. Of course, while this occupies a significant part of the grandmother's time to participate, it can also be physically exhausting. Therefore, social participation can be in a disadvantageous position both with aging and being a woman for elderly women. In this study, elderly social participation is discussed under the subtitles of community life, interpersonal relationships and leisure activities. While conducting a sociological study, the variables of the study should be compatible with the socio-cultural background. Although concepts such as 'active aging' and 'successful aging' have been on the rise in Turkey recently, the importance of social participation is just emerging. These three titles, which will be explained below, constitute the categories that grandmothers can access while experience social participation in Turkey. Apart from this, in the literature review on the social lives of grandmothers in Turkey, it is seen that the activities included in these three concepts come to the fore.

2.4.1. Community Life

Community life is one of the most important subgroups of social participation. The reason why it is especially emphasized in this study is that this concept occupies an important place all over the world. Participation in community life can be defined as performing daytime activities by people while interacting with others. (Dusseljee et al, 2011; Naud et al, 2019) Participation in community life is significantly affected by characteristics such as gender, age, and education. However, as seen in our study, participation in community life is inversely proportional to age.

As Phillipson et al. (1999) said, as you age, the network shrinks considerably. They summarized the effect of aging on this situation as follows: The importance of neighbors in public spaces in gerontology has been proven in many studies. However, as in this thesis, there is a very infertile public space sharing among middle-class neighbors. It always differs in urban space and rural space. In rural spaces, the existence of mechanical solidarity also connects the elderly in the

neighborhood to each other and their surroundings, and public space sharing increases. In urban space, the situation is the opposite. In both cases, the fact that the elderly people are not alienated and ‘aging in place’ significantly affects their mental and physical health, but what opportunities they can access should be noted in the urban space. Therefore, the study was conducted in metropolitan areas of Turkey.

It is not always easy to be motivated to participate in additional social activities of community life for elderly people. However, the difference between men and women brought about by a feminist study should be highlighted. Naud et al. (2019) stated in their studies on community life, women wanted to increase their participation of community life more compared to men. Despite this finding, it is obvious that women also have a limited time in their old age due to the care activities and the responsibilities due to the traditional gender roles. In the study of Setterlund and Abbot (1995) on elderly women's participation in community life, it is said that barriers to participation may consist of physical health and loss of spouse, friends, and roles. Of course, as well as the loss of roles, the roles they gain are also one of the barriers. In the study, they say that they often stated that they should have time to spare for their grandchildren in order to help their working daughters. (Setterlund & Abbot, 1995) However, it is beneficial in every way for them to continue their lifelong learning for themselves and to continue the function of transferring their lifelong experiences to others. Hoyert and Seltzer (1992) explain the impact of care on participation in community life with 'loss of self'. That is, grandmothers abandon the concept of 'me' and devote themselves to their new roles. However, according to the findings of Greenfield, Morrow-Howel, and Teufel's (2012) studies, caregiving grandmothers state that their participation in these activities is much better for them than those who do not provide care.

Community life also includes volunteer work. These volunteer activities, as Erikson (1959) mentioned in his generativity stage, are important in terms of conveying the lifelong experiences of the elderly. Because, if they find a channel

where they can convey their experiences and make what they learn immortal, they can keep their psychological health stronger. Apart from that, Neill and Kahn (1999) mentioned that engaging in volunteer activities increases the life satisfaction of older women. On the other hand, it has been shown by Farkas and Himes (1997) that the participation of elderly caregivers in volunteer work limits their time due to their care responsibilities. However, the importance of keeping oneself busy and participating in joyful activities should not be overlooked for these reasons. Another barrier, as mentioned in the section on social participation, is fear of rejection and experiencing ageism. The fact that none of the women interviewed in this study participated in volunteer activities can be explained both by the fact that they could not find anyone from their peers - hence the fear of rejection and exclusion - and care activities.

Neill and Kahn (1999) stated in their study that the social aspects of religious activities in community life also reduce loneliness, isolation, and shrinking of the social network. However, of course, this situation may vary according to the place of residence, religion, and the social environments offered by religion. In particular, the social environments that experienced religion offers to men and women make this aspect quite volatile, as in Turkey.

Last but not least, when it comes to participation in community life, public education centers should be mentioned. As Abalı (2020) said, when there are significant demographic changes such as the aging of the population, this change should not be ignored by the educational institutions, and the needs and wishes of the elderly people should be taken into consideration. Public education centers can provide this, but when these needs are taken into account, it is estimated that participation will increase greatly. As Aydın and Sayılan (2014) said, participating in these activities not only supports the theory of lifelong education but also brings active aging into our lives.

2.4.2. Interpersonal Relationships

An interpersonal relationship is another important category chosen under the title of social participation. To define interpersonal relationships, it can be said that two or more people interact and communicate. It is possible to establish interpersonal relationships with coworkers, neighbors, family members, and friends. And of course, different relationships can be established in terms of the meeting date, meeting frequency, or sharing. These relationships are of vital importance for everyone living in society. However, the reason why it is vital for elderly people is that at this age, the social network naturally narrows and may cause isolation and depression. Therefore, it appears as a concept that should be maintained at later ages.

As I mentioned above, it is thought that aging may affect social functioning. As Shadden (1984) said, communication skills and behaviors in the elderly are threatened by many life changes. There may be changes such as loss of role, loss of a spouse, loss of family and friends, economic losses, or health problems. This is exactly why as you get older, the importance of maintaining interpersonal relationships increases, in order to protect physical and mental health.

If the woman has worked, retirement is one of the most prominent of these changes. As Moraes and Souza (2005) say, friendships in middle age are usually built around work. Even if the woman has not worked, friendships may be made in the neighborhood. With retirement, the number of these friends decreases because they cannot see each other every day, the density of conversations decreases and the shared ones also decrease. Therefore, with the effect of retirement, there are great changes in interpersonal relationships. (Shadden, 1984)

As Graney (1975) mentioned, it is very important to have face-to-face contact with neighbors, family members or friends who live nearby -within walking distance- in interpersonal relationships. The happiness levels of the elderly are

positively related to this communication and relationship. According to this research conducted in the 1970s, Graney (1975) frequently emphasized the importance and necessity of its continuity, while talking about the fact that historical changes have greatly reduced this face-to-face interaction and interpersonal relationships. Historical changes such as the recent pandemic and the increase in technology use have greatly affected interpersonal relationships, just as Graney mentioned. Apart from that, as mentioned before, middle-class neighborhoods in urban spaces have difficulties in maintaining this face-to-face interaction. However, although it is not common, it does exist and it is important to maintain it. Otherwise, it can cause social isolation as a result.

The role of the family is very important in the concept of interpersonal relationships to emotional support systems for the elderly. (Kumar, 2016) Keeping in touch with the nuclear family, or other relatives is just as important as neighbors and friends. In this way, it can be ensured that the concept we call 'successful aging' is ably maintained. (Moraes & Souza, 2005)

Finally, as Moraes and Souza (2005) say, being socially active by maintaining interpersonal relationships adds great meaning to the elderly's life. Looking at this point from a feminist standpoint, it can be said that women face more psychological problems despite their longer life expectancy. One of the solutions points to these problems is the continuity of relations with family and friends. Likewise, when the issue is viewed from the context of widowhood, it is observed that the need grows even more.

2.4.3. Leisure Activities

Leisure activities are the last subcategory of the concept of social participation for this study, but not the least. Leisure activities were defined by Kleiber (2016) as a context of discretionary time with the opportunity for preferred activity. The study by Adams, Leibbrandt, and Moon (2011) on leisure activities shows us that high participation in leisure activities contributes positively to the well-being of

people. Here, leisure is defined by hobbies such as reading. Again, the same study shows us that leisure activities can offer multiple purposes, but the important thing is definitely the enjoyment of the actor. These activities are performed entirely by choice.

Leisure activities can be defined by activities such as using computers, doing puzzles, doing sports, visiting museums, and visiting exhibitions. Toepoel's (2012) studies on aging and leisure show that optional but enjoyable leisure such as watching TV, sports, using technology, cultural activities, and shopping is a very important tool in terms of increasing or continuing the integration of the elderly into society and should be maintained.

According to this study, one of the most important components of leisure activities is technology. Considering both the life of today's elderly people, which are much more intertwined with technology, the increasing use of technology in the care of grandchildren, and the functions that technology brings to life -especially during the pandemic period-, it is inevitable to stay on top of technology. One of the important studies on this subject is undoubtedly Nimrod and Ivan's (2019) research on the dual role of technology in leisure. According to this study, technology is of course developing day by day and the interest in technology is increasing, also. However, technology can contribute to leisure (by causing the development of new leisure activities), it can be leisure itself, and it can also limit leisure activities, just as grandmothers mentioned in the interviews. According to Nimrod and Ivan (2019), leisure contributes to physical, psychological, and social well-being. When we consider the contribution of technology, it is seen that the elderly may be inspired, gain knowledge, and follow cultural activities, and these are all meaningful activities. However, on the other hand, technology can also be used as a time-fillers, a reason that can hinder leisure activities and even social participation itself.

Finally, in connection with the thesis, it may be useful to look at the work that Ates, Bordone, and Arpino (2021) establish a relationship between grandparental

care and leisure activities from a feminist point of view. As the statistics clearly show, women are much more involved in this caring activity than men. Here, the relationship between grandchild care and well-being is discussed through participation in leisure activities. According to the study, these multiple social roles owned by grandmothers can be time-consuming. In addition, even if it is done by volunteering, this care work can be tiring and there may be willingness, energy, and time constraint for this from time to time. Therefore, providing grandchild care can be a negative effect on participation in leisure. (Ates, Bordone & Arpino, 2021)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the social participation of grandmothers over the age of 60 who are already looking after grandchildren was investigated. This study, which was carried out with a qualitative methodology, has adopted a broad perspective and conducted multifaceted research, touching on the specific problems of women, insufficiency of child care policies in Turkey, emotional labor, and lifelong care practices in women's lives, and aging. It has been deemed appropriate to work with a feminist approach in terms of addressing all these issues, more specifically, women's daily life practices, experiences, and problems. As Reinharz and Davidman (1992) state, this view can be seen as getting 'inside information' while learning about women's experiences. Here, the most important necessity of getting inside information is mutual understanding and empathy, interaction, and eliminating hierarchy in the interaction between researcher and participant. From a socio-cultural point of view, since the taboos of giving care, motherhood, and helping the family is not easily questioned in Turkey, the study aims to unfold information and experiences that have not yet been discovered. Of course, the beauties that grandchild care added to the lives of grandmothers were not ignored. Therefore, the methods were created in this direction and the in-depth interview method was deemed appropriate in order to observe the manifest and latent information at the same time and to create a joint interaction process. The methods will be explained in detail in the *Design and Method* section.

The research aimed to find out how grandmothers maintain their social participation while they provide care for their grandchildren. When the aging process is taken as an important variable, it was assumed that grandmothers who have experienced repetitive caregiving work more than once in their lives would

see their social participation affected at different stages of their lives. One of the main objectives was, therefore, to examine the extent and nature of the effect of caregiving on social participation during the ageing process. The main themes in the analysis of the interviews were identified as community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure. In this study, it was important to pay attention to the discourses. Because, while conducting the study, the latent thoughts and experiences in the subtext of the answers frequently emerged and created a pattern while analyzing the findings. This will be mentioned in the *Analysis* chapter. Finally, apart from the interviews, municipal and public education activities for elderly women in three big cities -Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir-, the social participation conditions provided by municipalities, and the content of social policies were examined in detail. The reason for examining the attitudes and facilities of municipalities is to see whether an accessible social participation environment is provided to these women living in big cities. It is also worth examining the existence, context, and inclusiveness of social policies that support the elderly and/or child care. Because these policies are exactly one of the most important factors that shape the lives of the participants.

3.1. Design and Method

As Neuman (2014) says, while doing feminist social research, the researcher is not disconnected or independent. On the contrary, the researcher connects with the participant and does this by combining personal life with professional life. Therefore, this can be accompanied by mutual sharing of feelings and experiences. This is the reason why this study can be called 'feminist social research'. As a middle-class child, who lived in Üçyol, a civil servant-majority district of Izmir, with both working parents, my grandmother provided care for her grandchildren, both for myself and other members of my family. Also, most of my friends experienced this situation in my environment. Of course, there are both individual and societal reasons and consequences, although the value of micro-scale bonds being established and their experience of Erikson's (1959) desire to 'make future generations' sustained during the ‘stagnation versus

generativity stage' are invaluable. It is essential at this stage that the person usually through parenting – grandparenting in our case – creates things that will benefit others and continue for many years to come. Raising the next generation is one of the key ways to avoid the 'stagnation' period. Otherwise, it can result in feeling isolated, discontinuing self-development, and a sense of inadequacy. On an individual basis, there are consequences of situations such as being in the aging process -which is often said to have positive returns-, generational conflicts for both grandparent and grandchild, the stress of being away from the primary family for a grandchild, and the incompatibility of mutual expectations, while on a social basis, there are causes like lack of social policies and workplace policies in terms of child care. The result of the lack of policies may also lead to macro consequences such as the elderly population with reduced social participation at some points. Of course, the fact that these observations and experiences that the researcher relied on at the beginning of the work came from a private and personal place did not mean that they were viewed from a biased perspective during the interviews, because the preferred method aims to explore the experiences of women rather than reaching a specific goal. In this research, to mention one more interesting aspect of the researcher position, I can be defined as an insider, as I was involved in the experiences of caregiving, not as a caregiver but as a grandchild. Being able to be a part of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, even from the opposite side of their lives, has provided a great advantage in applying the methods and opening the doors. One of the benefits of the similar life story in this study is the non-hierarchical researcher and participant infrastructure required by the feminist methodology.

As mentioned above, in this study, which started to be designed with a feminist methodology, seeing the unequal aspects of social reality comes to the fore. In this study, as mentioned in detail in the previous chapter, inequality, impossibility, and family responsibilities and obligations arise from the lack of attention given to women, the elderly, and child care in terms of socio-political and workplace policies in Turkey. To be honest, although the male, who is not very active in terms of care practices during paternity periods, provides more

intensive care support when he becomes a grandfather, domestic labor - laundry, dishes, meals - and vital care of the child - again, such as hygiene and feeding - is provided by the grandmother. Probably, this is not the kind of vital care that a woman gives for the first time in her life. She gave the same effort to her own children and family members older than her. Beneath the grandchildren's care, of course, there is a great joy, love, and, as mentioned before, the idea of 'generativity'. However, what needs to be understood here is to consider the repetitive care work of grandmothers. Therefore, if we can see that there is an invisible part of the iceberg in the socially acceptable perception of *'grandchild is different!'*, it is possible to identify grandmothers taking care of grandchild as a subject of feminist social research. As Smith (1987) said, the importance of revealing and making visible the knowledge of the 'secondary' can be seen sufficiently from the sentence of the participant: *"Oh, it was nice to talk to you! Call me from time to time and make me talk about these, okay?"* (P18)[1]

The aim of the research is not to explain cause and effect relationship, but to understand and define the meaning of social life, daily experiences and relationships in depth, and it is necessary to prefer the qualitative method based on in-depth interviews that will best serve this purpose. (Kümbetoğlu, 2005) Therefore, the use of in-depth interview technique is appropriate because with this technique, as mentioned before, the interaction process can be created and the questionability of time, space and relationships can be increased. As a matter of fact, as much as I pay attention to Turkey's social background, I think that I have reached the individual wealth of experiences of each grandmother and started a transformative work among the studies about grandchildren care.

In this research, with the aim to grasp the experiences of grandmothers caring for grandchildren, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted. Therefore, the ready-made questions kept the interview within a certain framework and provided flexibility to the researcher and the participant at the same time. The

[1] *"Ah ne iyi geldi seninle konuşmak! Arada sırada ara da anlattır bana bunları e mi?" (K18)*

interviews lasted approximately one hour, and the questionnaire consisted of the following parts: (i) demographic information; (ii) daily life practices in private and public areas; (iii) experiences with childcare practices, including perceptions and capabilities of the child and grandchild care in comparison; (iv) social participation, including community life, interpersonal relations and leisure practices; and (v) the effect of the pandemic on participation in social life. In fact, the pandemic was of course not taken into account when starting the study, but considering the strict rules applied to individuals over the age of 65 in Turkey, categorized as a 'risk group', its impact on social participation could not be ignored. In these interview questions, the fact that many contradictions and dualities such as indoor and outdoor, everyday life in public space, and private space are given and asked together has been beneficial both in terms of social participation and in terms of understanding social reality.

