

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY  
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BEING A ‘WOUNDED’ CIVILIAN: UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES  
OF THE MILITARY MEMBERS WHO WERE EXPELLED FROM THE  
ARMY AFTER THE 1980 MILITARY COUP IN TURKEY

Aslı UZEL  
116627008

Prof. Dr. Hale BOLAK BORATAV

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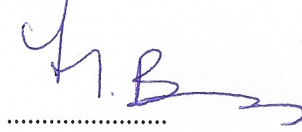
Being A 'Wounded' Civilian: Understanding the Experiences of the Military Members  
Who Were Expelled From the Army After the 1980 Military Coup in Turkey

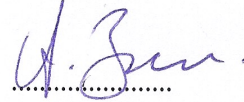
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Atılan Askeriye Mensup Bireylerin Deneyimlerini Anlamak

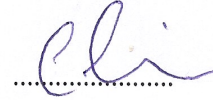
Aslı Uzel

116627008

Thesis Advisor: Prof. Dr. Hale Bolak Boratav  
Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi  
Jury Member: Doc. Dr. Ayten Zara  
Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi  
Jury Member: Prof. Dr. Cengiz Erişen  
Yeditepe Üniversitesi







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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to explore deeply the unique experiences of the military members who were expelled from the Turkish Armed Forces between the years of 1980 and 1984, after the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980 military coup d'état in Turkey because of their personal thoughts and values, and to reflect on the adaptation journeys of these individuals as they built themselves a new life after experiencing losses accompanied with traumatic events. The semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with eight expelled soldiers living in various regions of Turkey, aged between 57 and 62. The participants were exposed to several detrimental situations including captivity, torture, losing a profession, and a place called 'home' since their adolescent years, and continued to experience the expulsion related social stressors over many years. The results of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis indicated 8 super-ordinate themes: a) starting life from scratch, b) losing a profession idealized by others, c) having difficulties with explaining the self to family, d) being the subject of discrimination, e) making sense of the expulsion, f) coping with life after expulsion, g) feeling the effects of expulsion for a life time, h) meaning of getting one's rights back: 40 years later along with 22 sub-ordinate themes. In addition, the results, which provided information consistent with the related political trauma literature, suggested that the traces of unresolved, or avoided mourning processes seem to be maintained in the internal worlds of these expelled soldiers. Further investigations of the factors that complicated the mourning process are recommended for future research. It would also be valuable to examine the impact of these unresolved mourning processes on their children's psyche. Such studies may contribute to the efforts towards breaking the cycle of collective trauma, and developing prevention strategies. The clinical implications of working with the avoided emotions and mourning processes for survivors of collective trauma are discussed.

**Key words:** Expulsion, collective trauma, politically motivated violence, expelled soldiers, complicated mourning, coping.

## Özet

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye’de yaşanan 12 Eylül 1980 askeri darbesi sonrasında, 1980 ve 1984 yılları arasında kişisel düşünceleri ve değerleri nedeniyle, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinden atılan askeriye mensup bireylerin özgün deneyimlerinin travma ve başa çıkma üzerine literatürdeki önceki bulgular ışığında derinlemesine incelenmesi; kayba eşlik eden travmatik olaylar yaşadktan sonra bu bireylerin kendilerine yeni bir hayat kurma yolundaki adaptasyon süreçlerinin anlaşılması hedeflenmiştir. Türkiye’nin çeşitli bölgelerinde yaşayan atılmış askerlerden, 57 ile 62 yaş arası 8 kişiyle derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar, askeriyeden atılma sürecinde tutsaklık, işkence, meslek ve ergenlikten itibaren ‘ev’ olarak görülen yeri kaybetme ve sonrasında da atılma olayıyla ilişkili uzun yıllar toplumda ayrımcılığa uğrama gibi birçok hasar verici duruma maruz kalmış kişilerdendir. Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz sonucu edinilen niteliksel veriler neticesinde, 8 ana tema ve bunlara bağlı 22 alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır: a) hayata sıfırdan başlamak, b) ötekilerin gözündeki ideal mesleği kaybetme, c) aileye kendini açıklamada zorluklar yaşama, d) ayrımcılığa maruz kalma, e) atılmayı anlamlandırma, f) atılmadan sonra hayatla başa çıkma, g) atılmanın etkilerini bir ömür boyu hissetme, h) hakları geri almanın anlamı: 40 yıl sonra. Araştırma sonuçları, politik travma literatürüyle uyumlu bilgiler sunmakta, ayrıca, çözümlenememiş/kaçınılmış yas süreçlerinin izlerinin iç dünyalarında taşınmaya devam ettiğini göstermektedir. İleride, yas süreçlerini karmaşıklaştıran faktörleri derinlemesine inceleyen ve tamamlanmamış yas süreçleri sonucu, yaşananların atılmış askerlerin çocuklarının ruhsallığındaki izlerini araştıran çalışmaların yapılması önerilmiş; bu gibi çalışmaların, kolektif travma döngüsünü kırma ve önleme stratejilerine de katkı sağlayabileceği düşünülmüştür. Kolektif travma karşısında kaçınılmış duygu ve yas süreçlerinin yansımalarının, bu kişilerin terapi süreçlerinde göz önünde bulundurulması önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Atılma, kolektif travma, politik güdümlü şiddet, atılmış askerler, karmaşık yas, başa çıkma



## INTRODUCTION

It is known in the literature that being exposed to life events that are extremely stressful may have effects on survivors' mental health with the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic traumatization or depression, and also with the ruptures in relationships, lower levels of self-esteem, loss of vitality or social isolation even after many years since the actual experience (van der Kolk, 1989; Holen, 1991; Herman, 1992; King, Leskin, King, & Weathers, 1998; Storolow, 2007). Recently, trauma researchers have begun to focus more on studying post-traumatic experiences of the survivors qualitatively with an aim to differentiate the factors that make individuals vulnerable to or keep them protected from suffering from long-lasting effects of trauma (Gullone, Jones, & Cummins, 2000; Jones, 2002; Ai & Park, 2005; Dillenburg, Fargas, & Akhonzada, 2008).

In the context of collective and politically motivated violence including captivity and torture, the studies indicated that individuals are exposed to multiple traumatic events, and experience massive losses (Herman, 1992; Sveaass, 1994; Jones, 2002; Quiroga & Jaranson, 2005). People who are exposed to political trauma use various coping mechanisms such as social support, resistance or ideological commitment, which help them on their adjustment processes in the aftermath of trauma; the importance of post-traumatic social factors and individual characteristics on adaptation and recovery processes are also revealed (Everly, 1995; Snyder & Pulvers, 2001; Bonanno, 2004; Maddi, 2005).

In the history of Turkish modernization process, there were several military interventions; however 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980 military coup d'état has been considered as the most oppressive and violent one (Gurbilek, 2007, as cited in Alver, 2012). Many individuals suffered from the detrimental circumstances and basic human rights violations that included harsh interrogations, torture, and imprisonments because of their ethnic, religious, or ideological differences. Also, the lives of these 'victimized' groups have entirely changed as a result of this

military intervention. It is known that political trauma is currently prevalent in the entire world and continues to change the direction of so many lives (Amnesty International, 2015).

This study aimed at deeply investigating and reflecting on the personal experiences of the ex-soldiers who were captured, tortured, and expelled from the Turkish Armed Forces, which they had joined when they were 13-14 years old, because of their personal beliefs and views, as a result of the 1980 military coup in Turkey. There are few studies conducted with the political ex-convicts who experienced discrimination, social exclusion and political trauma because of their ethnic differences and political views during the 1980 military Coup. However, none of the studies investigated the experiences of the ex-members of the military. The qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with the expelled soldiers in order to examine their personal experiences, and the impact of these expulsion-related traumatic experiences on their psyche through their civilian lives.

Considering the potential long-lasting impact of political and collective traumas, it is believed that hearing the voices of these people after 40 years still carries importance. It is hoped that this study can contribute to the literature in terms of understanding; which areas in one's life are affected by the political trauma in the long term, how appraisal processes, meaning attributions and post-traumatic experiences influence coping with traumatic situations and adaptation processes. First goal of this study is to investigate how individuals make sense, cope with and build a new life after adverse life-changing events. Second goal is to make more visible the devastating effects of political and collective violence.. A third goal is to contribute to improving to the treatment strategies in psychotherapies with individuals who experience political trauma.

## SECTION 1

### PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

The 'trauma' word corresponds to the injury or wound in broad terms (Tummey & Turner, 2008; Nijenhuis & van der Hart, 2011), and traumatic events refer to the extremely difficult experiences that cause psychic pain and excessive distress. Therefore, some theorists have perceived traumatic situations more as a 'psychobiological wound' than an event, because it involves various evolving psychological, social, environmental and biological factors in itself (Nijenhuis & van der Hart, 2011). Trauma has been described as the psychological disruption that happens in reaction to a sudden and overwhelming stimulus, that comes either from external or internal sources, and surpass the abilities of active adjustment causing significant and pervasive effects on psychological functioning (Auchincloss & Samberg, 2012). Depending on their process, traumatic circumstances that create feelings of threat and danger can be categorized as 'time-limited', 'cumulative', and long lasting exposure (McFarlane & Girolamo, 1996). The duration of exposure that is either short-term or long-term, or the frequency that can be repeated occurrence or one time exposure, and severity of an event affect the level of stress and ability to deal with the distress. In addition, subjectivity matters on the perception of a traumatic event, and to be able to call an event as traumatic for a person, the person needs to perceive it as negative (Creamer, McFarlane, & Burgess, 2005).

The extremely stressful life events such as war, displacement, natural disasters, rape, sudden illness, torture and politically motivated violence that may overwhelm and exceed the human capabilities of coping, disturb the adaptation processes and affect lives of individuals in negative ways. As van der Kolk and McFarlane (1996) stated, these distressing events influence individuals negatively however, being exposed to one traumatic event does not always lead to traumatic stress. As Auchincloss and Samber (2012) explained, one of the most significant

mental states associated with trauma is helplessness that may be ranging from feeling total indifference or apathy, withdrawal to affective storm concomitant disorganized behaviors on the panic border. Also, regardless of the reality, the subjective meaning of the event, the ways of experiencing it, and the level of feeling threatened and helpless determine whether the person experiences trauma or not (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 1996). Various theorists and researchers in the psycho-traumatology field explained the importance of the pre-traumatic, peri-traumatic and post-trauma risk and resilience factors on developing trauma related disorders (McFarlane, 1987; Bresleau, Davis, Andreski, & Peterson, 1991; Sherwood, Dolan, & Light, 1990). The reactions following trauma, behavioral and physiological outcomes, interpersonal and environmental factors in the society level have been considered as the underlying factors of psychological trauma (Everly, 1995),

Being exposed to traumatic events that involve psychological and physical threats both toward the coping mechanisms and bodily integrity of the individuals, may even cause changes in the psychological, biological, and social equilibrium (Saporta & van der Kolk, 1992; van der Kolk & McFarlane, 1996).

### **1.1. COLLECTIVE TRAUMA**

Erikson (1976) defined collective trauma as a blow that damages the basic bonds, and ruins prevalent sense of being a member of community in social life in which people attach together. Also, incursive, unpredictable or unexpected, and destructive incidences that emerge during collective trauma influence both individuals and a group of people, who may be an entire community or a specific group in a society. Wars, terrorist attacks, sexual, ethnic and religious abuses, natural disasters, and politically motivated violence are some instances of collective or mass trauma that when exposed directly or indirectly have an immense potential to create psychological distress, and disturb the well-being of people in a society (Krystal, 1968). Some of the traumatic experiences are the outcomes of natural disasters including tsunamis and earthquakes, while the

others happen within interpersonal context such as torture, captivity, violence, and wars. Being exposed to trauma, and overwhelming memories related to the adverse circumstances that take place in this context especially shatters basic assumptions about self worth, predictable and safe future (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). As Lopez (2011) emphasized, both in individual and community level, traumatic events have vital implications on the behaviors and daily functioning of victims. Moreover, because the ego's corrective power is limited, psychic world of human beings is delicate to the ruptures more than repair (Rappaport, 1968), and although the outcomes can vary in time, and reveal its effects with different manifestations, the impact of massive trauma may not disappear completely.

In contrast to natural disasters, the victims do not usually attribute large group conflicts to fate, but feel more rage and seek for revenge when they encounter violence in the context of relationships. As a result of these tragedies, released emotions such as shame, helplessness and humiliation, and related psychological processing are almost obstructed; therefore, victims experience difficulties even on initiating the psychic elaboration to overcome the traumatic situations. As a result, the consequences and damages generally last longer among the members of a traumatized community.

To be a subject of collective trauma at a community level, traumatic events needs to leave their negative influences on individuals' minds with its memories associated with negative affects such as shame, guilt and disgust, and on the basic values of culture that are difficult to erase (Smelser, 2004). In collective trauma, traumatized individuals lose their identities dramatically as they identify and describe themselves as victims within a shared experience of violence (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009). Because trauma occurs in a socio-cultural context that usually extends over time, these memories are required to be remembered and integrated at a community level. Otherwise, as a result of collective trauma, social transformations can be observed with the destructions in attachment, support and identities of individuals within a community (Abramowitz, 2005). Also trauma survivors may develop mistrust toward the authorities and social institutions

through collective trauma suffering, which may result in their isolation and only trusting their own personal resources during their lives.

Moreover, historical trauma that has been referred to as a kind of collective trauma and used interchangeably with it, reveals the complexity of the traumatic events. Either past or present, these traumatic events affect many groups who share a common identity by leading them to suffer collectively, and experience psychological and social distress (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Its effects are seen in multiple layers including the individuals, societies, and family units. Also, unresolved collective trauma that is not confronted, integrated, and recovered continue to live within the members of a community and affect the generations as a result of the transmission of trauma (Volkan, Ast, & Greer, 2002). As Krystal (1968) emphasized, collective traumas can release several emotions including helplessness, uneasiness, alienation, anger, and numbness. These unresolved and unprocessed helplessness, humiliation, and shame, and also the work of mourning as a result of losses they experience, are transmitted to the next generations as their own tasks in their psychic world. Moreover, as Evans-Campbell (2008) explained, the impact of the trauma is accumulated in the descendants of traumatized individuals.

Trauma, either individual or collective, requires a system in which they can be materialized. Smelser (2004) explained that the system in individual trauma is again individual who is impacted by the devastating circumstances and related memories in their internal worlds, whereas in collective or cultural traumas, the system is society itself. It is known that inner feelings of safety and trust are developed during the first years of infancy within the mother-infant relationship dyad, and these feelings are overwhelmed and shattered as a result of facing the terrifying external reality. Similarly, traumatic events spread out their shocking effects, and release emotions such as fear, apathy, and hopelessness to the internal worlds of all members of a community (Giesen, 2001). Collective memory that is one of the main elements of collective trauma has been defined as

remembering the past in a collective manner with the shared meanings between individuals of the same community (Halbwachs, 1992), and this memory of past affects people psychologically in their current lives even after many years than the actual event (Pennebaker, Rim, & Paez, 2013).

As Zara (2018) emphasized, when violence systemically applied to a particular group, is accompanied with the feelings of helplessness, fear, and anger, this group of people's hope and desire of living are destroyed through the undermining of their spiritual, economic, cultural, and social building-blocks. Collective memory is generally influenced by the main ideology of the state that has the power (Edkins, 2003). However, the feelings, ideas, and memories of the oppressed people in this collective memory are usually repressed or denied by some states for declaring their own sovereignty. Also, traumatized communities usually exposed to several stimuli thorough their further lives that remind them the traumatic collective memories, but the tendency of avoiding these stimuli in a society has a potential to trigger more the traumatic experiences of its members and also avoids their expression of painful emotions, even though it provides a false sense of security. As a result, experiencing difficulties on interpreting the past and inability to integrate its pieces can result in identity distortions or compulsory forming of new identities of traumatized individuals (Eyerman, 2001). In addition, because it is very painful and devastating to experience past trauma, and to feel the shame over and over again, traumatized individuals gradually become inclined to be silent because of the social pressure (Rinker & Lawler, 2018). In this manner, some studies indicated that there is a difference between collectivistic and individualistic cultures on evaluating the effectiveness of these avoidance strategies. While individualistic cultures consider avoidant behaviors as something to be healed, in collectivistic cultures, they are perceived as adaptive, because expressing emotions that include shame, pain, and helplessness are considered as dishonorable (Slobodin, Caspi, & Klein, 2014).

Furthermore, the building of a collective identity of a group cannot be considered apart from the collective memory of a community (Zara, 2018), and an intentional pain, shame, and helplessness that is caused by a certain ‘enemy group’ to a group of individuals are resulted with certain psychological processes on the victimized people (Volkan, Ast, & Greer, 2002). Çeviker (2009) noted that the "we" differentiation, which forms the basis of the common group identity, is reflected in the "collective memory" of the group (cited in Zara, 2018). Also the shared psychological processes within a group that are triggered as a result of collective or massive trauma, strengthen the group bonding and the differences between two groups become significantly more intensified (Volkan, Ast, & Greer, 2002). As Volkan suggested and Zara (2018) emphasized, our lives are buried in the social and cultural worlds that contain a dual process with its own specific consciousness organized as “me/ not-me”, “we/not-we”, and we use these sociocultural factors to understand or define who is enemy or ally to us by using some psychological defenses such as externalization, displacement and projection. Freud (2015 [1921]) stated that the identity of a large group becomes more significant than the individual identity at such times. Also, these intensified differentiations between the large groups may lead to the intense feelings of anger, exaggerations of rituals, and bonding within the groups that may result in exclusion of ‘the other group’. Therefore, people who live together for decades become enemies as a result of collective traumas, and individuals’ own values are defeated for the collective will. As Zara (2018) emphasized, whenever collective anxiety arises, the members of a community rigidify the boundaries between ‘we’ and ‘they’ for strengthening their own collective identity. Consequently, both sides of the conflicts continue to suffer from the transmitted traumas unless the processes of reconciliation and peacemaking are accomplished, and reparative justice is provided at the societal level (Zara, 2018). Otherwise, the impact of traumatic memories and associated emotions such as shame, guilt, and rage keep expending to the members of communities who even did not experience directly the traumatizing event (Giesen, 2001). Also, many authors emphasized the importance of strengthening the community resilience especially in face of



collective traumas to break the cycle of collective traumas, to prevent the hatred, further violence, and to provide psychological well being to the individuals (Walsh, 2007; Zehr, 2008; Zara, 2018).

World War II, Holocaust concentration camps, genocides all over the world, 1999 Earthquake in Turkey, September 11 World Trade Center destruction in New York, and the military coups in Turkish history can be given as some examples of collective trauma. The current study focuses on one of the collective traumas that was experienced in Turkey, which is 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980 military coup d'état. In the following part, the incidents that paved the way for the military coup, the events in that period, and the consequences its will be briefly explained.

#### **1.1.1. 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980 Military Coup D'état**

The military coup d'état that occurred in 12 September 1980 by the Turkish Armed Forces taking over the government on the grounds that the murders were increasing due to dissidence of the leftist and rightists groups, and economic/ political decline, caused and left various detrimental impact on the lives of many individuals in the society. All the oppositional political stances had been seen as a danger by the military, and it led to a policy in which suppression, intimidation, and denial took place. The extremely adverse situations including widespread arrests, harsh interrogations, imprisonments and torture, were experienced in Turkey during these years, which influenced the entire society and especially the ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and the different groups who defended their own political ideologies mostly the leftists, resulting in the permanent changes in the direction of lives. As both Demirel (2003) and Zeydanlioglu (2010) explained, any diversity in the country had been historically perceived as a threat to the state's integrity. In the history of Turkish modernization process, military had played a significant role, and as a result of perceiving itself as the protector of the nation and country, the three military interventions took place in 1960, 1971, and 1980 (Tachau & Heper, 1983), and the 1980 military coup was the most violent and oppressive military intervention.

The social and political climate of the 1960s were affected by worldwide nationalistic movements, which also influenced already existing religious and ethnic conflicts in Turkey, and the struggles of Turkish politics through a democratization process were the underlying reasons of involvement of the military in politics. After the 1961 constitution, which was an effort of ‘organizing’ politics (Çelik, 2010), the tension in the country intensified back culminated in the 1970 military coup (Alver, 2012), and the regime of democracy was considered to be in danger (Demirel, 2003). As Çelik (2010) emphasized, increasing numbers of ‘antagonistic groups’ in Turkey were perceived as a threat to the ‘order’, rather than the necessary organs of democracy. Also, there have always been some groups arguing that the nationalism of Turkey was an obsession for preserving the state, and also as failure or humiliation after the ‘magnificent’ Ottoman Empire (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2010). During 1960s and 1970s, “Kemalism” the ideology of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the founder of modern Turkey and Turkish Republic, determined the meaning of politics for the public (Çelik, 2010). This ideology seen as an ultimate way towards the modern civilization recognized the secularism and nation-state as its basis (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2010). However this idea of gathering all the citizens into solidarity in a country as ‘Turkish people’ had become unsuccessful on building itself objectively with the effects of the so-called Kemalists (as cited in Çelik, 2010).

While Kemalism was aiming to gather all kinds of different identities under a single roof, the failure in its practice led different groups to imagine alternative orders in the state, and in the wake of 1980, with the increasing economic problems, industrialization and urbanization, demands of the different groups, which started as societal demands at first but turned into political demands later, started to direct political life in Turkey. When the societal demands turned into political demands from top to toe, the challenge between opposing ideologies to get accession to power become intensified eventually (Çelik, 2010). Besides, the increasing ethnic or religious incidents, leftists and rightists clashes caused a great tension in the political arena, which led to a more violent

atmosphere in Turkey. The official resources indicate that 5.000 people died, while the unofficial ones indicating 10.000 people, between the years of 1973 and 1980, in this atmosphere (Birand, Bila, & Akar, 1999). The leading political parties were not able to make a coalition in this chaos, while extremist parties got a chance to cooperate with the leading ones (Demirel, 2003). Furthermore, government authorities were not able to re-establish an environment of trust and welfare, while the chaos was over ruling and causing substantial damages to the rights of citizens (Alver, 2012). This was seen by the military as an entire breakdown of government authority. The military had seen itself the only responsible body to protect the state order in that atmosphere and thus legitimized the military coup (Demirel, 2003). As a result, the military intervention took place in 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980. The military had seen the main catalyst of this chaos as clashing ethnic and political ideologies, and as a result all were perceived as internal threats to the regime. The military coup targeted to suppress these ideologies.

Following the military coup, thousands of journals, newspapers, and the books were perceived as ‘objectionable’, and were burned, and destroyed by even entering the private houses of people. The Turkish media was silenced and restricted. Getting a good education became difficult, since the universities were under control, and there were many protests ongoing in front of them. Many academicians and intellectuals were intimidated, while most of the individuals were also suffering from the basic human rights violations by being denied their freedom, and being exposed to the sanctions that were incomprehensible. It is also known that many people lost their lives by being the victims of unresolved murders during these years. According to the report of Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, one million people were exposed to the torture since the 1980s until now in Turkey (TIHV, 2008). During the time period of 1980 military coup, systematic torture techniques were used during detentions with the ideology in which the aim was revealed as creating a ‘homogenous’ population in Turkey (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009). The leftist groups, Kurdish and Alevi people were seen as

the ‘internal enemies’; therefore they were the subjects of systematic tortures during the extended period in prisons. In the history of military coup d’états in Turkey, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980 military coup was the harshest one in every respect including torture. The military aimed at regaining its power by frightening and manipulating the society through the practices of torture (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2009). During the years between 1980-1984, 650.000 individuals were detained, 65.000 people were put into the prisons, 208 individuals were murdered as a result of direct or indirect torture, and the number of people executed reached 0 according to the official reports (TIHV, 1994).

Many prisons of Turkey are the places where the most unthinkable atrocities took place, and they are still keeping the memories, and traces of this military coup. Diyarbakir and Mamak Military Prisons were the most well known ones, and several studies had been conducted with the political ex-prisoners from these prisons; however, they were not the only ones witnessing the inhumane treatments that cost the lives of many individuals. Moreover, in addition to the civilians, the military members including cadets, officers, and petty officers within the Turkish Armed Forces had been exposed to many acts of these sanctions and inhumane treatments by being captivated, tortured, and expelled in the end by losing the only profession they knew, because they were also seen as the ‘different and unwanted’ ones within the army at that time period, because of their own personal thoughts and beliefs. The concern of this thesis will be on the exploration of the unique experiences of this specific group of people by focusing on their expulsion related experiences, and coping ways.

### **1.1.2. Politically Motivated Violence**

Political trauma or politically motivated violence is one example of collective trauma that causes highly distressing incidents, and affect larger groups. Political trauma differs from other traumatic experiences including war, family abuses or other interpersonal trauma, because sufferings and adverse conditions exposed to by an individual or a group with the instigations of the antagonistic

groups with a political agenda in which the rightness of traumatic executions are rationalized, and defended (Montiel, 2000). Therefore, the likelihood of experiencing collective guilt or remorse is lower. Moreover, violence that is being exercised with the political aims challenge individuals' basic need to perceive the world as predictable, secure, and controllable (Hamblen, 2005), and this may result in negative influences in individuals' lives including experiencing changeable anticipatory anxieties, impairments in functioning, and feeling the fear of being harmed or the loved ones' getting hurt (Konvisser, 2013). Moreover, the impact of political trauma transcend the borders of a country that actually experiences it, because it also affects people who share similar political views, and identify themselves with the victimized group (Montiel, 2000). Political trauma also has an aspect of evoking psychological struggle in the individuals, which lead them to feel like they can be the targets of the next attacks (Ganor, 2004). Therefore, coping with these extreme traumatic experiences involves the difficult task of rebuilding the basic assumptions that were challenged, and to integrate the trauma experience in the aftermath (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

Several research studies have examined the impact of political trauma both in children and adults. The discovery of the posttraumatic stress disorder had its roots from the examination of traumatizing impact of war on the experiences of American war soldiers (Sonnenberg, Blank, & Talbott, 1985), and PTSD has been revealed as the most common negative outcome of politically motivated violence in the history of psychology. The consequences of political trauma will be presented further in this thesis; however, it is noteworthy to mention that the outcomes of politically motivated violence differ from one person to another. Suedfeld (1997) revealed the importance of the individuals' hardiness and resilience in response to societal traumas in the instances such as Holocaust, Southeast Asian war survivors. In contrast, many studies demonstrated the detrimental and long-term negative consequences of political trauma (Koopman, 1997).

Genocides, wars, forced displacements, terrorist attacks, and ethnic or religious abuses can be given as some examples of politically motivated violence. Also captivity, imprisonment and torture, which are also in the main focus of this study, are the most common methods that are seen in political trauma. In the following section, the brief literature regarding the torture and captivity, and their possible consequences on the psychologies of the victims will be discussed in accordance with the trauma literature.

### **1.1.3. Captivity and Torture**

Captivity, imprisonment and torture are the methods that reveal the dark and evil side of human being, and also of politics. Concentration camps, slave labor camps, and prisons are known as the places where the cumulative and repeated traumas are being exercised towards the individuals under captivity over a time period (Herman, 1992). As Herman (1992) explained, these conditions have a critical aspect that is the psychological domination of the perpetrator over the captive with specific goals such as disempowering and enslaving the victim. For that, the perpetrators aim at controlling the body and all the areas in life of a victim. Therefore, the torturers control the amount of food that the victims eat, force them to wear a uniform or control what the victims wear, when they sleep, and even when they go to the toilet. Additionally, these instilled helplessness, isolation and terror destroy the victims' sense of autonomy and self. Also because these repetitive and systemic control technique are the organized methods of breaking the ties of victims and disconnecting them from interpersonal relationships by creating psychological trauma, the victims' sense of self are disturbed in the relationships with others (Herman, 1992). Herman (1992) also explained that this specific relationship type between the victim and perpetrator is crucial, because perpetrators may also become the source of consolation besides being the source of fear and humiliation, when they take the control over the bodies of victims. As a result, the psychological resilience of victims gradually decreases, and also the inner representations of the bonds with the others are destroyed. To resist these attempts of perpetrators, the most common actions of

victims is the hunger strike for regaining their control. Moreover, hunger strikes can be seen as a way of expressing the self when there is no context available or allowed to do that (Sevinç, 2002). As Human Rights Foundation of Turkey noted, eleven prisoners were dead because of these hunger strikes during 1980 military intervention. In addition, considering the body as political itself, these can be perceived as bio-politic responses of the oppressed bodies toward the states' sovereignty that has policies over the bodies of individuals, indicating that the body is not only a biological system, but it contains the ideas, meanings, emotions, and values (Gencer, 2014).

Torture is one of the human rights violations, and as Basoglu and colleagues (2001) defined, is a sociopolitical issue that has psychological, social, economic, political, and physical outcomes. Generally, torture is an act of giving misery, pain, and suffering to a victim that challenges the psychic and body integrity. Önok (2006) explained three properties of torture, that cause severe suffering and pain to the psyche or body, executed by perpetrator who is in the opposition and authority position, and for the specific purposes of inflicting pain such as information gathering, punishing, accomplice discovering, and confession taking. In addition, as the several interviews conducted with the political detainees of 1980 military coup indicated, the main purpose of the torture might be conveying the messages to the entire society with the screams of the victims to keep quiet, to surrender, and to obey the authority no matter what. In this manner, the purposes behind torture are not only in individual level, but also releasing the fear in a collective manner with the aim of repressing individuals and destroying their sense of belonging to a community (Sironi & Branche, 2002).

As Dinçer (2011) stated, although people in Turkey received the signals of warning, they pretended like that they did not witness these screams, and used their denials because of the inflicted fear by the state. Paker (2003) compared what had been done in prisons during the 1980 military intervention to the concentration camps. He also explained this silence and denial of people in the society as due to the fact that acknowledging the violence and being empathic

with the victims would release ‘unbearable’ emotions such as fear, anger, and depression that could have resulted in taking oppositional actions toward the state (Başoğlu et al, 1996). Sironi and Branche (2002) explain this kind of torture as it is applied to make people silent, to not speak.

There have been various definitions of torture that differ from one culture to another, depending on the political, cultural and legal understandings. For example, in one culture, a condition can be defined as a torture, while in another culture it may not correspond to torture. Also, using prison and torture separately in explanations may be problematic, since keeping captivated or taking the freedom of one is also a way of torture. The Turkish Law Dictionary defines torture with the application of physical persecution to someone for the confessions of their crimes (Önok, 2006). On the other hand, as Paker (2003) emphasized, torture is not only for getting information, but also for oppressing, releasing fear, taking revenge, punishing, and damaging the victims psychologically that shatters and leave the traces in the personality of political prisoners. Torture can have different forms such as physical and psychological that was mostly used during the interrogations in 1980s in Turkey. Psychological torture is complex by its nature, because it is executed in interpersonal context with prolonged sessions, and contains feelings of humiliation, threatening about death and dread (Kanninen, Punamäki, & Qouta, 2003). As testimonies demonstrated, the most common methods of torture during the 12<sup>th</sup> September military coup were the abuses by the guardians over and over again, intimidation, death threats, Palestinian hangings, systematic and severe beatings, leaving confined in solitary, leaving naked, falaga, setting on many dogs to attack to the victims while being blindfolded, making victims to listen the torture session of other victims, threatening the familiar ones of detainees, hosing, keeping under constant surveillance, not giving food and not allowing for sleep.

Furthermore, torture has been known as one of the major causes of developing psychiatric and psychological disturbances when the traumatic experiences are not integrated and organized in the internal worlds of victims. The



most prevalent psychological disturbances and disorders after captivity and torture are PTSD, depressive disorder, anxiety disorders, cognitive impairments, sleep disorders, psychosomatic complaints, adjustment disorders, hypervigilance, repetition of trauma and so on. Because a torturer overwhelms the resources of victims, and disorients them by inflicting feelings of shame, and humiliation, and creating dependency, some psychological impact of torture develop within inner world of victims. Other effects can be also seen as losing the self-confidence, concentration problems, emotion concealing, learned helplessness, privatization of suffering and pain, self-subjugation, and blurry lines between reality and fantasy (Sveaass, 1994). Additionally, while torture victims may not meet the criteria of the psychological disorders while revealing certain symptoms of trauma related disturbances, they may experience difficulties on their relationships, and problems on social adaptation.

In addition, torture can cause long-term psychological sufferings and impairments in functioning, which will be emphasized in the following sections of this study. In this manner, it is noteworthy to mention that several studies conducted with the victims of Nazi concentration camps indicated the impoverishment in the personality functioning, disturbances in the mental and physical health, and changes in the overall assumptions regarding the world and others even after many years than the traumatic events (Dor-Shav, 1978; Antonovsky, Maoz, Dowty, & Wijnenbeek, 1971).

Furthermore, various resilience and trauma studies have showed that majority of people exposed to torture or captivity do not develop any mental health problems. Several variables play important roles in the aftermath of trauma including pre/peri/post traumatic factors such as premorbid personality characteristics, environmental factors (e.g. social support or societal reactions), emotions, previous traumas, characteristics of the event (e.g. unpredictability, lack of control, forced separations, severity of situations), and age of victim. On the other hand, it is significant to remember the findings from the studies conducted with Holocaust survivors, that intense and cumulative trauma was the most

important factor of developing late symptoms despite predispositions.

#### **1.1.4. Long-term Effects of Political Trauma**

Traumatic circumstances compose a threat for individual's social relationships, self-perceptions, sense of control, assumptions about the others, and reality testing. In the aftermath of a traumatic event, experiencing at least minor levels of some stress reactions and symptoms is probable. Memory intrusions and avoidance are the most common symptoms of trauma survivors (Creamer, Putnam, & Pattison, 1992). The memory intrusions after a traumatic encounter aid people to process what has happened to them through learning how to accept it as a past event that takes a part in their lives, and enabling them to do future plans (van der Kolk & McFarlane, 1996). However, if these symptoms related to acute stress do not guide an individual to processing, or if they do not fade in time, the integration of traumatic experiences into a normal memory cannot be accomplished, and they appear with invasive and unintentional nightmares or flashbacks. That may lead a person to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and being hypersensitive to the triggers either internal or external, reminding traumatic experience.

PTSD is one of the various ways that people respond to massive psychological trauma, as Thomson (2000) stated. DSM-V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) defines PTSD under five subcategories symptoms that contain the type of traumatic experience (direct or indirect exposure), intrusion symptoms (trauma related distressing memory intrusions or recurrent dreams, dissociative reactions, excessive and extended distress, or certain physiological responses to the reminders, persistence avoidance of the reminders, negative changes in cognitions and mood, and experiencing certain changes in arousal/reactivity associated with traumatic event

In addition to PTSD, other psychiatric disorders that are also in trauma spectrum such as acute stress disorder and adjustment disorder, or depression and

anxiety disorders also may be developed, when a traumatic experience cannot be integrated. Also, the victims of trauma may suffer from substance related disorders, and impairments in their personalities (Brady, Killeen, Brewerton, & Lucerini, 2000). The comorbidity between PTSD and other psychological disorders is common, and comorbid depression poses a risk to chronic PTSD (Breslau et. al., 1991). Moreover, some massive traumatic events like Holocaust and other wars that lead to emergence of the post-traumatic stress related studies provided a basis for the examination of the long-term effects of trauma (van der Kolk, Weisæth, & van der Hart, 1996).

The effects of being exposed to extremely stressful life events such as natural disasters, war, displacement, and torture, may also be seen on the physical and mental health in the long-term, even after many years after the traumatic event. In the context of political violence individuals suffering from intense psychological distress reveal the symptoms of depression and PTSD (Silove, Steel, McGorry, Miles, & Drobny, 2002), and may demonstrate unique and complex psychological problems as a result of the dilemmatic captivity experiences (Herman, 1992; Graessner, Gurriss, & Pross, 2002). The studies conducted with the prisoners of war and World War II veterans found that severe captivity predicted suffering more than life-long anxiety, depression and PTSD diagnoses, and torture. The body weight loss rates have been revealed as the strongest predictors of psychological disturbances among prisoners of war who met the criteria of PTSD diagnosis after 40 years passage of time regardless of the other pre-traumatic risk factors such as early trauma history and pre-existent psychopathology (Speed, Engdahl, Schwartz, & Eberly, 1989; Eberly & Engdahl, 1991, as cited in Hunt & Robbins, 2000).

The studies that compared the impact of World War II, Vietnam War and Korean War lead to an increased attention on the research of long-term consequences of traumatic events by also indicating that the delayed impact of war can be experienced (Davidson & Smith, 1990; Blake, Weathers, Nagy, Kaloupek, Klauminzer, Charney, & Keane, 1990; McNally, 1992). One study that

is a five year follow-up, conducted with 200 veterans revealed that psychiatric cases have been becoming more apparent in time indicating the importance of understanding the symptoms that are war-related but arising after the combat in the long-term even after individuals have been functioning as normal for years (Futterman & Pumpian-Mindlin, 1951, as cited in Hunt & Robbins, 2001). Moreover, Eberly and Engdahl (1991) showed that among prisoners of war, depressive disorders and increased degrees of posttraumatic stress disorder had lifetime prevalence ranks.

On the other hand, some authors have discussed that the diagnostic symptoms in the DSM may not reflect the experiences of the certain individuals who experience human right violations, especially the experiences of survivors of political violence, and torture, and also in different parts of the world while examining the post-traumatic symptoms (Waller, 1996; Hernandez, 2002). Even though, the classifications on trauma spectrum disorders have provided a diagnostic system that has made the sufferings of the trauma survivors more visible and help them to get appropriate treatments, they may not always represent the subjective individual experiences of the trauma survivors (Becker, 1995; Hernandez, 2002). In addition, the idea that symptomatology of stress may not be only precipitated by a single event has been recognized by trauma researchers (Green, 1994; King et al., 1998).

Montiel (2000), as being one of the political psychologists also emphasized the importance of looking also at the situational and contextual factors of survivors who are exposed to political trauma and who live through the 'protracted social conflicts' aftermath of the traumatic events. She also highlighted that not looking at the further experiences of political trauma survivors may lead an incomplete understanding in the therapeutic interventions (Montiel, 2000). It is also explained that in several developing countries, political environment is not stable but rather changeable, and that therefore the traumatizing experiences are not episodic, but increasingly intense and, systemic revealing their effects on the many years in the future, by also affecting the

healing process of survivors. Considering the continuity of adverse situations in the survivors' lives, the word 'post' can be the beginning of the traumatic responses (Hernández, 2002).

Several clinical studies demonstrated that political prisoners reveal complex mental health problems, and psychological distress with unique characteristics reflecting the problematic experiences in prison. Being captured, and exposed to inhumane treatments cause prisoners to experience challenging traumatic events that overwhelm their regular adaptation capabilities, damage coping mechanisms, and threaten their body integrities (Saporta & van der Kolk, 1992). Several clinicians suggest that trauma that occurs in interpersonal context where the victims' basic human rights are violated, and the threat and harm are inflicted deliberately to the victim, is very complex, and that therefore it is not easy to understand and examine it with a single diagnosis. Moreover, these experiences are being inflicted on the victims while they are under captivity, and the trauma is experienced repeatedly in a period of time like in a domestic violence or war. As a result of the prolonged and repeated exposure to trauma in which there is no chance for a victim to escape, trauma symptoms may not cease in a short period, but last for many years after being released (Herman, 1997). For that matter, Herman (1997) introduced the "Complex PTSD" concept for capturing all aspects of complex trauma. This concept can be explained briefly as experiencing difficulties on self-regulation, and regenerating self-integrity in the interpersonal context (Ford & Courtois, 2009).

Furthermore, many clinicians have emphasized the importance of subjective understanding/ meaning-making and political context while examining the effects of cumulative trauma. Also, they have argued as that most of the studies in this field are quantitative, subjective interpretations of adults who come from diverse cultures have not been explored (Jones, 2002). Additionally, because the symptoms and coping behaviors would correspond to different things in different cultures, examining their effectiveness and significance would also vary (Eisenbruch, 1991). Recently, increasing number of studies have been use

qualitative methods for investigating the experiences of trauma survivors from in/post-conflict regions (Cairns & Dawes, 1996; Peters & Richards, 1998; Povrzanovic, 1995; Jones, 2002). For example, one qualitative study conducted with adolescent Bosnian survivors indicated that the political meaning given to the trauma led survivors to interpret their symptoms as 'non-problematic' (Weine, Becker, McGLASHAN, Vojvoda, Hartman, & Robbins, 1995). Similarly, the study of Paker (1999) showed that political activists who were the subjects of devastating torture in Turkey, scored lower on depression, PTSD and other psychiatric disorder related scales, than the non-activists, suggesting that political activism decreases the risk of developing disorders after torture.

Herman (1992) explained that traumatic events damage the basic structures of interpersonal relationships, break the ties with friendships, family, and community, and shatter the self that construct and support the relationships with others. Also, these events lead to existential questionings through the disturbance of the value system that helps them to make sense of their lives, and beliefs about the fairness of the world. The connection between a person and society are ruptured because of the traumatic event especially in the context of politically motivated violence where the rescuers or others in a society being indifferent to the suffering of victims. As a result, victim does not only suffer from the original traumatic event related symptoms, but also from the ruptured relationships, pathological grief, and chronic depression (Herman, 1997). In addition, political prisoners have a tendency to suspect others, and may evaluate the neutral situations as dangerous or hostile or threatening in interpersonal context (Ehlers, Maercker, & Boos, 2000) In extreme cases, that can result in paranoid ideation.

Furthermore, because of the devastation of the sense of self, trauma has its effects on the feelings of self-sufficiency, and on the victims' capability of taking initiative. Also, traumatized individuals tend to repeat their trauma unconsciously in their further lives by reenacting them in various ways (van der Kolk, 1989), or putting themselves in similar situations with a hope to experience a different

outcome that time (Saporta & van der Kolk, 1992). There is no doubt that torture has long-term impact on its survivors. Studies conducted with Holocaust survivors indicated that they have been suffering from several problems involving depressive states, excessive anxiety levels, disturbed health and psychological functioning for 40 years (van der Kolk, Weisaeth, & van der Hart, 1996; Nadler & Ben-Shushan; 1989). As Nadler & Ben-Shushan (1989) emphasized, individuals' emotional life quality is being altered as a result of torture and trauma related social isolation, problems with emotional attachment, and feelings of distrust.

A distinct 'torture syndrome' has been conceptualized for explaining long-term physical and psychological effects of torture under captivity that was generated from the studies with political prisoners, and that contains behavioral, psychosomatic, and intellectual dysfunctions (Allodi & Cowgill, 1982; Hougen 1988). Moreover, because the pain of torture never fades, another consequence may be the victims' suicidal ideation that is the most significant long-term effect. Zerach, Levi- Belz, and Solomon (2014) showed with their longitudinal study, that political ex-prisoners who experienced captivity during war, indicated increasing rates of suicidal ideations over 17 years in the aftermath. In addition, the unpredictability of the next torture session has been regarded as another significant dimension that creates constant fear, therefore negative effects on the psyche, that may lead to 'learned helplessness' that corresponds to a feeling in which people believe no matter what they do, they cannot control the outcome (Somnier & Genefke, 1986). As Hougen (1988) acknowledged, health problems of the victims may be cumulative because of being the expelled one in a community in addition to the effects of torture.

On the other hand, a significant number of studies revealed the importance of disclosing the trauma experiences and associated emotions in a holding environment, for being able integrate the unbearable to a meaningful narrative, and its positive impact on psychological health (Finkelstein & Levy, 2006; Boals & Perez, 2009). As also Storolow (2007) suggested, a 'relational home' is required for a traumatized person to able to verbalize traumatic emotional

experiences, and to maybe benefit from the trauma as a result of this processing. Otherwise, non-verbalized emotional traumatic experiences affect the sense of being, and become a part of traumatized state in an unconscious level with all the unbearable feelings within psyche, and that may lead an adult to suffer from emptiness, depression, dissociative states, psychosomatic complaints, or losing vitality in life (as cited in Carr, 2011).

During political conflicts, torture and interrogations, individuals are treated as like they are not humans, left vulnerable or helpless, humiliated, displaced from their familiar places with emigrations or forced separation including job loss. Thus, they experience major emotional and material losses as a result of massive psychological trauma that causes massive impact exceeding the psychic capacity for coping (Volkan, Ast, & Greer, 2002).

In the next section, the associated literature on traumatic loss, complicated grief and mourning processes will be presented in order to understand the impact of traumatic experiences in the lives of the individuals who were exposed to political trauma.

## **1.2. TRAUMATIC LOSS, COMPLICATED GRIEF AND MOURNING PROCESSES**

Loss, traumatic stress, grief, and mourning processes had been conceptualized as discrete dimensions in trauma field until recent years, while studying the psychological effects of traumatic events, and adaptation to traumatic losses (Neria & Litz, 2004). Recently, intertwining of these have began to be recognized (Lattanzi-Licht & Doka, 2003; Litz, 2004), and this expanded perspective has allowed for deeper psychological examinations of traumatic experiences and their impact. However, the boundaries are still blurry between traumatic stress, traumatic loss, and chronic, complicated grief, mourning, and PTSD, because there are few studies focused on the unique loss reactions after trauma (Neria & Litz, 2004). Many researchers suggested conducting more qualitative research for examining their interactions and also for understanding the



cultural differences in mourning processes.

Loss is known as a traumatic stressor that may cause the development of posttraumatic stress disorder that is described in DSM-V. However, some theorists have considered loss as different from trauma. Catastrophic events may create several forms of trauma, because they include multiple losses such as the loss of significant relationships, people, roles, a way of living, a job or a profession, economic resources, hopes, goals, sense of wholeness either physical or psychological, and assumptions, meanings about the existence, world, others, and self (Walsh, 2007). Walsh (2007) emphasized the importance of addressing and understanding these complicated losses while examining the trauma recovery processes.

In psychoanalytic literature, loss is considered as traumatic by itself especially when it occurs suddenly and unexpectedly. Actual traumatic events accompanied with loss can be an additional factor that complicates the mourning process, when it is associated with the feelings of shame, humiliation, and survival guilt of mourners (Volkan, 2007). The primary literature on loss and mourning in psychoanalysis had begun with the “Mourning and Melancholia” that was written by Freud (1917). In face of a significant loss, grief, as a unique, relational, and social experience, is an initial response that involves a feelings or a sense of shock, which changes or coincides with certain physical reactions such as muscle looseness, shortness of breath, needing withdrawal internally, loss of appetite and so on (Volkan, 2007). Volkan (2007) underlined the importance of differentiating mourning process from grief by explaining the process of mourning which has to do with internal reflection and dealing with the mental representations of the lost thing. Especially, when a group is victimized by another larger group, feelings about losing various things and concomitant feelings of sorrow and pain are mixed with shame, helplessness, and humiliation. These disruptions in psyche may prevent the victims, who must get through some psychological processes like mourning to be able to internalize or digest the difficulties of tragedy, from engaging in the required psychological processes

(Freud, 1917).

In psychology, mourning is usually recognized as a process that individuals must experience after loss for being able to accept the loss of things, and changes in external reality. The unresolved, uncompleted or avoided mourning lead people stuck in the middle of an uncertainty between the acceptance of adversity and adjustment to life. This may be considered as their waiting for the appropriate conditions to mourn; in other words, avoidance or prevention of mourning as Volkan and colleagues (2002) explained. Volkan (2007) explained that the process of mourning starts when a person still displays grief reactions and usually proceeds for years, until the mourner has had enough experiences in life related to the lost object including the significant anniversaries associated with it. It is highlighted that adults have capability of keeping the lost thing or person in their mind with their mental representations, even though they are lost in the outside reality. Therefore, mourning process has been accepted as a never-ending process in life, because reactivation of an inner relationship with several mental images of the lost thing can realize any time, especially on the anniversaries related to the loss (Volkan, 2007). When an individual suffers from traumatic loss, there is no termination or complete resolution (Walsh, 2007). As also Stroebe and Schut (2001) emphasized, individuals generally fluctuate between being preoccupied with their grief and reengaging or involving in a world that was transformed because of loss.

In case of losing, the reality testing indicates that the loved object/ lost thing is no longer in the real world, and therefore the investment of libido must be withdrawn from the lost object to release the pressure of the psychic energy. On the other hand, these processes do not happen simultaneously; thus the existence of the lost thing goes on in the psyche of a mourner. 'Normal' mourning process requires the winning of the external reality in this struggle. Also, through this process, a mourner starts to deal with the various forms of images of the lost things mentally, and to try to ease the associated emotions with loss. Volkan (2007) states about the optimum way of 'ending' this process as "A mourning

process only comes to a “practical end” when the mourner is no longer preoccupied with the mental images of the lost object and when the mental representation of the lost object ceases to remain ‘hot’” (p.4). In this process, intense pain, and deep sorrow, self-devaluation, and reduced activities are involved. Tähkä (1984) emphasized that the lost object’s mental representation that is “hot” needs to be transform into a “cold” representation to become “futureless”, and it happens when the mourner is not preoccupied with the lost thing in mind or the lost thing does not have a continuous influence on the desires, and actions of the mourner. That enables individuals to integrate some aspects of these images to their self, which is also explained as identification with the functions or aspects of the lost object in psychoanalysis. This identification process may be healthy or unhealthy leading to a ‘normal’ mourning process or not, and it can differ from one person to another because of the differences of the conditions of a loss, and varying levels of being prepared to encounter significant loss.

In relatively healthy or normal mourning process, individuals may deposit the images of the lost object to the “suitable reservoirs” that help them to externalize these images that inflict confusion and pressure to the psyche in a secure way while dealing with the loss (Volkan, Ast, & Greer, 1997). One of the examples of these unconscious reservoirs may be building some organizations or joining a group that are associated with the mental image of the lost thing. As Freud explained, the libidinal energy is now being invested on something lasting and alive (Volkan, 2007b). This process may lead an individual to gain something in the end with the enriched internalized world after this time and energy consuming mourning period. On the other hand, there may be unhealthy identifications that are not enriching especially when the loss is associated with trauma or the relationship of an individual with the lost thing had been ambivalent (Volkan, 2007a). Rather, a mourner may take the representation of the lost thing entirely, therefore a part of self-representation begin to contain this ambivalence of relationship. As Freud (1917) explained, this ambivalent conflict may result in

pathological responses, especially if a person has obsessional tendencies.

Experiencing ‘normal’ levels of anger is expectable, and even required on accepting the reality of loss during the mourning process, when a loss creates narcissistic injury on a mourner. However, for people who lose many things as a result of massive trauma, experiencing this feeling of anger is not easy, because it is associated with the destruction, murder, and identification with the perpetrator’s rage (Volkan, 2007c). Therefore, this avoidance of anger causes them not to start mourning in a proper way. Furthermore, all traumatic experiences carry other losses with them, and especially in face of cumulative or collective trauma people may lose their reputation, significant parts of their identities, close relationships, country, and sense of security, and control about the future and world. As a result, each of these losses contributes to the complicated or unfinished mourning process, or denial of it.

All these complications may result in several consequences including falling into depression, or denying it and attempting to the restoration of the lost thing with manic defenses, or being trapped in a chronic mourning process for many years, and becoming a ‘perennial mourner’ (Volkan, 1972; Volkan, Ast, & Greer, 2002; Volkan, 2011). Volkan (2007a) explained the perennial mourners as people who experience difficulties on identifying with the enriching parts of the lost object’s mental image and related adaptive ego functions, who therefore cannot find appropriate or secure reservoirs for the externalization of the lost thing, and do not have normal process of mourning that may lead to depression. Rather, they keep this representation of the lost thing in their self-representation as an non-integrated or unassimilated, specific, and “foreign body” also called as “introject” that constantly uses the ego mechanisms (Volkan, 2007a). This preoccupation causes an internal struggle with a disconnection within a mourner, in which there is a robust longing for having back what was gone, and at the same time, deep fears about confronting the loss. That struggle affects the adaptation to life after loss, and consumes the daily energy of a mourner depending the severity of loss.

Many authors explained the importance of ‘coming to terms’ with traumatic losses by putting it into a narrative including the related memories, and emotions, making sense of the adverse experience, and integrating them (Walsh, 2007). Otherwise, another possible outcome of the complicated grief and mourning processes can be transmitted to next generations as a psychological task that is unfinished. After horrifying traumatic experiences as a result of the political violence including the traumatic losses, torture, captivity, and discrimination, there is an unarguable fact that people become new people, either in a positive or negative way (Ortiz, 2001). However, people use various coping mechanisms to overcome these complicated traumatic circumstances during and after, and to make themselves a new life. In the following section, the coping literature will be presented, and the mostly engaged coping behaviors of the political and collective trauma survivors will be emphasized.

## **SECTION 2**

### **COPING**

#### **2.1. COPING MECHANISMS**

So far the relevant trauma literature, the possible psychological consequences that may apply to the participants who were expelled from the military services, imprisoned and tortured, have been emphasized in the context of collective/ political trauma in addition to the issues regarding the 1980 Military Coup in Turkey. In this section, the theories regarding the coping mechanisms, and then the studies about certain coping behaviors will be covered. In addition, the studies conducted with individuals who suffered from political violence and trauma, and experienced traumatic loss, displacement, imprisonment and torture will be presented.

The concept of coping in psychology literature emerged during 1960s and 1970s, and with the studies that gave an increased attention on ‘stress’ (Lazarus, 1993; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004), the researchers have begun to focus more on studying this concept by conducting more scientific studies and developing scales to measure it (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Billings & Moos, 1981). In the psychoanalytic literature, coping was considered under the term “defense mechanism” (Freud, 1933; Endler & Parker, 1990) during the times when the focus was mainly on the individuals’ internal world mainly ‘unconscious’ than external or situational circumstances (Lazarus, 1993). However, as Snyder and Pulvers (2001) explained, personality and environmental factors interact with each other in face of the distressing encounter and through the coping processes. Coping is the individuals’ cognitive and behavioral efforts of handling the internal or/and external demands that are perceived as burdening or beyond the existing resources to reduce the distress, to assess and moderate the tension accompanied with the stressful situation (Billings, Cronkite, & Moos, 1983; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stress leads people to deal both with their external circumstances

and internal emotional reactions (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986), and people try to cope with the stressors to minimize their negative influences with an on-going effort, and also with repeated actions (Snyder & Pulvers, 2001).

Many psychologists have tried to conceptualize and categorize several coping mechanisms from their own perspectives, and their studies with diverse populations illustrated many coping strategies. It is seen in literature that firstly, coping had been tried to be conceptualized with the “hierarchical approach” in which the psychological defences and traits were examined based on their level of ‘healthiness’ in an order (Menninger, 1954; Haan, 1969; Lazarus, 1993). In this perspective, people’ using consistent coping mechanisms across different circumstances are assumed. Later, the idea of ordering coping styles in terms of their healthiness has been given up, when the importance of the relationship between situation, time, and coping was understood (Lazarus, 1993). According to Lazarus (1993), putting coping mechanisms into a hierarchical order is not an easy and accurate way to understand their healthiness, since it can change depending on the conditions of the individuals. In recent perspectives, coping is seen as “a complex, multidimensional process that is sensitive both to the environment and its demands and resources and to personality dispositions that influence the appraisal of stress and resources” (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004, p. 747). In face of stressful and adverse life situations, coping mechanisms have an underlying role and impact on the well-being (Gullone, Jones, & Cummins, 2009); various studies have revealed that coping has a mediating role between the influences of the adverse life experiences and the negative outcomes in the health of the individuals (Aldwin & Park, 2004; Endler & Parker, 1990). Examining and investigating coping strategies is especially important for the adjustment and adaptation processes of the individuals who experience difficult life-changing events, since it also underlines and predicts the resilience capacity of people (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). As Snyder and Pulvers (2001) explained, coping is composed of the ‘conscious, effortful and intentional actions’ on responding to

the events that assault the 'sense of stability' and risk the 'usual activities'. It is also highlighted that coping mechanisms are not actions that are outside of daily lives of human being, but are rather a part of human experience, as special processes having their own laws activated in face of stress (Costa, Somerfield, & McCrae, 1996).