To go into detail, information about age, occupation, and income status was obtained in the ‘demographic’ section. After that, they were asked how they spent their time in their daily life practices, their occupations, and the time they were at home and outside. In the care practices section, what needs of their grandchildren are met, how much and how they spend time, their routines, the difficulties that come with age and good sides of caring grandchildren, the support they receive or not while providing care, and its effects on their social life are explored. In the ‘perceptions about their children/grandchildren’ section, considering that their children's lives are at the forefront, it was asked how they took care of them, whether they received support, why and how they decided to look after grandchildren, whether alternatives other than family care were considered, and how they perceived motherhood and grandmotherhood. Next comes the ‘social participation’ section. This section is analyzed in three parts as mentioned above. The first is *community life*, which focuses on day groups and excursion groups, as well as the courses attended collectively, the activities of municipalities and public education centers, and the activities they want to participate in. The second is *interpersonal relationship*, which aims to determine the relationship with neighbors, family members and friends, with a view to

exploring how often these relationships are performed and whether grandchild care is included in this participation or whether it affects it. The third item is *leisure activities*, focusing on how grandmothers who are looking after grandchildren in the aging process spend their free time. Therefore, the effects of technology use, walking, exercise, previous leisure activities, and the effects of grandchild care were asked in this part.

At the beginning of this thesis, the COVID-19 process had not yet started. However, it has become undeniable how this social trauma was experienced as it continues, and Turkey's restricted socio-political infrastructure regarding care and aging has also had significant implications in this process. Therefore, questions were asked under two headings: the effects of the pandemic on their social lives and relationships, and the care of their grandchildren by thinking about the restrictions on staying at home for children and the elderly, the parents invited to their workplaces, the closed nurseries and the grandmothers who are in the risk group but still have to look after their grandchildren.

3.2. Ethical Considerations

Permission was obtained from the Middle East Technical University Human Research Ethics Committee in order to start the thesis study and collect data. The period for data collection was determined as August 1, 2021 - October 1, 2021. Considering that the participants are in the risk group during the COVID-19 process, according to the preference of the interviewee, it was deemed appropriate to conduct the interviews face-to-face in a place where they felt comfortable or on the online platform they requested.

The aim of the study and the research question was explained in an understandable and clear language to all the respondents. The data collection process is briefly explained, including the methods. Interviewed participants have been given a consent form and all participants voluntarily participated in the study. Also, their consent for voice-recording has been taken. It is clearly

stated on the form that their names, personal information, and voices would not be used in any way. As mentioned above, the recording has been taken only with the consent of the person. Voice-recorded interviews were transcribed, with the names hidden. In the interviews where the recording was not preferred, it was continued by taking notes.

The purpose of the study was fully shared with the participants, and it did not contain stress-increasing elements that threatened the mental health of the participants. In the same ethics committee form, the characteristics of the participants, how they will be invited, and the contribution of the study to the field are clearly stated, as will be explained in the next section.

3.3. Research Procedures / Access to Respondents and Conduct of Interviews

As mentioned above, it was deemed appropriate to conduct in-depth interviews on the feminist approach and specifically on this subject. It is thought that, with this standpoint and method, a woman's knowledge can be reached with much finer lines from the concept of a dedifferentiated woman. (Kümbetoglu, 2005)

To talk about the beginning of the procedure, the process of reaching the participants will be explained. The respondents of this study were selected with the following criteria:

- being over 60 years old,
- currently taking care of their grandchildren for at least 2 years,
- having a grandchild at pre-school age,
- living in the same city with their grandchild, and therefore providing daycare,
- not working.

The grandmothers living in Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara were asked to be interviewed. A detailed explanation of these characteristics will be in the *Key Characteristics of Respondents* section.

Given the socio-political background of the country, families are left with almost no choice but to demand care from grandmothers. Therefore, there was no difficulty in accessing respondents. In Izmir, they were reached through the neighborhood, parks, and participants suggested by the people around the researcher; in Ankara, through the 'Ayrancı Ahalisi' group, which is actively used especially by elderly people on Facebook; in Istanbul, the participants were reached through the acquaintances of the participants in these two cities. At the end of each interview, it was asked whether they know anyone who had these characteristics. Therefore, snowball sampling was applied in this research. The gatekeeper experience here also provided an advantage in terms of trust among other participants.

A total of 19 interviews were conducted. Seven of these participants are from Izmir, six of them are from Istanbul and the other six are from Ankara. All participants living in Izmir were interviewed face-to-face at their houses with masks and social distancing, and those in other cities were interviewed through the preferred online platforms because participants did not want the researcher to provide transportation by bus or plane, because they are in the risk group and have to take double precautions for their grandchildren and their families. While the consent form was signed by hand in the face-to-face interviews, an online consent form was signed before the online interviews, which they could easily mark from the survey software called 'Qualtrics'. All face-to-face and online interviews took approximately one hour. As a result, within two months, the data were collected, names were coded and interviews were transcribed so that they were ready for the analysis phase.

3.4. Key Characteristics of Respondents

The study was carried out with 19 participants. In order to understand the social participation of the grandmothers' providing grandchild care whose aging process has begun, a minimum age limit was set as 60. The average age of the women interviewed was 62,79. The second characteristic is that they have been caring for their grandchildren for at least two years, because pandemic-related questions may require comparison with pre-pandemic grandchild care. At the same time, the grandchildren should be in the pre-school period so that the daycare experiences of the grandmothers during the part of the day when they participate in the community can be understood. The women in the study must have lived in the same city with their grandchildren for the same reason. At the same time, living in different cities may cause temporary care or a complete differentiation of the social life they are used to. In order for the experiences to be understood and described in detail, they had to provide care for grandchildren for at least three days a week. In the families in which the other grandmother in the family did not provide support, all of them gave care for five days except for external situations, only one person received the support of the other grandmother.

It is a prerequisite that the interviewed grandmothers are not working and the mothers are working because the main issue here is that working mothers who cannot provide daycare to their children have no alternative but grandparental care. Finally, a certain degree of technological literacy has been determined as a prerequisite, as grandmothers who are the risk group in pandemic were interviewed via online platforms.

3.5. Data Analysis

In this section, I will briefly summarize what was done in the analysis section, which is the main theme of the next chapter. After the interviews were transcribed, themes were created in line by looking out the theoretical framework

before. Since the interviews were conducted within the framework of these themes, it was not difficult to examine them under the concepts in the analysis. Then the answers under these concepts, especially similar or common ones, were gathered together. The analyzes were gathered under certain headings in the light of the Feminist Standpoint Theory. The common patterns and sentences that emerged here were highlighted, and the common sentences were revealed by considering the weighted values. Of course, since the essence of qualitative work is not forgotten here, the differing values have not been ignored.

Descriptive analysis process As Yıldırım and Şimşek (2000) said, entails that the data collected under these themes are first described, then interpreted, and some conclusions are reached with cause-effect relationships. Of course, the importance of the feminist standpoint theory to unique experiences has not been overlooked. Then, it was based on making the themes talk to each other and to the literature.

As in this type of analysis, quotations were used to show the strikingness of reality. As mentioned before, the analysis was created according to the language, discourses, and dialogue used while analyzing. The themes and analyzes will be explained in detail in the next chapter.

3.6. Limitations of Study

As with any research, this study also has limitations. In this section, four main limitations will be discussed. First of all, it should be said that it coincided with a period that was not very fruitful for data collection. Although I am working with an issue that is not difficult to share, does not cause stress for the participant, and even grandmothers can enjoy sharing, as I said before, I work with a sample that is in the risk group during the COVID-19 period, even though I work with a sample that I can often encounter due to the socio-political infrastructure of Turkey in the field of childcare. This causes both the anxiety of the participant and the travel barrier of the researcher. Even if the participants have

technological literacy, they do not feel comfortable on most online platforms compared to many young people, and the comfort of being in the same place that provides being able to make instant interventions during the course of the interview was eliminated. In particular, while the non-hierarchical communication structure in feminist research is so important, the 'distance' factor has been a concern in providing this. Of course, I can say that the increase in online interactions that the pandemic has brought into the lives of the elderly has made my job easier. Therefore, the interviews made over the online platforms also took about one hour.

Another limitation, even if it looks like an advantage, is the versatility of the thesis. The study touches on many issues and this made it difficult to stay focused on the data collection and literature review while researching. In detail, the topic touches on family interactions, care practices, socio-political background, women's domestic labor and social participation concepts, and aging. However, it seemed to me that separating these subjects would leave some puzzle pieces missing.

Another feature that can be called a limitation is the sanctity of the family in Turkey and the taboos that develop accordingly. According to my conclusions from the discourses, whenever they say that care creates an obstacle to any social participation or fatigue, the situation is tried to be compensated by them and good feelings begin to be told before that experience can be deepened. Of course, this situation can be seen as an aspect that will enrich the research rather than a limitation when the discourses are analyzed.

Finally, the similarity of the experiences I had and my curiosity towards the caregiver, my individual sense of wonder because being taken care of the grandmother, may have caused some emotional rise and falls. This has rarely made it difficult for me to stick to the framework I have drawn. Fortunately, the fact that the feminist method does not put the relationship between the researcher

and the participant in a strict position as in the positivist approach has compensated and sometimes enriched the situation.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

The main objective of this study is to explore the impact of grandchild care on the social participation of elderly women. In this study, social participation is discussed under three headings. The first is community life. Here, the activities of the participants in the group were examined. Examples are gold day -women who know each other gather every month to collect gold coins for the person chosen that month-, family gatherings, municipal public education courses, volunteer activities, excursions, or religious activities. Secondly, interpersonal relationships are discussed. In these relations, meetings with family, relatives, and friends, what was done in these meetings, and the frequency of these interviews were discussed. Finally, leisure activities are examined. Here, physical activities, walking, sports, use of technology, and many other leisure activities are discussed.

The analysis was conducted by considering the daily lives of these elderly women, their perceptions about child and grandchild care, their care practices, their social participation in the three main areas mentioned above, and finally the pandemic, which had a substantial impact on all of these.

While examining the effect of care practices on social participation, it is impossible not to mention the socio-political background. With the understanding of social municipality in Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara - in other words, in the three big cities of Turkey, studies on active and on-site aging have increased considerably in recent years. This can be easily deduced from the participants' description of the opportunities offered by the municipality, and

from the literature in this field. As Durdubaş (2019) said, this elderly-friendly physical environment, social services, taking action regarding social participation and taking measures to protect autonomy. Therefore, in these interviews, it was important to consider the extent the grandmothers who care for their grandchildren were able to add these opportunities to their lives. Of course, the most important social policy area on the subject is that of childcare. As I mentioned in the literature review chapter, temporal project-based short-term studies and scarcity of policies in this field in Turkey is at a point where these women intersect with their social participation.

The analysis of this thesis has been made in the light of Feminist Standpoint Theory, considering all this socio-political background. This feminist method sees women as the object of sociological practice and social policies of male domination. (Aptheker, 1992) Therefore, as Smith mentioned, male-dominated discourse was extracted from the text while conducting the analysis, women's experiences were used as data, and the interpretivist method was conducted. (Tansel İliç & Yıldırım, 2018)

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Maternal Side/ Paternal Side	**Age**	**City**	**Marital Status**	**Education**	**Occupation**
P1	Maternal Side	63	Ankara	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher
P2	Maternal Side	65	Ankara	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher
P3	Maternal Side	63	Ankara	Single	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher
P4	Maternal Side	60	Ankara	Married	High School	Housewife
P5	Maternal Side	60	Ankara	Married	Primary School	Cleaning Woman
P6	Maternal Side	60	Ankara	Married	High School	Housewife

Table 1. (continued)

P7	Maternal Side	61	İzmir	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Civil Servant
P8	Maternal Side	60	İzmir	Married	High School	Housewife
P9	Maternal Side	65	İzmir	Married	High School	Bank Employee
P10	Maternal Side	62	İzmir	Single	Middle School	Housewife
P11	Paternal Side	62	İzmir	Married	Middle School	Housewife
P12	Paternal Side	60	İzmir	Married	High School	Housewife
P13	Maternal Side	60	İzmir	Single	High School	Housewife
P14	Paternal Side	70	İstanbul	Single	Primary School	Canteen Keeper
P15	Maternal Side	61	İstanbul	Married	Primary School	Stationer
P16	Maternal Side	66	İstanbul	Married	High School	Bank Employee
P17	Paternal Side	69	İstanbul	Single	High School	Housewife
P18	Paternal Side	65	İstanbul	Married	High School	Self Employed
P19	Maternal Side	61	İstanbul	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher

To explain the table, first of all, it is seen that 14 of the 19 participants are from the maternal side (*anneanne*) and five of them are from the paternal side (*babaanne*). Of course, it can be seen as a significant outcome that a great majority were on the maternal side. We can exemplify the preference of the woman's side in terms of asking for help and including it in the care decision, with the study of Çiftçi (1986). In the study conducted with women working in banks, 54.6% of the children were taken care of by their grandmothers from the maternal side, while only 15.4% of them were taken care of by their grandmothers from paternal side, similar to our study. When asked from whom they received help, 80.8% of the women's families intervened. Çiftçi (1986) argues that in this case, the conditions that emerged with the mother-daughter

relationship established during the socialization process of the girl child are influential.

Considering the social participation of women while looking after grandchildren within their aging experiences has resulted in working with women over the age of 60. As mentioned above, the average age of the participants is 62.79. Under normal circumstances, although the World Health Organization's categorization of the elderly was increased to 65, most of the participants described themselves as 'elderly' due to retirement, loss of relatives, loss of roles, and physical and social withdrawal. While the fact that longevity has increased all over the world at the same rate in Turkey, it has encountered resistance while the social meanings attributed to aging have changed.

Interviews were held with the participants in Izmir, Ankara, and Istanbul, which are described as the three largest cities in Turkey. The reason why the interviews were held in metropolitan cities of Turkey, not in rural areas, was to both collect data from different places and show that life in the metropolis both provided opportunities for them and imposed restrictions. These middle/middle-upper class participants frequently mentioned restrictions such as transportation difficulties and crowding, while they mentioned the socialization areas in each neighborhood, public education centers, and the services provided by metropolitan municipalities to the elderly. Therefore, although it is not very meaningful to make a cross-city analysis since common patterns are seen to a large extent -except for the decrease in social participation due to Istanbul's transportation and crowding problems-, it is an important contribution that the study was conducted in metropolitan cities.

A great majority of the participants are married. The reason of the importance of this demographic characteristic is that the concept of 'support' in the care process of grandchildren. Although most of the participants do not share the primary care responsibility such as feeding and hygiene with their spouses, the existence of the grandfathers is very comforting in meeting their needs such as playing and

walking around with grandchildren. Apart from this, in many interviews, having another caregiver at home when women need to cook, clean, shop for the house and most importantly socialize on the days of care has emerged as a very important factor.

Regarding the educational background, it can be said that the participants vary. Three participants graduated from primary school, two participants from middle school, nine participants from high school, and five participants have bachelor's degrees. The point that should be mentioned here is that the educational background of the participants does not make any difference in their attitudes and behaviors towards themselves and their families.

Last but not least, occupation emerges as an important demographic feature. Eight of the participants, a large proportion of them, stated their occupation as housewives. Among the participants, there are four teachers, two bank employees, a cleaning woman, a civil servant, a canteen keeper, a stationer, and a self-employed. Since the proportion of participants who have worked and retired, and those who have never worked, are quite close to each other, the differentiation between them is also striking. The occupations of the participants were indicated because it is clear that the women who worked were more sociable and advantageous both in terms of the plurality of the friend group and in terms of participation in social activities around them. Although both groups showed the same pattern after grandchild care, the change in their lives is worth analyzing.