Folkman and Lazarus (1980) claimed that person and environment 'mutually influence and are influenced by each other,' representing an interactional and continuous relationship between them. 'Appraisal and coping' are considered as the bidirectional processes involved in this relationship by affecting each other and their long-term consequences directly or indirectly (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Also, it is known that traumatic events impact psychological well-being on different levels depending on the many aspects such as time or severity of the event. In the aftermath of the difficult events such as war, disaster, accident, abuse, political violence or torture, some individuals suffer from symptoms of trauma spectrum for a relatively short time, while some experience and suffer from the long-term even life-long effects of the trauma (Ehlers & Clark, 2000). As Maercker, Beauducel, and Schützwohl (2000) revealed in their studies with the political ex-prisoners, the way of reacting to trauma plays a more significant role on developing trauma related symptoms than the severity of the event, and how the traumatic experience is appraised cognitively is considered to be critical in coping. Cognitive appraisals are defined as "a process through which the person evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to his or her well-being, and if so, in what ways" (Folkman et al., 1986, p. 992). There are two processes described in reaction to the traumatic events, which are primary and secondary appraisals, that refer to the processes of initial perception of the threat in the distressing encounter and trials of coping with the related stressors (Folkman et al. 1986; Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). In primary appraisal, the person assesses the threat in face of a distressing situation, and evaluates the risks of potential damage, harm or loss, and also the opportunities that can lead him or her to benefit from the situation



(Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Folkman et al., 1986). In secondary appraisal, the assessments regarding how to prevent the loss or damage, or how the circumstance can be defeated or if any benefit can be gained from a situation are realized and to do so, the ways of responding to the encounter are evaluated (Folkman et al., 1986; Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub; 1989). As Lazarus (1993) asserted, coping has been seen in terms of a style in clinical and personality psychologies; however there are other perspectives seeing coping as a process that yields the view that coping mechanisms can change depending on the stress, and survival of one coping strategy depends on its effectiveness.

On the other hand, which stressors are appraised as life-threatening or unbearable for an individual depends on many factors such as the controllability, severity, duration, ambiguity of a stressful event, and the event's affecting many significant areas in life of an individual (Snyder & Pulvers 2001). Besides the event-related factors, there are also personal/individual related factors that influence how people perceive and cope with the traumatic events, which will be examined further in this thesis (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988; Lazarus, 1999). Also as Lazarus (1999) stated, intelligence, education level, socioeconomic and relationship status, age, gender, ethnicity, and physical health have also important impact both on the appraised level of stress and on coping strategies. It is known that individuals react and respond to traumatic events in different ways, and there is not a single way to cope with the distressing events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Herman, 1992). As Herman (1992) stated, differences between individuals and relational contexts play a significant role on the perception and integration of the traumatic event, and even two people exposed to the same event may respond to it differently, and also even the same person may use different coping mechanisms through their adjustment and adaptation processes depending on the circumstances. In this manner, addressing and understanding the human capability of changing the person-environment relationship that is appraised as troublesome through coping process is important, because the perceived challenge, and the emotions of individuals can be altered any time depending on the subjective

experiences, and meanings attributed to the event (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985).

Moreover, many researchers and theorists focused on the role of the emotions and affect regulation on the stress appraisal and coping processes. (Folkman & Moskowitz; 2004; Badour & Feldner, 2013). Coping has been considered as a response both to the emotions (Lazarus, 1993), and to the appraisals that affect each other continuously in face of a stressful event (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub; 1989). In the aftermath of traumatic experiences, developing post-trauma related symptoms are considered to be associated with the difficulties on the affect regulation, because the event itself and its reminders arouse some emotions that are needed to be regulated (Badour & Feldner, 2013). As Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) explained, appraisal of the stress usually occurs with the negative affects that are intense. They also stated that coping primarily functions as ‘down-regulating’ the negative emotions that evoke distress within individuals and also disturb their familiar and effective ways of coping. In the literature, it is seen that emotion regulation has been evaluated in terms of the levels of awareness or comprehension, acceptance, clearness, and individuals’ capability to sustain purposeful actions or avoid impulsive behaviors (Badour & Feldner, 2013). These proposed strategies of emotion regulation are considered to be alike with the coping mechanisms that are emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1990); but as Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) also discussed, emotion-regulation concept refers to a broader concept and it is more related with unconscious processes, and its main focus is not on the event related stressors like in the emotion-focused coping. Therefore, emotion-regulation will not be within the scope of this thesis.

Event though coping represents a broad and complex concept, various researchers and theorists have been focused on categorizing and classifying the coping mechanisms (Compas, Connor-Smith, Saltzman, Thomsen, & Wadsworth, 2001; Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003). As a result, coping strategies have been divided into diverse categories according to their features. Some of them will be emphasized through this section. In the coping literature, the scale

called “COPE” developed by Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub in 1989 that has been used in many studies, represented 15 coping mechanisms, which are “active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, seeking social support (instrumental), seeking social support (emotional), positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance, turning to religion, focus on and ventilation of emotions, denial, behavioral disengagement, mental disengagement, alcohol- drug disengagement”. Later, Ayer, Sandier, West, and Roosa (1996) conducted factor analyses for testing the existing conceptualizations on the coping structure with the 10 coping measurements. Their analysis revealed that they are grouped under 4 factors that are *active coping, social support, avoidance, and distraction* (Ayers, Sandier, West, & Roosa, 1996).

According to many studies, emotion-focused or problem-focused coping styles, avoidant or approach coping strategies, meaning-focused coping, resistance, positive reinterpretation, resistance, ideological commitment, social support, and social comparison are the coping ways that trauma survivors usually engage in the aftermath of massive or political trauma and traumatic loss experiences.

### **2.1.1. Emotion-Focused and Problem-Focused Coping**

The functions of coping mechanisms have been proposed by Pearlin and Schooler in 1978 with three main categories of strategies: strategies to change the circumstances that are full of stress, to alter the meaning of the event, and to deal with the emotions related to the stressful event. Later, these categories have been named as “active-behavioral, avoidance, and active cognitive copings” (Billing & Moos, 1981). Moreover, the most commonly accepted classification of coping was recognized under the two categorizations which are problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping, since coping has been considered as having two main functions, which are emotion-regulation, and change of the person-environment relation that is perceived as problematic (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Folkman et al., 1986; Endler & Parker, 1990; Carver

& Scheier, 1994). As Folkman and his colleagues (1986) explained, one of these functions is the regulation of the emotions that creates an intrapsychic threat for an individual, which is understood as emotion-focused coping. In this coping style, one attempts to ease and regulate affects that are aroused by the event to reach a calmer and a more balanced feeling state by denying it or altering the attitude about it (Lazarus & Lounier, 1978; Aldwin, 1999). Carver and Connor-Smith (2010) argued that there are actually several ways of reducing distress, therefore various responses are involved in emotion-focused coping such as emotional support seeking, soothing self, expressing negative affects, rumination or escaping from the situations that evokes distress. The other identified coping is about changing the person-environment relation that is perceived as problematic by a person, which is problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Folkman et al., 1986; Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003). In this coping style, individuals' direct their resources by observing the environment, gathering information, planning, and having purposes for the future on dealing with problems, making decisions and finding solutions (Lazarus & Lounier, 1978; Endler & Parker, 1990).

As Folkman and Lazarus (1985) explained, the problem-focused coping has been seen as the adaptive way of coping, because it leads a person to plan actively or engage in some behaviour on overcoming stressful problem. On the other hand, the adaptive quality of emotion-focused coping has been approached in terms of the ways of using it, either active or avoidant (Holahan & Moos, 1987). Expressing/ verbalizing the emotional distress or reframing the effect of the stressor cognitively has been usually considered as an adaptive strategy in emotion-focused coping, because there are active attempts to regulate the affects (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). On the other hand, using avoidant strategies in the absence of problem solving behaviors, such as distracting the self or denying the actual source of the negative emotions, has been seen as maladaptive (Holahan & Moos, 1987).

Previous studies suggested that distancing and emotion-focused coping is more used in face of an uncontrollable and severe traumatic event that also evokes feelings of helplessness, while problem-focused coping is more related to trauma that allows more sense of control to individuals (Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller, 1993; Mikulincer & Solomon, 1989; Punamaki et al., 2007). On the other hand, Thoits (1995) stated that stress has two kinds that are “situational stressors and emotional reactions to those”, and he acknowledged that individuals use both of these two coping mechanisms while dealing with these two kinds of stressors. That reveals the difficulty of categorizing coping mechanisms. In addition, districting the coping styles into this dichotomous domain have been argued as being too simplistic, since these concepts are not that clearly separated, complete or exclusive from each other (Skinner et al., 2003; Maguen, Papa, & Litz, 2008), and also because this may lead to underestimate or overlook the significant differences within each category (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus, 1996). Skinner and his colleagues (2003) also explained that using one aspect of a specific coping style might result in the main issue associated with the other coping style; for example, making a plan to solve a problem may also help for relieving some emotions. Also, the goal behind the behaviour clarifies the function and the place of coping response in a category in the end. Carver and Connor-Smith (2010) provided an example about the place of support seeking, whether it is in problem-focused or emotion-focused category of coping. It is explained that if it is related to get some advice from the others about what to do, it is considered as a part of problem-focused coping; however when getting some emotional support and reassurance from another person is the main purpose, then it is emotion-focused coping (Ayers, Sandler, West, & Roosa, 1996). In addition, the importance of thinking about these two coping styles as complementary to each other, instead of two separate and independent categories has been also emphasized, because they facilitate each other (Lazarus, 2006; Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010).

Moreover, the context and specific issues regarding the problem and also personality of the individual who deals with the problem have been found as associated with using the combination of these two coping mechanisms (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Solomon, Mikulincer, & Avitzu, 1988). As Thoits (1995) suggested, using multiple coping strategies and having alternative ways of coping responses have been seen as what is ideal in face of the stressful life events. It is also said that while emotion-focused coping seems to help people on keeping their affective balance, not using any feature of problem-solving mechanisms can lead to psychological negative psychological results (Solomon, Mikulincer, & Avitzu, 1988). As Holahan and Moos (1987) also explained, using avoidant emotion coping can be perceived as adaptive on managing one's daily activities right after the traumatic event; however relying on this coping style at the expense of problem solving strategies over time can result in mental health problems. These authors also embraced the other side of the coin, and they suggested that relying on problem-focused coping without active emotional coping could also be problematic (Holahan & Moos, 1987). As Schnider, Elhai, and Gray (2007) discussed, there is still less knowledge regarding the association between specific coping mechanisms and traumatic loss, and the relationship between PTSD, complicated grief and coping responses; but, various researches indicated the relation between emotion-focused coping, specifically the avoidant strategies, and general negative psychological outcomes (Coyne & Racioppo, 2000). Some studies conducted with depressive people revealed that they generally rely more on emotion-focused coping than problem solving strategies (Billings & Moos, 1981). Moreover, Foa, Davidson, and Frances (1999) suggested that using adaptive and effective coping mechanisms may soften the post-traumatic reactions or may even prevent the development of posttraumatic disorder for who experience traumatic loss (Schnider, Elhai, & Gray, 2007). The coping styles are considered as important for people who are under risk of developing PTSD and complicated grief because of the traumatic loss they experience, since coping has a mediator role on the relationship between the loss and complicated grief (Stewart, 1999, as cited in Schnider, Elhai, & Gray, 2007).

In the context of military conflicts and individuals who suffer from politically motivated violence, information is still insufficient to see which coping mechanisms are effective on protecting mental health. The study conducted with Nepalese torture survivors indicated that people who were isolated and socially withdrawn and unable to cope with the effects of adverse situation they experienced, suffered from depressive symptoms, somatization and excessive levels of anxiety (Emmelkamp, Komproe, Van Ommeren, & Schagen, 2002). As Benotsch and his colleagues (2000) claimed, distractive and avoidant coping strategies among prisoners influence various areas in their adjustment trajectories in the aftermath of traumatic experience in ineffective ways, because they avoid the extensive cognitive-emotional processing, sharing the traumatic experiences even with the significant others, which also restrict the access to the social and familial resources in return.

### **2.1.2. Avoidant and Approach Coping**

One of these distinctions is avoidant vs. approach coping style that were developed as the extensions of disengagement vs. engagement coping styles respectively (Littleton, Horsley, John, & Nelson, 2007; Jensen, Thoresen, & Dyb, 2015). In the approach coping style, dealing with the emotions or stressors is seen as the purpose including the areas of mostly problem-focused coping and some of the emotion-focused coping, which are acceptance, emotion-regulation, seeking support, cognitive restructuring (Moos & Schaefer, 1993; Roth & Cohen, 1986; Snyder & Pulvers, 2001; Littleton et al., 2007). On the other hand, ‘denial, avoidance, and wishful thinking’ are seen as the basic elements of disengagement or avoidant coping (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). In avoidance coping, denial or withdrawal from the situation is explained as the ways of individuals’ coping to decrease their situation related emotions in the absence of reducing problematic facets of the circumstance itself (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000).

According to Carver and his colleagues (1989), mental and behavioural disengagement, denial and also substance usage are involved in avoidance coping

mechanisms. Avoidant coping has been generally seen as the emotion-focused coping, since it aims at escaping from the distress. This coping style has been considered as less adaptive in many situations than approach or engagement coping style in face of a stressful life event, and discussed that it may be resulted with the severe long-term distress in the future leading a cycle of avoidance and intrusion (Najmi & Wegner 2008; Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). As Carver and Connor-Smith (2010) emphasized, individuals who use disengagement coping usually behave in a manner in which like they do not have to react emotionally or behaviourally toward the stressful situation, since their main effort is mostly on acting like there is no stressor. They also explained that it creates a distance between the experience of an individual and the external reality because of the phantasy and wishful thinking (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010).

It is suggested that the traces of these denied or disengaged stressors, avoided unpleasant emotions, and thoughts become intractable as a result of the excessive using of denial or avoidance, and it can lead more intrusion and distressing thoughts (Horowitz, 1976; Tait & Silver, 1989). Many studies indicated that this cycle of intrusion and avoidance has a mediator role on the relationship between distressing life events and psychological problems in long term including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Creamer, Burgess, & Pattison, 1992; Hovanitz, 1986; Sutker, Davis, Uddo, & Ditta, 1995). Moreover, the use of these avoidant coping strategies becomes more likely the higher the amount of threat that is perceived by a person, that prevents appraising the stressor as a challenge or opportunity to benefit from (Carver & Scheier, 1994; Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). Another domain of disengagement coping that is renouncing or abandoning the goals has also been recognized (Carver et al., 1989). In this coping style, the very existence of the stressor and its affective impact are embraced or addressed by a person, but in a way of relinquishing an investment in something else, because only by disengaging from the threatened goal, the negative emotions related to the threat are avoided (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010).



In contrast to the lack of instruments in avoidant coping, many options of coping have been emphasized in approach coping style, and Littleton and his associates classified them as “problem/behavioral approach, problem/behavioral avoidance, emotion/cognitive approach, emotion/cognitive avoidance” coping styles in 2007.

### **2.1.3. Meaning-Focused Coping**

In the literature, another critical way of coping has been recognized, that is meaning-focused coping. The responses that alter the appraisal of the stress and meaning of the traumatic event are involved in meaning-focused coping (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). What distinguishes the meaning-focused coping from emotion-focused strategies, since both seem to serve the same function, has been explained with the special and significant role of the meaning attribution that may lead to positive changes in one's lives in the aftermath of traumatic loss and adverse life-changing events. Baumeister (1991) defines meaning as a “mental representation of possible relationships among things, events, and relationships. Thus, *“meaning connects things”* (p. 15). Even though defining and conceptualizing meaning is difficult, it is known that it is in the centre of human life, and has an underlying role on the adaptation and adjustment trajectories when people face traumatic life events (Guo, Gan, & Tong, 2013).

It is seen that recently, many researchers have begun to focus on the meaning making processes, the role of the attributed meanings and restoring the meaning after extremely distressing life events. Park (2010) provided some specific tenets that many theorists described and agreed upon in relation to the role of meaning making and its impact on the adjustment process after stressful life events, based on the Meaning-Making Model introduced by Park and Folkman in 1997. Meaning making attempts are seen as an individual's effort to decrease this discrepancy to go back to their pre-traumatic sense of self, perceptions of world and others that include the evaluations of the world as a meaningful and safe, the self as worthwhile and the others as good (Greenberg,

1995; Joseph & Linley, 2005; Skaggs & Barron, 2006; Park, 2010). All these processes have been regarded as the journey through the successful adjustment after traumatic event or extremely stressful encounter. Some specific processes that are automatic, unconscious and coping operations requiring one's efforts have been emphasized in the conceptualization of meaning making (Creamer, Burgess, & Pattison, 1992; Folkman, 1997; Park, 2010).

As Moulds and Bryant (2004) suggested, automatic and effortful processing are involved in acute stress disorder, or dissociative symptoms and overall trauma recovery process. Park and Folkman (1997) stated that many coping strategies that are measured by the scales are actually the reflection of meaning-focused coping, because these coping activities are oriented toward the alteration of the appraised or global meaning. On the other hand, researchers explained that meaning-making coping differs from other coping strategies, because it does not aim at altering the problematic condition, or directly reducing and regulating the negative feelings and their pressure; rather, its main object is on reducing this discrepancy between appraised and global meaning (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2007; Pearlin, 1991). As Thompson (1985) explained, meaning evaluation in this coping process is executed with the re-evaluation of the positive meaning of the event. In this process, some specific questions are presented that individuals must answer to themselves about why the traumatic event occurred, and why it happened to the person, what aspects of the life has changed in the aftermath of the event, and eventually, which parts lead a person to consider the event as 'meaningful' to the self (Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Collins, Taylor, & Skokan, 1990; Dollinger, 1986; Guo, Gan, & Tong, 2013; Silver, Boon, & Stones, 1983).

Some possible ways of meaning-focused coping that can result with positive outcomes are described by Park and Folkman (1997), which are empowering social resources that contain the improvement of the interpersonal relationships in family and friendship, networking new social supports, ameliorating personal resources that involves enhancing self-understanding, self-

reliance, empathy, altering cognitions, goals and priorities in life, and enhancing new coping and emotion regulation skills such as emotion-regulation and problem solving strategies and help-seeking skills. In addition, positive reappraisal, modifying prior goals and making goal-oriented plans with a problem-focused coping style, and actuating the spiritual beliefs and experiences are described as meaning-focused coping (Folkman, 1997).

Still little is known about the relationship between meaning making coping and adaptation especially in face of uncontrollable and extremely distressing life events such as loss, because it is still difficult to assess the contributions of meaning-focused coping on mental health with the existing instruments in a valid and reliable way (Guo, Gan, & Tong, 2013; Moskowitz, Folkman, Collette, & Vittinghoff, 1996). However, the importance of facing the long-term recovery process after completing the initial coping phase by individuals who experience and suffer from traumatic events has been highlighted in the literature, since it has an important effect on the long-term mental and physical health (Park, 2010). Also, the role of search for existential meaning in this phase on the adaptation process after the traumatic event through the following years has been emphasized (Xuereb & Dunlop, 2003).

As has been presented previously in this thesis, politically motivated violence and especially imprisonment and torture may lead to enormous and permanent changes in one's cognition, memory and emotion (Herman, 1992). In addition, individuals may lose the sense of existential meaning, trust and safety that influence their perception of the others, the world, and their identity (Silove, 1999). On the other hand, the studies conducted with political ex-prisoners revealed that the attribution of political meaning to the trauma and explaining the adverse experiences according to their ideology helped individuals' emotional processing of trauma that in turn affected the posttraumatic psychological states (Başoğlu & Paker, 1995; Ortiz, 2001). Moreover, political goals and reasons were evaluated as the causes of the interpersonal violence they experienced during the meaning making process, which has been interpreted as potentially contributing to

positive appraisals and the self-esteem of the ex-prisoners (Başoğlu & Paker, 1995; Başoğlu et al., 1996). Similarly, the studies conducted with the human rights activists who experienced political violence in Colombia, indicated that being involved in a meaning making process in the context of trusting interpersonal relationships, and comprehending the political bases behind the inhumane treatment, and believing in their own motivation that is working for peace and justice led to an enhanced sense of internal coherence (Hernández, 2002).

As Park (2010) explained, people usually convert the appraised meaning of an event in a way that may enable them to perceive the event as less hazardous and more coherent with their already existing global desires and beliefs. One of the examples in this manner is related to individuals' starting to perceive the event as more benign to them than to the people who experienced the same event; this will also be emphasized in this thesis under the section of social comparison as one of the coping mechanisms (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that individuals may sometimes see themselves as lucky or fortunate for not experiencing situations worse than they have been through (Thomson, 1985; Taylor, Wood, & Lichtman, 1983).

#### **2.1.4. Political Meaning Attribution and Ideological Commitment**

Several studies evidenced that political prisoners generally reveal relatively high levels on the post-traumatic growth and resilience measures; since attributing political causes and ideological reasons to the traumatic situations makes their adverse experiences more meaningful, influencing their perceptions of self as sacrificing themselves for higher purposes (Salo, Punamaki, & Qouta, 2004; Ursano, Grieger, & McCarrol, 1996). Political awareness, and clinging to this awareness on appraising and making sense of the experiences in terms of the ideology is considered as a coping mechanism. Elsass and Phuntsok (2008) claimed that, among Tibetan tortured individuals "political engagement" has been used as a way of coping way and overcoming their adverse traumatic experiences.

In the post-traumatic growth literature, the voluntary activism of the political prisoners and torture survivors has been emphasized, since engaging in political conflicts and resisting actively, revealing strong commitment to their ideology are considered as protective factors helping them on their coping and recovery processes (Salo, Punamaki, & Qouta, 2004; Ursano, Grieger, & McCarroll, 1996). In this manner, political awareness and preparedness for traumatic experiences have been argued to affect the mental health of political prisoners. On the other hand, the unexpectedness, uncontrollability and unpredictability of the traumatic events have been considered as the predictors of the posttraumatic psychological responses that may lead to depression, anxiety and stress related disorders (Mineka & Kelly, 1989). Basoglu and his friends (1996) evidenced that political prisoners who were prepared for being arrested and tortured indicated less severe PTSD symptoms and low depression and anxiety. Similarly, the combat soldiers who anticipated and were prepared for traumatic experiences indicated higher scores on post-traumatic growth scales revealing that they also benefited from their violent experiences (Ursano et al., 1996).

Punamaki and colleagues (2007) explain that ideological commitment provides a change for individuals to assess their experiences and make sense about it leading to feelings of control and power, and also affecting their psychological health. As Salo, Punamaki, & Qouta (2004) explained, there is a positive association between the perceptions of political ex-convicts regarding their self and others and the intensity of the posttraumatic stress disorder related symptoms. The research conducted with political ex-prisoners during 1980 military coup in Turkey indicated that the social context and perception of self influence the PTSD symptoms, showing that all the political-prisoners who were evaluating the police and state from a more negative side had lower scores on PTSD than the prisoners who were not political, regardless of being tortured or not (Basoglu et al., 1996). Therefore, it is proposed that being politically aware can also function as a factor of resilience against developing posttraumatic stress disorder (Basoglu et al., 1996). In this manner, Tedeschi (1999) explained that

appraising the source of the trauma, and perceiving the enemies and interrogators, as they are external and foreigner to the individuals are regarded as more helpful for political prisoners than being victimized by reliable and familiar people. Moreover, ideological commitment while coping with the political conflicts and struggles may enhance resilience as the studies with subjects from Palestine, South Africa, and Philippines indicated (Jones, 2002; Kostelny & Garbarino, 1994; Protacio-Marcelino, 1989).

Furthermore, Punamaki (1996) found that the individuals, who revealed more ideological commitment, suffered less from psychosocial problems in the aftermath of the traumatic experiences. In addition, being exposed more to the traumatic situations has been found as yielding more commitment in return (Punamaki, 1996; Jones, 2002). As a result, the interpretation of trauma and attributing political reasons while making sense of the adverse experiences have underlying impact on the mental health, and these interpretations may also change depending on the military and political contexts and time (Qouta, Punamaki, & El Sarraj, 1995; Jones, 2002). Eggerman and Panter-Brick (2010) indicated that Afghanistan subjects who made sense of the violent experiences in terms of their values about morals, honour and service during the war were better able to bear war-related adverse experiences on coping processes.

#### **2.1.5. Resistance**

Herman (1992) explained the risks associated with losing the sense of autonomy and control as a result of the captivity experiences. She explained that perpetrators' forcing the political detainees to wear uniforms of criminals that are identical, restricting and controlling their food intake and sleep times, serves a function of destroying their sense of autonomy by violating their bodily boundaries besides releasing the feelings of fear (Herman, 1992). These control methods that aim at impressing the terror and helplessness to the victims' minds are explained as the organized ways of enervating and breaking the bonding of victims that may also destroy the internal symbolism of bonds within the victim

affecting further relationships. Therefore, resistance is known as a coping mechanism that is usually used by the individuals who are exposed to politically motivated violence such as imprisonment and torture, and war conditions.

The study conducted by Punamaki (1988) with the Palestinian political ex-convicts revealed that the most frequent coping mechanism was resistance through hunger strikes, explained as the only way to deal with the problems in prison to fight for their rights and against the adverse conditions. Similar examples are seen in the narratives of Holocaust survivors who had found the ways of protecting their sense of integrity and self-control with active resistance by fasting in Nazi concentration camps (Herman, 1992). The examples of resistance behaviors which ex-prisoners were engaged in at prisons and after their release in North Belfast, were presented as getting education about military and politics, being opposed to wear identical and mandatory uniforms, protesting, contradicting/challenging the authorities with legal means by searching for their legal rights, and establishing collective organizations, that also reveal their political meaning attributions through coping processes (McEvoy, Shirlow, & McElrath, 2004). McEvoy, Shirlow and McElrath (2004) investigated the post-prison experiences of political prisoners and their families, who were exposed to continuous political, social and civil exclusion, because they have been seen as ‘criminals’ in the society, and also their coping mechanisms that lead them to adjust their circumstances. The central coping ways used by the subjects were found as coordinated and active resistance on dealing with the forced power and oppression against them in the state, and they appraised and evaluated the ‘criminalization’ of different groups such as ethnic minorities, leftists, different races, their being imprisoned, and tortured in terms of the state’s desire to exert power on them (McEvoy, Shirlow, & McElrath, 2004; McEvoy, McConnachi, & Jameson, 2007). Therefore, their resistance has been perceived as an intended and collective coping that may provide them with a sense of agency and will (McEvoy et al., 2007). However, there may be other forms of resistance other than the collective and organized resistance. As Crewe (2007) explained, because the

oppression is toward the identity of individuals, some people resist it at individual level. Not showing any signs of weakness or vulnerability, processing and experiencing the pain inside rather than revealing it to the oppressor or perpetrator, and maintaining the feelings of belonging to the certain group/community have also been explained as forms of resistance (McEvoy, Shirlow, & McElrath, 2004).

#### **2.1.6. Social Support**

Politically motivated violence, imprisonment and torture have been known for their detrimental impact on the self-esteem, safety and trust feelings, and normal development in the lives of the victims. As Herman (1992) explained, the central experiences of psychological trauma are the ruptures in the interpersonal relationships, and the feelings of weakness. Therefore, the healing process can only be based on the relationship context with the significant others, and it can succeed by empowering the trauma survivor and creating new bonds with others (Herman, 1992). In the context of trusting relationships with others, the emotions can be shared, processed, grief process can be experienced after losses, and the reconnection with life can be accomplished (Herman, 1992). In addition, this communication with others aids people to rearrange, distinguish, and detail the mental representation of the experience of the cognitive process of demanding circumstances by also improving the coping abilities (Meichenbaum, 2005). Meichenbaum (2005) also explains that emotional disclosure of the whole story of catastrophic event, can generate a “collective identity” and social cohesion.

The existence and capability to reach social support has been seen as a prevalent way of coping of adults in face of political violence (Sousa, Haj-Yahia, Feldman, & Lee, 2013). The study conducted with the political prisoners and torture survivors in Iraq revealed that occupational and social losses, difficulties finding a suitable job, and the marriage or education delays were the contributors to the social and economic dysfunction in the survivors’ future lives after their release (Quiroga & Jaranson, 2005). Various studies indicated the significant



effects of social support on the stress endurance, mental health, resilience building, and further well-being of the individuals after political violence (Cohen & McKay, 1984; Leavy, 1983). As Betancourt and Khan (2008) explained, resilient thriving and effective coping, both for adults and children in face of political violence, seems to be associated with available resources within the families, communities, and broader political and social environment.

Basoglu and Mineka (1992) emphasized that, being approved and accepted by a social group, that indicates the existence of support within the environment of the survivor, is essential for the individuals' recovery processes; otherwise, there is a risk that they may see themselves as socially isolated, and living in a socially hostile world (as cited in Sousa et al., 2013). The study conducted with the individuals who were exposed to the sectarian violence during the political conflict years in Northern Ireland 30 years ago, revealed that the intra-family support was a crucial factor in coping across time, and people who could share their emotions and receive support from their families and friends coped better over 20 years than who were not able to access social support (Dillenburger, Fargas, & Akhonzada, 2008). Cohen and Wills (1985) who have focused on the positive effects of support, explained that social support protects individuals from the potentially adverse consequences of the trauma and stressful responses by providing a 'buffering effect', and that it improves functioning. The studies conducted with the veterans revealed that social support after deployment from military service protected the soldiers from developing PTSD symptoms, and those who received social support showed higher scores on the resilience measures and revealed more social connectedness, and better interpersonal relationships (King et al., 1998; Pietrzak & Cook, 2013; Sippel et al., 2015).

Moreover, many scholars have claimed that the absence of social support is also another factor of stress by itself, because it may lead to long-term negative outcomes on the psychological states of trauma survivors with psychological disorders such as depression, PTSD, and chronic anxiety disorder (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Cobb, 1976; Solomon, Mikulincer, & Avitzur,

1988). In the trauma, coping and resilience literature, the increased attention has begun to be given to the impact of post-conflict social stressors on the psychological health especially in the context of war and political violence (Annan & Brier, 2010; Betancourt et al., 2013), and experiencing financial difficulties, unemployment, displacement, and family disintegration have been revealed as the stronger predictors of anxiety and depressive disorders compared to the trauma-related experiences (Rasmussen, Yaqubi, & Daudzai, 2008).

For reducing these effects of stigmatization toward them, the incarcerated political activists in Northern Ireland who were ex-prisoners during the Irish republican movement, established self-help organizations. The main problem of the ex-political activists and individuals, who became the victims of political conflicts, was explained as the unemployment, since they were perceived as ‘criminals’ within the social community, and in the entire society. Studies show that working may protect individuals from the negative effects of political violence they experienced by promoting meaning, goal and a sense of normality, and opening the ways for sense of agency and hope (Giacaman, 2005), and this opportunity is often taken away from people in the context of political violence. In this manner, various researchers discuss the role and effectiveness of these self-help groups. (Kurtz, 1997; Roberts et al., 1999; Schiff & Bargal, 2000), and Dwyer and Maruna (2011) found that these groups effectively assist on healing the ex-convicts’ wounds and on their reintegration as recovery. They also acknowledged that the significant element of the healing process has been considered as associated with the healer’s sharing common experiences with the others in a group that enables a therapeutic process for these individuals. In their perception, being an effective therapist or healer depends on the severity of the suffering of a therapist (Dwyer & Maruna (2011). This perception of these people that they have a healer sharing similar sufferings with them in their social network can be evaluated as their coping strategy (Gencer, 2014). The family support has also been emphasized as a protective factor on coping with the political violence. One study conducted with Palestinian women indicated when the social resources

of the family increased, the psychological stress of the individuals decreased (Khamis, 1998).

Social support has been also seen as one of the protective factors of psychological resilience in the context of adversity with its stress-moderating effect. Lepore and Revenson (2006) asserted that environments that promote mental/physical health, social cohesion, normal development, and the establishment of the social capital for the individuals in the aftermath of traumatic experiences play a critical role on resilience levels. As Holtz (1998) revealed that the %86 of the Tibetan tortured refugees who benefited from social support did not demonstrate increased depressive symptoms. Similarly, the studies conducted with child soldiers indicated the protective effect of having supportive communities and families against the war experiences (Cortes & Buchanan, 2007; Betancourt, Agnew-Blais, Gilman, Williams, & Ellis, 2010). The long-term positive effects of social support on the mental health of tortured survivors have also been found in the research conducted with Bhutanese refugees in Nepal (Desjarlais et al., 1995)

The two forms of social support, emotional and instrumental have been mainly emphasized in the literature. The emotional social support includes the behaviors of others that promote the comfort feelings of a person by allowing the beliefs that a person is being loved, cared and respected, whereas instrumental support, also called material form of social support, involves receiving services or goods by other people that help on solving problems practically (Sippel, Pietrzak, Charney, Mayes, & Southwick, 2015). Farwell (2001) emphasized the significance of instrumental form of support in the context of political violence, with his study that demonstrated generating activities for Eritrean refugee youth for collecting money to reconstruct the ruined buildings collectively aid them. There are also other studies illustrating the value of having both forms of social support in the aftermath of trauma.

Furthermore, besides the importance of existing social support resources, the satisfaction and perception of individuals about the received support has been considered to protect adults from psychological disturbances after being exposed to political violence (Punamaki et al., 2005). A number of researchers explained that both the type, source, and timing of the support, and the individual differences in terms of the developmental level, and needs influence the effectiveness of social support (Cohen & McKay, 1985; Cutrona & Russel, 1990; Sippel et al., 2015). Research showed that not all people are able to reach their social resources even though they exist within their environments; however, in contrast, hardy people have enormous capabilities to create the support groups and be a member of them, which prevents them developing PTSD or other psychological disorders (Bartone, 1999). In addition, the stress-mediating role of social support has been found more on the individuals with internal locus of control than with external locus of control, and it is explained that individuals with internal locus of control use this support for instrumental purposes for dealing with the distressing encounters (Lefcourt, Martin, & Saleh, 1984). Even though, the importance of sharing emotions and verbalizing traumatic experiences in a social community and family has been emphasized by many authors, there may be some conditions and places where individuals may not receive healthy support and cannot disclose their emotions, especially in places where ethnic identity related or other forms of discrimination are experienced.

#### **2.1.7. Social Comparison**

Tajfel (1972) argued that, “No group lives alone-all groups in society live in the midst of other. In other words, the ‘positive aspects of social identity’...the re-interpretation of attributes and the engagement in social action...only acquire meaning in relation to, or in comparison with, other groups” (p. 293-4) (as cited in Turner, 1975). The comparison-oriented coping, in other words social comparison, has been regarded as a coping mechanism that help individuals to deal with the psychological distress provoked by negative life events, adverse traumatic situations, failures, and self-esteem threatening events (Taylor, Buunk,

& Aspinwall, 1990; Wills & Sandy, 2001). Comparing oneself to another person on coping, is a cognitive process for improving subjective well-being, and as a result of favourable comparisons, one may feel worthy as a person or feel better about own condition that also helps on motivating oneself toward coping with the stressors or avoid engaging in self-destructive behaviors (Wills & Sandy, 2001). People compare themselves with others to comprehend their positions, in face of their feelings of uncertainty or ambiguity about their potentials on self-improvement processes or ideas (Festinger, 1954). As Bunk and associates (1990) explained, social comparison may lead to either positive or negative emotions depending on the circumstances of individuals. Differentiating identification from comparison with the others is also important to evaluate the related emotions (Buunk and Ybema, 1997).

The two types of social comparison coping, which are downward and upward social comparison have been mostly emphasized in the coping literature, (Festinger, 1954; Wills & Sandy, 2001). In upward social comparison, individuals compare themselves, their attributes, and situations with others who are in a better position than them (Carmona, Buunk, Peiró, Rodríguez, & Bravo, 2006). On the other hand, downward social comparison has been regarded as a coping when people face the problems that are not easily solved by finding instrumental solutions. In face of a self-esteem threatening situation in which controlling the situation does not seem probable, people compare themselves with others who are at lower level and in worse conditions than themselves in their attributions (Festinger, 1954; Wills & Sandy, 2001). Downward comparison is known with its increasing self-esteem and feelings of power, whereas in upward social comparison, looking at the good examples who cope better with difficult conditions may evoke feelings of hope. Also, individuals who engage in downward social comparison as a way of coping are generally people who think that they are not doing well in their situations (Wills & Sandy, 2001). In these conditions where people feel distress about their own situations, even though they can be uncertain about using downward comparisons, since deriving self-elevation

and regarding self as fortunate through the others' misfortunes can be unenviable, people use this comparison for its self-enhancing potentials (Wills & Sandy, 2001). Moreover, Hussain and Bhushan (2011) indicated that Tibetan refugees were thinking about the earlier success stories of their community to cope with the feelings evoked by the political violence they were exposed, and this upward social comparison was found as a beneficial way of coping among them as survivors. Finally, individual personality traits have been considered as related to social comparison. People with "chronic self-esteem" are expected to see the positive sides of the comparison, while low self-esteem may influence perceiving the negative parts in comparison (Buunk, Janssen, & Vanyperen, 1989).

## **2.2. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COPING MECHANISMS IN FACE OF POLITICAL TRAUMA**

In the trauma literature, the significant role of the active coping strategies on the adjustment and improvement processes has been demonstrated especially with the ex-political prisoners, soldiers, and war veterans. Active coping has been described as the strategies that lead a person to solve the problems in a straightforward way by requiring direct actions to face the stressors and decrease its impact (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). According to Carver and his colleagues (1989), active coping strategies consist of problem-solving strategies, making plans, repressive coping, avoiding activities that are in the context of competition, and support seeking for beneficial reasons. Various researchers indicated that active coping can decrease the trauma-related distressing emotions, the effect of the event itself, and also may even lead to stress-related growth perceptions, and the overall resolution of the event (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987; Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). In addition, the contributions of active coping can be seen in lower levels of depression or distress, the symptoms of the post-traumatic stress disorder and also in dealing with the future threats after traumatic events (Solomon, Mikulincer, & Flum, 1988; Taylor & Clark, 1986).

The studies conducted with war veterans, war prisoners, and soldiers demonstrated that, while passive and emotion-focused coping strategies are not effective on dealing with the traumatic event, and pose a risk for developing psychological disorders like posttraumatic stress disorder, active and problem-focused strategies anticipate good adjustment and adaptation processes (Punamaki, Salo, Komproe, Qouta, El-Masri, & De Jong, 2007). As Blake, Cook, and Keane (1992) showed some coping mechanisms such as self-blame, wishful thinking, and social affiliation seeking that World War II veterans and prisoners of war used, were associated with PTSD diagnosis. In addition, denial and religious coping were found as the coping styles used among Vietnam veterans with PTSD and further interpersonal problems (Nezu & Carnevale, 1987; Punamaki et al., 2007). The research with the soldiers in Israel indicated that using problem-focused strategies such as planning, seeking information, and engaging in constructive activities are the predictors of low level of PTSD (Solomon, Mikulincer, & Avitzur, 1988).

Debates exist regarding the factors that influence the effectiveness of coping. Some researchers especially have been focused on the severity and the appraisal of the stress while evaluating the effectiveness of coping mechanisms. Punamaki and his colleagues (2007) suggested that the effectiveness of a coping may change in face of some traumatic events that are extremely challenging such as imprisonment or torture, because these can be a direct threat to life; however, generally, the effectiveness of coping depends on the compatibility or fit between the environmental hazards and the coping strategies of the survivor. In this manner, it is suggested that in controllable situations/ environments, active and problem-focused coping can be effective, but in some situations, passive and emotion-focused coping reactions can be more protective. Conway and Terry (1992) focused on the effectiveness of the various coping mechanisms with the moderator effect of the controllability of the situation that was appraised by the participants in their study, and they found the association between higher levels of problem-focused coping and more positive or favourable scores regarding coping

efficacy in the situations that were appraised as controllable. On the other hand, in controllable situations, the negative influences of self-denigration were found more than in the uncontrollable circumstances (Conway & Terry, 1992). In the same study, 'escapism' was found as more associated with lower degrees of adaptation regardless of the appraised control levels that were assessed (Conway & Terry, 1992). In addition, their expectation that the use of emotion-focused coping strategies may be more adaptive than the problem-focused ones in uncontrollable events was not supported by their studies.

Moreover, besides the common knowledge that active coping may be the most adaptive when the situations are appraised as controllable, acceptance and positive reinterpretation coping have also been evaluated as adaptive in uncontrollable circumstances where taking direct action does not seem possible (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). It is emphasized when individuals face the conditions that are unchangeable; the role of acceptance and positive reinterpretation is especially significant. Interpreting the circumstances again and finding something positive aftermath of a stressful event may help the individuals to manage their emotions that can be unbearable in uncontrollable situations, and it may also help them find a motivation to use active-coping skills in controllable situations (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). Various studies have found that acceptance and positive reinterpretation can be the predictive factors of trauma-related growth, since they can reinforce the beliefs that something is gained by focusing on the positive parts (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; Updegraff & Taylor, 2000).

Several studies revealed the effects and contributions of positive reinterpretation on better psychological long-term adjustment. For instance, the qualitative study conducted with the people who became refugees in other places because of political repression, massacres and massive losses as a result of the internal armed conflict in Guatemala for almost 40 years, revealed that these individuals' reinterpretation and positive appraisals about their situations helped them on coping. After spending many years in other places, these refugees came



back to their countries where the court system had just let them search for their rights after 40 years, and they had through trials several times that reminded them of all the traumatic events over and over again (Lykes, Beristain, & Cabrera Pérez-Arminan, 2007). However, the interviews indicated that these people reassessed these trial experiences, and stated that participating in those trials helped them resist to the violence more, even though the people who violated their basic human rights did not get punished in the end (Lykes, Beristain, & Cabrera Pérez-Arminan, 2007). These people used positive reinterpretation coping and appraised their distressing situation as a way of coping mechanism that is 'resistance to oppression', so that they were able to sustain their positive self-image. This attitude of resistance has been evaluated as an opportunity for them to overcome their feelings of helplessness after long years of repression.

### **2.3. INDIVIDUAL/ PERSONALITY FACTORS THAT AFFECT COPING MECHANISMS**

Several researchers have focused on the pathological responses after traumatic event when the traumatic stress is faced as a result of the mass trauma like political violence (Hobfoll, Mancini, Hall, Cannetti, & Bonanno, 2011; Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010). However, most people who are exposed such traumatic events evidenced the contradictory result by demonstrating quick recovery or functioning in a relatively healthy way during their trajectories through psychological resilience (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno, Galea, Bucciarelli, & Vlahov, 2007). In the literature, it is seen that traumatic situations have began to be seen from the perspective that suffering and distress may also be a source for positive change besides their adverse consequences (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

It is known that individuals who are exposed to traumatic situations such as abuse, loss and political violence do not struggle with the same amount of distress. Some people experience intense distress, suffer from several physical or psychological problems right after the adversity or later when a certain time has passed, while some of them suffer from a minor amount of stress. On the other hand, several studies indicated that there are people who do not reveal any

psychological disorder after potentially traumatic or challenging events in the long term while their functioning continues as usual (Bonanno, 2004; Bonanno & Mancini, 2012). These people's not suffering from lower levels of functioning or not experiencing significant distress had been perceived as surprising and abnormal, and as a result of the possible extraordinary emotional power or numbness (Bonanno, Westphal, & Mancini, 2011). Considering the bereavement cases, this absence of intense distress was even thought to be a form of psychopathology that is hidden (Bonanno, Westphal, & Mancini, 2011).

However, as theorists and researchers have argued that overall functioning of most people does not get disrupted when even when faced with the most extreme stressors, this perception has been challenged (Bonanno, 2009; Bonanno, Westphal, & Mancini, 2011). Even though resilient responses or outcomes may be universal, people are not identical in terms of their capacities, and environmental weaknesses or strengths that affect resilience (Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010). People have different trajectories following adversities, because they differ according to their resources (Gallo, Bogart, Vranceanu, & Matthews, 2005). As Garmezy (1991) explained, responsiveness of the society and physical surroundings of the individuals is important, and it varies from one family or community to another (Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010). Also, some researchers have discussed that more studies are needed that give attention to the contexts and social factors, because they may provide a deeper insights on understanding the different resilience processes both within and across the cultures.

Other resilient researchers have focused on the personality aspects and determinants (Friborg, Barlaug, Martinussen, Rosenvinge, & Hjemdal, 2005; Lepore & Revenson, 2006; Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010) such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, and educational level. The association was found between psychological resilience, and male gender, having higher levels of education and experiencing the adverse life events in older ages (Bonanno, Galea, Bucciarelli, & Vlahov, 2006; 2007). Higher income, education level, and being male were found as some

of the predictors of resilience (Campbell-Sills, Forde, & Stein, 2009). On the other hand, some studies showed that a lower level of education was associated with resilience, when other demographic variables such as resources, general life stress or exposure were controlled (Bonanno et al., 2007).

Furthermore, in the field of trauma, politically motivated violence, and war, resilience has been defined as the personality trait protecting people from mental health problems as a result of being exposed to life-threatening, and violent situations, that help them to bounce back, cope and adapt better (Hoge, Austin, & Pollack, 2007, as cited in Arnetz et al., 2013). Several personality characteristics have been emphasized in the literature associated with psychological resilience; hardiness, self-efficacy, and self-coherence, have been demonstrated as the most common personality characteristics of the individuals who cope and adjust better in face of politically motivated violence, and collective trauma, which may apply to the participants in the current study.

### **2.3.1. Hardiness**

One of the personality dispositions that have been as the factor of resilience or recovery after trauma is hardiness a term coined by Kobasa (1979). Hardiness has three essential constituents, which are one's sense of control over own life, commitment to the meaning assigned to the existence, and being open to see change as a challenge; each of them can be the motivators of adaptive coping behaviors on responding to stressful circumstances (Kobasa, 1979; as cited in, King et al., 1998). King and King (1998), suggested that hardy people are better at mobilizing their coping resources than less hardy ones, and as Maddi (2005) indicated, they demonstrate and engage in more courageous and goal-oriented behaviors, and are more inspired to face the worsening situations in their lives, instead of seeing them as catastrophic events that may lead them to feel more helpless. Also, this braveness and motivation of hardy people have been seen as leading them to engage in more problem solving focused coping strategies including searching for and giving instrumental social support in their

environments, instead of avoiding them (Blaney & Ganellen, 1990). Therefore, hardy people are more able to transform their adverse experiences into opportunities for psychological growth (Maddi, 2005). Moreover, hardy people believe in their own effectiveness and power on directing their experiences that lead them to interconnect with the difficulties in their adverse circumstances, and take responsibility just as people high in self-efficacy do. In addition, hardy people are able to find in or assign meanings that are indestructible and beyond their traumatic experiences, by using their inner resources actively and efficiently. So that, as Kobasa (1979) stated, they are masters or determiners of their lives, instead of being passive subjects.

Moreover, many researches demonstrated that having hardiness in personality repertoire plays a significant role on the adaptation to traumatic events such as war, immigration, and torture, and protect people from developing psychological disorders. Because they are more capable of controlling stress, they are less vulnerable to suffer from long-term psychological problems (Topf, 1989) or physiological health illnesses (Contrada, 1989). As Kuo and Tsai (1986) indicated, hardiness is one of the protective factors ameliorating the negative consequences of immigration. Similarly, the study conducted with military members revealed that when the hardiness levels increase, the tendency to develop depression and posttraumatic stress disorder decreases (Bartone, 1999). It is also acknowledged that attributing positive meaning to the challenging events as a result of reinterpreting the adverse experience is one of the characteristics of hardy people that create an opportunity for them to develop psychologically. In addition, there is a positive correlation between hardiness and self-esteem (Gito, Ihara, & Ogata, 2013).

### **2.3.2. Self – Efficacy**

Another important factor that promotes resilience and improves psychological well-being of the individuals while coping with the life difficulties is self-efficacy. When we look at the Social Cognitive Theory developed by

Bandura in 1982, it is seen that self-efficacy is related to one's feeling and believing in own ability to manage the circumstances, and to resist demanding situations by revealing adjustment to difficult stressors. Various theorists have defined self-efficacy as a person's belief in one's own capacity to get things done. Benight and Bandura (2004) clarified, and several studies revealed that the possibility of overcoming demanding encounters significantly increases, when individuals believe in their own skills and capacities to deal with them. Moreover, believing in coping abilities reduces the amount of stress, and depression people may experience, because they feel they have a control over the situation instead of drowning in the disturbing thoughts (Bandura, 2010). Perceived self-efficacy plays a role on the level of anxiety feelings and exercising control in face of threatening situations (Bandura, 2010). In addition, a low sense of social efficacy can lead someone to develop depression, because people who perceive themselves as efficacious socially search for and foster interpersonal social relationships that provide guidance to them on managing and coping with their difficulties, protect themselves from chronic stressors, and enable them to experience satisfaction in their relationships. In contrast, social isolation can be the consequence of the perceived social inefficacy that prevents people from developing and engaging in supportive and satisfying relationships that also affect their coping processes negatively (Bandura, 2010).

In the context of political/collective trauma, few studies have been conducted that looked at the relationship between self-efficacy and coping effectiveness, and the effects of perceived self-efficacy in the grief process. Luszczynska, Benight, and Cieslak (2009) indicated that among collective trauma survivors, self-efficacy has a strong predictor role on the posttraumatic recovery process. Moreover, Smith, Abeyta, Hughes, and Jones (2015) conducted a study with people who were exposed to mass violence, and they found that higher levels of posttraumatic stress affected the severity and the persistence of grief symptoms that were predicted by lower levels of self-efficacy, and more severe disruptions on the worldview, also revealing that self-efficacy can be decreased as a result of

traumatic event, and PTSD symptoms. Perceived self-inefficacy, or the undermined efficacy of the self has an indirect effect on the persistent grief symptoms through the worldview disruptions.

The self-efficacy appraisals have essential effects on the post-traumatic adjustment and adaptation including the cognitive processing and overall functioning (Benight & Bandura, 2004), and also on psychological growth. Since traumatic events shatter the meaning worlds of individuals, it is suggested that in therapy settings, bolstering self-efficacy with people who experience traumatic losses can help people on their meaning-making and grief processes and for integrating the traumatic experiences, that also protect them suffering from long-term psychological consequences of trauma. (Smith, Abeyta, Hughes, & Jones, 2015). Moreover, self-efficacy appraisals have an effect on processing the worldview-discrepant situations and losses by traumatic means by allowing emotional and cognitive resources that are required for struggling with the tough existential questions especially after mass violence (Smith, Abeyta, Hughes, & Jones, 2015).

### **2.3.3. Sense of Coherence**

Various studies indicated that resilient people who cope better with and bounce back from adversities have a sense of coherence (Lepore & Revenson, 2006). Sense of coherence has been defined by Antonovsky (1987) as “a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one’s internal and external environments in the course of living are structured and predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement” (p.19).

Individuals with a sense of coherence believe that the experiences are comprehensible, important, and they have control over them. Also, they make

meaningful explanations regarding their experiences that lead them to perceive what they experience is worthy to be engaged in (Antonovsky, 1987). As Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) explained, these people's ability to find their difficult and demanding experiences as meaningful, and confronting them increase their coping abilities on overcoming and adapting to the outcomes of adverse traumatic events, that may also lead to posttraumatic growth. In addition, one study revealed the inverse correlation of sense of coherence with being exposed to cumulative violence and trauma, and depression, PTSD symptoms (Pham et al., 2010).

## **SECTION 3**

### **METHOD**

#### **3.1. THE PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR (PI)**

The primary investigator, who is also the author of this thesis, is a registered student of Clinical Psychology Graduate Program of Istanbul Bilgi University, in the sub-branch of Adult Psychology. The PI has an experience on working with the soldiers who had been exposed to the traumatic events, especially collective/political trauma including war, torture, and imprisonment, and its psychological consequences in the long-term basis for five years. The PI began to work on this subject starting with her long-term internship at the psychiatric department of the Gulhane Military Medical Academy (GATA); and then, in order to help the individuals experiencing traumatic losses, suffering from the complicated grief processes, and post-traumatic life difficulties as a clinician, enrolled in the clinical psychology masters program.

The aim of this thesis study is to build up a better understanding in the readers' mind regarding the significance of the psychological effects of politically motivated violence and traumatic losses as well as to provide some insights regarding how long the wounds of being forcibly expelled, tortured, and discriminated in the social context could influence the individuals' lives, the traces of which we can still identify on the psyche of the expelled soldiers after 40 years. Additionally, it is considered that listening to the experiences and the processes of individuals after difficult life events may provide a comprehensive understanding about their specific coping behaviors in a detailed way.

#### **3.2. PARTICIPANTS**

The participation criterion of the study was to be an expelled military member including military cadets, officers and petty officers, as a result of the



personal views between the years of 1980 and 1984 following the 1980 military coup in Turkey.

It is known that a total of 1020 soldiers, including 397 military officers, 176 petty officers and 447 military cadets, were dismissed from the Turkish Armed Forces due to their personal views and beliefs (Yildirim, 2012). 200 people from this population are the members of the association called ‘ADAM-DER’ that is established by the expelled military members. Convenience sampling was used in the study. Eight participants were interviewed for the study. They were all men between the ages of 57-62, with the mean age of 60. The information regarding their expulsion year, ages, and positions during that time, and the year of getting their rights back, if they did, can be seen with some relevant demographics of the participants in the Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographics of participants

| Participants | Age | Profession                      | Age During Expulsion | Rank During Expulsion                      | Education      | Socio-Economic Status | Year of Getting Rights Back |
|--------------|-----|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mr. I        | 62  | Retired Accounting Manager      | 25                   | Company Commander of İzmir Aliaga Province | Bachelor       | Middle-Class          | 2011                        |
| Mr. A        | 61  | Accountant                      | 26                   | Company Commander                          | Bachelor       | Middle-Class          | 2011                        |
| Mr. B        | 57  | Financial Advisor               | 20                   | Cadet                                      | Master's / PhD | Lower-Class           |                             |
| Mr. C        | 57  | Owner of a Construction Company | 22                   | Cadet                                      | High-School    | Middle-Class          |                             |
| Mr. R        | 62  | Lawyer                          | 28                   | Lieutenant                                 | Bachelor       | Middle-Class          | 2011                        |
| Mr. M        | 58  | Employee Consultant             | 22                   | Intern-Lieutenant at Tuzla Infantry School | Bachelor       | Middle-Class          |                             |
| Mr. T        | 59  | Operating Engineer              | 21                   | Cadet                                      | Bachelor       | Lower-Class           |                             |
| Mr. Y        | 61  | Retired                         | 24                   | Captain                                    | Master's       | Middle-Class          | 2012                        |

All of the eight participants were involved in the Turkish Armed Forces when they were 13-14 years old for getting an education in military high schools and later in military academies, which was also obligatory after high school, as otherwise they were charged with a large amount of compensation payments. Beginning with the period of 12 September 1980 Military Coup d'état in Turkey, all of them were expelled during the years between 1980 and 1984, and were captivated, and tortured, because of their personal thoughts and beliefs, in the military schools in various provinces of Turkey. These schools were in fact the Intelligence and Language Schools of the military; however, later were designed for these purposes during that time period. Although none of the participants were found guilty or got convicted as a result of the interrogations and court trials,, they were all expelled from the Turkish Armed Forces.

After 30 years from their expulsion, in 2010, a law was proposed by the prime minister to give rights back to those who got expelled from the Turkish Armed Forces by the Higher Military Council (Yildirim, 2012). However, the first law proposal did not include the military members who got expelled after the 1980 coup d'état including the participants in this study. After this proposal, this group of people demanded to be included in this law proposal, and they put up a hard struggle to make this happen. Their struggle persuaded the prime minister of that period to accept their demands and as a result this group was been included to the law proposal, as for getting their rights back after their expulsion. In 2011, after the president confirmed the proposal, they got their rights back. However, half of the individuals who were expelled still have not got back their privileges and rights of being a military member, because they were cadets during that time. So that, it is important to remember that the half of the participants in this study are still continuing to struggle to gain their rights back. It is noteworthy to mention that these rights and privileges include receiving a colonel's pension, which is compatible with their age because if they would be able to stay at the military they would at least be colonels now, and would be allowed to live in

army houses. On the other hand, what is written on their military identification cards is their positions when they were expelled.

### **3.3. PROCEDURE**

After receiving the approval of the Ethics Committee in the Istanbul Bilgi University, the Primary Investigator reached the president of the association that the expelled military members have established for themselves. After having the approval from the association, the study was announced via their e-mail groups. The PI contacted the participants who were willing to participate in the study. The convenience sampling and snowball method were used in this study. Three pilot studies were conducted with the volunteers before the data collection period started. The sample size of eight participants is consistent with the guidelines of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, and it allows detailed data analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants. The questions that were asked during the interviews can be seen in Appendix 2. The previous qualitative studies on the post-traumatic recovery, coping mechanisms, and resilience, especially the research conducted with the Holocaust survivors inspired the PI while determining the interview questions. The PI and her thesis advisor worked on this process together, and the final versions of the questions were determined with consensus. All interviews were conducted in the meeting room of the association. Participants were informed about that the participation to the study was voluntary, and they could leave the study whenever they want. Each participant had to sign the consent form before the study had started (Appendix 1). The interviews lasted between 90 to 120 minutes, and all of the interviews were audiotaped, and later transcribed by the primary investigator. The participants' identifying information was removed for maintaining the confidentiality, and their names were changed with the random letters. The PI took field notes during and immediately after each interview session.