4.2. Everyday Life of an Aging Women in Turkey

Everyday life is the daily life practices that are built as a result of the mutual interaction of the individual with the dynamics of the social structure we live in and that repeat by stereotypes. These practices are simple, plain, and haphazard. However, by examining this seemingly simple phenomenon, we can learn a lot about ourselves and the social life we live in. (Giddens, 2012: 168) This is why it

is important to approach everyday life with a feminist approach. Because, as examined in this thesis, the way to understand the social participation of aging grandmothers providing daycare for their grandchildren is also through their daily lives. And as Lefebvre (2002) said, the most extraordinary thing is the most every day. Therefore, the effect of this socially normalized and patterned phenomenon on women's daily lives is worth examining sociologically, because, as can be understood from the interviews, these daily lives are shaped by the care of grandchildren.

There are many concepts in common in this topic. Those who are not common show individual meanings about why they are not common. In this study, the differing values were not ignored, and the differences in expression in the common values were also examined. Because, when considered from a feminist point of view, the story of each woman is more valuable than generalizations.

The concepts to be discussed are as follows; waking hours, household chores, care for other family members in addition to grandchild care, and weekend holidays. As is known, interviews were conducted with grandmothers living in Ankara, Izmir, and Istanbul. However, when it comes to everyday life, there are no significant differences between cities. The only major difference appears to be that going out is much less common in the everyday lives of women in Istanbul. This is highly related to the difficulty of using public transport, the crowding, and thus the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, when grandmothers who care for grandchildren are asked what they do in their everyday life, the first mention their grandchild care practices, naturally. Because the majority of the days of these grandmothers who provide daycare, especially between working hours, are spent with their grandchildren. However, the remarkable detail here is that 10 of the 19 participants started the sentence by ‘waking up at 07:00 am’. Considering that the daughters or daughters-in-law leave their children to their grandmothers because they are working, grandmothers experience the same pattern as working mothers by waking up at

07:00 am and giving care within the working hours. In this situation, which goes parallel with the working hours, the participants said, "*I get up early in the morning*." (P6)[2]; "*I wake up at 7 am for my grandson.*", (P1)[3]; "*I get up at 7 am*." (P17)[4]; "*My grandson wakes up at 8:30, I wake up at 07:00 to prepare.*" (P14)[5]. All these quotes, as mentioned above, go in parallel with the working hours of the mothers. Thus, as Thabethe and Usen (2012) say, "…older women continue to provide unpaid care work as informal volunteers." But one of the most striking quotes here was, "*Like work, I have to get up early in the morning, I have to plan every moment. Otherwise, I cannot meet the deadline*." (P7)[6] As it can be understood from this quote, while the care of grandchildren by grandmothers supports the employment of mothers, it also causes grandmothers to have a planned, regular and disciplined job with fixed hours but not paid. We can exemplify this situation by the same participant's definition of caring for grandchildren as a 'job', not taking his grandchildren to other activities. She defines the reason for not taking her grandchild to these activities as "allocating time for myself" and does not want to share this time.

The participants mostly used the concept of 'my own time', separating the care of grandchildren from other activities they do in their daily lives. However, it would not be right to ignore other answers given in a feminist study. Therefore, "*Now let me say this. Maybe I'm the wrong person, I don't like to do much outside. I just love traveling with my grandchildren. That is clear and precise*."

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[2] *"Sabahları erken kalkıyorum." (*K6)

[3] *"Torunum için sabah 07:00'da kalkıyorum."* (K1)

[4] *"Sabah 07:00'da kalkıyorum."* (K17)

[5] *"Torunum 08:30'da uyanıyor, ben 07:00'da kalkıp hazırlık yapıyorum."* (K14)

[6] *"İş gibi. Her sabah erken kalkmak zorundasın bir kere. Her anımı planlamak zorundayım, yoksa yetiştiremem."* (K7)

(P13)[7] While we see that there is one participant who states that she does much more than necessary, there is another participant who does not separate her daily life with the care of his grandchildren and takes her grandchild wherever she goes: *"...even when I take care of my neighbor's children and my own children at the same time, I was going out. The three of them were together. I was going out again. I don't sit at home.*" (P15)[8] Of course, when it comes to going out, it is an exception to the study that this answer comes from Istanbul, because the crowd, the fear of COVID-19 that comes with it, and the inconvenience of public transportation for elderly people, come together in Istanbul. It has been observed that from the participants in Izmir, answers such as "*If I am not looking after my grandchild…*" (P9)[9] *"We were going out every day before my grandchild, now I go out sometimes."* (P7)[10]; "*I go out one or two days a week.*" (P11)[11] were received. There are participants who do not go out due to rheumatic, immune-lowering diseases and pain. These diseases, which can be seen frequently in this period, restrict the elbow room of the participants.

> Of course, I had quite a circle of friends. I held back a little after my disease appeared. Because I wasn't supposed to go into the crowd, let's just say I got a little carried away. Then there's grandchildren and all that, I'm completely cut off. You know, these diseases in these days… (P12)[12]

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[7] *"Şimdi şöyle diyeyim. Ben belki yanlış bir kişi olabilirim, ben dışarıda fazla şey yapmayı sevmem. Sadece torunlarımla gezmeyi çok seviyorum. Açık ve net yani."* (K13)

[8] *"…ben komşumun çocuklarına ve kendi çocuklarıma aynı anda bakarken de çıkıyordum. Üçü bir aradaydı. Yine çıkıyordum. Ben oturmam ki evde."* (K15)

[9] *"Eğer torunuma bakmıyorsam.."* (K9)

[10] *"Torunumdan önce her gün dışarı çıkardık. Şimdi arada sırada çıkıyorum*." (K7)

[11] *"Haftada bir veya iki kere dışarı çıkarım." (*K11)

[12] *"Tabii vardı. Ne zamanki benim bu rahatsızlıklarım ortaya çıktı… Tabii, arkadaş çevrem baya vardı. Ne zaman ki rahatsızlığım ortaya çıktıktan sonra ben biraz geri durdum. Çünkü kalabalığa girmemem gerekiyordu, biraz uzaklaştım diyeyim. Sonra işte torunlar filan, tamamen koptum. Biliyorsunuz artık günümüzde bu hastalıklar, şeyler."* (K12)

Here, one of the crucial answers came from one participant. This quote is an important proof that grandmothers who provide 'labour' see the weekend as a 'holiday'. "*I was saying that I can't have any social activities for five working days, but if you make your schedules according to Saturday and Sunday, I was saying that I can join you*." (P10)[13]

Likewise, a participant said, "*We try to rest a little on the weekend in our way. We try to go where we want. Sometimes his parents also leave on the weekend. We suffer a little from that too, but… They have a job so we can help.*" (P6)[14] It can be seen as a parallel response. Apart from that, the answers about going out were seen in the axis of taking the grandchild for a walk and grocery shopping.

One of the most crucial details when recounting everyday life is that women take care not only of their grandchildren, but also of their elderly parents or elderly family members. In the literature, this is referred to as 'sandwich generation.' Adults who are part of the sandwich generation —that is, those who have a living parent age 65 or older and are either raising a child under age 18 or supporting a grown child. (Parker & Patten, 2013) However, this concept has been used for middle-age individuals and does not fully meet the situation seen here. Here, women, while taking care of their children's children, also have to care for their elders, and they fall into the category of the elderly also. The situation here is due to the lack of social policies in terms of both child care and elderly care, and the rise of longevity. When the participants were asked about their daily lives, one of the most common answers was elderly care. Seven of the participants stated that they also care for elderly family members. This is an important data because it shows that the concept of 'care giving for the second time', which is often mentioned in this thesis, is not limited with two for these

[13] *"Diyordum ki benim 5 iş günü hiçbir sosyal aktivitem olamaz ama programlarınızı Cumartesi Pazar'a göre yaparsanız size iştirak edebilirim diyordum."* (K10)

[14] *"E hafta sonu da işte kendimize göre biraz dinlenmeye çalışıyoruz. İstediğimiz yerlere gitmeye çalışıyoruz. Bazen anne babası hafta sonu da bırakıyor. Bundan biraz muzdaribiz ama… Çalışıyorlar yardımcı olalım diye."* (K6)

women. One of the most striking examples here: "*I go to my mother and father every day. They're too old now. My mother was bedridden. My father is also very grumpy and old. They can't do anything on their own, it's too much*." (P9)[15]. Apart from this, the answer from one of the participants is also thought-provoking: "*I say the same to my husband. My mother-in-law lives in Polatlı, my mother lives in Keçiören. I say our social life is among Keçiören and Polatlı*." (P4)[16] It is seen that a participant who talks about her daily life also states that she stops by her old uncle several times a week, and also one participant pays daily visits to her elderly relative, whom she has placed on the upper floor. While these 'multiple' care practices maintain intergenerational care relationships, just as expected in collectivist countries, they appear as another unpaid care work that falls under the responsibility of women.

Last but not least, when it comes to daily life, household chores are mentioned the most. It is possible to see this keyword in every city and every participant. Each participant talks about cooking, cleaning, dishwashing, laundry, ironing, and grocery shopping while talking about her daily life. As mentioned earlier in the literature, 60+ women were found to be involved in household duties four hours more than men (Samuels, Samman, Hunt, Rost & Plank, 2018). It is possible to exemplify this from the interviews. In particular, the word 'helper' has been used a lot. Household chores were not shared, and women whose spouses were alive said they received "help" from their husbands. In other words, in the majority of the interviews with grandmothers living with their spouses, it was mentioned that the spouses offered a helping hand rather than a fully equal share of responsibility. However, this support provides a significant area of freedom for the grandmothers, compared to the participants who took responsibility alone. In particular, it is often mentioned that someone takes care of the child while doing housework. In addition, having a husband at home means the

[15] *"Annemle babama giderim her gün. Çok yaşlılar artık. Annem yatalak oldu. Babam da çok huysuz ve yaşlı. Tek başlarına bir şey yapamıyorlar, çok fazla geliyor artık."* (K9)

[16] *"Eşime de öyle diyorum. Kayınvalidem Polatlı'da oturuyor, annemler Keçiören'de oturuyor. Sosyal hayatımız Keçiören-Polatlı diyorum."* (K4)

presence of someone with whom they can leave their grandchildren 'for a short time' on the days when they will participate in social life, even if it is not preferred very often.

As a result, when we look at the everyday lives of women over the age of 60 who provide daycare to their grandchildren, the concepts that naturally occupy a significant place in their lives were frequently mentioned. These include taking care of grandchildren, taking care of household chores, and other family members, and going out depending on certain variables. Apart from this, 'handicraft', which is an accessible activity that many participants can do when they are looking after grandchildren or when they are free, a few participants also participate in cultural activities such as theater and cinema, and as a daily life activity that can be done in their spare time, such as watching TV series, reading books, and taking a walk can be said to be exemplary. Of course, it should not be ignored that their social life is limited due to COVID-19, and the various health problems they have.

4.3. Perceptions of Grandmothers about Grandchildren Care and Childcare: The Love for Grandchildren is Different!

The purpose of focusing on the perceptions of grandmothers about their grandchildren and their children is to find out what women think while looking at the effects of a phenomenon that occupies such a central place in their lives. This gives us an important finding because it enables us to understand the social structure of Turkey, the duties and responsibilities attributed to the family, and how collectivism can be internalized by women through discourses. While doing a feminist study, there is no harm in asking questions about the concepts of motherhood and grandmotherhood, as we should do in every role attributed to women, even if it is socially tabooed as 'sacred'.

The questions asked in interviews for this part are:

- ✓ What does it mean to be a mother/grandmother for you?
- ✓ What were the reasons for you to take on the responsibility of taking care of grandchildren?
- ✓ Were possibilities such as a caregiver/nursery considered during the decision process?

The reason why the first question was asked was to learn about the perceptions on this subject, as it was said at the beginning. The first question was asked for both motherhood and grandmotherhood. The answers to this question are aimed at understanding how much the social infrastructure has spread to women's lives and how the thoughts of the participants shape their individual experiences. The second question was a question about how the reason for taking responsibility for the care of the grandchild developed. If it was already taken for granted for both parties, it is obligatory, or it is done at the request of one of the two parties, how was the reaction of grandmothers gave as a result. Because according to the reaction, it can be seen that the pattern of social participation, everyday life, and many things in their lives has changed. Finally, depending on this question, if it was not mentioned in the answer, it was asked whether any other option other than grandmother care was considered. Again, this can yield results related to both the attitude of the family, the perspective of both parties, and what individuals experience about the socio-economic and social infrastructure.

On the subject of *Perception*, four main concepts have emerged based on the interviews. The first of these was the sentence "The love for grandchildren is different!", which is the first and most dominant answer given by 12 out of 19 grandmothers, giving its name to the title of the part. The second is a finding on how similar ‘perceptions of motherhood’ are among the participants. Third is the theme of 'responsibility'. The last theme is the ‘lack of alternatives’, which is

exactly the answer to the socio-political infrastructure. All of these will be discussed in detail.

First, the theme of grandchild love will be examined. 12 out of 19 grandmothers said, "Love for grandchildren is different!" in different ways. 'The taste is different', 'a different feeling', 'grandchildren love is different', 'grandchildren have a connection with love' expressions were used. The answers that were not given in this direction were answered by saying that the question was 'difficult' or 'cannot answer'. Only one participant gave a single answer for both motherhood and grandmotherhood: responsibility. It is not a question that is expected to show a significant change among participants. However, this data, which tells that the love for grandchildren is different from the love of children, is actually quite important. Because, first of all, based on their own statements, they realized that they could experience the joyful emotions in the care of their grandchildren that they could not enjoy in the rush of life while taking care of their own children. The response to this situation can be easily seen in the literature and interviews. Women often experience family conflicts during their work and housework. The reason for this, of course, is that the roles assigned to women are inversely proportional to the time they have in a day. As Small and Riley (1990) mentioned, limited time and too much responsibility make women exhausted physically and psychologically. Of course, this was reflected in childcare for their own children. The 'working life', which was an important stress factor in the current lives of the participants, no longer exists. Although household chores and care responsibilities continue, this factor, which is eliminated by retirement, has caused the participants who have experienced the working life to perceive the care of grandchildren as a more 'enjoyable' experience, compared to child care. Apart from this, another reason for grandchildren love is the generativity stage, which is one of Erikson's (1959) stages, as I mentioned before. Transmitting to future generations at this stage and touching them from one point contributes to the psychological well-being of these aging women.

About perception of motherhood, responses like *'a natural process*' (P1)[17], '*responsibility*' (P12)[18], *'providing basic needs*' (P17)[19] were received among the participants. While the majority of the answers are common in this way, it is possible to summarize the situation with the words of one participant:

> When I look back, being a mother was something that should have happened in the natural flow of life. So, I never thought about what kind of mother I would be. I saw my first child as something that should have happened right away. I gave birth to my second child 5 years apart, so that he could have a brother. Both happened willingly, by planning, but I didn't quite understand the purpose. (P2)[20].

It turns out that motherhood, which is declared to require so much responsibility and time by women, and yet there is no opportunity to spare enough time and physical and psychological strength, participates in the natural flow of life as if it is a necessity for women in this society, it turns out that it is not always a conscious and thoughtful decision. Besides, this is a big topic that needs to be discussed separately.

The third and one of the most prominent themes is 'responsibility'. The answer of the 12 grandmothers, who stated that the love for grandchildren is different, continues with the fact that the responsibility of the grandchild is not on them. This responsibility was not a responsibility to care, but to direct a child's life, to take steps regarding his/her education or his/her future. By saying that "this responsibility is not ours anyway, we enjoy it," they wanted to point out that the reason for not being able to enjoy raising a child is actually the responsibilities

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[17] *"...doğal bir süreç"* (K1)

[18] *"sorumuluk"* (K12)

[19] *"temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak"* (K17)

[20] *"Geriye dönüp baktığımda anne olmak hayatın doğal akışında olması gereken bir şeydi. Yani hiç ben nasıl bir anne olurum diye düşünmedim. Birinci çocuğum hemen olması gereken bir şey gibi gördüm. İkinci çocuğumu da 5 yıl arayla doğurdum, kardeşi olsun diye doğurdum. İkisi de isteyerek oldu, planlayarak ama amacını çok anlayamadım"* (K2)

mentioned above, rather than giving care. The sum and the substance of it, they have a responsibility to care, but not to direct their lives. In addition, I realized how much feminist research is fed by gestures, facial expressions, and the reactions given, that these answers about responsibility are mostly said with a chuckle or a whisper. Because enjoying without responsibility can come across as a concept that these women, who have been given responsibilities all their lives, are not accustomed to and are afraid to say.