### **3.4. DATA ANALYSIS**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003) was used in order to explore and assess the unique experiences of the military members who were expelled, imprisoned and tortured. This method of qualitative analysis was used because it provides an opportunity to hear the unique experiences of this specific group sample that has not been studied before, and it also allows gathering more detailed information regarding their feelings and ways of making sense of their own experiences. Moreover, qualitative research, especially IPA methodology permits the involvement of the identity and perception of the researcher, regarding what can be inferred from the research. As Smith (2004) has noted, qualitative research accepts and provides a chance to explain this participant-researcher interaction on the entire research process . Because humans obtain knowledge via experiences, forming ideas and categorizations are realized in the context of experiences. Because both parties during the research process affect each other, a researcher plays actively a role during the research process while collecting and interpreting the data, and vice versa.

The primary investigator transcribed each of the records immediately after the interview in accordance with the methodology of IPA. After each interview and before coding, the interview transcriptions and field notes were read and re-read by the PI by paying attention to own reflections. After the detailed analysis of the first interview, the emerging codes were noted, and later the second case was analyzed. After the initial coding, the PI looked at the similarities and differences between the cases, and utilized MAXQDA Software program to code each of the interviews, reduce the number of codes and organize the data under superordinate and subordinate themes.

### **3.5. TRUSTWORTHINESS**

For increasing the trustworthiness of this study, a variety of techniques were applied. Field notes had been taken while the interview was being audiotaped and after, for more detailed information. During the data analysis

process, the triangulating investigators, who were experienced in qualitative research in clinical psychology, were involved in every step (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The PI shared her first versions of the codes with these investigators. The final versions of the codes were raised to superordinate and sub-ordinate themes appeared with the consensus after a long process of coding and recoding.. Eventually, the member check (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006), which allowed for sharing the final versions of the themes with the expelled military members to assess if there was anything not reflecting their experiences, was done. The findings were not invalidated by them.

## SECTION 4

### RESULTS

During the data analysis, eight superordinate themes were identified: a) Starting life from scratch, b) losing a profession idealized by others, c) having difficulties with explaining the self to family, d) being the subject of discrimination, e) making sense of the expulsion, f) coping with life after expulsion, g) feeling the effects of expulsion for a life time, h) meaning of getting one's rights back: 40 years later. The descriptions of the superordinate themes and their associated sub-ordinate themes will be presented in this section. In addition, some related excerpts that explain how these themes emerged out of the data will be shared.

**Table 2.** Themes

| SUPERORDINATE THEMES                                   | SUB-ORDINATE THEMES                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| STARTING LIFE FROM SCRATCH                             | Feeling Like Being Thrown Out On To The Street                     |
|                                                        | Sense Of Emptiness And Meaninglessness                             |
|                                                        | Feeling Betrayed and Disappointed                                  |
|                                                        | Perceiving Life As A Struggle From Then On                         |
| LOSING THE PROFESSION IDEALIZED BY OTHERS              | "What Is My Profession?"                                           |
|                                                        | Losing Respect of Others                                           |
| HAVING DIFFICULTIES WITH EXPLAINING THE SELF TO FAMILY | Disappointing Family                                               |
|                                                        | Being Accused By Family                                            |
| BEING THE SUBJECT OF DISCRIMINATION                    | Being Seen Like A Patient With "Black Death"                       |
|                                                        | Hardship Of Living In A Hometown Where You Are Seen As A "Traitor" |
| MAKING SENSE OF THE EXPULSION                          | Is Thinking A Crime?                                               |
|                                                        | "We Were The Couch Grass In A Clover Field"                        |
| COPING WITH LIFE AFTER EXPULSION                       | Believing In The Rightness Of One's Thoughts For A Life Time       |
|                                                        | Emotions Being Of Secondary Importance                             |
|                                                        | Comparing Oneself With The Expelled Others                         |
|                                                        | Ambiguous Feelings Toward The Received Support                     |
|                                                        | Focusing On The Positive Sides                                     |
| FEELING THE EFFECTS OF EXPULSION FOR A LIFE TIME       | Experiencing Disconnection In Relationships                        |
|                                                        | Never Again: No More Disappointments!                              |
| MEANING OF GETTING ONE'S RIGHTS BACK                   | The Return Of The Reputation And Innocence                         |
|                                                        | Secondary Victimization                                            |
|                                                        | "Having Our Rights Back Cannot Compensate For The Losses!"         |

#### 4.1. STARTING LIFE FROM SCRATCH

One of the major super-ordinate themes in this study is about how the expelled military members have experienced their expulsions from the Armed Forces. When they were asked about how they experienced the expulsion, all the expelled military members in this study stated that their lives have never been the same since the days when the expulsion process began. They were in the Turkish Armed Forces when they were 13-14 years to study, to acquire a profession and to have a reliable, and secure future. They explained their perceptions about the military as this place being a 'home' for them, and they felt that they were actually 'kicked out' from their homes, losing also the place that meant a lot for them. All the participants stated that they had to leave their own family homes in the first place for studying when they were children, and became students in the military boarding schools. As Basarir and Parman (2009) stated in the book called "Boarding School: When School Becomes Home", the identity of the boarding institutions never represents only a school or home, but provides multiple identities to the boarders by creating a shared, common identity and sense of being 'we'. Especially for individuals who enter the boarding schools when they are adolescents, the school carries much importance on the identity formation process, while also they deal with the separation related emotions at this age (Basarir & Parman, 2009). The lyrics of a marches they were singing during the high school years illustrates the school as a home and glorifies their common identity in an idealized place.

*"O honourable home, glorious home Kuleli* (the name of the military high school in Turkey),

*Your name is known in this country,*

*Written in the Republican book,*

*You, sacred, golden home Kuleli,*

*Your chest holds the desire of heroism."*

As all of the expelled military members including the cadets and officers claimed, even though they were experiencing some difficulties during their adjustment to the entirely new and strictly disciplined life style in military schools, their solidarity and ‘sense of brotherhood’ between the other military members who had shared similar sufferings, helped them cope. Also, they explained that they always believed in the higher missions given by authority, the ‘state’, which protected the country and educated people who did not have any other chances to access knowledge. Therefore, they claimed that they were taken into a very comprehensive education system in which the purpose was raising fully equipped military officers. The idea of graduating eventually, having a reliable, stable employment and realizing their higher aims were helping them to bear these difficulties. However, all participants said that they experienced a sudden change with the September 12 military coup, and all their lives became upside down releasing the feelings of betrayal, disappointment and helplessness. They described their experiences as being ‘like fish out of water’. All the participants acknowledged that after expulsion, ‘they had to start entirely a new life like a baby who has to be reborn’.

Commonalities among participants were observed when they were trying to explain what being expelled meant to them, and how their entire lives have been affected as a result of the adverse experiences during their expulsion processes. The commonalities were feelings of being thrown out onto the street, experiencing disappointment, and feelings of betrayal, questioning all the meanings in their lives and first feeling empty, and then life becoming a struggle, a fight after expulsion.

#### **4.1.1. Feeling Like Being Thrown Out On To The Street**

All of the participants who were expelled from the Armed Forces stated feeling helpless when they learned that they were expelled after they were interrogated, and tortured in ‘Military Intelligence Schools’. They explained their situations as like they were released to an unknown world and were left in the



middle of a street. Moreover, they stated that being uncertain and finding themselves in an outside world, which was a complete stranger to them, led them to feel helpless.

“A person who is thrown away into the middle of a street. There is a history, a life behind him; and now it’s a whole new life... What will you do in this path, who will support you, they are uncertain. From where and how will you start again... Everything is uncertain. And there is only 20 Liras inside your pocket, not even enough for a bus ticket... ” (Mr B)

“You become abandoned after your age of 30; they got you into a place where you are a total stranger. Until that time, the government compensated everything you had needed, no struggle to earn a living or anything like that... You are forced to start from scratch; you are thrown away into a life, which you are not used to live in. You got chunked away. Of course, there was a feeling of a despair.” (Mr R)

#### **4.1.2. Sense Of Emptiness And Meaninglessness**

The expelled military members stated that describing and verbalizing the emotions they had been feeling was never easy. They explained that after their captivity experiences in which they were being interrogated, and tortured because of their personal views and beliefs, they started questioning their meaning systems and precepts they had been thought. Moreover, after witnessing all the bad sides of humanity, they began to question their values and beliefs with which they have been defending human rights and equality. As it will be seen in the excerpts below, participants have still experienced some difficulties naming their emotions or believing in the existence of the words that they could use to express these intense feelings.

These also bring to the mind the question of whether these people have been still experiencing difficulties describing their intense emotions, or whether they have

not had any chance to articulate and process these emotions in the presence of others.

"Emptiness... It was like senselessness. You can't make any interpretations, you just try to depict your new life, and however, you can't truly. It is a really different feeling after all; it is really hard to explain. It's certain that you will be starting to a new life, from the scratch. At the first stage, what came to my mind was, we started to hear that some of our friends had been punished. Besides we also heard that they had been put on trial with some serious accusations, and they were about to get great punishments. I mean they were accused of murders for instance, to extend their conviction process as long as it could be. At that time, I was engaged. At first, I thought that I should call my family at the first opportunity and say that we should break off the engagement. I didn't want to make her life miserable too, as mine became miserable already, so that she could start a new life. That was the only thing that I could think of." (Mr C)

"So, I felt an emptiness when I first found out that I got expelled. It was not like a bed of roses. Because you studied 4 years of military high school and 4 years of military Academy... You are in emptiness... It was like; something had torn apart inside me. It's really hard to explain those feelings. As I said, it is really hard to tell... It was like something got broken instantly inside of you." (Mr B)

"Like I can think that I overcame this incident, however maybe I didn't. Because this consciousness thing is something different, you can't know it, it's also the same in the philosophy. It is really hard to solve the consciousness. You know, it is said that 'the spirit continues to live after the death of the body.' but where should we put the consciousness? Actually, consciousness is the one that goes missing. Otherwise, your body continues to live in a way, as it is being absorbed by the soil and

transformed. However, the actual loss, and what goes missing is your consciousness. Maybe, it was what happened to us also. We were unable to make an interpretation of what we had lived through. So, what happened in that consciousness, I really don't know.” (Mr Y)

“...After that, again there was a feeling of emptiness with those thoughts. That waiting process makes you miserable. I was thinking: ‘How long can I resist?’ Besides, the policemen were saying things like ‘Don’t try to annoy us here, just admit your crime now, and then you can say that you were forced to admit these under torture, at the court’ during the interrogation...That is to say, they blocked all the roads. All of the ideas, conflicting each other in your mind... Imagine that your palms are swollen because of torture, your feet are swollen, and you are thrown away into the street while, every part of your body is wounded and bruised. What you are going to do is uncertain, how are you going to tell this to your parents, how are you going to make peace with life...Of course, the thought was exactly like this, and we suffered everything we could think of.” (Mr B)

Some of the excerpts that refer to the feelings of emptiness, seeing everything as meaningless and experiencing disruptions in the basic assumptions indicated the significant impact of traumatic events, especially when trauma is experienced in the interpersonal area.

"This time, when we got expelled, we felt that we were obliged to question everything. Every doctrine we had been taught... We started to see things in a wider and global perspective and scrutinize more. This time, we were faced with a semantic shift. What was the meaning of the concepts about society and humanity after all? What we had been through was something different from all of things that we had learned. For instance, is existence based upon creation or evolution? We faced many things after we got out

there, we saw that there were too many things to be questioned about humanity." (Mr A)

#### **4.1.3. Feeling Betrayed and Disappointed**

The participants stated their feelings of being betrayed, shocked and disappointed, because of the reasons of their expulsion. They explained that the education they had received was very comprehensive including various areas of science, literature, language, history, politics, music, sports, and military training. They stated that when they were involved in the military school, the education system included a 4-year university curriculum in addition to their regular military trainings that also enabled them to gain a college degree. Therefore, they were asked to read many things at once, learn from diverse fields and discuss what they learned with an open mind and freely. As the expelled soldiers explained, the books that caused them to be interrogated, and tortured were the ones in the school library, mostly asked by professors to be read in the classrooms. They said that what was happening in the country and the politics of that period of time affected the military, and they experienced a sudden change with the 12 September military coup that led them to feel betrayed and disappointed inside.

"Actually, we were very comfortable, and there was no pressure on us until 12th September. Moreover, we could share our ideas and discuss freely. In fact, it was what everyone was expecting from our school. In lessons, our teachers also inspired us to think like this. Different thoughts and ideas were discussed, read and even in the classroom, we had debates which included the ideas that became the reasons why we got expelled later." (Mr T)

As mentioned in the excerpts, the sudden change not only resulted in expulsion, but was also experienced in the relationships of the expelled soldiers.

They stated that they were misunderstood, and their need for intellectual enlightenment was seen as a threat by the authority.

"... But when the 12th September started, everyone including the upper authorities instantly changed. That is to say, they wasted us to save themselves. And the regiment commander of ours... More precisely when the students become officers and go to troops, this regiment commander asks which term they had studied with, and he said 'We expelled those who were more competent than you, and now the brainless ones like you, stand in front of us!'. This was his one to one statement.. It nearly reaches an insult. So, we lived this expulsion process as a slaughter, like a genocide." (Mr B)

"I mean, you feel like you are betrayed. Just imagine, we were seeing our commanders as our fathers, as our brothers, so we couldn't think that they would join the ones who strapped us down and interrogated us. Of course, it is a huge disappointment..." (Mr M)

Moreover, as it can be seen in the excerpts, the familiar commanders whom they perceived as a 'father' for many years in the absence of their actual families exposed them to the adverse situations and that increased their feelings of disappointment and betrayal. They stated that no one pleaded guilty about what had been done, like everybody knew how much damage they caused, but still they were punished, although they were found innocent.

"You are just sitting in a closed room... The door is locked, the windows were dyed black, and you are only allowed to get out if you need to go the toilet... Moreover, you are being interrogated blindfolded. Moreover, the one who makes the interrogation is my ex-regiment commander, I mean, it's someone I know and who knows me. Of course, he denied it all after the incident. He said 'I didn't do anything like that.' Because, in their

opinion they were just executing the order that came from the government. They couldn't accept that they made us live through such mistreatment. Then, after all of these, the martial law prosecutors were arresting the civilians and the people who had relations with illegal organisations, but not us, as there was no steady crime after all. In fact, after they expelled us from the military school, the police told us that we had been already punished by being expelled, so we were guilt free...‘You can continue with your life’.” (Mr B)

“So, to say it was like a brain gymnastic, what we had just wanted was an enlightenment inside. There was a need of an intellectual paradigm. Why this? Because they raised you as an officer, you must be informed about everything. At that time, the government had an ideology like this. The government says that, I am accepting you into this 4-year education programme. The ideas we were discussing in the lecture hall became the reasons why we got expelled. 200 people discussing all together after all. So, we had such a free education programme. There was a structure. Imagine, they were even teaching us to question the position, the function of Armed Forces in the Turkish Economy. So, they were really pushing us to learn things. For instance, the teacher was making us to discuss things face to face, let's say that in one week, one of us studies capitalism, and the other one studies socialism. Therefore, you could suppose that you are in a place where it is really democratic, limitless, liberal, and has no hierarchical structure. We were also discussing things with our other friends who had different thoughts. They also believed in the dialogue and a liberal environment. There were small groups with weapons and stuff, imagine that those are some organisations which consisted of the people who was sharing the certain thoughts. It all happened in 12th September. I did not have any membership in any of those; so to say, I was solely a member of the Armed Forces. Therefore, that's why I couldn't get why we got expelled. I didn't participate in any of those political protests, or had

any membership to those groups. You cannot make sense of the actions that the government took, when you are also on their side. There was a need of finding answers to those questions. Not to comprehend and oppose to them, but for enlightenment... What I am trying to say is, there was a disappointment and a feeling of a shock. As I mentioned, 'you were the ones that made us learn and research things.' We were officially and totally misunderstood. They expelled the ones they had raised, to prevent any stand or protest targeting themselves in their minds. I think that they were afraid of the ones they had raised" (Mr A)

"It is really hard to make an inference or express right now but those feelings were really tough. It is hard to describe the feeling of being accused because of the book you had read, which was already in the school library. They expected us to be fully equipped, all-knowing officers. It was their desire too. You got shocked for a time but in those days, the whole country was living through these conflicts, imagine suddenly your thoughts become a crime. The change started concurrently with 12th September, instantly." (Mr Y)

"What I am trying to say is, they changed our curriculum to raise contemporary, fully equipped officers. We had already read those books that were banned and made us guilty in the interrogation. They asked if we had read them or not, by getting them from our academy library. Do you see the effect of 12th September on this country? Contemporary, all-knowing officers were what they were trying to raise; however, they also wanted us to obey and submit. Would a person who had read those books and questioned the concepts in the classes, not assert himself? But Turkey in those days couldn't handle it. That is to say, it couldn't handle an officer like this. There was an economic, political and social depression in this country. In those depressive days, the army couldn't handle these men. If there was a democratic Turkey, they could have handled it. You see, in

some countries of Europe, there are unions and rights to strike in armies. In our country, the military post should be democratic... But, you got shocked in the beginning, when the first expulsions started. ‘How come?’ you ask, a disappointment you feel...” (Mr R)

“But they said ‘You had read a book’ to me; is that a crime really? They were open to be read in the military school. I want a Turkish military officer to be a highbrow, and I think that this is the tone. At first their desire was parallel to this. They made us read many books, and they made us discuss. Because, you were going to be the ones who educate the society, the military post does not only consists of basic soldier moves... You are going to be the parents of these soldiers, as you grow older, because they find their “self” for the first time in that crowd. Moreover, in our society parents don’t let their daughters marry with a man who didn’t do his military service. Why do we have this tradition? We have it because we believe that a man wises up after military service. So, if I am the one or others like me that will help him to wise up, we have to be well informed, we have to be the teachers, their trainers. Kicking people’s tibia does not suit to a trainer, officer and human.... Hence, these people stayed in the Armed Forces. All in all, it was not easy to be there...But what we have been through is a disappointment, it is something like a betrayal, a shock.” (Mr C)

“We had located our emotional and thoughtful feelings about the government on a wrong place. The state is far from being fair, hence it crushes you when you get out of the boundary drawn for you. Actually, the paternal state as a figure is a stranger to the society and to labour. At that time we had thought that, it treats everybody equally and it is equally distant to all structures. To me, the government had the quality of being a referee. We failed to notice for a period that the state is a tyrannizing tool. Therefore, they had reminded it to us in this way. The paternal state which



I perceive as the figure where I can lean my back on and which is fair and equalitarian turned out to be a figure that tries to turn its own wheels and protect its own power by cutting off the couch grasses like me. Whatever you may say, whether a disappointment or anything else.”. (Mr M)

“It was not my preference to go there anyway. A new point of view, a new person you create, so to say. A new ideology is being imposed there. By the way, let me put that new ideology in quotes, as I don’t say that there was an ideology before that. In middle school, what ideology could we have anyway? It is exactly like a sculpturer who whittles the sculpture, and creates a new person. This created one is not always the one that is correct or nice. I can’t say that everyone became bad people but I can’t also say that they created an absolutely correct or nice thing. I don’t declare this just for myself, but also for the ones who graduated. I have to tell this, Kenan Evren made a press statement after the coup, saying ‘They can’t even be described as traitors’. So, weren’t you the ones who raised us? What happened now? What kind of a human separation is this? This really hurts much. As if we were adults when we first got into military academy, as if we got in there with our ideologies. See, we were reading and learning these concepts in lessons, in the school. It was where we acquired and discussed these concepts. As I mentioned earlier, when we got in there, they expected us to abandon our own personal characteristics, they tried to whittle us in a place far away from the society. However, they also expected us to be fully equipped officers; we were taking education, which is equivalent to a college curriculum. We were also taking books from the military school library, and reading those. Eventually, a reader becomes a questioner. At that time, they couldn’t handle this difference and they expelled us. What I am trying to say is, it is an absolute disappointment.” (Mr T)

#### **4.1.4. Perceiving Life As A Struggle From Then On**

All the participants mentioned that life became a struggle from then on. What they experienced during and after this event seemed to spread throughout their lives changing their perceptions about life. They explained how much they have put an effort to resist the challenges, and to maintain a meaningful and honourable life. Moreover, while life can be seen with its good and bad sides in an integrated way for most of people, it seemed that the participants began to perceive the world as something to fight against after their expulsion experience. In this manner, their post-expulsion experiences including difficulties finding jobs as ‘the expelled ones’, financial problems, and feeling not understood and perceptions of not being supported adequately by others also seemed to contribute to their seeing life as a struggle. Even though their further attributions and later experiences differ in some aspects, they shared the same feeling about life being never the same again.

"As I mentioned, life outside was really easy for me after those tortures. If I had been torn apart there, I couldn't have been able to carry anything on my shoulders. Our friends who had been torn apart there, they got divorced first and then fled somewhere else....I can say that life became a continuous challenge like a struggle after that. I entered life again, selling food on the street, to become a standard, regular member of the public. There were people whom I would help, but no one was there to help me. Besides, I was not understood. It's hard to live, but life is a struggle anyway. If you struggle and resist, then you live. When you give up, you will disappear. As I took on many big responsibilities, I was required to work." (Mr R)

This perception of the participants under this sub-theme revealed the importance of how the traumatic events that influence many areas in one's life, can change the way of looking at the world and life even 40 years later. For the participants, quitting or leaving this ‘fight’ seemed to be equivalent to be

disintegrated and annihilated. What was mentioned in the excerpts indicated that the participants believed that they could survive as long as they were struggling with life without compromising their own values and beliefs that led them to be expelled. While the existential and ideological questioning can be seen in their statements, their continuous attempts to preserve their self-identity are also observed.

"Of course, we are not wrong just because the way we think is different than the others or we don't adapt to their interests. You have to continue to struggle, as they proved it by expelling us. After that day, the life became a struggle, a war. When I say war, what I'm trying to imply is living without any compromise." (Mr T)

One of the participants stated that he had to immigrate to another country after the expulsion, because his family was also there and he felt like there was a big confusion and uncertainty waiting for him in his own country. He mentioned that he had to start a whole new life for himself there with all the disappointments he took with him, and the additional stressors and life challenges related to the expulsion affected his entire life negatively.

"I had been completely upside down; I mean my life had been completely upside down. I can say that it affected my life completely negatively. I have always struggled to start a new life. As I mentioned, we were forced to live in another country! I wasn't eager to live in Netherlands but it had become obligatory for me after all, in that period I mean. The difficulties here... Starting a new life from scratch even minus... I mean, I don't know if you can imagine but I was new around here and taking the bus. At that time, you become scared of your incapability to answer back if the bus driver would ask you anything. Because you don't know the language. You become like an offended child in another country. You re-learn how to say things like 'table, chair, wall, etc.' in another language. You learn a new

vocabulary. It is as if you were reborn. Moreover, I had learned French in the military school, goddamn it. When I came here, it went for nothing...That is to say, it was like being reborn, a life from scratch but I was not eager to face them. I mean, I have never said anything like 'Thank God, I'm here!'... Because, in another sense Turkey has always been on my mind. 'I don't belong here. I should have been in my country; I should have contributed to the society there.' I contribute to the society here but actually, I prepared myself for my country. Overall, there are some contradictions... I have lived through a life of contradictions..." (Mr T)

#### **4.2. LOSING THE PROFESSION IDEALIZED BY OTHERS**

Loss can be traumatic by itself, and when it is accompanied by adverse traumatic experiences, the main assumptions about the world, others, and the self may be shattered irreversibly, and getting over this loss may cost a lifetime. The most important loss that the participants have experienced as a result of being expelled was expressed as losing a profession and a career that was planned and endeavoured for. This superordinate theme emerged from the excerpts revealing what kind of experiences the participants had after losing their membership in Armed Forces, and what kind of hardships they experienced in their professional lives as a result of being 'the expelled soldiers'.

The responses to the questions "Do you think you have lost something as a result of the expulsion? If yes, what kind of losses you can mention?" and "What did your profession mean to you before you were expelled from the military?" led to the emergence of two major themes which are being left without a profession that was dreamed of and working in jobs that were not appropriate with their education and life goals, and the feelings of losing respect in the eyes of people in the community because of being seen as the guilty.

#### **4.2.1. “What Is My Profession?”**

The expelled soldiers stated their life-long difficulties on identifying what their professions actually are. Some of the participants were expelled with their college degrees that could enable them to work in jobs that are compatible with their education, while the others were still students in Military Colleges, and they had to get into universities to obtain another profession all over again. Until now, a significant portion of the participants continued their educations, some of them had master’s degree and eventually they acquired new professions. However, both the expelled cadets and students explained that with the expulsion, they experienced the confusion and hardship of working on jobs, which were incompatible with their education, and world-views. As it is seen in the excerpts, they have experienced the disappointment of not accomplishing their mission, which was spreading the knowledge they have to the others who do not have a chance, which was the primary meaning of being an officer for them. All the employments and other professions mentioned were only for maintaining their lives financially after the expulsion.

"When the topic comes to the ‘profession’, it is interesting that I still really don’t know what I should say about it. After I left the army, I had sold cooking pots for a time. Steel cooking pots were some kind of a trend in those days. When we talk about ‘profession’, I’ve always felt like “What should I say now?” Later on, I had found an accounting bureau, a basic one, and we were providing tea and sugar to this bureau. I carried 25kg-packages to its depot from our truck, they were very sizable things indeed, and that was my sole job. Furthermore, I had gotten a driver’s license... One day, I had just run out of patience, as I really felt it beneath me... We got neither a dream nor a future...What kind of a job it was that I had... I was at the age of 26-27, when I got expelled.” (Mr A)

“I mean, I lost the career which I was going to make. By saying ‘career’ I mean: Truly, I lost the satisfaction of serving my country.” (Mr Y)

“Moreover, after I left the village, I had liked very much to get informed about so many things. I was getting informed slowly and sometimes I was dreaming of returning to my village and transferring my knowledge to people who lived there. How should I know; there were those dreams inside my head. Acquiring new knowledge in school was a good thing; and that certainly attracts the person to reading... In addition, there was this feeling of responsibility. The responsibility of transferring my knowledge... However, I couldn’t do it. As a result, it was a disappointment. At that time, it came to us that we had such a responsibility to transfer our knowledge to people. Informing the ignorant people and the people who weren’t able to acquire new knowledge...” (Mr M)

“Our youthfulness, childhood, dreams and ideas... I mean we had lost everything. That is to say, it is a big disappointment. It was something, as if you have reached to a rank and a readiness, after all those years of education, to serve your country, people and motherland and suddenly everything is being taken away from you... Your future, profession and living are being taken away from you... You are doomed to unemployment and being thrown away to the street.” (Mr C)

After the expulsion process, the participants were not only left without a profession, but also, they experienced challenges finding jobs because they were not experienced in other fields, and also because of the perceptions toward them in the society. It is possible to say that these post-expulsion difficulties seemed to disrupt some of their basic assumptions about the others’ benevolence, and their beliefs that others actually can understand and accept them as they are, which will be further emphasized in the other superordinate themes of this study.

“The most important thing was, we couldn’t ask anyone to help or become a reference to us. However, you have to find a job and work, as you haven’t got any job experience. They asked us our experience. Furthermore, when they asked us the reason why we had got expelled from the army, they were getting curious, listening to your story, and then sending you somewhere else. One, which I can never forget, was like this: When I was the company commander of District Military Police, we were having issues with a businessman. He had poor relations with his employees. Later on, we got encountered and when the chat went a bit long, he offered me some help getting a job. After that, we set up a rendezvous; he would take me to another businessman, who would help me. When I went to our meeting point, he wasn’t there. Later, he wrote me a letter and gave me a letter, saying this would help you, when you meet him. I went to the man that he had directed me; the man was the owner of a commercial complex. A honourable man (!)... Later, I gave the letter that he gave me, to this man. He took the letter and looked at it, he looked me in the eye and said that there were no jobs for the time being.” (Mr I)

“I worked in the municipality as a worker. I worked as a watchman in parks and gardens; I read water meters and etc. Ordinary things we can say... Nevertheless, I did these things in no need of support from anyone. Yet, when I saw the other workers, not caring for their rights; besides, living on minimum wage was difficult like nowadays, I lived through those rough days. To hold on somewhere else, I got into Istanbul University, Law Department and graduated. However, as I mentioned I was a fee-earner lawyer, let’s define it as a “labouring lawyer”. Living was a bit more comfortable compared to being a municipality worker, at least I could make double minimum wage instead of one, comfortably. Yet, neither was I able to become a true lawyer nor a military officer. In military academy, they gave me the nickname ‘Gallego’. Gallego was the captain of Spanish National Football Team, and still the people who

studied in 1978 term call me with this nickname. I accept being ‘Gallego’ because playing football was a job that I truly loved. Apart from that, I understood nothing either from being a military officer or from being a lawyer.” (Mr I)

“I mean yes, I got the diploma. Yet, I can’t say that I’ve done my profession. I’ve tried a few commercial things but they failed. At last, I started a job in the municipality, and I stayed there. I accept that I used the knowledge I had acquired from my studentship, the knowledge that comes with the diploma; but officially, I never worked with that status. In the end, I worked in the status of an ordinary worker. There was no opportunity for this in truth. I’ll try to put it this way, I got into university in 1981, and I graduated in 1992. Furthermore, if you include the military academy period, that is to say I was able to graduate from a university after 16 years. When you apply to a job in a few institutions at that age, these create an obstacle for you anyway. If I should say briefly, there wasn’t any work opportunity for me according to my education. Without the opportunity, I wasn’t able to wait a bit longer after all. I was obliged to work in a job that I was able to find, and do those. The commercial trials were also like these anyway. I wasn’t the kind of person who owns a certain amount of a capital. We started with a friend of mine and said maybe we could have been able to get through, and it earned us a living for a few years; however at the end, we got bankrupt very badly. After I started a job in the municipality with the help of my connections, I learned to accommodate myself to circumstances and that’s how I got here. Trading was not appropriate for those of us who came from military academy, because as I mentioned earlier, we had always been in a solidarity, we were also friends with those who had different opinions; after that environment, being a boss or trading didn’t match up with our ideas. You feel like you fell onto the opposite side, that’s how I say.” (Mr T)



As it can be seen in the excerpts, some participants believed that it is not easy for a soldier to be successful in business. They made sense of their difficulties on this as because they were thrown into a strange and non-trustable world that was unfamiliar to them until the expulsion. They also mentioned that they realized their separation from the real world in the military when they were expelled, as they were in a bell jar living in solidarity, and how this affected their further relationships with others in the business world. In most of their statements, they explained how much they have floundered after losing their positions in the military.

“Losing a profession and holding a job was difficult for me. You don’t know to trade, the personal relations in it... It is very hard for a soldier to start a commercial business... After all, as you were raised in a military culture, an environment of confidence among the friends. That is to say, there was neither any document nor any contract between us. When you start a business without a second thought, you notice that even your most loved ones can cheat on you for not even six pence. Furthermore, you become a guarantor for them; they rip you off and disappear, so you become obliged to pay the debt. It’s really sad, I don’t know how to describe it.” (Mr C)

The following excerpt reveals a good illustration of expelled military members’ continuous attempts to avoid being in a position where they would become a boss, who dominates and abuses own workers, and do not extend them their earned rights. As seen in the following example, the participants’ mental representations about the authority figure seems to affect the major areas of their lives.

“Trading is not suited to us, those people who have a military background... Because, as I mentioned earlier, we were always in solidarity also with the people who got different political views, they were

also our friends. After that kind of an environment, being a boss or trading did not agree with our thoughts and ideas. Because for being a boss, you need to oppress your workers or use them and not provide what they actually deserve; we would never do such things.” (Mr R)

One of the participants mentioned that expulsion caused life-long damages including the economic problems in his life until in 2011, he received back the rights and privileges of being a member of military.

“The expulsion event changed my whole life. On the other hand, I could have evaluated it better, so to say, at least if I could have got into a job in a big company; I could have been much more successful at there. When looking back, now I regret this. If I could have got into a big company, but not started my own business... I could have been one of the white collars. As we have got our rights back, I have no financial difficulty for the time being, but it’s just too recent. However, when I was retiring, I had got some bills being paid in half, so I went for another job to earn a living. What I did there, after a certain age, was the general management of the company. I worked there for a time and qualified for a pension. Besides the retirement, this getting our rights back issue had become like a lottery win for us. Maybe it had not become like a lottery win for some people, but it had become one for me. After that, I said to myself that I would not work anywhere else ever again. Because I had been working too hard, here and there.” (Mr Y)

“There was no career for us anymore. I couldn’t complete my self-development. I mean, the conditions made it worse some, as I’ve dealt with various issues such as the disappointments that I’ve lived through both here (referring Netherlands where he immigrated) and my homeland, plus the conflicts in my family, my education level remained in the same level when I left Turkey. I’ve followed up some courses here but I couldn’t

complete my career development. That is to say, my work life is consisting of being a civil servant and a consultant at its peak. It went like this with the Dutch language I've learned. Apart from this, I couldn't achieve my lifelong targets of being a manager or a principal in a reputable work place. The negative things that had been lived through, and the disappointments also affected my work life negatively. Some things had just lost their meanings. Either this or that way, the time has passed." (Mr M)

#### **4.2.2. Losing Respect of Others**

Another related major theme emerged from the statements of the participants showing that with the loss of their place on the military, their place and status in the minds of others in the social community also changed. They explained their struggle with the feelings of losing their idealized images in the eyes of others. Considering the value of being a member of Turkish Armed Forces during those years, they stated that the ones who respected them until the time of expulsion, denigrated and accused them when they came back as civilians, and that was the most painful part of being expelled.

"The neighbourhood pressure is much more difficult than overcoming your feelings about the state. Imagine, everybody knows you, you are a military officer. Whose son you are is known. They know where you live... If you want to learn more about my personal feelings at that time, I will tell. Imagine, they suddenly expel you from the army. You've got nothing left. Besides, they cut your hair as a flattop and then they expel you. Then you return, and when they look at you, they will see a completely different person. And then the rumours start; it is what it's like in the small places. The rumours start immediately! If you had left by being successful, I mean to military school or something... Oh, you are a soldier now! You will be respected there. However, if you get into a trouble... They'll absolutely ridicule you. Could I explain? Once they see you in trouble, they

exaggerate things, come down on you, they will gossip about you. And if you indulge them further, they will spill out their hatred against you, face to face." (Mr Y)

"In truth, when I returned to my village, I will put it this way: I went to the coffee house of the village, you know the general illiterate and ignorant profile in villages. Before my expulsion, when I had gone to my village, these people would stand up and say "Oh, look! M. is here." After my expulsion, people approached me and said, "So you became like one of us, huh?" That was the statement. Like I was someone else as a military officer. This was the general reaction of the villagers". (Mr M)

"There was an aviation officer friend... He invited me to join his business, he said that he was selling cooking pots and wanted to do this with me. I said 'Let's give it a try.' That night I never slept. I dreamt of myself presenting these cooking pots in front of the whole neighbourhood. I felt fear, and then got nervous. I would appear in front of the families while doing this job. How are you appearing as, in front of them? You were a military officer, now you are a cooking pot seller. I didn't sleep that night to overcome this thought. . I decided to go and work and then returned back constantly as I was asking myself whether I should I work with these people. Anyway, I started to sell and market them, as I was able to prepare myself for this from the previous night I had... But the interesting thing was, I had been in military exercises, drinking tea in the same place 8 months ago and after, I was selling cooking pots in front of the families again there. They also clearly reacted to this with their harsh comments..." (Mr A)

As it can be seen in the excerpt below, one participant mentioned his experience of seeing that he lost the status, and being exposed to discrimination in the community indicating the expulsion related post-traumatic experiences as a

continuum. Moreover, their feelings of oppression can be understood from their narratives.

“By the way, there is also a love adventure in this story of being a meatball peddler. There is also a social class issue in it. When I was a meatball peddler, there was an eatery. And the owner of that restaurant had a daughter, who was studying at the university. Every day, she came. Every day, she wore different clothes. Every day, when she came, we looked at each other. I was wearing suits, to show that I was not a regular peddler. Then I told to myself that we had been looking at each other for so many times; however you had got no experience in this as a soldier, and it was that you should talk to her. One day, when she was going up the hill, I said to her: “Can we talk?” She said to me “But I don’t know who you are’ and then left. When she said something like this, I felt broken and didn’t say anything further. Later, there was a man, working in their eatery. He asked me to come beside him and said: “You were disturbing our girl. You are just a meatball peddler, and this girl is the daughter of the owner of this eatery. This isn’t going to work out, you should pull yourself together.” (Silence)... You feel exactly the same thing what a meatball peddler would feel. You came there from a different social class, from being an ex-military officer, however in the end you are the peddler now... The man slapped the importance of being in different social classes to my face. It is absolutely like the song of Cem Karaca “You are a worker, and remain as one”. It was difficult. You see the value that the society gives to being a military officer, and you lost it. But you also give value to people. In fact, these happened to you as you gave importance to their rights and you see the system of “oppressor and oppressed” in the same society.” (Mr R)

“...Later, he looked me in the eye and said that there were no jobs for the time being, but he would help me when the opportunity arose. In the end, of course I left the place and have never returned back. I had never

demanded anything or help afterwards. Because I knew that they would not. After that, I've always walked away, maybe I avoided feeling like that once more again... You know, I felt very humiliated, when I got that negative response, most particularly when that man behaved like that, I felt like I was despised, and I was sweating blood. I mean, as if I felt something very very bad... In situations like this, I was falling into disgrace. You come front of a man, and want a job from him. You had been a commander of some great men, you had been a deputy district governor, when everybody was showing a strong interest in you, you suddenly dropped far below zero in their eyes. It was a great disgrace.”  
(Mr I)

#### **4.3. HAVING DIFFICULTIES WITH EXPLAINING THE SELF TO FAMILY**

This superordinate theme involves the commonalities among the eight participants' primary concerns after they were expelled from the military, about how their expulsion would be approached by their families and how it would affect their relationships with them. Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that all the participants stated their worries about the feelings and reactions of their families in the first place when they were asked about their feelings after the expulsion, instead of their own emotions. These questionings of the participants bring to mind the issue that they might have been in need to see whether they would be accepted or not by the closest ones when they were back as expelled soldiers. Especially, considering that they were interrogated and tortured by the familiar and previously trusted people, their anxieties can be seen as their wondering about who would protect, understand, support and heal them after these adverse experiences they had been exposed to.

The answers given to the questions of “What did you feel when you learned you were expelled?”, “What experiences did you have after being expelled”, and “What were the factors that made your life easier or harder to pass

through this process?” led to the emergence of the major themes showing that the participants’ difficulties were not finished when they were released, but as their statements revealed, the post-expulsion process and their experiences especially in the family relationships context seemed to influence their lives and recovery trajectories. The major themes that appeared in the participants’ statements included feeling like they have disappointed their families by being expelled, that their own values and beliefs were not understood, and that they were accused and found as the guilty ones in the first place.

#### **4.3.1. Disappointing Family**

After being expelled from the Turkish Armed Forces, the participants hesitated to go back to their family homes where they lived when they were children. The reasons of this hesitation were mentioned as that they were not receiving any allowances from their families since the day they were involved in the military, and being a military officer was honoured in their families, and that the actual reasons of their expulsion from military could not be understood by their families. Five of the eight participants stated that being a military officer was valued in the eyes of their families considering the important place of the military and being a soldier in the society in Turkey. Besides the financial concerns and the effects of losing a stable, secure employment, most of the participants mentioned that seeing their families as disappointed by them was one of the most difficult things they experienced after the expulsion, releasing a feeling of shame. Moreover, they stated that regardless of whether they have received support or not from their families, they felt like that they were not understood by their closest ones. Even though they believed in the rightness of their thoughts and ideology, they wanted to explain themselves to their families.

"For instance, my family... You got expelled from the army, coming home again after that was a very difficult feeling... That is to say, if there were another alternative for me, I wouldn't have gone there again. The feeling

was like that. My father's biggest happiness was me being a military officer. It was too important for him. After all this, when I told him that I had got expelled from the military, it created a very harsh damage on him. Therefore, the neighbourhood also judges you constantly... They think like, most probably I had done something wrong or committed a crime before getting expelled from the army. It was really tough for me to feel that I had disappointed them." (Mr I)

One of the participants mentioned that he had experienced ambiguous feelings like that he was believing in himself, but that these feelings of disappointing the family led him to behave in a manner to prove himself to them. Also, he mentioned that seeing family as disappointed had resulted in him believing that he would not be accepted unconditionally as the way he is, and that he is alone in his failures in life.

"I didn't feel fear but, it was hard for me as I would tell them to my family. Because the society was never ready for anything. The reason of getting expelled from the military academy could only have been a crime or a burglary or homosexuality... That was the prejudice of society. That's why you beware at first, as you think of the position that your family will be in. My father was a civil servant, so he wasn't earning much for a living. And when you get expelled, you also have to think a way to earn a living. A kind of shame, I felt, we can say. After that age, you have to start from the scratch. You think of your family's reaction to this. How will they react? Because to make your own decision is easy... It was like disappointing them that was the set of surroundings; however, I have never thought like this, this was my life and this was my view. Nevertheless, I was striving to prove the opposite. It was really hard for them to see you as you are and as another individual. There was the success of raising a child like you; you have no success on your own. However, if you are unsuccessful, it



becomes your deficiency. That is what I have realized after the expulsion”  
(Mr B)

One participant mentioned that his expulsion affected his mother negatively leading her to suffer from physical illnesses, because seeing his son’s expulsion was something hard for her to swallow. Moreover, he stated that this event influenced his way of living life in which he has been specifically careful about not disappointing anyone anymore because of himself.

“My father didn’t understand it for sure, my mom got sick after I got expelled...Where did this interview come from, too many things I have remembered now. We were being dispersed around Istanbul... Before we came to Istanbul, my mother experienced goitre, because of the psychological effect of my expulsion, and it lasted for 7-8 years. Later, she survived somehow, saved herself anyway. When I got expelled and returned back to my homeland, my situation affected her, very deeply. You can’t make them understand anyway, they just understand that I got expelled, she sent his child to military school to make him a military officer but one day that child returns as just himself... I never wanted to be in such a position like this, in life. To be accused when I was innocent, alienated... I never wanted anyone to be disappointed because of me ever again.” (Mr A)

“Well, let’s put it in this way, I experienced a difficulty to tell this incident to my parents. But there was no regret in me to make me say things like “If I wouldn’t have done that...” or “if this wouldn’t have been like this...” There was nothing like this however, I asked myself “How am I going to tell this to my father, to my mother?” After all, I had stayed in Ankara for a couple of days after I was expelled. Then I came to İzmir. After I came to İzmir, I had stayed there for a couple of days too and had returned to Ankara. I mean, I tried to plot an individual route for myself. Had I been

successful? I hadn't been too successful on that, I mean after some time, I returned to my family, got involved after those hard times.” (Mr T)

“You don't know if your family would accept you, they both got saddened about your situation and think like “Of course, there is nothing malevolent from him but what will happen next?” Well there is the man who came to the age of 20. You cannot get a pocket money from them, as you are not used to it. In military school, the government had given you the pocket money for years. There was this whelmed feeling like a humiliation inside me.” (Mr B)

#### **4.3.2. Being Accused By Family**

Some of the participants stated that they were exposed to harsher comments of their families when they were back home as a civilian. They experienced difficulties explaining their innocence to their families who supposed to embrace them after their loss and adverse experiences in prison. However, in contrast, participants stated that they were being criticized because of disclosing their own beliefs and values or being with the friends who share the same ideology in the military.

"However, we couldn't get along with my father. That is to say: “If there was no reason, then you wouldn't have got into this trouble!” or “I told you before that you shouldn't have become a part of these political discussions in military academy!” he had always said. He had always come front of me with these accusations. I mean, I was telling him: “Father, I wasn't any part of a political discussion, yet I did nothing political wise...”, the he had said “I told you that, those friends of yours will get you into trouble...” It was the attitude of my father. He had stroked an attitude like this. Then there was an unrest in our house." (Mr M)

One participant mentioned that he was being exposed to continuous reminders of his adverse situation, with the accusations of his mother.

"For instance, even my mother was coming to our house and asking me "Look son, why did you do this?", when she saw anything from Armed Forces in TV. She spoke like this. She was asking me: "Are you going to be the one that will rescue the country, and to fix the people?" (Mr B)

One of the participants accepted that not everyone would understand what it meant to be expelled, but at least he wanted his family to understand him, and find him not guilty; otherwise he would end up completely alone.

"Before all, you return to your family house, you tell about the situation to your mom and dad, you try to convince them. I mean, you want to prove to them you did not do anything wrong in a moral wise or humane way or about your country, because you feel the obligation to explain that. You don't know what people will tell about you. You want to tell that you haven't committed a crime regarding your homeland and people in it. Because you feel that you are obliged to tell these. Being thrown away from the hierarchical structure of the state by being damaged, it is not something that the social structure can understand. They think 'So, he is guilty.'" (Mr B)

"When you got out of the system, you directly become isolated. Six months pass anyway, until you tell the situation to your family, most loved ones. You have to tell that you did not commit a crime, so to say. You can't tell it to people or society as they look at you as guilty, head-on." (Mr A)

#### **4.4. BEING THE SUBJECT OF DISCRIMINATION**

All the expelled military members expressed their feelings of being discriminated by others beginning with the expulsion process during 1980s, and also in their further lives as civilians. They stated that they were expecting to be taken into the interrogations and even to be expelled, since they were being left alone in the barracks or academy, and also their friends were also taken, and not coming back. They were told that some of their friends committed suicide during their captivity. As it was mentioned before, the solidarity between the soldier friends were too strong which helped to deal with the challenges of military and also life for years. They had been together since their childhood in the boarding schools, and a special kind of friendship was described during the interviews, that were lost with the beginning of the expulsions. Most of the participants explained the process as that even their close friends were afraid of talking to them, because they were known by the authorities with their 'political views' from the books they read, and the topics they talked with each other; the government found these views as 'oppositional' and individuals like themselves as the 'others'. Participants defined their situations before the expulsion as they were like the patients with 'black death', and communicating with them could transmit the disease to the others, mentioning that their friends could also have been 'labelled' and expelled because of them.

The discrimination that the participants felt did not end with the expulsion; rather they stated that they continued to feel all alone when they were out of the military. Only one of the eight participants stated that he did not suffer from the discrimination in the social community, and he acknowledged that he was supported very well by his family; his fiancé did not leave him because he was expelled like he expected, he took psychiatric consultation right after the expulsion, and the people where he has been living share the same ideology with him. The rest of the participants explained that they suffered from the perceptions of others against them, they were seen as 'criminals', experienced difficulties

finding jobs, communicating with others, and they always felt that they were not understood by the society, and felt even more disappointed.

This superordinate theme arose from the responses given to the questions of “Have you ever thought that you could be expelled from your position in the military before this event happened? If so, how?”, “Have you experienced any difficulties in your further life because of the expulsion event? If so, how?”, and “What were the factors that made your life easier or harder to pass through this process?”. The following main themes show that participants have been suffering from the discrimination by others from the beginning of the expulsion process until now, showing that they have experienced the hardship of living in the society where they had been seen as ‘the traitors’, the guilty ones and they have still been feeling resentful of being isolated and not understood.

#### **4.4.1. Being Seen Like A Patient With “Black Death”**

All the expelled soldiers in this study stated their ambiguous feelings about their being isolated before the expulsion, because they were both considering this as their friends protecting themselves and they had all the rights to do that, but also, they were feeling sad, and like they were left alone in an uncanny place where anything could happen anytime to them. This separation from them was mentioned as it has been continuing all through their lives, and their relationships had been ruptured with the friends, especially with the ones who were not expelled.

“I mean the process was obvious. From the moment, it was all clear from the way that the officers in the military school look at you and the other friends, becoming distant. It was all clear. You are like the only patient that is quarantined. To be dead at any time, alienated.... People and friends beside you, are looking weirdly to you and becoming distant. Everyone think for themselves. They think that if they talk to you, they will be

getting into trouble. You become abandoned and you notice that something will happen to you.” (Mr B)

“The most painful part for me was, when I was in the senior year of military academy, I had a friend that I loved very much. We were never apart in our senior year, we were going to school together, you see we were hanging out at weekends, and so on. After our distributions to elsewhere, he was positioned in another profession. We parted our ways after we had left military academy. Around a year later, I went to Ankara, as I had something come up there... I came across with him in Kizilay. He told me “Mate, where were you? When I was getting married, I looked for you in the whole country, but couldn’t find you...” The person who told me this, didn’t even look to my face after I got expelled.” (Mr M)

“After the expulsion, our relationships were broken with our friends, even we couldn’t get any news from our best friends. This was very sad. I mean, you’ve got broken away when you were that close... After that, I left there, and started to work in private sector in my civil life. I had become an accounting manager. Years passed... One day, when I was reading the newsletter, I noticed the name of my friend, the news was about the appointment of some judges to somewhere else in the country, and there were some articles. I wrote a letter to him, to his address, to see if it was be delivered or not. After that, a reply came from him and we exchanged our phone numbers. Once I called, but I had uneasiness with it, as I didn’t want to create a disturbance for him. We spoke for an hour. After a week further, I called again and someone picked up the phone and said, “There is no one here named like this.”. And, that was where I said, shortly, “My friend doesn’t want to talk to me.” After that, I just withdrew my interest. You become very uncomfortable and uneasy. It is how a friend, who you had loved so much, abandons you. Moreover, he didn’t do this in a gentleman like manner. If he told me that, as he was a judge and his

circumstances were hard, that there was a government pressure on him, therefore, it would have been nice to cut off for a while, I would have understood. I wasn't in a position to not to understand him. I would justify his decision. I was left alone for no reason because of this expulsion; everybody looked at me with different eyes, and treated me like a diseased person. We were not expecting our friends to avoid us, as if we would contaminate them. But still I understand, as I mentioned earlier, the country was in a position like that in those days. If you had seen with another person, who is undesirable by the authority, it was enough for them to blacklist you. Everybody was scared of these things". (Mr I)

"We hadn't been expecting that until it happened, our friends got distant from us as if we were some sick people and would contaminate them. I understand this anyway, as I said, the country was in a situation like this. Even the people you had been seen with was causing you to be marked, and made them think that you were on the same side with them, the people were scared." (Mr A)

"Of course, it was bad. You knew that there were many people who were also behaving like that. Many people behaved like you, but you were the one who got punished. I mean, you are being discriminated, you become a target, you are being a person who is unwanted... You are also being alienated in this period... For instance, this expelled friend of mine, was in the same battalion with me, but in another troop. Actually, they had warned me about him before he got expelled. I mean, the troop commander called and warned me "It would be nicer if you would have not seen him as often as it is." I suppose that, someone also had been warned because of me, like this. So what happens next? Greetings start to decrease, the people you had chats start to become distant to you. These were the general things that you would live through at that time. I mean they got restricted. It is not something that can be seen as a right, yes, the people weren't right because

of doing this after all, but it is not something to be criticized too heavily either. Human psychology can develop weird things like this to defend itself. It tries to develop something that can help to strive for their life first, before anything. You love someone, you are a friend, an ally, you feel like it. However, the people start to behave by thinking, “Will something bad happen to me too tomorrow?” Isn’t it weird?” (Mr T)

Moreover, for some participants, the only support they could get was from the expelled soldier friends again, and they stated that without their solidarity all these years, participating in life would not have been possible with the felt solitude in the society where they have been constantly discriminated against, revealing the importance of not being isolated and distanced by the friends who shared similar pains and help them to integrate their traumatic experiences.

“...Plus, our friends beside us... We shouldn’t forget them either. Even though all of us started their own struggles in life, we were always side-by-side, with my friends who got out of that prison. We had connections with each other. Their social support was great. It is nearly impossible to struggle with life if you are alone; therefore, you should never be alone. Because, our expulsion was such an event, if we couldn’t get our friends’ social support, we would not have taken a part in life and would definitely have fallen apart.” (Mr R)

#### **4.4.2. Hardship Of Living In A Hometown Where You Are Seen As A “Traitor”**

This major theme contains one of the common and dominant post-expulsion experiences that all the participants have been suffering from all these 40 years: the hardship of living in a country full of people who do not understand them, know their worth, and who have been accusing them. Participants stated that they have been exposed to the prejudices by the society, because they were perceived as ‘guilty or criminal’. Even though the courts did not find them guilty,



being expelled from the military resulted with their being seen as ‘the bad ones’ in the public. Majority of the participants mentioned their feelings of resentment about the word ‘traitor’, since the chief of defence, who started the military coup and became the president at that time, labelled the expelled military members in the media with this word (Yildirim, 2012).

“We were alone when we got out. Why we were alone, when you look at the dominant general thought in the social structure, it was normal that they see you as a criminal. They named us anarchists, communists, so to say, criminals... People who don’t fit into existing order. Further, I will tell you something interesting, there was a neighbour , who had a 20-year history with us. Until I got my rights back, he continued to see me as a criminal for all those years, can you believe it? You know, as the government expelled us, he had always thought that, my expulsion from the army as a soldier, was my own guilt for them. He said to me ‘Oh, so you were right, you were innocent...’Can you believe it? Until that moment... The general perspective had always been like this. I mean, you were thinking that you would enlighten yourself by studying, lead your country and people through a better future, and these people come and label you as a “criminal”.” (Mr A)

Participants believed that they sacrificed themselves by thinking about the good of the entire public, and in reverse, the society did not even listen to them, leading them to feel more disappointed, and resentful. They explained that in their ideology, they defend the human rights, equality of all people, and the importance of sharing with others. They always believed that they have been struggling for these people’ benefit, however they got a treatment in return that they did not deserve.

“Also, you sometimes think that, you did this for the sake of these people, by sacrificing and never thinking about yourself; then the same people

label you as “Communist, worthless guy...” at the outside. These were the things we had lived through. I mean, you do something for a good, to enlighten them, but they start to slaughter you, firstly. In the beginning you start to feel distrust in people, and it continues for a certain amount of time... We were labelled as “traitors” in the first place, so that we were facing prejudice from the people.” (Mr Y)

“... I don’t know, if they had thought that they could not have controlled us, or they had seen us as radicals... However, we had never done something that proved them right. That was the reason of our inner breakdown. It was the whole reason anyway, of our emotional, intellectual, political, socio-economical, psychosocial collapses and cries that we had lived through after 12th September! Not being understood... As the society looked at us with prejudice by the false accusations, our vital relationships with the society had been broken. They had discriminated us; they had seen us as demons. And this, continued for 30-35 years, in all of our socio-cultural relationships, imagine that people hold themselves distant to you for all these years...” (Mr A)

“When you see the people in the society, and when you notice their viewpoint to the political events, you think like: “These people have no intention of thinking.” The major part of the society didn’t understand us anyway, I mean my inner circle, family, friends did understand but this major part of the society didn’t even care. People always look for their own interests; you notice that when you see them. On the other hand, when you think of the people for whom you have put up a fight for, you get angry towards those people. Why didn’t you stand by me and why didn’t we stand shoulder to shoulder? Well, if your aim was to save yourself, I saved myself, but you couldn’t. My intention was saving you too. Furthermore, I think that I had put up this fight without any hesitation and sacrificed

myself, so where are you now? Moreover, you had looked at us badly for years, while we were having your best interest at heart.” (Mr C)

#### **4.5. MAKING SENSE OF THE EXPULSION**

This superordinate theme includes the common statements of the eight participants about their ways of making sense of the expulsion event. It was notable to mention that they have still been questioning the reasons that led them to be expelled 40 years ago, and having difficulties comprehending how their personal values and thoughts, and thinking about the benevolence of the others’ in the society could be the excuse of their being tortured, interrogated and expelled. Also, they explained that the official reason of their expulsion on paper was different from what had been asked during interrogations and torture, leading them to feel more confused, helpless, and downtrodden.

Moreover, the commonalities among their responses revealed that they have always believed in the rightness and innocence of their thoughts, and they stated that they had experienced the reflections of what was happening in the Turkey during 1980s. They asserted that during those times, people in Turkey were divided into two groups, as one group was consisted of the oppressors, and the others were the oppressed ones, and they believed that they were expelled, because they were only thinking about the rights about the oppressed ones, and the authority was on the side of oppressors. They explained that although they were innocent, they were tried to be found as guilty with the false accusations, and were being forced to accept the crimes they did not commit. They made sense about the expulsion event in a way that they were not wanted in the military anymore, because the authority did not want people who thought and were different from itself. Moreover, the splitting in their perceptions, in which they completely believe in their rightness and innocence, so their ‘goodness’, whereas the other side was pictured as an evil, can be observed in the excerpts below. It is possible to say that this perception and meaning attributions might have been

helping them to cope with their unbearable and overwhelming emotions, besides what is objectively visible to the eye.