One of the most striking results here is the lack of alternatives in the care of grandchildren. Nine participants out of 19 explained the reasons for taking responsibility for their grandchild care by saying "There was no other alternative". Because of the lack of alternative, six participants said "My daughter asked me to look after her children", one participant said "My son-in-law asked me to look after his children". Only two participants said "I asked to look after my grandchildren myself", which comes across as a small mass. The smallness of this group may indicate that the grandmothers generally had not planned to care for their grandchildren on the path they took in their aging journey. Apart from this, the lack of alternatives provides us with a large amount of data that should be evaluated, because it reveals the concepts of insufficient financial conditions for child care, lack of institutional care facilities in the socio-political infrastructure, distrust of the caregiver, and lack of control in nurseries. It would be possible to exemplify all this with a quote:

> You can't stand it. You don't know how to take care of her. It is very difficult to find reliable places. We see it on TV. Kindergarten feels safer. I raised my son in kindergarten and I could go and see him through the window whenever I wanted. Lots of parents come and go. You feel more in control because it is a state nursery, but they are alone at home with caregiver, there is no technology, you cannot follow it. It seems like the young girls are head-in-the-clouds. You get a woman, it costs money, even used electricity is an expense. Salaries are not very high; they are not met. To entrust the children to a person you do not know, I could not. It would be very expensive if it was certified by state. The state should open many kindergartens. It's hard at home. (P7)[21]

[21] *"Kıyamıyorsunuz yani, nasıl bakılacağını bilemiyorsunuz. Güvenilir yerler bulmak çok zor. Görüyoruz televizyonlarda. Kreş daha güvenli geliyor. Ben oğlumu kreşte büyüttüm gidip istediğim zaman camdan görebiliyordum. Bir sürü veli gidip geliyor. Devlet kreşi olduğu için*

As a result, learning the perceptions of women about their children and grandchildren has yielded very important data. The feeling of 'loving differently' created by knowing that caring for grandchildren does not come with great responsibilities as they do with taking care of their children. The desire to touch the next generations is undeniable, but despite all this, living in a society without alternatives about childcare should not be overlooked.

4.4. Care Practices

In this section, the care practices that grandmothers provide for their grandchildren are analyzed. This section is the last stage before learning whether grandparents' grandchild care practices have an impact on their social participation. That is, we should know how women spend their days with their grandchildren and how they maintain patterns so that we can interpret them. The questions asked to the grandmothers for this section were:

- ✓ Can you describe a day spent with your grandchild?
- ✓ What has changed in your life after you started looking after grandchildren?
- ✓ What are the good sides and difficulties of taking care of grandchildren according to you?
- ✓ Do you get support while looking after your grandchildren?
- ✓ Did you get support while looking after your child?
- ✓ Has grandchild care affected your social life?
- ✓ What were you doing before looking after your grandchildren?

To explain the purpose of asking these questions, the aim of the first question is to understand how this experience, which covers a large part of the days of women who go through the aging process, is unfolding. It is important for this

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daha kontrol altında hissediyorsun ama evde yalnız, teknoloji de yok takip edemiyorsun. Genç kız olunca havai oluyor gibi geliyor. Kadın alıyorsun masrafı oluyor, elektrik yemek artı bir yük. Maaşlar çok yüksek değil, karşılanmıyor. Tanımadığınız bir insana çocukları emanet etmek, ben yapamazdım. Sertifikalı olsa çok pahalı olur. Devletin çok kreş açması gerekir. Evde zor." (K7)

research to understand the process of taking care of the grandchildren of these women, which are thought to affect women's social participation. The changes in their lives show how women perceive their unique experience. Likewise, the good sides and difficulties were also asked for this reason. It is equally important to find out if they are getting support. Because this situation both affects how they make sense of grandchild care and whether they have the opportunity to do the things they want to spend time in their ageing process. The support they received in child care, which is a question about the past, was asked for the purpose of learning whether this pattern in their lives is a continuation of a tradition from the past or an experience they brought from their own lives. Moreover, striking answers were received here. Asking whether grandchild care affects their social life can be seen as one of the most important questions here. The answers received here will be explained in detail, but it should be underlined that it is one of the unexpected aspects of the research. Finally, it provides data for research to learn how their life is going before they have grandchildren and to compare their lives with their grandchild care processes.

Four main themes emerged in the *Care Practices* part. The first of these is 'a day with grandchildren'. The part worth mentioning here is that, regardless of education level, socio-economic status, marital status, support situation, and place of residence, all grandmothers mention the same pattern. This planned and scheduled marathon, which starts at 07.00 in the morning, continue with breakfast, snacks, dinner, and at the same time cooking for their children. In addition to feeding, it also accompanies playing, strolling, sleeping and bathing. "Cooking for children", which is not directly but indirectly related to the care of grandchildren and was not taken into account, is an important data. Because it shows us that taking care of grandchildren is not only for the benefit of the grandchild, but also that they continue to take care of their own children, who are now adults. When the children of the participants come to pick their own children up from their mother/mother-in-law, they also take the food prepared for them and go home. Let's take a look at the quotes of three people from different backgrounds to show that the situation is the same for almost all

grandmothers, regardless of any variables. First, we can look at the quote of a grandmother.

> It is a marathon. We sleep, we get up together in a day. We do activities with her, we play games. I have works at home. I'm putting her to sleep, then I can do my work. Sometimes I cook while she standing next to me in the kitchen. So, it is. We live close with my daughter. When I take her home, I take their meals with me. (P5)[22].

This participant's daughter works every day. This is how she described a day spent at home with her granddaughter. It can be also referred to the excerpt of a retired middle class civil servant participant from Izmir.

> You can't do your job while taking care of the child. You can do it more comfortably when someone is standing next to you. Here you will be juicing fruit, brewing yogurt, shopping… Breakfast in the morning, I'm already with my grandchildren all day, he doesn't play without me. He takes a bath every other day. You need to prepare fresh, special meals for babies. More organic, healthier. I do it for both. I'm fermenting yogurt. It's full of stuff like that all day. In the evening, their mother comes and I prepare dinner for them again. It's a lot of work, but that's what family is like. (P7)[23]

This quote also contains very important details. In the same way, the fact that she said that family is exactly 'something like this' after describing a day that passed, shows how they internalized all these responsibilities. Finally, as another different background, we can read the excerpt of our middle-upper class, retired self-employed participant:

> I have a garden in the summer, we have breakfast with her. Then we start the books. I read for her. We paint, or play Lego. She loves them very much. Then, the lunch comes. She left afternoon sleep early. Either my husband and I take

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[22] "*Maraton. Yatıyoz, kalkıyoz. Etkinlik yapıyoz onla, oyun oynuyoz. İşlerim oluyor evde. Onu uyutuyom, öyle yapabiliyorum işlerimi. Bazen mutfakta yanıma onu alıp öyle yemek pişiriyorum. İşte böyle. Kızımla da yakın oturuyoz. Onu eve götürürken yemeklerini de yanıma alıyom."* (K5)

[23] "*Çocuğa bakarken yapamıyorsun. Yanında birisi durunca daha rahat yapabiliyorsun. İşte meyve sıkacaksın, yoğurt mayalayacaksın, alışveriş…Sabah kahvaltı. Ben zaten bütün gün torunumlayım, bensiz oyun da oynamıyor. Her gün banyosu var. Bebek için taze ve özel yemekler hazırlamak gerekiyor. Daha organik, daha sağlıklı. İkisini de yapıyorum, yoğurt mayalıyorum. Bütün gün böyle şeyler. Akşam annesi geliyor, onlar için de yemek hazırlıyorum. Çok iş var ama aile de böyle bir şey zaten."* (K7)

> her to the park by car, or we can cross the ferry from İstinye and drink tea and come back. In the evening, her mother comes and gets her, and she takes the food that I have prepared. Of course, it's not always this sweet, one gets tired sometimes, but… (P18)[24]

As a result, regardless of where, how and under what conditions they live, they carry all the responsibilities of motherhood, grandmotherhood, or being a member of family, especially as a woman.

The second prominent theme is the 'change of lives' of the participants. The point that needs to be brought to the fore here, too, is that the good points and the answers to the challenges go exactly opposite to each other. Participants experience two emotions at once. We can exemplify this dilemma with the words of a grandmother, "*He gives me youth, it is good for me… As you get older, it becomes harder to take care of children.*" (P7)[25]. It is obvious that taking care of grandchildren creates good results mentally in women's lives. It is often encountered with answers such as 'it feels good', 'it gives joy', 'it gives vitality', 'my life has become better'. "*My life has become colorful. It was becoming a monotonous, familiar life*." (P2)[26] and "*I was attached to life, otherwise I would have waited for death*." (P19)[27] are the parallel answers given are worth analyzing. Because, the state of not being able to spend their lives productively and feeling useless in aging – also known as psychological aging – can be quite wearisome for women. Grandchild care comes to their aid at this point. However, from a feminist standpoint, feeling productive only occurs when

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[24] *"Yazın bahçem var, onunla beraber kahvaltı ediyoruz. Sonra kitaplara başlıyoruz. Ben okuyorum. Sonra o da başladı. Boyama yapıyoruz. Lego oynuyoruz. Onları çok seviyor. Sonra öğlen yemeği, öğleden sonra uykuyu erken bıraktı. Ya eşimle arabayla parka götürüyoruz. Ya da İstinye'den arabalı vapurla karşıya geçip çay içip geri geliyoruz. Akşam olunca annesi gelip alıyordu. Tabii ki her zaman bu kadar tatlı olmuyor insan bazen yoruluyor sıkılıyor ama…"* (K18, Serbest Çalışan)

[25] *"Bana gençlik veriyor, iyi geliyor..Yaşlandıkça çocuk bakmak zorlaşıyor." (*K7)

[26] *"Hayatım renklendi. Monoton ve tanıdık olmaya başlamıştı."* (K2)

[27] *"Hayata bağlandım, yoksa ölümü bekleyen bir insan gibi olacaktım."* (K19)

women fulfill the responsibilities assigned to them, especially when they give care. Physical fatigue is often mentioned in difficulties. In particular, these fatigues caused by the diseases that come with old age can be challenging in this 'marathon'. However, as soon as any difficulty is mentioned, it is compensated with the concept of 'love'. This discourse can be interpreted as the acceptance or even legitimization of the traditional gender roles assigned to women. Looking at the situation backward, providing daycare for the grandchild does not come as a result of love. Therefore, their difficulties should be seen as natural as their good sides. Grandmothers who do not have to take care of their grandchildren also love their grandchildren as a result. However, this raises another question: How do grandmothers taking care of their grandchildren evaluate their own lives when they compare themselves to those who do not? Even though it was not specifically asked in the interviews, the participants had answers summarizing this situation. Some of the grandmothers describe themselves as more 'altruistic' than the other grandmothers of the family. Apart from that, as can be seen in the title of social participation, they created their comfort zone from people who 'understand them'. Because, according to them, others who do not care for grandchildren will not understand the responsibilities and time constraints of grandmothers who are looking after grandchildren.

The third and most important theme, 'support', yielded unexpected results. Of the 19 grandmothers who support their children unconditionally, 15 are raising their grandchildren without any support. Two people said they received support from their spouses, one from her neighbors, and two from their grandchildren's other grandmother said that they received support. What is striking here is that 13 of 19 grandmothers said that they did not receive any support while taking care of their children, and only two participants said that they received support from their mothers for a childcare for a short time. One of the interesting things is that seven of these women did not receive support from their families even though they were working, they tried to find a way by arranging their days with their spouses, or find a nursery. One of them could not work and did not receive support even though they needed it economically, which is one of the biggest

reasons for looking after grandchildren now. Others did not consider the possibility of support because they were not working. These women, who have made great sacrifices in their lives, have not experienced the same patterns themselves.

Finally, one of the themes that will lead us to the research question, 'the effect of grandchild care on social lives' has been examined. Six of the six participants interviewed in Istanbul stated that the care of grandchildren affects their social life. While the crowds and the difficulty of accessing a place in Istanbul is difficult enough for any person, it is an expected but still striking result that an aging woman who is caring for her grandchild will be hesitant about this issue. Four out of seven participants in Izmir and three out of six participants in Ankara stated that taking care of grandchildren affects their social life and they have less time for themselves and what they can do. Participants from both Izmir and Ankara, who said that it did not affect their social life, stated that they did not have a social life anyway due to health problems. There is no determinant feature like Istanbul among these two cities.

4.5. Social Participation of Grandmothers

As mentioned in the literature, the concept of social participation is taken here as a person's involvement in activities that provide interaction with others in society. (Dehi Aroogh & Shahboulaghi, 2020) In this thesis, social participation is evaluated through community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities. These three dimensions, each of which is important in itself, will be examined in line with the interviews.

4.5.1. Community Life

Community life is one of the most important aspects of this thesis. It can be defined as the life and activities of a community. One of the most important factors of social participation in aging is to be active in the community life. If

people do not stay active in this area, aging will occur because they also experience losses of kinspeople, role losses, loss of function, health deterioration and psychological withdrawal. The fact that the elderly people continue to exist as a part of the society destroys the perception of only 'consuming', 'withdrawal' and 'burden' for the society. Active aging, which has been the focus of the European Union and the World Health Organization lately, has also spread to Turkey. Therefore, necessary actions are taken especially by municipalities to encourage the elderly to participate in community life. Public education center activities, various hobby groups such as, reading groups, excursion groups, etc. can be given as examples.

Based on a sketchy observation in Turkey, it can be argued that aging women say that they will not work more, housework is not as intense as it used to be, motherhood and companion roles do not require heavy responsibilities as before, and they want to focus on some activities that they could not do in their busy lives. Many of these activities are not economically challenging and they have enough time now.

The possibilities offered by the municipalities in the context of community life are obvious when looking at the data coming from three big cities in Turkey from all socio-economic backgrounds. By joining them, women are able to acquire new social circles and skills and keep their lives active, until they are assigned new roles: grandmother.

Speaking with data, answers from many grandmothers can be cited as examples. 13 of 19 grandmothers answered the question of "Are there any group activities you participate in?" by listing the activities they participated in before looking after their grandchild. However, they further stated that they left it unfinished because they were looking after grandchildren, or that they would not be able to attend such a course again. The answers are quite impressive. The words of a teacher participant who tries to lead a very active life will be explanatory:

> Like I said, we enjoy going to the theatre. Not as a day, but we have dinner and chat meetings with our friends. We attend interviews and fairs with them. We are going to the exhibition opening. But I couldn't continue because it would be selfish to do these things rather than take care of my grandchild. (P1)[28]

The word 'selfishness' implies that, if a woman gives up the care roles assigned to her and participates in the activities she wants, she will assign herself as 'selfish' and maybe even be seen as such by her surroundings. This can be confirmed by a parallel answer. "*I started the art of illumination, I stopped it when the child was born. Likewise, ceramics and yoga. I had a dream of college, but it won't be realistic when I have grandchildren*." (P2)[29]. Other grandmothers explained with parallel answers: "*I was attending before my grandchild.*" (P6)[30]; "*We were making jewelry, sewing. Now there is a child*." (P7)[31] "*There was, I still want to, but it's hard.*" (P12)[32].

Another striking answer here is this: "*I used to participate. I am looking after children now. But I don't want to anyway, because everyone there will be younger than me now, we used to be the same age.*" (P16)[33] The meaning attributed to aging is striking here. According to the research conducted by Aközer, Nuhrat and Say (2011) on the expectations related to old age in Turkey, the elderly declare that they do not maintain their social life after they get older.