#### **4.5.1. Is Thinking A Crime?**

This major theme emerged from the participants' statements about their meaning making processes beginning with the expulsion process until now. All of the eight participants stated that they were expelled from the Armed Forces, although they did not have any fault, and they were continuing to perform their duties as they were asked to do. They acknowledged that the reason of their expulsion was that they were undisciplined, even though their discipline points in the military were the highest until the military coup period. In addition, they mentioned that the questions they were asked during the interrogations contributed to their feelings of helplessness and confusion, because the torturers were forcing them to accept the crimes, they had no idea about and the books that were expected to be read at school had become an element of crime. As a result of that, they considered that they experienced all of these things in a place where there was no law, also leading them to believe that people inflicted pain on them on purpose with other ambitions behind.

“I still cannot understand why we got expelled... They played us a game, named indiscipline, and we stayed under arrest for 3 months. I mean, they interrogated us and so on, then they expelled us because of indiscipline. However, our discipline points were at very good levels, but they had said to us that they had been reduced to zero in a month, and this was the reason that they were expelling us.” (Mr T)

This major theme showing how the expelled military members evaluated their expulsion was named with a specific question they have been asking for many years. The way they answered this question was reproachful.

"I didn't think of anything or any precaution as I was a military student and I had nowhere to go or escape... You have no connection with any organizational structure, you basically can't think of anything. Nobody can support, so to say stand by, you or no structure to stop this and protect you. We were just waiting like a sacrificial lamb, for our turn to come. I mean we were desperate. Besides, you think, "Why should I run, I didn't do something wrong, I'm not a criminal after all. Is thinking a crime?" (Mr M)

"I didn't do anything after all, also there was nothing to bear the consequence. I mean, there was nothing to bear, as I didn't kill anyone, or do something wrong. The only thing I did was thinking. That was our only crime." (Mr C)

All the participants mentioned the legal optimization that was done to legitimize their expulsion with the specific changes on the laws; this reinforced their feelings that all these things were done to them on purpose with bad intentions.

"To expel us, they had to burden a crime on us however there was no crime. Was book that I had been reading a crime? It is a very original and unique event in the legal sense. They expelled us because of indiscipline... After that, they took our "crime" statements, and delivered us to the police. Police also took our statements and they delivered us to the court. If there were a crime element, I would have been judged; for instance, if I had a membership in any organization...I could have been imprisoned because of being a member of an organization, if the statement would have become absolute. Or if I had been involved in an event or protest, I mean if my statement had involved something like that, I would have been imprisoned. And of course, I would have been imprisoned as a civilian. Because, when they were expelling us, they didn't introduce a law as for this de facto

situation. They expelled us with this “trio enactment”, which involved the signatures of head of the state, prime minister and the minister of national defence. They added an article, indicating that Supreme Military Court could interrogate a soldier and expel if necessary. That affected the ones who were expelled after us. I mean it all started in 1982, it continued until 1985 – 1986.”(Mr Y)

One of the participants mentioned that they were already stigmatized before they were taken into the interrogations, and the reason of the systemic torture they were exposed to, was for legitimizing their expulsion causing them to feel more like they do not have any control over this event.

"We were discussing and sharing our ideas with our friends, however we found out later that were being spied on. When the order was given, the events started with a clattering noise, immediately. Even though I had been carrying out the orders and I had no interest in any protest or organization, I was taken into custody on 12th March. I was interrogated and tortured in the place called Intelligence Language School. They interrogated and tortured you to accept the accusations that they were trying to calumniate. You see, there was a statement, which indicated that I was a socialist that the previous students had given about me. There was a board in front of us which included how many students were in the class, how many of them were rightist and how many of them were leftist, it had all been marked on it. On our names, there was a red cross; so to say it was obvious that they were going to expel us. To set the situation, there were interrogations. For instance, there were accusations like being a member of an illegal organization, or being a representative in that certain regiment...To make me guilty, they tried to burden a guilt on me. But there was nothing, no proof after all. During interrogations, one officer from the term of 1978 went insane, he was kicking himself as he didn't remember the name of a book, that he had been told that he had read in 1974.” (Mr B)

#### **4.5.2. “We Were The Couch Grass In A Clover Field”**

This major theme emerged out the excerpts revealing that participants were perceiving themselves as the different ones in a place where the diversity and uniqueness were not acceptable. When the participants were asked the question of “How do you make sense of this event when you look back now?”, the common responses indicated that they believed the cause of the expulsion event was that the authority who raised their ‘children’ did not want and blamed them, when they became differentiated in their ideas. They mentioned their feelings of shock and disappointment because of being the unwanted one.

"They expelled us with special decision, and the justification was being inclined to the outside ideologies. The ideology was defined as an outsider to the main ideology that was in the centre. That is to say, they had seen us as a couch grass in a clover field and they had scythed us. They accused us for being an outsider to the centre." (Mr A)

“Just to satisfy themselves, to sustain their authority over us, they humiliated us for years and in the end, they said to us that we couldn’t have thought differently from them, or our thought couldn’t have been different from theirs, then they expelled us.” (Mr T)

“I mean, the reasons why we got expelled and the questions had been asked in the interrogation were completely different. We had no undisciplined behaviour, after all. They had no proof that we did something somewhere. They kept saying, ‘You did this and that.’ They were trying to accuse me with something I didn’t do, to make the expulsion legitimate. The only big mistake of mine was, borrowing the book called ‘Dialectic and Historical Materialism’ from the library, on my

2nd term. They showed it as evidence that I was a leftist. Well, if it was forbidden, why did it exist in the library in the first place?” (Mr T)

One participant mentioned his feelings of confusion, disappointment and being the one who is ‘out’, as a result of the sudden change he experienced.

“I had stayed in a cell for 30 – 35 days, all by myself. He was asking me lot of questions; he was trying to find an organizational relation. When my eyes were closed, he was giving voice from 3 different locations, one from there, and another from there... Of course, it was really tough for me... On 32nd day, at first, they interrogated me. They were asking me, which illegal organization that I had relations with. Of course, I had no relations. In their opinion, it was revising the whole personnel, a commission drills you emotionally and mentally, to label you and include you to a cluster, to get a data to make it legitimate. They had set their mind on doing this, they had evaluated me on that side, they had set their mind on settling my hash. This is very interesting, as you had educated me to create a contemporary military officer, and informed me about all of the ideological, political and economic things in the world in this direction, in all of the levels of my education. You both equip me, wherever it may serve to after all this, and you approach me with suspicion, then you throw me out as a dreg. You start to feel that you are not in the place that you were used to be and you have to look for a truth at the outside.” (Mr B)

As it can be seen in some illustrative excerpts, most of the participants presented this perception of being different in a more positive way in which the level of awareness was found associated with the ‘differentness’. They believed that the government did not want the ones who think and who are better within its ranks, because it was something that threatened its authority.



" It was just a thought for us... Otherwise, we didn't do anything different, we didn't participate to any protest, we didn't do anything wrong. Our only crime was thinking. I mean no protests that we participated, or no fights... Just because of our political views. They thought that, 'If we let them to be military officers, and stay, the Armed Forces will completely change or go into another direction. They are different from us, so for god's sake, we shouldn't let them to be military officers!' Well they did this in 1960, in 1970 and eventually in 1980... Actually, I think that the state didn't want thinker military officers, as it would not serve to its purpose. They didn't want to keep people who were different from them, thinking of the public good, and questioning. They wanted to keep people who would submit to them in any condition, listen to them without any murmur, and serve them in any way." (Mr A)

"Every system raises a person that is compatible with it. For this reason, either it makes you compatible with it or expels you... This is like this in everywhere; this is the way that the system works. That is to say, I think that I got expelled, because we were different from them." (Mr Y)

One participant mentioned that he considered his reason of expulsion as having to do with the fact that his ethnicity was different and unwanted in the military.

"..The expulsion process, I had thought that I was expelled because I'm an Alevi. I mean, if they had shown me any proof, or any single reason, told me that 'you are being accused because of bla bla...' I would say O.K. because I had different political views. However, both of them, being an Alevi or socialist, are my personal views and my beliefs. After the first interrogation, they gave me a paper, consisting 5-6 pages, and a pencil. They had written 6 questions, which were all about being a member of an illegal organization... As if I were a member of an illegal organization...

‘When would the revolution start?’, ‘How was your attitude towards villagers and workers?’ and etc. I didn’t have enough information to fill out. No, I don’t know the reason. He said to me that: ‘No, we didn’t bring you here because you are an Alevi.’ ‘Then why did you bring me here?’ I asked. He said that ‘We have confirmed that you are a leftist.’ ‘So what should we do now?’ I asked. He said ‘You are going to tell us the things you’ve done.’ I said to him that ‘For god’s sake! I didn’t say that I am a leftist, while you were saying me I was. Just tell me how did you decide that I am a leftist, so that I can understand.’ Then they asserted some claims like, ‘You took part in a demonstration in that place, you helped to the family of this person, you made some plans in that illegal organization house, etc.’ But they had failed to tell me a single truth. I was taken into the interrogations three times, and at the third one, the sound of typewriting was coming. I said ‘Okey, I am over.’” (Mr I)

#### **4.6. COPING WITH LIFE AFTER EXPULSION**

Mourning is a complex and long process especially after traumatic loss, that is generally not finished when the traumatic event is ended, and the things that have been lost are replaced with other things especially without accompanying emotional processing. Also, the further experiences after the traumatic events influence this process.

The excerpts regarding the participants’ ways of coping during the process of expulsion and their life-long adaptation strategies led to the emergence of this super-ordinate theme. The major themes came out from the responses to the questions of “In what ways you coped with the difficulties during and after the expulsion process?” and “How do you think you cope with the stressors related to your expulsion in your recent life?”. Themes include their believing in the rightness of their ideology, defending their own thoughts and values, and trying to live in accordance with their ideology through their entire lives, putting their

emotions aside while building a new life, searching for social support from their close ones who usually share the same ideology with them, looking at the positive sides of being expelled by reinterpreting their expulsion, and comparing themselves with the other expelled friends and finding themselves as more fortunate.

#### **4.6.1. Believing In The Rightness Of One's Thoughts For A Life Time**

The expelled military members stated that their ideology that led them to be expelled, helped them to reinterpret what they have been through and make sense about life again, while they have been coping with their feelings of loneliness. All of the eight participants stated their feelings of pride, because they have never surrendered to the people who tortured them, perceived them as guilty, and never behaved in a bad manner all these years. Not giving up their own values and identities seemed to help them to cope with the hardships they encountered during these 40 years and also reinforced their self-esteem.

“But we were honoured and proud of what we had learned in our education process. The incident gave us a harmony; I mean we were fired up after our expulsion again. We believed that it was wrong, and we saw that the system was malfunctioning. But I shouldn't be malfunctioning just because the system is malfunctioning. Our belief in what we had thought was right, lifted me and my friends up.” (Mr A)

In addition, they stated that their own desire to gain more knowledge, and to improve themselves intellectually was seen as rebellion against the authority of the state, and therefore as a ‘crime’; however their believing in their innocence, and what they have considered was accurate and true, helped them to stay and resist all the sufferings releasing the feelings of courage in return.

“Oh, hadn’t it crossed my mind, like running away abroad, or other things... Sometimes they do cross your mind... However, sometimes there is this feeling, that you say “Why should I run anyway, I didn’t do something wrong, I am not guilty.” “If they got to call us, then just let them call.”, “If they’ve got things to ask, then they have the answers...” So that was our general thought back then. We had a personal standing. We didn’t do something to be scared of, as we were in military academy. We had been studying in a boarding school for 8 years. You were allowed to get only a month of leave, to go to your hometown. Apart from that, neither we were taking part in a demonstration, nor protested anyone. There was nothing. I was innocent. I mean, as we had believed that we were innocent, we were much braver too, and there was atmosphere like this. Also, we were proud of our attitude too.” (Mr M)

“I didn’t see this as a loss. It was also a bit of political tradition; I interpret this situation like this as for myself, because I’ve reached to a certain level of consciousness, so that I didn’t see it as a loss. If there would be a way back to the past, I would have been the same person again. Again, I would have lived through the same process, what I say. Because I am still proud of being on the right side, and I believe that it is the right side regarding my political views and the books that I had read.” (Mr I)

One good example of one of their ways of coping can be seen in the excerpt below showing that their appraising and interpreting the world, others and themselves was based on their ideologies that contain rational evaluations and philosophical explanations. In addition, it was noteworthy to notice that their commitment to the ideology, and desire to maintain their lives without compromising their thoughts were revealing their belief in their being right for a life time, helping them to deal with all the struggles after expulsion. Moreover, it seemed, as that has been a way of preserving self from disintegration after trauma that shattered all the things they knew.

“I mean, some of us had got devastated and the other ones had not... There are two ways after all, surrendering or not surrendering. These two are like brothers. At any time, one could become one another. That is to say, what we call the unity and the struggle of the opposites is the basic law of dialectic. That is the law that provides dynamism. These theoretical things come to you as something to memorise in the beginning, but after what I lived through, the things that the government did, the torture, everything merges in your head. In a way, you learn by living. I mean, it is the most permanent way of learning, by experiencing, by living. The things that I had lived through, those painful days, showed me how much my thoughts and what I read were true. Both in the torture and the life outside, my ideology has always been validated as true. Imagine that you have a thought in your mind, and you say this order should change. But you’ve adapted to the order, let’s say. What you had lived through will demolish this thought, will finish it. I mean, as I had studied philosophy for a period, I had eventually become a part of it but the main problem of the philosophy is the relationship problem between the world of thoughts and materials. I mean, would somebody think as they live or lives as they think? The thoughts came from outside, from the books, from the incidents in Turkey. You put that idea on your mind, and you are going now, but if you fail to live in that way, then you become a boss and start to think like a boss. Well, I’ve always tried to integrate my thoughts and life. You think that, the ones who will advance and take this system into goodness, are the public, people and workers, so to say oppressed ones. Then you have to be one of them and stand by them. Otherwise some will say, you have to be rich to be useful to this society. No, it can’t be. A boss is a boss, a worker is a worker. That person will narrowly be a good boss. Apart from my education, I’ve always set this in my mind and chosen this way of life. (Mr I)

"I mean, we got expelled because of these things, but we didn't stop to think in our way, just because we got expelled. We have never withdrawn our interest in working harder or building a meaningful world. Even, our need to make these possible increased after the expulsion. We coped with that loneliness and isolation very successfully. For instance, I became a really good radio listener. At that time, I took part in art and science events. I focused more on literature and art, and I got relief. I did these things as much as I could. Every day was a new beginning for me. It went on and on like this, consistently. I mean, when we got up every morning, we rearrange the puzzle in front of us, this routine had become a reflex and every day was completely different to us. We followed the government, economy, cultural events, human rights and the people who went missing after the torture, almost every day, and we were attending to demonstrations with foundations. Today, our fight still continues. " (Mr A)

Participants also mentioned that they were expelled from the place in which the system they were against was not humane, but cruel to its own people within itself. Considering their adverse experiences during and after the military, their ideological commitment, and defending their rightness can be better understood.

"The desire of enlightenment and to be informed will never diminish inside of us. But what my thoughts brought me was the ambition of struggle. Belief. I don't say it regarding anything religious but our belief in the trueness of our thoughts... After it was certain that you would be imprisoned, no fear left inside us. Of course, I felt the fear, about everything like, what would I told to my parents, how would I told this, what would I be when I got expelled, what would they do to me in the place where I was being taken. I have never thought that I was wrong with my thoughts; even I still defend my thoughts... For this reason, that environment never suited to me. I mean, it was not something

humanitarian to slap a soldier when he is in attention, or to give orders that are donkeywork. Anyway, the armed forces was not for me. However, we were obliged to be in it, because we didn't want that the armed forces were controlled by the people like them. I mean the people, who beats soldiers, builds a hegemony, the part of the society that vent their spleen on the soldiers when they become lieutenants... This was the profile that they wanted to raise. I didn't want these people to stay there, so that's why I wanted to stay there to protect the structure. The scary thing for me was, the uncertainty of what thing would happen to us when we got the prison. Otherwise, I still believe that my ideology is the right one to choose. Even though I got expelled, I am still the same person now, even if they didn't, I would be the same person again. I am not obliged to give up my thoughts just because they punished me. A person gives up to believe in something only when it is proven that something is wrong or he accepts that he didn't know the truth. If my thoughts are still the same in my 57th age, since my 17th, I mean my thoughts are evolved in a way, then my thoughts are true. I mean, when will you get frightened, when you are wrong or when a characteristic of yours come to light? I am still proud of myself, as I had thought the good for society, for my people and I do think of the good for them. I am a kind of person, who feeds animals like cats and dogs with my own food and helps poor people as much as I can." (Mr B)

"What I believe in helped me: I'm in the right way, I didn't think wrongly. I didn't do the wrong thing either, you say to yourself. I will continue my struggle. What will I do? Again, I will continue to do whatever I can for the salvation of the people, for democratisation. I mean, you say this to yourself. However, we are aware of that we were devastated. This still continues to be the case... We feel complicated feelings like these..." (Mr M)

“I told my father that I was going to open a bookstore. I told him that, after this I had to earn my living in that way. He said ‘Why don’t you do something that will bring more money?’ I said ‘No. I will make inspire the young people to read books’ (He laughed). And, my mission still continues. It’s not a crime to read books, just forget about what they had done to us as because they saw reading books was a crime, young people should read more books, to be enlightened. That is what I believe in, and my view is still the same. I tried to hold on to life by opening a bookstore.”  
(Mr C)

#### **4.6.2. Emotions Being Of Secondary Importance**

The commonalities among participants’ responses to the emotion related questions showed that the financial and relational difficulties they experienced after the expulsion process led them to put their own feelings into a second place for many years. They stated that they needed to consider how they could maintain their lives from the beginning, and for building a new life, they had to fix the problems initially, and plan about their futures.

In addition, when participants were asked about their emotions right after the expulsion, all of them explained that they were only feeling empty and thinking about their families. The possibility that their questioning might be related to their need to see whether there would ever be a place where they could touch and process their own emotions, will be taken up in the discussion section. On the other hand, considering the problems they experienced in their family and social relationships after the expulsion, it seemed that there was no room for their feelings in a relational context.

"Of course, you couldn’t see this as an experience at that time, even it was really tough for you to think about it and I will not even talk about making sense of it. Moreover, you immediately struggle to earn a living. I had



opened my shop, just in 3 months. Well, you didn't have money after all, and you hadn't got or demanded any money from your family until that time. In that process, my father had a heart attack. The minute I had helped him heal, my mother had got breast cancer. She had a mastectomy. And of course, the process of my arrest triggered their sickness psychologically, because of that stressful environment. After I had got out of prison, I had got married in just a year. However, we couldn't arrange my wife's appointment to my hometown, so she stayed elsewhere, but I had to shuttle between my hometown and there, so in that fast-paced environment I couldn't have the chance of thinking about my emotions and feelings. The anxiety of living had gotten ahead of emotions, they stayed in the background." (Mr C)

One of the illustrative excerpts below reveals that some participants were more engaged in thinking how to set goals and to fix their problems. Moreover, putting the emotions aside was presented more as a success, like focusing on the emotions was more associated with drowning in the emotions. Thinking about their adverse experiences including the captivity and torture, focusing on the emotions might have been too overwhelming or unbearable for the participants.

"So, I told myself that: 'Yes, it is an emptiness. Yes, you have to start to this life from scratch, you have to rebuild everything by yourself.' Everyone is the doctor of themselves. If somebody couldn't relax themselves psychologically, then nobody could have been relaxed. I cured myself, maybe I was obliged to learn this. These were the good things that Armed Forces brought to us. Being planned. But not being planned minute to minute or continuously. If you are about to do something, you have to plan it before you start, then you go towards your target. If it lefts half finished, then you've got something wrong in your plan, so you need to change it, nothing to be afraid of. I was very successful on putting the emotions in the background. So it helped me to become coldblooded, for

instance, let's say that a person who is really close to you got sick, so what should you do first, even though you are very sad? Call an ambulance or applying first aid? I mean the first thing is to make an intervention. Unless you didn't put the emotions into background, you will be like the others who will cry and lament. And it's no use. I am sad too, I a human too, I have feelings too. But the important thing is to solve the situation at there. Or if you get into trouble, I would try to solve it, rather than looking for someone to blame. As I developed this approach as a philosophy, I really feel at ease. Of course, I've felt that emotions, I'm not saying that I've never felt them. I was scared a bit too, I became sad but I didn't murmur. I didn't look for someone to blame at anywhere." (Mr B)

Some participants mentioned that military has a role on their relationships and their emotions, leading them to stay hardy when faced with the losses.

"In 1980 Mother's Day, my father had passed away. At that time I was a lieutenant, I took him to Gulhane, he had a surgery there. He passed away, when I was watching him. I couldn't feel anything much emotional. Maybe, this was a hardiness that being a soldier brought to us. I didn't experience much about emotional moments, or emotional traumas that affected me for a long time, or something similar. Or I had just put the emotions into background. The challenge of life has always become dominant and took priority over emotions." (Mr R)

One participant mentioned that the emotions needed to be distanced since the beginning of the expulsion process until now. Being aware of the existence of the feelings also seemed to be difficult for him during the interview, and caused him to avoid talking about his emotions.

"I don't even know how to answer this. Because, I couldn't focus on this issue or on how I felt after my expulsion, for years. Let's put it this way, I

don't run from the fight. I mean... I was sacked from the municipality from such a strange thing. I preferred to fight. I mean, when we were expelled, we had preferred to fight too. Believe me, I don't want to drill it any further; it's not something that I want to emphasize. Even in that period..." (Mr T)

#### **4.6.3. Comparing Oneself With The Expelled Others**

This major theme contains the commonalities among expelled soldiers' feeling more fortunate compared to their expelled friends, when they were asked about how they have been managing to cope with the life difficulties after the expulsion.

Some of the participants stated their luck in having a family who share the same ideology with them and supported them, and acknowledged that the others did not have the same chance, and they suffered more. Especially, their statements regarding that the other expelled ones' lives were more disintegrated, the major areas in their lives were more affected with the expulsion were noteworthy.

"At that time, my greatest support was my family. As my family also believes in the same ideology, it was easy for them to acknowledge the situation. They gave me great support. Plus, I was engaged at that time, and I'm still married with her, she gave me a great support too. If there was no support from them, believe me, I would struggle much more than this, as most of my friends did. In situations like these, either you were a civilian or from the military culture, I mean when an incident like this comes to you, the support of the social environment and the family is essential. For instance, when I got out from prison, I went directly to my hometown, I didn't live through the bad things as much as my other friends did. Most of my friends got alienated by their families at first, and everybody had started to reject them. Plus, their friends also rejected to

talk and meet with them. After I got out of the prison, I recovered myself a bit, plus I got a psychological support for a time, with a doctor. I can say that, 70% of my friends couldn't get this chance. I mean, there are so few of them who got support in such a good environment as mine. That is to say, most of them got their bonds broken with their social environment, family and relatives. There were some of them who were married and engaged, these relationships also got broken. Maybe they were divorced after few years from the expulsion, there were lots of friends that struggled too much in this difficult period. "(Mr C)

For some participants, the ones who were expelled when as students were exposed to more hardships in life, revealing their sense of themselves as luckier compared to them in this process.

"However, as a result, I am not sure whether you will be going to those who were expelled when they were military students, I think you should, because what they lived through was much more difficult than what I lived through. They had lived through so many rough things. I was the luckier one, compared to them. At least, I was counted as a graduate from an university, I wasn't obliged to do military service again. They made them suffer much more than us. Like doing a military service all over again, it must have been a really hard thing. " (Mr Y)

One of the participants stated his finding himself more fortunate, because he was single during the expulsion, compared to others who also had to think about meeting the basic needs of their wives and families.

"All in all, I was single in that period but there were friends who weren't single. They had got married before the expulsion, they had kids, and they were telling that they had got expelled at a time, when even their refrigerator payments weren't finished. Their story is much more

difficult. In that sense, I was luckier than them. There were the ones who had just become lieutenants. You wouldn't get hired by everywhere in that position. It's hard to imagine, how much they had been through.”  
(Mr M)

Most of the participants stated that the ones who had been living in the small towns suffered more from the perceptions and discriminations of people in the community, and they believed that they suffered less compared to these expelled individuals, even though they were expressing various difficulties they also experienced during the interview.

“Our friends, who lived in small villages, went through a more difficult process compared to us, we always talk about these, and even we don't get together so often. By the way, my father didn't understand it for sure, my mom got sick after I got expelled. Our friends, who came from the small places, got insulted much more than us, they got stuck in those places, what they would become and what they had become were completely different. Where did this interview come from anyway (laughed), too many things I've remembered now.” (Mr A)

#### **4.6.4. Ambiguous Feelings Toward The Received Support**

Social support is one of the most important factors on the recovery trajectories of trauma survivors; also reaching and using available social resources while coping with the difficult situations influence the post-trauma experiences and psychological states of individuals.

This major theme appeared out of the participants' commonalities on the responses regarding their perceptions about the social support they needed and received after their expulsion. When participants were expelled, they had nothing.

Therefore, all of them stated that they had to go back to their family homes, although they hesitated. For most of the participants, not being able to receive the salaries and allowances paid by the state since their childhood, left them unsupported, and because their families were poor, they had to start working immediately after their expulsion. Only a few of the participants stated that their families played a significant roles by supporting them on their recovery processes, while for the others, solidarity between the expelled soldiers again helped them to cope with their feelings of loneliness in the world. In contrast, all of the participants stated that they were standing alone against the life challenges all these years, although they mentioned and gave a credit for those who were trying to support them.

“I returned to my family, got involved. After those hard times, I was back with them. So, somehow, they hugged me and accepted me... They tried to help me heal as much as they could. I mean, I don’t think that they were supporting my thoughts, but they had always tried to stand by me as human beings. Of course, as much as they could...I mean not that much or not in a way as I actually expected” (Mr T)

One participant stated his circumstances in which he had to be the one support his family, and as it can be in his statements below, social support was more correlated with earning a livelihood, since his primary hardship was on the level of sustaining the basic needs.

“My family’s economic situation was really poor. My father had died before it. He died in the year of 1980. And my mother was illiterate. My mother was desperate. 4 sisters and 2 brothers... I am the eldest one, apart from me I’ve got 6 more siblings, and no father. However, all of them were in education. I was responsible of a group of people after all, however there was no one to help me. We couldn’t be understood, anyway. It is hard, but life is a struggle after all. If you continue to struggle and resist,

then you are living. When you let it go, then you disappear As I had taken bigger responsibilities more than ever, I had to start to work as soon as it was possible.” (Mr R)

As it can be seen in the excerpts, there are two types of support in the minds of the participants. One of them was immaterial/moral support and the other one was explained more as a support for instrumental functions that involved finding a job, getting into a school, or financial backing.

For some participants like the one in the example below, the moral support they have been receiving was expressed as only a source of motivation, but they were the ones who had to succeed on their own. It was noteworthy to realize that stating that they coped with the difficulties on their own was important for the participants, like they did not need any social support, or did not focus on the fact that they could not get the appropriate support they actually needed.

“Well didn’t I get support? I got support from my family. I got moral support from them, when they said “You will succeed” and patted on my back, I became fired-up. Even today, when I got stressed, I call my sister and talk to her. She believes in me too, or just gives an idea to me when I call her. You either solve the situation or make up something.” (Mr B)

“We had emotional traumas, we had economic traumas, and we had intense ups and ups downs. However, an emotion, a behavior or a thought of another person, a person who is with you, makes you fired up, so to say. In a way, you got resurrected.” (Mr A)

For some participants, being close and engaging in the activities with the ones who share the same ideology helped them to cope with the difficulties after the expulsion.

"Well, how we got consoled here? After we came here, a friend of mine was here too and there was a foundation. They had founded worker foundations. We were doing some cultural activities there, such as establishing a music group. This democratic group was consisted of Alevi people mostly. As Alevi people are more close to leftist view, there was a foundation which had been founded by those people, and we were doing some activities there." (Mr M)

"We started to meet with few friends. There was group, they helped me to focus on philosophy. I joined to group in 1983, and our friendship with some of them continued, whilst with some of them didn't, and these friendships were very helpful to me. I mean they were generally hanging out when we were young and I was also hanging out with them. This really helped me. Because at that time, there was no one to talk, I mean there was no subject to talk about or a person who is enough intellectual to discuss things with. I don't mean to devalue people here, but what would I talk with others while they were already judging me because of the expulsion? As I mentioned earlier, I had never said hello to anyone for 10 years. This group made it possible for me. They were the group of friendship. I felt like I was one of them when I was with them. At least, what you had said was being understood by the others, I mean, that's what helped me to fulfil my social needs. Still, we are seeing each other from time to time, at least once in a month." (Mr Y)

One participant explained that solidarity between the expelled ones, and having even only one person who can instrumentally support them helped him to overcome expulsion related problems.