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[28] *"Daha önce söylediğim gibi, biz tiyatroya gitmeyi çok seviyoruz. 'Gün' olarak değil ama arkadaşlarımızla yemekler yer sohbet ederdik. Sergi açılışlarına gidiyoruz. Ama ben devam edemedim çünkü torunumla ilgilenmek yerine bunları yapmak bana bencilce geldi."* (K1)

[29] *"Tezhip kursuna gittim, çocuklar doğmadan. Doğunca tamamlayamadım. Seramik ve yoga da böyle oldu. Üniversite hayalim vardı ama torunlarım olunca gerçekçi gelmedi."* (K2)

[30] *"Torunumdan önce katılıyordum."* (K6)

[31] *"Takı yapıyordum, dikiş…Şimdi çocuk var."* (K7)

[32] *"Vardı. Hala istiyorum, ama zor."* (K12)

[33] *"Eskiden katılırdım. Şimdi çocuk bakıyorum. Ama zaten istemiyorum, çünkü artık hepsi benden genç orada, eskiden hepimiz aynı yaşlardaydık."* (K16)

Despite this finding may vary according to demographic factors, the majority prefer the house to spend time and limit their social environment preferences to family and relatives. Therefore, they withdraw from activities such as public education center courses and hobby courses they attended or intend to attend before they entered the aging phase, and they declare that these activities should belong to young people, as in the above quote. Other than that, it is possible to get answers such as, "*I was going to join, but I got discouraged*." (P4)[34]; "*I do not want anymore.*" (P9)[35]. Among the participants, there were also those who mentioned that they could not keep the community life active due to caring for their grandchildren and that they tried to create alternatives for this, which can be seen as valuable data on its own. For example, "*I have book reading groups, we read a book every week and discuss that book by meeting on Zoom*." (P18)[36] As can be seen, in this example, an alternative was produced at the point where physical participation became difficult.

Participation in courses of public education centers is quite high, with the exception of the minority who have not participated before, who have started looking after grandchildren right after her working life ended, or who do not want to participate in any way. However, it is stated directly that grandchild care is an obstacle at some point. At this point, the possibilities provided by the municipality should not be ignored. The wide variety of courses offered in every district and every semester is definitely attractive to women and participation is assured. For example, a participant living in Ankara who did not attend these courses due to her busy schedule said, *"Çankaya municipality had many activities, but I thought it would be selfish to participate in."* (P1)[37]. Likewise, a

[34] *"Katılacaktım ama hevesim kaçtı."* (K4)

[35] *"Artık istemiyorum."* (K9)

[36] *"Kitap okuma gruplarım var. Her hafta bir kitap okuyup Zoom'da buluşup tartışıyoruz."* (K18)

[37] *"Çankaya Belediyesi'nin bir sürü aktivitesi var, ama katılmanın bencil olacağını düşünüyorum."* (K1)

participant living in Izmir said, *"After retirement, I went to a jewelry design course, I also took a sewing course. I went when I was free. Public education had courses, the municipality too. But I don't want to get tired anymore."* (P7)[38] These statements supported both the existence of municipalities' activities in big cities and the argument that women have knowledge about them. However, the socio-political background, which does not produce alternatives for grandchild care in return, may prevent these participations.

As a result, community life, which is an important part of social participation, should be an important concept for these aging women. Here, it is important that they have community life around them, and that they participate in these activities. While communities such as public education centers, various hobby courses, reading groups, etc. are quite accessible in the places where respondents are located, it has been seen that participation is not sufficient. Participation in community life, along with age and care responsibilities, either caused withdrawal or a tendency to quit was observed among the participants. One of the prominent demographic features here is the occupation of the participants. Because, compared to housewives, working women have already been in many communities. Therefore, the loss they actually experience is felt more than others. Here, rather than 'wanting and not being able to start', the situation of 'experience and having to give up' has prevailed.

4.5.2. Interpersonal Relationships

Community life is a really important aspect for aging women. Because the concept of 'new' is not associated with old age. However, in community life activities, there is learning new things, meeting new people and acquiring new groups and skills. Another aspect of such vital importance as community life is interpersonal relationships. Participants who experience many losses in their

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[38] "*Emeklilikten sonra takı tasarım kursuna gittim, Ayrıca dikiş kursuna da gittim. Halk eğitimin bir sürü kursu var. Ama artık yorulmak istemiyorum."* (K7)

families and other environments during the aging process become more vulnerable to social isolation if they cannot maintain family, relatives, and friendship relationships.

What differs from other activities here, of course, is that the grandchild is one of these relationships, but the time they spend on relationships for the rest of their life while taking on the care work should be examined. The effect of maintaining this relationship on well-being is obvious, as seen in the literature. In this study, the following questions were asked about interpersonal relationships:

- ✓ What kind of relationship do you have with your neighbors, family members and friends?
- ✓ How often do you meet?
- ✓ How much is your grandchild involved in these activities?

The reason for adding the last question is the observation that interpersonal relationships can be maintained even when there are grandchildren. However, the same is very rare for courses or the physical activities they participate in. It is significant that nine participants out of 19 in the study gave the answer 'no' to such a basic social participation aspect. These answers are sometimes stated with discourses such as "*I don't see them because of the pandemic*."(P6)[39]; "*I do not meet, I do not*."(P2)[40]; "*There are no more people with whom I spoke*."(P19)[41]; "*There was, but I am afraid of diseases now*."(P12)[42]; some participants stated it is because of their grandchildren directly and say, "*I cannot take my grandchild*

[39] *"Pandemi yüzünden görüşmüyorum."* (K6)

[40] *"Görüşmüyorum, yok."* (K2)

[41] *"Konuştuğum hiçbir insan yok burada."* (K19)

[42] *"Vardı. Ama artık hastalıklardan korkuyorum."* (K12)

to people he does not know."(P13)[43]; "*I see them on weekends when my grandchildren are away*."(P17)[44]; "*All my friends live nearby, but there is no time left because of grandchildren*" (P5)[45]. Apart from this, the answer of grandmothers, who continue to communicate with their environment, naturally changes depending on the grandchildren. The biggest example of this is that they can do this during the 'weekend break' as mentioned before. Apart from that, a participant said, "*I talk to people who understand me. I am meeting with those who understand the priority I will give to my granddaughter.*" (P2)[46] She explained clearly how she eliminated the people around her according to her grandchildren care routine.

Another reason for this situation is the pandemic to a great extent. The elderly in the risk group had to be isolated for a long time both for themselves and for the people around them, mostly in line with the prohibitions. However, these women, who say that they still have to protect themselves in the same way, had to ignore the pandemic due to the lack of alternatives when it comes to taking care of grandchildren, which is an interesting data. Because respondents in the risk group frequently mentioned the impact of the pandemic while talking about interpersonal relationships. These respondents, who were able to internalize this isolation in order to protect both themselves and their environment, had to break the rules of isolation while caring for their grandchildren who came and went to their homes almost every day, because there was no alternative for these families. This situation, which we can define as 'accepting helplessness' for both parties, caused women to protect themselves for their grandchildren, and revealed the pressure to be isolated twice.

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[43] *"Torunumu tanımadığı insanların yanına götüremem."* (K13)

[44] *"Haftasonları görüyorum. Torunlarım yanımda yokken."* (K17)

[45] *"Bütün yakınlarım yakınımda yaşıyor ama torunumdan zaman kalmıyor."* (K5)

[46] *"Beni anlayan insanlarla konuşuyorum. Benim önceliğimin torunum olduğunu anlayan insanlarla görüşüyorum."* (K2)

In the concept of interpersonal relationships, occupation stands out just like in community life. Because, apart from family, neighbors and relatives, another important environment is coworkers. Therefore, the rare meetings with this environment, which are already lost after retirement, decrease considerably with the care of grandchildren. However, just being working is not enough here. For example, among the participants there are also those who have occupations such as cleaning woman, self-employed, which are not done in a stable and large environment. On the other hand, participants who can establish a regular relationship for many years, such as teachers and bankers, suffer more from this issue.

4.5.3. Leisure Activities

The last aspect to be examined in the context of social participation in this thesis is leisure activities. As Sala et al. (2019) said, “Active engagement in leisure activities can help older adults to maintain cognitive, physical, and mental health.”. The point to be noted here is that leisure activities are the ability to do the activities that one prefers at the time of his/her choice. Whereas, free time can be defined as the time spent after work. It is necessary to distinguish these two, because the question here is ‘freedom of choice’. However, it was noticed during the interviews that the care process was defined as 'workdays' by the grandmothers, and their time and what they could do were limited. Therefore, leisure time has not been one hundred percent applicable for people who have experienced this situation. Leisure activities, an aspect of social participation, include physical activities such as walking, sports, voluntary activities, and the use of technology, which has recently been on the rise, especially among the elderly. Therefore, the questions also examine these contents. However, since none of the 19 participants participated in voluntary activities, physical and technological activities will be evaluated. Of course, these aspects will be analyzed by taking into consideration of grandchild care.

First of all, it is an aspect worth mentioning that none of the participants was interested in volunteering. Volunteering, as Palaz (2021) mentioned, can provide a meaningful social role to aging individuals who have experienced many losses in their lives. Apart from that, it helps to bridge generational gaps, and it can provide physical and cognitive benefits. However, this important statistic can be seen as one of the areas where aging women withdraw themselves, just like participation in community life.

Physical activity was mostly associated with walking for the participants. This activity, which is very important for all ages, is explained as a factor whose presence or absence is questioned by every participant. 12 out of 19 participants stated that they could no longer do the walk they used to do during the day because they were taking care of their grandchildren. We can look at the words of a grandmother who explained that she could not perform this activity, which is of great importance for her physical health:

> I can't do it while I'm taking care of grandchildren. You're already tired in the evening after the kids leave. You feel quite tired. You pile up the moment they go through the door. But you don't feel it until you go, you can't do it if you do. I realize how tired I am when they leave. (P7)[47]

We can continue with the words of one of these participants, who thinks that even walking can be a luxury. *"Time for a walk is tight, it's a matter of priority."* (P2)[48]

Apart from all these answers, one out of seven women who said that they went for a walk just for the toilet of their dog, two for their grandchildren, because they live in an area suitable for walking -which can be an important data that

[47] *"Torun bakarken hiç yapamıyorum. Zaten akşam yorgun oluyorsun çocuklar gittikten sonra. Baya bir yorgunluk hissediyorsun. Kapıdan gittikleri an yığılıyorsun. Ama gidene kadar hissetmiyorsun, hissetsen yapamazsın zaten. Ne kadar yorulmuşum diye gittiklerinde anlıyorsun."* (K7)

[48] *"Yürüyüş yapmak için zamanım yok. Öncelik meselesi."* (K2)

should be taken into account on the basis of cities and municipalities-, other all three of them said that they continue this activity because they continue their habits. One of the quotes that stands out here is: "*I take a walk when my grandchild is away, not when I'm with her. Let it be my time too!*" (P5)[49]

Other than that, when asked about their use of technology linked to grandchild care, we can see that the answers given among the participants are divided into two. While 10 participants said that there was no change in their use of technology / that they were not good with technology, nine participants said that their use of technology increased with the care of their grandchildren, they communicated with their old friends, they could search for something, they could watch something, etc. Here, we can show the contrast as follows,

> "I don't use social media, I'm not on good terms. It doesn't have to be because of my age anyway." (P16)[50] versus "Of course it happens because all of his toys are technological. You press it, it speaks Turkish, you press it, it speaks English. You are learning them too. Colors, numbers. Toys are like that. You are renewing yourself too with technology." (P15)[51]

It means, while there is a group trying to stay up-to-date in technology in terms of keeping up with the innovations and catching up with their grandchildren, the other group has withdrawn themselves. In this example, age is also associated with withdrawal, but the response intensities being halved can be seen as an indication that some breakpoints have begun to be crossed. The use of technology can be seen as a useful option to break intergenerational gaps in this context. Apart from that, as Romero et al. (2007) mentioned, the state of complying with the technology leads to the positive emotional appraisal of

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[49] *"Torunum bende olmadığı zaman yürüyüş yapıyorum, o varken değil. O da benim zamanım olsun artık!"* (K5)

[50] *"Sosyal medyayı takip etmiyorum. O biraz sinirimi bozuyor benim. Çoğuna da inanmıyorum. Zaten yaşımın gereği de gerekmiyor bana."* (K16)

[51] *"Oluyor tabii çünkü onun bütün oyuncakları şey. Basıyorsun Türkçe konuşuyor, basıyorsun İngilizce konuşuyor. Sen de onları öğreniyorsun. İngilizce kulak dolgunluğu oldu artık. Renkler, sayılar. Oyuncaklar öyle artık. Sen de kendini yeniliyorsun."* (K15)

maintaining social relationships. Of course, it should not be forgotten that among the features that participants should have, there is technological literacy to be able to conduct online interviews. Therefore, although the level of interest varies, it should be said that it is an advantageous group in terms of social media and technology use due to the criteria.

4.6. Effects of Pandemic

When I started this study, pandemic claims were just beginning to emerge. As time passed, it became impossible not to notice that the pandemic had penetrated every part of our lives. Since the beginning of the pandemic, many studies on women's issue have been done. Many of these were related to the fact that women who had to stay at home more were included in the household chores more, the private and public space balance that was tried to be built with difficulties was upside down, and they were more abused.

This thesis, which started with feminist standpoint theory, could not ignore the impact of the pandemic on the lives of women who are aging and looking after grandchildren. Childcare has become a crisis during the pandemic, not only in Turkey but all over the world. While grandmothers were assumed to be one of the most important caring alternatives, grandmothers joined in with the rest of those who could not go out in the risk group. From the perspective of the elderly, as Arun (2020) mentioned, an 'indefinite' curfew has been enforced on the elderly in Turkey as of 21 March 2021, and according to these precautions, which can fall under the age discrimination, elderly people are prohibited from sitting in public spaces, benches in public spaces have been removed. In some municipalities, even 'elderly denouncement lines' have been established for the elderly going out. Therefore, grandmothers also have their share of these precautions. On the other hand, the closure of kindergartens coincided with the recall of mothers to their duties, and dead-end paths were formed. While many women experienced work-related problems as a result of this situation, most of them could not find any other way other than to continue to receive support from

grandmothers who were in the risk group. However, while curfews, risk of contracting the disease, endless uncertainty and social trauma for people over the age of 65 are psychologically quite wearisome, it was thought that taking care of grandchildren with maximum hygiene rules and without leaving the house had consequences for them. In this thesis, the answers to the questions asked about the pandemic were quite striking.

First, it was asked whether the pandemic had an impact on the care of grandchildren, and secondly, whether it had an impact on their social lives. First of all, 10 out of 19 people mentioned how difficult it is to keep children entertained by staying at home. Responses such as 'I couldn't keep busy', 'too difficult', 'too suffocating for both of us', 'the child was bored' were received from grandmothers. One of the participants, who was very worried about her grandchild being bored, talked about the sacrifice she made by taking a cat home despite her fear. The grandmothers, who said that they did not have a social life in the previous parts, said that there was no change in the care.

As I said above, the striking thing here is that the grandmothers in the risk group continue to look after their grandchildren because there is no other alternative. 19 of the 19 participants continued to look after their grandchildren during the pandemic. Only one participant was able to get slightly more support from her daughter in the early days than before. However, this has greatly increased their risk of being infected.

In addition to this, apart from two people who said that their social life does not exist, 17 participants also mentioned that their social life has collapsed due to the pandemic. Of course, aside from the urge to protect themselves, they have also limited themselves with the responsibility they take for taking care of children. There are even examples of this being forced by their children. The following quote exemplifies this: *"They didn't let me out for six-seven months. Likewise, they did it for their children. So, I don't want to remember those times."*

(P13)[52]Apart from this, the participants who had a house with a garden did not make such complaints. This is one of the most important examples of how socio-economic status plays a distinctive role in pandemic conditions.

As a result, the pandemic has affected the care of grandchildren and the social participation of women who care for their grandchildren, as in all areas of life. The pandemic, which is one of the most important agendas of the last two years of our lives, has become impossible to ignore in this study, because it can be seen how wearing it is, especially in aging studies.

4.7. Conclusion

The analysis above includes parts of everyday life, perception, care practices, social participation, and effects of the pandemic, respectively.

To briefly show the striking points, in the *Everyday Life* part, it is seen how much space the daycare provided by grandmothers occupies in their daily lives. This provided the initial data needed to begin the analysis of the thesis. Apart from that, one of the answers that paid attention to the intensity of the interviews added richness to the study: giving care to other family members. This finding was one of the unexpected but most common patterns. One of the reasons this finding was important was that only child care and grandchild care were addressed at the start of the study. However, it was ignored that women also care for other members of the family. Therefore, this is one of the essential patterns that point to the life of women full of care responsibilities. Household chores at home and out-of-home shopping are the other patterns described as default, just like these two types of care. On the other hand, when looking at other activities in daily life, it should be said that they tend to have hobbies that can be done while taking care of children, such as handicrafts. However, if there is something to be said for all participants, they plan their 'working' days with a strict

[52] *"6-7 ay kapının önüne çıkarmadılar beni. Çocuklarla da aynı şekilde. O dönemleri hatırlamak istemiyorum yani."* (K13)

schedule to meet all the responsibilities. While all these are considered, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has not been forgotten.

In the *Perception* part, analyzes of grandmothers' perceptions of grandchildren and children are included. Here, the most remarkable case of 'grandchildren love is different' is discussed. The reasons are primarily their anxiety about the life they live as a parent, the responsibilities taken for the future of their children, etc. Therefore, concepts that include negative connotations about care are not included in grandchild care. Because, for the first time, life gave them an opportunity to enjoy childcare. Of course, it has been revealed that women who have experienced the working life have not been able to enjoy childcare because they have experienced this work-family conflict deeply. One of the important points in this section was 'lack of alternative'. It can be said that not supporting child care with adequate infrastructure, distrust of caregivers, and financial difficulties forced women to care for their grandchildren. In addition to the 'joy', this fact should not be forgotten.

In the *Care Practices* part, it has been discussed what grandmothers think about their grandchild care practices, whether they get help in care, what has changed in their lives with the care of grandchildren, and their effects on their social lives. Regardless of their demographic characteristics, grandmothers generally follow the same pattern in their care practices. One of the important points in this section is that they still continue to take care of their own children. Many grandmothers continued to cook for their working children and reduce their burdens, as well as taking care of grandchildren. Also, finding of 'being useful' mostly seen in retired women, because they generally thought that their lives have no more meaning after they retired. This is mostly about traditional standpoint of ageing which highlights the 'withdrawal' of elderly people.

In the *Social Participation* part, the social participation of the grandmothers was evaluated in the context of community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities. In *Community Life*, while group activities and trainings that end

with the care of grandchildren, participants attributed continuing their activities as ‘selfishness’. In addition, the emphasis on aging was frequently made, and therefore, the state of not belonging made them withdraw from these activities. Also, it can be said that there has not been an opportunity for elderly women who have taken care of their grandchildren directly from working life. In *Interpersonal Relationships,* it is striking that women who have had a professional life have more than one friend group, and in this sense, they come from a more active life. However, in general, all grandmothers have to postpone these activities until the weekend because of grandchild care, and eventually they were all affected by the pandemic. Lastly, in *Leisure Activities* part, three striking points stand out. First of all, none of them participated in volunteer activities, which is related to their feeling of not belonging to this field and their withdrawal again. Secondly, a large majority did not continue their physical activities because of their busy daily lives. Finally, there was a complete dichotomy in the use of technology: half of the respondents saw technology as a good tool to build bridges with other generations, while others preferred to distance themselves because of their 'age'. Here, too, it is striking that the participants, who have professions such as banking and teaching, already have a good command of technology.

Finally, the *Effects of the Pandemic*, which is assumed to be very tiring due to the sample of the study, on the lives of grandmothers are quite clear in their grandchild care and their own social participation experiences. The important point here is that the grandmothers are in the risk group due to their age, but at the same time they had to continue to care for their grandchildren. Therefore, they had to take serious precautions both for themselves and for their grandchildren, and the results of this double isolation were quite devastating for them obviously. Considering all these, it is not possible to ignore the effect of day care they provide on the social participation of grandmothers.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Considering the demographic changes in Turkey, it is clear that the population is aging and will continue to age. This has increased the work done in the field of aging compared to the past. Aging is a holistic concept that needs to be addressed in every aspect. It is possible to examine health, mental health, economy, gender, and social context. This study, on the other hand, deals with a women's issue which examines the elderly women's perceptions, practices, and social participation implications of the care of grandchildren. In these years when feminist gerontology is on the rise, it has become important to discuss women's aging, especially in the context of the 'care' role.

As individuals get older, shrinkage or loss may occur in their roles or in their close and distant environments. On the other hand, aging can also bring new roles to the individual. One of the most important of these roles is the 'grandparent' role. These roles can bring radical changes, especially for women. Because with this role, the process of 'childcare' begins again, preferably or because of the lack of alternatives for the childcare. The ages at which these women care for their grandchildren are also the ages when their social participation should not be interrupted. Otherwise, they may experience social, mental and physical regressions. Therefore, it is important to examine grandmothers, who are thought to have a rewarding role, from a feminist standpoint, with the title of 'care'.

Looking at the socio-political background, it is seen that the family is still the primary caregiver in child care, as Aybars, Beşpınar and Kalaycıoğlu (2018) said. This may be due to the fact that no other alternative has been built. Of course, when it comes to working mothers, grandmothers come into play. Here,

one of the most notable examples is the Grandmother Project (Büyükanne Projesi). This project, carried out in Turkey with the support of the EU, aims to prevent currently working women from withdrawing from the labor market and to support cultural transfer by providing children who are under the age of three with the opportunity to grow up with their grandmothers. This project is closely related to the thesis because it both supports those social policies that leave childcare to family assistance and legitimizes the situation with issues such as 'cultural transfer' and 'trust'. At the same time, it literally realizes the transformation of mothers' employment into grandmothers' employment, which is also put forward in this thesis. It is one of the projects that commodifies grandparental care, which is the reality in Turkey under normal conditions.

In addition, there has been no specific initiative for the social participation of older women in Turkey. It is understood that Turkey deals with aging only with the understanding of regression in health and being in need of care, rather than the holistic approach of successful/active aging, which generally means taking steps regarding care, health, and home care services. On the other hand, public education centers, whose target audience is usually 'women', are seen as an initiative that can enhance social participation.

In this thesis, the concept of social participation is used. ICF (2001) defines social participation as actions/tasks in the social and civic areas of life. Social participation, which can be greatly affected by demographic and environmental factors, is examined in this thesis under the titles of community life, interpersonal relationships, and leisure activities.

Community life can be explained by engaging in daily activities and keeping in touch with others. The place of residence, aging in place, and health is closely related to community life. Participation in courses, participation in public education centers, or volunteer work is included in the concept of community life. Although factors such as having difficulty finding peers in the environment they have, fear of rejection, and providing care are among the barriers to

community life. However, these activities are essential for lifelong learning. (Aydin & Sayan, 2019)

Interpersonal relationships happen when two or more people communicate. A social group is an important concept to prevent shrinkage. Meeting and visiting friends, relatives, and neighbors are included in this category. It is very important to maintain these meetings are face-to-face. As Moraes and Souza (2005) said, these face-to-face interactions add great meaning to the old woman's life.

Leisure activities can be defined as discretionary activities done voluntarily. Reading, doing puzzles, walking, and using technology can be diversified as leisure activities. However, the time-consuming roles of grandmothers can be seen as tiring for leisure and can create a barrier. (Ates, Bordone & Arpino, 2021)

To talk about the methodology, the study started with the question “What is the effect of the grandparenting role on the social participation of elderly women?”. It is planned that the participants will consist of 20 elderly women, but 19 participants were interviewed. In order to understand in detail both their grandchild care experiences and social participation in this period, interviews were conducted with women over the age of 60, who have been giving daily care to their grandchildren for at least two years, and who live in the same city with their grandchildren.

In order for the grandmothers to be able to provide daycare, it is a prerequisite that the mothers of the grandchildren are working, but grandmothers are not working. In order to collect the correct data, it was preferred that the grandmothers take care of the grandchildren at least three days a week and that the grandchildren were in the preschool period.

Turkey's three largest cities, Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara, are also cities that we can call metropolis with their rapid growth. Although economic growth and

women's employment are increasing visibly here, both the precautions to be taken against the impact of this situation on child care and the construction of an age-friendly city have not been accelerated. Therefore, interviews were made in Izmir, Ankara, and Istanbul in order to see what these cities, which stand out with their growth in world lists, can offer to elderly women in the context of the social municipality, and to provide a variety of data to be collected in urban.

In line with the demands of the participants in the risk group during the pandemic period, online platforms were used as well as face-to-face meetings, so technological literacy stood out as an important characteristic of the participants.

In the study, which was conducted with the Feminist Standpoint Theory, the qualitative method was used as the feminist methodology would suggest. In this study, the in-depth interview method was preferred and, it was carried out with empathy, interaction, and a non-hierarchical structure with the intention of understanding the experiences of women, as Reinharz and Davidman (1992) said. Participants were reached through snowball sampling. Since the experiences of women in the metropolis may vary in comparison with the rural, data were collected from three big cities, namely Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara.

The findings from the interviews were interpreted through descriptive analysis. The analysis was analyzed under the titles of everyday life of an ageing woman, perceptions of grandmothers about the grandchildren care and childcare, care practices, social participation in terms of community life, interpersonal relationships and leisure activities, and finally effects of the pandemic.

5.1. Key Findings

To summarize the crucial points, it was observed that caring was not limited to the grandchildren of elderly women. They can provide care for the other members of their families. The care responsibilities of women stand out once again from a feminist perspective. Apart from this, housework takes up a lot of

space in the everyday life of elderly women who take care of their grandchildren. This includes cooking, shopping, washing clothes and dishes, and cleaning. The care provided to grandchildren is matched with the concept of 'workdays'. Therefore, mothers' workdays have turned into grandmothers' workdays.

When we look at the part of perceptions of grandmothers about grandchildren care and childcare, almost all participants stated that the love of grandchildren is completely different from anything. As the reason, they stated that they were not responsible for their grandchild's life or future, unlikely their children. However, in addition to this sense of 'joy', the lack of alternatives in care often led to the decision of grandchild care.

It has come to the fore that grandmothers do not receive support while fulfilling their care responsibilities, especially basic responsibilities such as hygiene, food, etc. Apart from this, they continue to take care of their children with jobs such as cooking, and they also take on the responsibilities of their own children again. The care was mostly carried out by the grandmother from a mother’s side. Here, it is possible to see a women's solidarity in the context of mother-daughter relationships. They frequently stated that they felt useful as an elderly woman while taking care of their grandchildren.

Another important finding is that participation in community life is called selfishness by participants. This 'loss of self' has resulted in women withdrawing from community life. There is a noticeable difference between working and non-working women in interpersonal relationships because it has been observed that women who have worked have a greater network size. Interpersonal relationships, which is constrained by caring responsibility, was seen as a concept that should be continued on weekends for both groups. They have created a comfort zone, especially by choosing to keep in touch with people who understand their caregiving situation. When looking at the leisure activities, the first highlight is that no grandmothers participate in volunteer activities, they do not feel belonging and leave it to the new generation. Physical activities cannot

be carried out on 'working days' due to lack of time and fatigue. Although technology is seen as an effective way to communicate with grandchildren, it is seen that the people who have worked and retired use technology more efficiently than the other group due to their experience. However, as stated in the analysis section, since the use of technology is a requirement for the participants, it is known that all participants are competent in the use of technology and social media, even if there are differences between their uses. The subject that should be discussed in the whole of this analysis is the occupation of the participants. Although it is an important finding that there is no difference between the findings in the context of demographic characteristics such as education level and socio-economic status, being a professional is one of the prominent characteristics of social participation. The reason for this is that the social environment formed around a profession that has been practiced for years, the activities that are participated in or independently of the profession, and the obligation to remain active, of course, make a difference in terms of social participation. As mentioned in the analysis section, the difference between 'not being able to start' and 'letting go' after facing a care barrier while participating is clearly seen among women who did not work and who worked. Therefore, it is normal to see a differentiation in perception as the size of the losses increases. Among the participants, eight women were housewives and 11 women were retired, making the difference clearly visible. On the other hand, it is not enough to just create the worked/unworked dichotomy. Because the distinction between working alone, such as cleaning women, and working with a large community in a stable environment such as teaching and banking can also be seen in the answers given about social participation. As a result, when considered in the context of life habits, the feeling of loss in social participation of worked women becomes more prominent. Therefore, it can be said that occupation is the distinctive characteristics of this thesis. It is not possible to talk about a significant difference between cities in the findings. However, one of the things that will make it easier for an elderly woman to participate is that she will be able to reach her destination. However, most of the participants living in Istanbul stated that it is impossible for them to benefit from public transportation and that

the crowd creates certain reservations for them. In this study conducted during the COVID-19 period, it can be said that this is a finding that complicates the already isolated life of this group, which is in the risk group.

Finally, considering the effects of the pandemic, these women in the risk group have no other alternatives, or preferably care responsibilities have prevented their risks. Despite the fact that they could not go out due to the pandemic precautions, they continued to provide grandchild care. Therefore, they had to take double precautions for both themselves and their families, which is very challenging socially, psychologically, and physically for them. Therefore, the effect of grandchild care on the social participation of elderly women can be summarized as follows.

As mentioned in the *Limitations* section, conducting the study with the risk group during the COVID-19 period has greatly damaged the comfort of face-to-face interaction and online platforms have been preferred more by the participants.

Combining women's issues in the context of care, and social participation of elderly women not only added diversity to the study but also made it difficult to focus in the interviews and opened new conversation channels. However, this did not prevent getting answers.

Most importantly, this unpaid care work is seen as a kind of emotional labor. The difficulties experienced during this effort were difficult to be expressed by the grandmothers and they constantly tried to be compensated with nice words after their speeches about difficulties. However, this is actually very important data. Because emotional labor is a process that decides how an individual should feel, the 'inappropriate emotion' felt is often suppressed. This means that the caring role that traditional gender roles define for women should actually be welcomed. Therefore, the words of love uttered right after the difficulties described can be interpreted as a discourse that legitimizes the roles assigned to women.

Finally, the situation that added both richness and an emotional dimension to the thesis was that the researcher had experienced the same situation from the side of a 'grandchild'. This created an almost 'insider' situation for the researcher, but at the same time clearly demonstrated the challenges of working with similar feelings and experiences. Here, the inclusive nature of feminist social research has been very helpful.

In future studies, more information can be obtained about the health status of the grandmothers while collecting data, because the health status of the individuals also played a large role in the effect of care on social participation. Apart from this, the details of the differences created by the grandmother being the mother or the father's mother can be elaborated on for future studies more, because in this study, it was seen that the grandmother from the mother’s side assumed the responsibility with a ratio of 14 to five. In addition, this thesis was written to discuss a women's issue, but in the future, grandparents' experiences can also be consulted in order to clearly see their participation in the care of grandchildren and to understand the gendered division of labor precisely. Last but not least, conducting future studies with a randomly selected sample may enrich the study, because the snowball sample may bring together similar experiences and backgrounds.

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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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26 Temmuz 2021

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Ayşe İdil Aybars

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Begüm Demirkol'un "Kadınların Yaşlanma Deneyimi: Günlük Bakım Sağlayan Büyükannelerin Toplumsal Katılımı" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve **298-ODTU-2021** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY
İAEK Başkan

B. TURKISH SUMMARY/ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Tüm dünyada olduğu gibi, son yıllarda Türkiye'de de özellikle yaşa bağlı demografik değişimler gözlemlenmektedir. Yaşlanmakta olan bir ülke olarak Türkiye'de 65 yaş üstü bireylerin oranının 2023 yılına kadar %13'e çıkması beklenmektedir. (Şentürk, 2020) Buna ek olarak, bu oranın düzenli bir şekilde artması beklenmektedir. Bu demografik değişimin yansımaları akademik alanyazında ve Türkiye'nin son dönem sosyal politikalarında görülüyor olsa da toplumsal hayatı içine alan bütünsel çalışmaların yeterli olmadığı göze çarpmaktadır.

Yaşlanma; sağlık, ekonomi, psikoloji, bakım, toplumsal yaşam gibi birçok başlıkta incelenebilecek disiplinler arası bir konsepttir. Her bir konsept akademik anlamda çalışılmaya uygun zengin bir içeriğe sahiptir. Ancak, sağlık alanında yapılan çalışmalar, büyük bir çoğunluğa sahip olmakla beraber, yaşlanmanın sosyal, fiziksel, psikolojik ve ekonomik anlamda bütünsel bir süreç olduğunu göz ardı edebilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışma yaşlanmanın toplumsal boyutunu kadın meselesini merkeze koyarak ele almaktadır. Bu tez, yaşlanmakta olan kadınların torunlarına sağladığı günlük bakımın, toplumsal katılımlarına etkisini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Yaşlanmakta olan bireyin, fiziksel, sosyal, psikolojik ve ekonomik anlamda birtakım değişimler yaşadığı bilinmektedir. Birbirleriyle yakından ilintili olan bu parametrelerin, sadece gerileme bazında ele alınması yanlış olur, her yaşta olduğu gibi yaşlanmada da parametrelerde iniş çıkışlar gözlemlenebilmektedir. Öte yandan, yaşlanma sürecinde bireyler, önceki dönemlerine göre daha fazla kayıp yaşamaktadırlar. Eş kaybı, arkadaş veya akraba kaybı, rol kaybı ve özellikle çalışan bireylerin emeklilikte yaşadıkları çevre kaybı bu duruma örnek olarak gösterilebilir. Dolayısıyla, sağlıklı bir yaşlanma için alınabilecek en önemli önlemlerden biri de sosyal olarak aktif kalmaya devam etmektir. Toplumsal sermayeyi sürdürmenin yolları, akraba, arkadaş, komşularla, önemli

ölçüde yüz yüze görüşmeye devam ederek, hobi edinme, fiziksel aktivite gibi etkinliklerden geçmektedir. Bu parametreyi aktif tutmak, yaşam kalitesi açısından önemliyken, bu aktifliğin önüne geçebilecek durumlar göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır: ücretsiz bakım emeği gibi.

İçli'nin de (2016) belirttiği gibi, yaşlanma sadece rol kaybına değil, yaşamımızın her döneminde olduğu gibi rol kazanımlarına da yol açabilmektedir. Kazanılan en baskın rollerden biri, büyük ebeveynliktir. Bu rol, torunun doğumuyla başlar ve torunun bakım ve gelişimine destek olarak kazanılır. Alanyazında, büyük ebeveynlikle ilgili yapılan çalışmalar konuyu birçok açıdan incelemiştir. Psikolojide, Erikson'un (1959) belirttiği gibi, yeni jenerasyona katkıda bulunmak, kişiye pozitif bir deneyim olarak dönebilmekteyken, sosyal politika büyük ebeveynin sağladığı bakımı, atılan adımların bir sonucu olarak görmektedir. Sosyoloji, her konuda olduğu gibi, bu konuyu da birçok perspektiften ele almaktadır. Ancak, bu çalışmaya da ışık tutan Feminist Teori, konuyu bütünsel olarak ele alırken, öte yandan büyükannelik rolünde kadınların sistematik bir şekilde tekrarladığı ücretsiz bakım emeği meselesinin barındığını da göstermektedir.

Geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri bu çalışmada araştırma problemi belirlenirken önemli bir rol oynamıştır, çünkü hayatlarında birçok değişiklik yaşanmasına rağmen yaşlı kadınların hayatlarında bu roller devam etmektedir. Samuel ve ark. (2018) söylediği gibi, 60 yaş üstü kadınların erkeklerden 4 saat daha fazla ev işleriyle ilgilendiği belirtilmiştir. Dolayısıyla, bu konuda bir değişiklik gözlenmemektedir. Tüm bunlar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, torun bakımı her ne kadar pozitif duygularla özdeşleştirilse de kadınların sosyal aktivitelere katılımını önemli ölçüde düşürmektedir, ki bu katılım kadınların yaşlanma süreçleri için önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. (Albertini & Kohli, 2009)

Tüm dünyada görüldüğü gibi, Türkiye'de de aile yapısında değişimler görülmektedir. Toplumsal değişimin bir yansıması olarak, çekirdek ailenin yükselişi, kadınların iş yaşamına katılışıyla paralellik göstermektedir. Bunun

dışında, sadece çekirdek aileden bahsetmek doğru olmaz, çocuklarını yalnız başına büyüten anne babalar da bu değişimle beraber artış göstermektedir. Elbette, geniş aileden daha mikro boyutlara küçülen bu ailelerde, çocuk bakımı için de alternatifler bulmak gerekmektedir. Oysa kadınların iş yaşamına katılımının artışıyla, çocuk bakım politikaları aynı oranda artış göstermemektedir. Dolayısıyla, bakıcı desteği alınmadıysa, kreşten faydalanılamadıysa, çocuk bakımı büyük ebeveynlerde son bulmaktadır. Bu bakımı sağlamaya karar verme süreci ise incelenmeye değerdir. Taşkın ve Akçay'ın (2019) büyükannelerle yaptıkları çalışmada büyükannelerin karar verme aşamasında çocukları için endişelenmelerinin, sorumluluk hissinin veya bir başkasına güvenmemenin önde gelen söylemler olduklarından bahsetmişlerdir. Sonuç olarak, sağladıkları bu 'duygusal emeğin' kadınların toplumsal yaşantısı üzerinde yarattığı etki incelenmeye değer görülmüştür.

Türkiye'nin sosyal politik arka planından bahsetmeden önce, globalleşen dünyada aile kavramının ne kadar değişime uğradığını belirtmek yanlış olmayacaktır. Çünkü, erozyona uğrayan aile kavramının kültürel aktarımı ve yerine getirilmesi beklenen işlevleri sekteye uğratması endişeyle karşılanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, sosyal politika bağlamında, özellikle kadınlara rol atayarak ailenin devamlılığını sağlamaya yönelik adımlar atılmaktadır. Feminist Bakış Açısı Teorisine göre ise bu durum, yine ataerkil bir yapı ile kadınların tüm karar alma süreçlerini kontrol altına alma olarak yorumlanabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, tahmin etmesi zor olmayacaktır ki, Türkiye'de sosyal politikalar bütünsel bir tutumdan çok, 'aileye dönüş' mantalitesi ile yapılandırılmaktadır. Aybars, Beşpınar ve Kalaycıoğlu'nun (2018) dediği gibi 'örtük aileciliğin' gözlendiği Türkiye'de, kaçınılmaz olarak bakım da aileleştirilmektedir. Tam da bu noktada büyükanneler devreye girmektedir.

Çarkoğlu ve Kafescioğlu'nun (2013) dediği gibi, kolektivist yapının getirdiği sosyo-politik arka plan ve kültürel değerler, Türkiye'de yaşanan değişimlerle uyum sağlamakta gecikebilmektedir. Öte yandan, özellikle büyük şehirlerde, iki ebeveynin çalıştığı durumlarda çocuk bakım servislerinin yeterli olması büyük

önem arz etmektedir. UNICEF TÜRKİYE'nin (2010), konuyla ilgili yayınladığı raporda belirtildiği üzere, erken çocukluk için sağlanan bakım servisleri oldukça azdır. Bu servislere ulaşılabilirliğin az olması, aileleri ikinci seçenek olan özel bakım servislerine veya bakıcı hizmetlerine yönlendirmektedir. Ancak hem finansal anlamda hem de kontrol edilebilirlik anlamında aileler bu seçeneği gerçekleştirmekte zorluk çekmektedirler.

Feminist bakış açısıyla bakıldığında, burada dikkat çeken bir diğer konu, çocuk bakım politikalarındaki bu eksikliğin tamamlayıcısının, yine ailenin kadın üyesi olmasıdır. (Kağıtçıbaşı, Ataca & Diri, 2010) Dolayısıyla, aileye dair politikalar, kadınların sorumluluğu olarak aileye geri dönmektedir. Bunun dışında sivil toplum kuruluşları da konuyla ilgili önlemler almaktadır. Ancak bu önlemler, makro boyuttaki bir problem için yeterli gelememektedir.

Yaşlanmayla ilgili alınan aksiyonlara bakıldığında ise, nüfusun yaşlanmasının elbette sosyal politikaya da yansımasını görebilmekteyiz. Ancak, sosyal ve psikolojik bağlamda, ekonomik bağlamda ve sağlık bağlamında bütünsel bir şekilde ele alınması gereken yaşlanmanın, sosyo-politik olarak her noktasına değinilmediği görülmektedir. Politikalar, genellikle bakım servisleri, sağlık, emeklilik sistemleri etrafında şekillenmektedir. (Tuncel & Uzun, 2019) Örnek olarak, bakımevleri, evde bakım hizmetleri, Alzheimer'lı yaşlılar için bakım merkezleri ve sosyal sigortalar verilebilmektedir. Bu politikalar incelendiğinde toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı bir farkındalığın var olmadığı görülmektedir. Oysa, kadın ve erkek tüm bu süreçleri farklı deneyimlemektedirler. Bunun dışında, sosyal anlamda yaşlı bireylere alternatifler sunmak, yalnızlık, rol kayıpları, toplumdan geri çekilme, özgüven kaybı gibi engelleri ortadan kaldırabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, Berkün'ün (2017) söylediği gibi, belediyeler aktiviteler düzenlerken yaşlı bireyleri de içeren bir yol izlemelidirler. Çünkü, kapsayıcılık düşünülmediği takdirde yapılan aktivitelere yaşlı bireyler tarafından katılım sağlanamayabilir.

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, yaşlanmakta olan kadınların büyük ebeveynlik rolünden önemli ölçüde etkilenen toplumsal katılımlarını irdelemektir. Burada, toplumsal katılım, kişinin toplum içinde diğerleriyle etkileşim içine girdiği aktivitelere katılımı olarak tanımlanabilir. (Dehi Aroogh & Shahboulaghi, 2020). Konuyla ilgili yapılan çalışmaların önemli bir kısmı, bireylerin yaşlandıkça sosyal izolasyonlarının da artacağına yönelik sonuçlara varmıştır. Bu duruma, daha önce de bahsedildiği gibi sosyal yapı, kültürel kodlar, rol kayıpları, yakınların kayıpları, iş kayıpları ve sağlıktaki gerilemeler sebep olabilmektedir. Dolayısıyla, bu konuda yapılan çalışmalar önem arz etmektedir.

Çalışmanın bir diğer amacı, bu konunun da toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı olduğunu göstermektedir. Ataerkil toplumlarda, açıkça görülmektedir ki kadınlar yaşlanmayı da erkeklerden farklı bir şekilde deneyimlemektedir. Daha önceki çalışmalar büyükbabaların torun bakımında çocuk bakımına nazaran daha çok sorumluluk aldıkları görülse de sorumluluğun büyük bir kısmı büyükanneler tarafından yerine getirilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmada amaç, yaşlanmanın sosyal boyutunun ve kadınların ileri yaşta üstlenmek zorunda kaldığı toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı rollerin altını çizmektedir. Öte yandan, tüm bunları sosyo-politik ve kültürel arka plandan bağımsız düşünmek ve hükümetin tutumundan ve konuya ilişkin söylemlerinden ayrı tutmak verimli olmayacaktır.

Araştırmanın önemi, artan yaşlanma oranlarının farkındalığıyla birlikte yaşlanmanın sosyal parametrelerinin de dikkate alınması gerektiğini öne çıkarması olarak gösterilebilir. Bu nedenle konuya akademik bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşmak gereklidir. Çalışma, annelerin değişen istihdam eğrisinden hareketle Türkiye'nin aile içi rollerini, yaşlanmada bazı rollerin kazanılması ve bunun toplumsal katılıma etkisi ve büyükanne rolünün feminist bir bakış açısıyla sorunsallaştırılması açısından önemli görülmüştür. Böylece yaşlanmanın sadece geri çekilme, tüketim ya da işlev kaybından ibaret olmadığı vurgusu, ele alınmayan yönleriyle çerçevelenmektedir.

Literatür incelendiğinde ise birçok farklı çalışmanın kadını ve yaşlanmayı sorunsallaştırdığı görülmektedir. Bu çalışmalarda bakım sağlama konusunda çok spesifik bir odak bulmak zor olmuş, hatta kadın ve yaşlanma kelimeleri bir araya geldiğinde öncelikli olarak aldıkları bakım ve sağlık durumları ön plana çıkmaktadır. Öte yandan, Kılıç, Yazıcı ve Yoltar'ın (2009) çocuk bakım hizmetlerinin yaygınlaştırılmasına ilişkin öneri raporlarında yer verdikleri kadın odaklı politikalar örnek olarak gösterilebilir. Bunun dışında, Artan ve Irmak'ın (2008) yaşlanmanın fiziksel değişimlerle sınırlı olmadığını ve kadın yaşlanmasının farklı deneyimlerle ilerleyebileceğini belirten makalesi; Samuel ve ar. (2018), yaşlı kadınların ücretsiz bakım işi ve ev işi açısından yükünü ele aldıkları raporu; Dowdell'in (2004) büyükanneliğin getirdiği ağır sorumluluklara değindiği makalesi ve Türkiye'de büyükannelerin sağladığı bakımla ilgili yapılmaya başlanılan önemli çalışmalar (Uğur, 2019; Taşkın & Akçay, 2019) bu çalışmaya ışık tutmaktadır. Toplumsal katılım bağlamında ise, Hazer ve Aslan'ın (2010) yaşlı bireylerin toplumsal katılımının önemi hakkında yaptığı çalışma; Quirke, König ve Hajek'in (2019) sosyal izolasyon ve torun bakımı arasında kurduğu ilişkiyi gösteren makale ile benzerlikler görülmüştür. Öte yandan, tüm bunlar bu çalışmanın bütünsel ve çok yönlü bir biçimde konuyu ele aldığını göstermektedir.

Çalışmanın araştırma sorusu şu şekilde belirlenmiştir: Yaşlanmakta olan büyükannelerin torun bakım deneyimlerinin sosyal katılımlarına etkisi nedir? Birçok araştırmacı yaşlanma çalışmalarında sosyal ağ veya sosyal sermaye gibi kavramları kullanırken, bu tezde toplumsal katılım kavramı tercih edilmiştir. Sosyal sermaye yaratan bu katılım, yaşlanma sürecinde yaşam doyumunu, sağlığı veya bilişsel işlevleri büyük ölçüde etkilemektedir. Bu nedenle toplumsal katılım kavramı tez için uygun görülmektedir.

Tezin ana teması olan toplumsal katılımı Dehi Aroogh ve Shahboulaghi'nin (2019) dediği gibi sosyal sermaye, sosyal destek ve sosyal ağ gibi benzer kavramlardan ayırmak gerekmektedir. Toplumsal katılım, ICF'nin (2001) tanımına göre, toplum içinde, aile dışında organize sosyal hayata ve hayatın

sosyal ve sivil alanlarına katılmak için gereken eylem ve görevler olarak tanımlanabilir. Elbette bu, kişinin kendisinin oluşturacağı ve dış etkenlerden besleneceği bir kavram olarak hayatımızda yer almaktadır. Dahan-Oleil, Gelinas ve Mazer'in (2008) toplumsal katılım kavramsallaştırmasına göre, toplumsal katılım demografik özellikler gibi kişisel faktörlerden ve erişilebilirlik gibi çevresel faktörlerden etkilenmektedir. Dolayısıyla, sağlık, sınıf ve etnik köken gibi özelliklerden de beslenebilmektedir.

Yaşlıların toplumsal katılımı söz konusu olduğunda elbette tanımda hiçbir şey değişmez, ancak yaşlanma süreçleri için önem arz eden sosyal rollerinin devam etmesi için topluluk yaşamlarını, kişilerarası ilişkilerini ve serbest zaman aktivitelerini sürdürmeleri esastır. Sepulveda-Loyola et al. (2020), yaşlanmada kaçınılması gereken sosyal izolasyonu önleyerek fiziksel aktiviteyi ve sosyal etkileşimi geliştirdiği ve depresyon riskini azalttığı için toplumsal katılımın çok önemli olduğunu belirtmektedir. Feminist bir bakış açısından, bu çalışma oldukça önemlidir çünkü yaşlanmada toplumsal katılımın kadın ve erkeklerde farklı deneyimlere yol açtığı birçok çalışmada belirtilmektedir. Elbette, bunun en önemli nedenlerinden biri de farklı toplumsal cinsiyetlerin çevre ile etkileşimlerini de farklı deneyimlemeleridir. Yine Sepulveda-Loyola ve ark. (2020), toplumsal katılımın yaşlı kadınların sağlık durumu üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğunu önemle belirtmektedir.

Goll ve ark. (2015), yaşlı ayrımcılığını, yaşlanmanın negatif yönlerini benimsemeyi ve güven eksikliğini toplumsal katılımın önündeki engeller olarak açıklamaktadır. Aile üyelerinin, eşlerinin, arkadaşlarının ve içinde bulundukları toplulukların kaybıyla baş etmeye çalışan yaşlı bireylerin sosyal fırsatlardan yararlanmayı reddetmeleri çok yaygın görülmektedir. Bu çekinceler genellikle reddedilme korkusuyla var olur. Kendinden küçükler tarafından reddedilme korkusu, bu çalışmada da kadınların sıklıkla dile getirdiği konseptlerden biridir.

Bu çalışmada yaşlıların toplumsal katılımı; toplum yaşamı, kişiler arası ilişkiler ve boş zaman etkinlikleri alt başlıkları ile ele alınmaktadır. Sosyolojik bir

araştırma yapılırken çalışmanın değişkenleri sosyo-kültürel arka planla uyumlu olmalıdır. Türkiye'de son dönemde 'aktif yaşlanma' ve 'başarılı yaşlanma' gibi kavramlar yükselişte olsa da sosyal katılımın önemi yeni ortaya çıkmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, toplumsal katılımı anlatırken kullanılan bu üç başlık, Türkiye'de büyükannelerin sosyal katılımı deneyimlerken erişebilecekleri kategorileri oluşturmaktadır.

Toplumsal yaşam, toplumsal katılımın en önemli alt gruplarından biridir. Toplumsal yaşama katılım, insanların başkalarıyla etkileşim halindeyken etkinliklerini gerçekleştirmesi olarak tanımlanabilir. (Dusseljee ve ark., 2011; Naud ve ark., 2019) Toplumsal yaşama katılım, cinsiyet, yaş, eğitim gibi özelliklerden önemli ölçüde etkilenmektedir. Hobi kursları, halk eğitim merkezleri ve yaşam boyu öğrenmeyi aktif tutacak ve diğerleriyle etkileşim halinde olunan her türlü aktivite toplum yaşamına örnek olarak gösterilebilmektedir.

Kişilerarası ilişkiler, toplumsal katılım başlığı altında seçilen bir diğer önemli kategoridir. Kişilerarası ilişkiler, iki veya daha fazla kişinin etkileşimde bulunması olarak tanımlanabilmektedir. İş arkadaşları, komşular, aile üyeleri ve arkadaşlar ile kişilerarası ilişkiler kurmak mümkündür. Elbette, görüşmelerin sıklığı veya paylaşımın derinliği açısından farklı ilişkiler kurulabilir. Bu ilişkiler toplum içinde yaşayan herkes için hayati öneme sahiptir. Ancak yaşlılar için hayati önem taşımasının nedeni, yaşlanma sürecinde sosyal ağın doğal olarak daralması ve izolasyon ve depresyona neden olabilmesidir. Bu nedenle ileri yaşlarda özellikle korunması gereken bir kavram olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Serbest zaman etkinlikleri, bu çalışma için toplumsal katılım kavramının son alt kategorisidir. Serbest zaman aktiviteleri, Kleiber (2016) tarafından, istenilen zamanda tercih edilen aktivite fırsatı olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Adams, Leibbrandt ve Moon (2011) tarafından serbest zaman etkinlikleri üzerine yapılan araştırma, serbest zaman etkinliklerine yüksek katılımın kişilerin yaşam kalitesine olumlu yönde katkı sağladığını göstermektedir. Burada serbest zaman

aktiviteleri, okuma, yürüyüş yapma, teknoloji kullanımı gibi aktivitelerle örneklendirilebilir.

Neuman'ın (2014) dediği gibi, feminist sosyal araştırma yaparken araştırmacı bağlantısız veya bağımsız değildir. Aksine, araştırmacı katılımcıyla bağlantı kurar ve bunu kişisel yaşamla profesyonel yaşamı birleştirerek yapar. Bu nedenle, buna karşılıklı duygu ve deneyim paylaşımı eşlik edebilir. Dolayısıyla, tam da bu noktada araştırmacı olarak bakımın karşı tarafında yer almış olmak dahi kendimi içeriden biri (*insider*) olarak görmeme ve konuyu sorunsallaştırmama sebep olmuştur. Türkiye'de aynı şekilde birçok aile bu süreci deneyimlemektedir.

Bu tezde deneyimler hakkında daha derin ve ayrıntılı bilgi edinmenin en etkili yollarından biri olduğu için nitel metodoloji tercih edilmiştir. Çalışma feminist yaklaşım benimsenerek yürütülmüştür. Feminist yaklaşımın benimsenmesinin en önemli nedenlerinden biri, yaşlı kadınlara seslerini duyurma fırsatı vermesidir. Bu önemlidir, çünkü ataerkil bir toplumda kadın olarak var olmalarının yanı sıra, yaşlanmayla birlikte başka bir kırılgan gruba dahil olmaktadırlar. Feminist yaklaşım, sosyal araştırmada kadını merkeze koymaktadır.

Derinlemesine yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme, büyükannelerin duygu, deneyim ve fikirlerine detaylı bir şekilde odaklanmak için araştırma konusu ile ilgili olarak kullanılabilecek en uygun tekniktir. Görüşmeler 19 katılımcıyla yapılmıştır. Katılımcılara kartopu örneklemesi ile ulaşılmıştır. Katılımcılar, 60 yaş üstü, kentte yaşayan, torunlarına günlük bakım sağlayan kadınlardan oluşmaktadır. Çocukların anneleri çalışıyor olmalıdır. Büyükannelerden detaylı bilgi alabilmek için en az iki yıldır bakım veriyor olmaları gerekir. Bunun en az iki yıl olarak belirlenmesinin nedeni, pandemi öncesi sosyal katılımın tamamen farklı olmasıdır. Katılımcılarda teknoloji okuryazarlığı aranır çünkü pandemi durumunda risk grubu olarak nitelendirilebilecek bu grup yüz yüze görüşmeden kaçınabilmektedir. Katılımcılar, çocuklarıyla aynı şehirde yaşıyor olmalılar çünkü farklı şehirlerden gelip aynı evde yaşayarak bakım sağlamanın hayatları

üzerinde tamamen farklı etkileri vardır. Büyükannelerin günlük bakım sağlamaları için çalışmamaları ve haftada en az üç gün bakım sağlamaları gerekmektedir, aksi halde aktif günlük bakım olarak adlandırılamaz. Büyükannelerin torun bakımının etkilerini gözlemleyebilmeleri açısından torunlarının okul öncesi çağda olması gerekmektedir.

Görüşmelerin gidişatı katılımcının demografik özellikleri, özel ve kamusal alanda günlük yaşam pratikleri, torun bakım uygulamaları, karşılaştırmalı olarak çocuk bakımı ve torun bakımı hakkındaki algıları, toplum yaşamı, kişilerarası ilişkiler ve serbest zaman etkinlikleri bağlamında toplumsal katılımları ve pandeminin etkisi olarak gösterilebilir. Katılımcıların 14'ü anneanne, 5'i ise babaannedir, yaş ortalamaları 62.7'dir. Görüşmeler, Türkiye'nin üç büyük şehri olarak adlandırılan İzmir, Ankara ve İstanbul'da yürütülmüştür. Görüşmelerin kırsal alanlar yerine Türkiye'nin metropollerinde yapılmasının nedeni farklı yerlerden veri toplamak, metropoldeki yaşamın onlara nasıl fırsatlar ve kısıtlamalar getirdiğini göstermektir. Katılımcıların büyük çoğunluğu evlidir. Bu demografik özelliğin önemli olmasının nedeni, torun bakım sürecinde 'destek' kavramının öne çıkmasıdır. Katılımcıların çoğu beslenme ve hijyen gibi temel bakım sorumluluğunu eşleriyle paylaşmasa da torunlarla oyun oynama, gezme gibi ihtiyaçların karşılanmasında dedelerin varlığı oldukça rahatlatıcıdır. Eğitim durumuna bakıldığında ise katılımcıların farklılık gösterdiği söylenebilir. Üç katılımcı ilkokul, iki katılımcı ortaokul, dokuz katılımcı lise ve beş katılımcı lisans mezunudur. 11 katılımcı çalışıp emekli olmuş, sekiz katılımcı ise ev kadınıdır. Katılımcıların çalışma durumları, çalışan kadınların hem arkadaş gruplarının yoğunluğu hem de çevrelerindeki sosyal etkinliklere katılım açısından daha girişken ve avantajlı olmaları açısından belirtilmektedir. Her iki grup da torun bakımından sonra aynı örüntüyü gösterse de hayatlarındaki değişim farklılaşmaktadır.

Görüşmelerin yedi tanesi yüz yüze, 12 tanesi ise COVID-19 pandemisi sebebiyle çevirimiçi platformlar üzerinden gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmeler yaklaşık bir saat sürmüştür. Görüşme yapılmadan önce katılımcılara onam formu verilmiş,

seslerinin kaydedilmesiyle ilgili onay alınmıştır. Katılımcıların ve bahsettikleri kişilerin kimlikleri tamamen gizli tutulmuştur. Sesinin kaydedilmesini tercih etmeyen katılımcılarla olan görüşmelerde notlar alınmıştır. Daha sonra kayıtlar ve notlar deşifre edilmiş, ardından analize hazır hale getirilmiştir.

Çalışmada betimsel analiz kullanılmıştır. Görüşmeler deşifre edildikten sonra, teorik çerçevenin de yardımıyla temalar oluşturulmuştur. Daha sonra, bu temaların altında benzer veya ortak olan, örüntü oluşturan konseptler bir araya getirilmiştir. Burada ortaya çıkan ortak kalıplar ve cümleler vurgulanmış, ağırlıklı değerler dikkate alınarak ortak cümleler ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Elbette burada nitel çalışmanın özü unutulmadığı için farklılaşan değerler de göz ardı edilmemektedir. Daha sonra bu temaların birbirleriyle ve literatürle konuşmasını sağlamak esas alınmıştır. Toplumsal gerçekliğin çarpıcılığını okuyucuya gösterebilmek adına direkt alıntılar kullanılmıştır. Analiz, beş başlık altında yapılmıştır: (i) demografik bilgiler; (ii) özel ve kamusal alanlarda günlük yaşam pratikleri; (iii) çocuk ve torun bakımına ilişkin karşılaştırmalı algılar ve deneyimler; (iv) toplum yaşamı, kişilerarası ilişkiler ve serbest zaman etkinlikleri bağlamında toplumsal katılım ve (v) pandeminin etkisi.

Analizlerden çıkarılan önemli bulguları özetlemek gerekirse, ilk olarak katılımcıların gündelik yaşamlarında yalnızca torunlarına değil, ailelerinden birkaç kişiye daha bakım sağladıkları görülmektedir. Bunun dışında, torunlarına bakan yaşlı kadınların gündelik yaşantılarında ev işleri oldukça büyük yer kaplamaktadır. Gündelik yaşamlarında torunlarına sağladıkları bakım, katılımcılar tarafından 'iş günü' kavramıyla özdeşleştirilmektedir. Bu sebeple, esasında annelerin iş günleri, büyükannelerin iş günlerine dönüşmektedir.

Büyükannelerin torun bakımı ve çocuk bakımı ile ilgili algılarına bakıldığında, hemen hemen tüm katılımcıların torun sevgisinin her şeyden farklı olduğunu belirttikleri görülmektedir. Gerekçe olarak ise, torunlarının hayatı ve geleceğiyle ilgili kararların büyükanneler tarafından alınmaması gerçeği ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Ancak, bu 'keyif' duygusuna ek olarak, çoğu zaman bakımda alternatiflerin olmaması torun bakımı kararının alınmasına yol açmaktadır.

Büyükannelerin bakım sorumluluklarını yerine getirirken, özellikle hijyen, yemek vb. temel sorumluluklarda eşlerinden ve çevrelerinden destek almadıkları görülmektedir. Bunun dışında, yemek pişirme gibi yardımlarla kendi çocuklarının hayatlarını kolaylaştırmaya devam etmektedirler. Dolayısıyla, torun bakmanın yanında tekrar kendi çocuklarının sorumluluklarını üstlendikleri görülmektedir. Bakım, çoğunlukla anneanne tarafından sağlanmaktadır. Burada anne-kız ilişkileri bağlamında bir kadın dayanışmasının izlerini görmek mümkündür. Bakım pratikleri bağlamında son olarak, katılımcıların sıklıkla yaşlı bir kadın olarak torunlarına bakarken kendilerini faydalı hissettiklerini dile getirdiği görülmektedir. Bu da karar aşamasını kendileri için kolaylaştıran bir diğer etmen olarak görülebilir.

Toplumsal katılıma dair önemli bulgulardan ilki, toplum yaşamına katılımın katılımcılar tarafından bencillik olarak adlandırılmasıdır. Bu 'benlik kaybı' kadınların toplum hayatından uzaklaşmalarına neden olmaktadır. Çalışan ve çalışmayan kadınlar arasında kişilerarası ilişkilerde gözle görülür bir fark vardır, çünkü çalışan kadınların daha büyük bir sosyal ağa sahip oldukları gözlemlenmiştir. Her iki grup için de kişilerarası ilişkiler hafta sonları devam etmesi gereken bir kavram olarak görülüyor olsa da bireysel anlamda etkileri çalışan ve çalışmayan kadınlarda değişim göstermektedir. Katılımcılar, bakım sürecini anlayışla karşılayan kişilerle iletişim halinde olmayı seçerek kendilerine bir konfor alanı oluşturmaktadırlar. Serbest zaman aktivitelerine bakıldığında ise, fiziksel aktivitelerin ‘iş günlerinde’ zaman yetersizliği ve yorgunluk sebebiyle sürdürülememesi göze çarpmaktadır. Gönüllü faaliyetlere katılım hiçbir katılımcıda görülmemektedir. Katılımcılar, bu tür aktivitelerde kendilerini ait hissetmediklerini, gençlere bıraktıklarını ve akran bulamadıklarını belirtmektedirler. Son olarak, teknoloji kullanımı torunlarla iletişim kurmanın etkili bir yolu olarak görülüyor olsa da çalışıp emekli olmuş katılımcıların serbest zaman anlamında teknolojiyi daha verimli kullandıkları görülmektedir.

Son olarak, pandeminin etkileri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, risk grubundaki bu kadınların ve ailelerin bu bakım sürecini devam ettirmekten başka bir alternatifi olmadığı görülmektedir. Tüm katılımcıların, pandemi önlemleri sebebiyle dışarı çıkmamalarına rağmen torun bakımına devam ettikleri görülür. Bu sebeple hem kendileri hem de aileleri için çifte önlem almak durumunda kalan katılımcılar, sosyal, psikolojik ve fiziksel anlamda çok zorlayıcı bir dönem geçirmişlerdir.

Sınırlamalar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, COVID-19 döneminde çalışmanın risk grubuyla yapılması yüz yüze etkileşimin derinliğini büyük ölçüde yok etmiş ve çevrimiçi platformlar katılımcılar tarafından daha fazla tercih edildiği görülmüştür. Görüşmelerde yaşanan sınırlılıktan bahsetmek gerekirse, katılımcıların 'duygusal emek' de diyebileceğimiz bu ücretsiz bakım işine dair zorlukları ifade etmekte güçlük çektiği görülmektedir. Eğer bu zorluklar ifade edilirse, sevgi söylemleriyle telafi edilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Ancak, görüşmelerde kısıtlama olarak da adlandırılan bu durum, önemli bir bulgu olarak çalışmaya katkıda bulunmaktadır.

İleride yapılacak olan çalışmalarda, bakım sorumluluğunun anneanne veya babaanne tarafından üstlenilmesi durumu detaylandırılabilir, çünkü bu çalışmada önemli verilerden biri anneannelerin sayıca fazla olmasıdır. Son olarak, bu çalışma kadını merkeze alarak bir kadın meselesini tartışmaktadır, ancak gelecekte torunların bakımına katılımlarını görmek ve cinsiyete dayalı iş bölümü ayrımını anlamak amacıyla büyükbabaların deneyimlerine de danışılabilir.

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