"So, we had looked for some good people in our social circle. Thanks to professor O.A., the promise he gave us was 'If you pass the exams and become eligible to enter business administration faculty, I am going to



make the transfer of your courses which you had taken in the Military Academy'. He was the chairman of a department back then, and now he is a professor. We had reached him, we were 17 friends, one of us knew him and that was how we had reached him, and then he promised us to transfer our courses. Well, we passed the exam but the problems wouldn't have ended, the university personnel refused to register us, as they wanted us to provide a postponement document for military service. He forced the personnel to give us student certificate, and with that we went to recruiting office. In this way, our military service due date was postponed. If I am a university graduate now, that is all because of him. Of course, it is my personal success but, but he is the one who made this success possible for me." (Mr B)

Some participants expressed that they wished they had received more support from their families

"Let's put in this way, to succeed constantly, I've always walked alone in life, without getting any support from my family. It was good for me to get moral support from them. However, most of the time, I was the one giving support to them. Nevertheless, I could be more successful than I am now. But those things may have caused a frustration for me sometimes. You do not feel yourself enough strong when your family is not there." (Mr T)

"Something was happening outside of me. Well, there were some changes on the side of my relatives and their view towards me. Our relationships had gotten broken. I've never visited them since then. My aunts and uncles had become distant to me, as they were scared something bad might have happened to them too. For instance, let's say that you go to your uncle's house. I had felt this feeling of a bit, and I've never visited them since then. Just this group of people, who stayed beside me after the expulsion, only they were the ones who helped me." (Mr A)

Some participants stated that they did not believe in others' willingness or capability to help or support them after the expulsion, and most of especially emphasized that their belief in themselves helped them cope with the challenges.

"I can't say that we have managed to coped with it much... Maybe, for us, it was something like living, as these were never happened. It might be something like this. For instance, there is this interesting thing: I had gotten engaged with someone at that year's month of February, but then we broke up. I mean, there were some changes in our lives. Not to worry... I am saying it because, at the night that we were getting engaged. I came across with my ex-regiment commander in the engagement ceremony, by coincidence. He said to me: "Is there anything I can help you with?". I mean, it's like a saddle on a sow... The person who did everything to me in the military, when he was the regiment commander, is now saying that "How can I help you?". It's weird. It was just something that had been said for the sake of the conversation. Let's say, it was something like "I came across with this guy here, so I should ask him if there was anything that I can help him with..." I've never believed that anyone could help me anyway... You were on your own in that situation; they made it perfectly clear after all. It was a question that had been asked half-heartedly, "Is there anything you need?" (Mr T)

"We learned to live our struggles within ourselves. We gave up projecting it to someone else. Because at the moment I was expelled, there was nothing to do except to say 'What a pity!', you are a human after all, you just become sad for it. You don't have the chance of showing me how to solve this." (Mr I)

#### **4.6.5. Focusing on the Positive Sides**

This major theme emerged from the common responses of the participants to the question of 'How do you think you have been managing to cope with the difficulties of the whole expulsion process?'. Participants' recent reinterpretations about the expulsion, given meanings, and besides all the life difficulties they have experienced because of being expelled for many years such as the lasting feelings of being discriminated in the society, loneliness, losing a career that was deserved, and the felt ruptures in interpersonal relationships, their focusing on the positive sides were stated as helping them cope.

"Well, If I hadn't got expelled, I wouldn't have been in this house, I wouldn't have been able to start this family, I mean I wouldn't have met my wife. From where I stand now, it may have provided a benefit. If we would have stayed there and never got expelled, if this hadn't been lived through, most probably my life might have never been better than this. I might have been much comfortable regarding my social status and economic situation, however I would have never been at peace with myself, as I am now. It is about being much more independent. It is about the good being done today because I behave in parallel to my thoughts. "  
(Mr T)

"...But I have seen a lot, I have seen the army and I have seen the other side of the government. I saw that the people living, the workers living and the people who resisted this order living by myself, that is to say, I've experienced the things I had read in the books. The time I got outside, there was this giant world. A giant world, outside the military post... There was this great freedom." (Mr R)

Most of the participants mentioned that being expelled, and the adverse experiences during that process also contributed to them by making them

stronger. Because they stated that with the expulsion, imprisonment and torture, they had fallen to the bottom, and the only task for them was to go up from then.

“Let me give you an example, I had also seen that a person, who copied from me in exams and could barely pass the class, becoming a colonel in military academy, giving the lecture of military tactics, which was the lecture he was copying from me in the exam, after so many years. I wasn’t even caught up in these, which were the things I could have achieved, but I couldn’t eventually. Let’s suppose that a baby fell down; at first he will look at its surrounding area and if he can’t get any support from its environment, he’ll try to stand up. I’ve tried the exactly same thing since the beginning. Everybody has some problems, both materially and morally. From one time to another, I both became unemployed and got very rich, but when you realize that life is becoming beautiful, when you don’t see the money as your priority but becoming successful depends on stepping forward. Of course, if a person prefers to jump in the water and plumb the depths, then this person will reach rock bottom for sure; however to get to surface again, the only way is to going upwards. I think that, I was successful on doing this.” (Mr B)

"And I think that even getting expelled helped me to gain many things. That is to say, from the perspective on life, I hadn’t changed, but I had become stronger. Because, If I had stayed in the Armed Forces, I would have continued to be a military officer, so to say, I would have trained the soldiers in the morning, after that there would have been a duty calling, then I would have gone to the lodgement or to my house... There would have been a considerable amount of money, a guarantee for the future... I would have been a bit of flattery to my superiors: “You are the one my commander!”. And in the worst condition, I would have been retired as a colonel, what a life would it be! I think the worst part of this life is, if you want to be a military staff officer, maybe a general, even your family have

to flatter your superior's family. So there was this saying: "Until captaincy, everyone is a brother. After captaincy, if you want to become a military staff officer, you have to rule out your friends in the race." These were the things that I was going against." (Mr R)

#### **4.7. FEELING THE EFFECTS OF EXPULSION FOR A LIFE TIME**

This superordinate involves the main commonalities among the eight participants' feeling that expulsion event caused some permanent changes in some major areas of their lives. The commonalities among their responses to the question of "When you look at your present life, do you think this event has its effects in your current life? If so, how?" indicated that this event still has not lost its vitality for the participants. In addition, it was noteworthy to realize that all of the participants remembered the exact date on which they were taken into custody, and they were explaining what they had experienced during those processes with all the details, as it has happened recently.

"I was expelled on 15th March, 1984. I was in prison anyway. Until May 1985, I was in Metris Prison. I was taken into custody on November 1982, when I was there, I was forced to retire. So, in torture, they sign you the papers of retirement, and by that you are expelled." (Mr A)

"On April 1983... It was 20th April, when military school commander got me in. What he said to me was, news came from Ankara, and according to it, we should have gone there. At the end of the day, we had prepared ourselves for this. Previously, there had been some arrests in the month of November and some of our friends had been gotten in Ankara, and taken into custody." (Mr T)

Considering that the expulsion occurred almost 40 years ago, some memory distortions in their statements may be important to take into an account,

that will be further emphasized in the discussion; however the vivid expressions and common themes in their narratives show that the life-long effects of this life-changing event led them to keep this event fresh in their minds. In other words, their mental preoccupation with the expulsion seems to continue. It was noteworthy to notice that the adverse experiences that they had been exposed in the interpersonal area, revealed their effects again in the quality of their future experiences.

The first following major theme is experiencing disconnection with others in interpersonal relationships that contain the difficulties of communicating and building new relationships with others who are not from their families or who do not share the same ideology with them; the second one is minimizing their desires or goals in life, and avoiding the situations that would lead them to request and demand something from others, for not experiencing disappointment or rejection again.

#### **4.7.1. Experiencing Disconnection In Relationships With Others**

From the beginning of their expulsion, participants were exposed to the negative attitudes of others toward them in the social community, and feelings of not being understood by people created a rupture or disconnection in their further relationships, that led them to cease explaining themselves to the others. Moreover, they explained how different their internal and external worlds had to be in their minds all these years, and how they have passed through the difficulties in their internal world that contradicted the self they showed to the others.

“A disconnection happens between the people and you... I’ll put it this way, we learned that it was necessary for us to be different internally, and play another role externally. Imagine that, you are telling the incident to another person, but, of course, they don’t even listen to you. For instance, I had stopped to tell it to some people or I was just telling the part that was sufficient. And sometimes forgetting does good too. In the times that I

wasn't obliged to tell, then I wasn't telling it because I wasn't a fan of telling it." (Mr M)

"Let's put it this way, you got clamped together more and more with your loved ones, on the other hand, you give up to tell your situation to the people, who were on the other side regarding the political views. I mean a disconnection happens with the people who are on the outside, excluding your family, friends and relatives. No matter how much you tell those people, you feel that they will never understand you and as a result, you prefer to be silent to them." (Mr I)

Some participants mentioned that avoiding talking with others, since they believed that they would not be understood or would be accused again, was related to their need to protect themselves.

"Because, in this situation you disconnect with the general social life. Maybe this was our fault but we generally approached with a determinist attitude. We usually approached people in the way that we saw them. Maybe, this was our defence mechanism to protect ourselves. After all, nobody approached us and to this situation with empathy. Even our families, friends didn't approach us in this manner, they were frightened. We were all by ourselves." (Mr A)

"When you got accepted to military school, you will be respected immediately, as you become the representative and the leader of that community. However, if something bad happens to us... They'll ridicule you in the minute it happens. I don't know if I could tell it correctly? In the minute that something bad happens to you, then they will try to come upon you in an exaggerated way, and they will gossip about you. I mean, they can't say anything to your face, but they will definitely gossip about you. And if you pamper them a bit, they will tell it to your face too. I

mean, I had an experience about it, I was hearing the interpretations, and comments that the others in my social community were making about me. They were saying “If he was expelled from the army, then he must have committed a crime, however they didn’t lock him up for this.”, and after I was expelled I created a tactic for myself. I have never said hello to anyone, since that time. They looked at us in this way, I got that vibe from everyone...I become lonely. Loneliness... But that did worked for me.” (Mr Y)

“Yes, of course. I feel like, I’ve built a new world for myself. This event has caused a disconnection for us, with the rest of the society or with the ones which don’t think like us. I had started to think as if they wouldn’t understood me; however I’ve got an unlimited interest of telling things to other people, I think you’ve noticed it too (laughed) But, as I said life had changed into an unaccompanied struggle. I started to feel like, only I could remediate myself for my internal fractions and my failures.” (Mr B)

One participant stated his ongoing perception about the others’ selfishness after the expulsion, and he believed that the benevolence of others has been lost during these years, therefore the felt ruptures in relationships even with the closed ones could not have been repaired.

“...They might not have remembered it, but I’ve not forgotten. My resentment continued for a while.. Imagine that your friends who you wake up and go to sleep together, share your food with, start to become distant from you. I know, I said that our relationships returned to a normal state, but the disconnection which started in that period was never truly fixed. One day, we went to Kuleli with a friend of mine, for the 40th Anniversary of our draft. I don’t know how to express it but life is strange. Today’s human beings don’t feel the same emotions, which we felt in our childhood. Today’s human beings have become more individualistic.



There is a total competition among them. For instance, in the old times, they would get united and they would help each other, therefore there was solidarity among people. On the other hand, nowadays people work as individuals. I have been actually feeling in this way, since the expulsion.”  
(Mr I)

One of the participants mentioned that with the military coup, their relationships have begun to be disrupted even with the others who were like families to them, but who were not expelled that time. He explained that this disintegration and separation from them still continued to be experienced.

“At first, the system wants to shape you in the period of military high school. We got united with our friends, we didn’t feel much about the restrictions at that time, and the school was like a home for us. But when you enter into military academy, the pressure towards you increases, plus as you start to get conscious about things and become different, the pressure increases more and more. For this reason, our friends miss the period of military high school, and not the period of military academy. And I miss the military high school too. Why? Because we had a solidarity among us, we acted as one and we were brothers. But life had divided us. We had divided into two groups, one group was consisting of the ones who protested the injustice both in the army and in Turkey, and the other group was consisting of the ones who surrendered to these. This dissolution still continues today. We also try to build our relationships with our friends, who were retired in normal conditions. They lived through all of the hierarchical processes of the army and the government, so they prioritise the government’s welfare. And us, we prioritise the people, and we are living through the same things that the public is living through. It is the contradiction of first priority, the state or the people? It seems that, it is really hard to overcome this contradiction with them after all.” (Mr M)

The excerpt below was a good illustration of the long-term effects of unexpected separation and unfinished complicated grief on the human psyche indicating that their outspread negative effects on further relationships, and continuity with the repetitions of the individuals.

“As how I left my relationships there, so I left the different feelings in the past too. I mean, there are those new things, new relationships. Let’s put it this way, I’ve always had a problem of sustaining old relationships when new ones started. At a point, you learn to leave these relationship bonds behind yourself. You start to give importance to the new relationships and choose the preference of being with them. You start from the beginning over and over again. Maybe it is because of losing a circle... I had lived through this loss for the first time with my expulsion. Life forces you to meet with those new things; or you return and you go into a struggle to earn a living. Always new relationships come. And whenever the new one arrives, the bonds with the old ones get ruptured. You always try to set up a new system, a new order. Can you succeed? Certainly no. These ruptures are caused by the constant changes and the new struggles in your physical life. But the process of expulsion from the military academy also teaches you to leaving things behind, abandoning, disconnecting, starting life from the scratch, and from that it points that it comes easy for you to repeat these in your next experiences. In fact, doing these things becomes your life-style. You start to leave some things behind constantly. However, you don’t make any effort to sustain those old relationships. These relationships have not ended in their natural flow. To sustain it, you may give a fight for it. All in all, it may seem that it had been an easier choice for us. To continue living with these old bonds might have been a reminder of those rough days, the things that stayed incomplete... It might have been a reminder of how we couldn’t live through a natural separation process. I mean, our ways had divided because of the conditions, but there were some other things too.” (Mr T)

#### **4.7.2. Never Again: No More Disappointments!**

The five of the eight participants who stated the experiences of rejection and feelings of shame and disappointment in their young ages with the expulsion, reflected on their ongoing avoidance of demanding their own desires and goals in their adult lives.

“Well, everybody were looking for a job experience. So, I thought that I should have had one. After all, as I didn’t know the job, I wasn’t deserving that money. Also, I had thought that if I would have failed and they would have fired me, as I was getting money from them, I would have felt embarrassed. For that reason, I didn’t want to demand money from them. After that, I told my brother in law that I wasn’t expecting any money, but I wanted to increase my job experience. We went to an accounting bureau, my brother in law had also worked there for a period before me. Then I started to work there, and I didn’t get any money from them for a while. (Mr I)

Some participants mentioned that they have begun to live a life in which they have been doing with less after the expulsion, because they have been avoiding more frustrations by others.

“I developed some habits. For instance, when I sit at a dinner table, wherever it can be, if there is no water on the table, I will never say that there is no water. Whatever food they bring in front of me, I will not approach with a selective manner, I will eat it. If they bring me water, I will drink it. But if there isn’t any water, I will not mind anyway, I will not say that there is no water. I will ask things like why did it happen or why didn’t we organize it. I’ve given up demanding anything from anyone. I’ve just given up to demand something from life, I mean I don’t dream or expect something specific to be realized in the future.” (Mr Y)

Additionally, one participant stated that he has also given up struggling more, because of having encountered more and more difficulties in life as a result of being expelled.

“Believe me or not, somehow the life goes on. They expel you by saying ‘You are an outsider, you are different, whatever you may be or no matter how much you work you are different.’ I mean, at first you don’t accept it. You say to yourself that you can find a way and earn a living, however the things won’t go as it was planned. So the struggle continues on and on. We’ve always continued to struggle. Anyway, the life is a struggle as itself. I struggled to remain my profession, I looked for and struggle to obtain another job, and in the end, when the things didn’t go as they were planned, I eventually gave up. I had earned my living with social subventions and unemployment pays. When I had realized that my aim was not a career anymore, I had just looked for to earn a certain amount of living to which will be enough to cover my basic needs.” (Mr M)

One participant mentioned how he has been careful in his relationships with others thinking that his claims would affect others in a bad way, and how it has been hard to express himself as he is. Also, he explained that with the additional losses in life, there was no meaning of asking for something more, since nothing was under his control also stopping him from hoping for the things he wished for.

“I gave up demanding anything from anyone. I am a person, who gave up demanding anything from life, so to say I didn’t expect or dream anything particular to be realized. If my friends say “Let’s do this”, I will do it but I will never say these “Let’s do this” things. I mean, if a thing that I would like to do, will bore you and you will just do that with me because you don’t want me to be hurt, then I will never ask you to do it. At first I will

measure your attitude towards it and then only when I'm sure, I will make the proposal. I've just developed some habits like these. After the expulsion, we thought that we could have felt ourselves as more comfortable or more independent but we never did...You know that humans feel that, their skills and attributes will be enough to overcome everything, however after the expulsion this feeling had disappeared from inside of us. We said 'Man! It is not just being a hard worker, intelligent or capable of doing something...' The government also employs you if you serve to its purpose, if you don't then it throws you out... Well, you certainly start to believe that you can achieve something. I mean that was what I had felt. I think that I didn't find it necessary to want or hope anything. I think I thought that it won't work. Everything happens above me." (Mr I)

"Oh, what I can say on this matter is, I didn't lose my self-confidence but my braveness a bit. And there was this, I lost my purpose of living. I mean, I still don't know that this purpose was a right one to choose... As I said, my purpose was serving my country and its people and to be a person who was mentioned as an honest person... When I was dreaming these, there was the event took place and suddenly these were all gone. Additionally, I learned how to give up entirely." (Mr M)

An illustrative example below showed that for some participants, the disappointments inhibited them from dreaming about the things that they could succeed in, and the others' not trusting them after the expulsion has resulted in their losing their self-confidence as well.

"Also, there was no meaning left for me to dream, want new things, learn and achieve... Because I had lived through a great disappointment at a time when my life had just begun, maybe I didn't think that I could trust myself anymore on demanding things from myself or adding value to

something. Plus, if you have financial difficulties within your family as I had or if your parents lose their trust in you as they had lost in me ... You just start to live with the current conditions” (Mr T)

“I never wanted to be in that position again in life. To be accused when I’m innocent, seen as an outsider or disappoint my family...” (Mr A)

#### **4.8. MEANING OF GETTING ONE’S RIGHTS BACK: 40 YEARS LATER**

As explained in the method section of the current study, the participants have just gotten the opportunity to appeal for the decision of their expulsion after 30 years with a law that has provided a chance for having their rights back. While four of the participants have not gained their rights and privileges of being a military member back, the other four have begun to receive them since 2011. As all of the participants reported, they have begun to be involved in another struggle after all these years by remembering, and re-experiencing the previous emotions, and traumatic events. Having the rights back corresponded to several meanings for the participants besides its providing economic welfare. However, it may be important to remember that for the ones who got their rights back, what is written on their military identification cards is their military position when they were expelled are, which is incompatible with their ages.

This superordinate theme appeared from the common responses of the participants to the questions of “What does it mean to you getting the rights back?”, “How do you evaluate the experience of receiving the rights and privileges of being a military member?”, “Do you think this situation causes any changes in your life? What kind of changes can we talk about?”, “How did you feel when you learned that you could/ could not get your rights back?”, and “Do you consider that having the rights back is a compensation for you?”.

The three sub-themes emerged within this superordinate theme. The first major theme is about the meaning of getting the rights back that corresponded to a return of their innocence and respect in the eyes of others after many years of discrimination and alienation. The second one is about experiencing the secondary victimization because of the process that did not include them in the first place, and their feelings of being discriminated all over again, struggling once more for getting their rights for own and for other expelled friends who could not get it yet. And the final major theme is about not feeling that getting the right and privileges of being a member of military, as a compensation of losses or recovery after all their sufferings for many years. The major themes in this superordinate-theme also seemed to indicate the life-long effects of the expulsion event in the psyche of the participants; refreshed recently by the issue of getting the rights back in recent years, and the difficulty of restoring the irrecoverable losses and pains that changed the life's direction 40 years ago as a turning point.

#### **4.8.1. The Return Of The Reputation And Innocence**

The participants stated their feelings of losing the respect in the eyes of others after being expelled, and came back as the civilians. All these years, they have been struggling with others' perceptions that resulted with the accusing, blaming or staying away from them. They explained the hardship of not explaining themselves to the others, and not being understood by the social community, also their further avoidance of communicating their own feelings and demanding their own wishes because of these perceptions. All of the participants perceived that getting the rights back as a way to prove to others their innocence and rightness.

"Of course, there are other meanings of getting these rights back. It is really hard to define it with words. It is the meaning that your innocence is proven. It is the statement of your righteousness that is given back to you,

what you have known and believed in for all those years. But of course, this is not the everything.” (Mr B)

“Well, there was a neighbor which we had 20 years of history, he said ‘so you were right, you were innocent’. They gave me my military ID Card back. It was like, the return of my identity, that I had only known for all these years, even though which I couldn’t tell to anyone in society, mostly I didn’t prefer to tell. My self-reliance was always there but with the rights which were given back me, they had also seen that I was right.” (Mr A)

For some participants, having rights and privileges of being a military member means that regaining the ‘identity’ that was lost with the expulsion.. They stated the difficulty of not being able to explain their differences that have been felt by the others in conversations. That may be considered as associated with their working on the jobs that were incompatible with their education level.

“Yes, it was obvious that we were different from the society in a certain way but we weren’t able to base it upon a structure. It was the place where we belonged to, it was an identity for me. They had taken it away from me. I was saying ‘What am I anyway?’ That was our main relief. It is important that my being right was returned to me. We were the only ones that were unfairly treated. . It was understood that we were innocent. That is to say, we were not the traitors then, as Kenan Evren said. You know, what he said once ‘I will not even call these people as traitors’ for us. And what’s more, he said this in the opening speech of Military Academy. It was really annoying.” (Mr M)

“I can’t deny the economic side of it. Well, I don’t know if the things I am going to tell now are included in this side or not, but what affected me the most was the subject of the identity. Our identities came back. Even it came late, and even it says that I am a retired lieutenant... This identity



came back. When a person asks you that where did you retire from, you can easily say “from the army”. So it means that it is a great deal of an identity. For instance, when I was going somewhere as a man who dealt with plastic material business, people were saying that I was different. When I was asking them ‘How different?’, they were saying that ‘I mean you are different, the way you talk, your perspective...’. I didn’t grow this hair for no reason. Everybody asked me that if I was a retired police or a retired soldier... I think it was because of my appearance and behavior. In a speech, you might have used some different words, however we were doing it without noticing” (Mr Y)

Most of the participants mentioned their feeling hopeful when the possibility of getting their rights back had arisen, while they also got afraid of hoping because of the possibility of being disappointed again. They stated their attempts to control their feelings to avoid this disappointment again.

“As my prison days were complicated, I immediately consulted a lawyer, a friend of mine, to ask if I could get my rights. My petition was accepted on 25.05.2011. You should have seen my situation in those days. Every day we were checking if the petition was accepted or not. What a thrill (his eyes were full of tears). Interesting! We were like kids. I did not want to be so hopeful. I also controlled this feeling about hope just because I did not want to be disappointed.” (Mr A)

“We were pleased of course! We were hoping but it might not have happened. We have never forgotten this option though. I always refuse to get rights without fighting and I refused at that time as well. And we got them also by fighting. We gained these rights by making announcements on televisions and radios, and press releases. We’ve already struggled for this in the past, but we couldn’t get because the army opposed it. Together with those who left in the February 28 coup, we acted together within the

fraternity. They were also with us in this struggle. These rights would not have been given spontaneously if we had not struggled.” (Mr R)

#### **4.8.2. Secondary Victimization**

Since the possibility of getting the rights back had arisen, all of the participants stated their feelings of disappointment and being victimized again, because they were not included in the law proposal. Some of them explained getting into similar struggling processes for having their rights back that was taken away from them, and this event led them to remember and experience their sufferings, feelings of loneliness, discrimination and downtroddenness once again. In this manner, this event may also be considered as another traumatic situation for the participants.

“Also, we are being victimized again for the second time. There was this law issued by the government in 2011. Everyone who got expelled after coup d’état and military intervention periods got their rights back, they have all become retired colonels now. More precisely, they had become retired lieutenants, but they had taken the colonel’s wage. They had received their bonuses; they had got everything back. Again, you see, we had been through another victimisation. We had started our struggle again. We applied to the management of the military, and they refused our application, as we were cadets at that time. We have our foundation anyway; we still continue to struggle with this foundation. Since 2011, we have been shuttling between Ankara – Istanbul. I have been asking those guys ‘Is being expelled from the military because of your personal thoughts a crime?’, and they have been saying “Yes.” Then, if you gave the rights back of the people who had got expelled because of being reactionists, you must have given my rights back too. You must be equal. We’ve always told you this. According to the promise they have all given to us, our rights will be given back to us, but there is not any result so far.

This struggle has made me live the past all over again. I mean, it is not like living through all the pains again but it is still unfair and it reminds you that you couldn't be understood and you need to struggle by yourself once again. That is to say, nobody supported us in life...But there is no time for a rest, there is no regret and no rebellion in this struggle!" (Mr B)

One participant mentioned his feelings of being aggrieved with the situation of regaining the rights back, because he was both excluded from the law as a cadet, and also the perceptions of others in the society as he was not worthwhile to have his military membership back, offended him once again. It seemed that for the ones who have not got their backs, their experiences of discrimination have been continuing in this manner as well, adding more to their difficulties in interpersonal relationships by also affecting their evaluations of others' benevolence.

"It was bad that they had given the rights back only of those who were expelled when they were military officers. The decision to refuse us was because of we were expelled when we were cadets... At first, we had a discussion among ourselves that made us wonder if they would have given our rights back too... Well, there were some friends, who were thinking in this direction, as this was a normal in law not including the ones who were expelled when they were students. I had thought through this a lot, and I think that discrimination was made in the implementation process of this law as well. We had been living through this discrimination in the society anyway. Especially, as the ones who were expelled when we were students. I mean, there is no such difference between the ones who got expelled when they were military officers and the ones who were expelled when they were students, after all. In the very beginning, I didn't believe that I could have got my rights back. For this reason, I didn't enter into any struggle. However, when the law had been issued, I kind of had become hopeful for it and I had tried to make use of it. But it is not an easy position

to be in, waiting for something to happen even though you don't believe that it would happen. The society always prefers to show the other side of its medallion and this side always comes across to us, the bad side. I think this is the case." (Mr T)

"In fact, I feel like I got victimised for the second time. I mean, something unfair happened to me again, after all. Looking from another perspective, there hadn't been much changed as I had built a life in Netherlands, which is totally different that the life I had in Turkey. I had immigrated here, I had built a life anyway, and it goes along somehow. On the other hand, there was this extra living and that's all. However, to retire and get retirement check, I will wait until the age of 67 in here." (Mr M)

For some of the participants, experiencing similar processes of being left alone led them to go back to their familiar coping ways, which have been the resisting, being in solidarity, and struggling back, also releasing the feelings of strength, and courage for them. In addition, it seemed that this time, the ones who were expelled, but received their rights backs have been trying to struggle for the others who could not.

"I currently have our association at the center of my life. I take an active part in this association. In the current order, the same pressures as those made on us in time, the inhumane treatment in prisons and the isolation are still continuing today. We are still struggling to integrate, to claim our past, to claim our present and future, to get the rights of friends who cannot take their rights. This gives me power at this age, it gives me excitement. How if I have focused on to graduate from Faculty of Law in the past, today also I am trying to bring the friends together to walk toward a goal in order to get rid of loneliness. We are still trying to be side by side with the workers, civil servants, intellectuals and doctors who struggle for labor, democracy, and freedom. We couldn't say "Hey, we gained our rights, goodbye to you"

to friends who couldn't get their rights. That's why we established our association in order to cooperate with them and establish a more corporate relationship.” (Mr R)

“In fact, I didn't think they would give us our rights when this law came out. It was a process, and we started this process with at least a combination of solidarity and call to account whomever responsible. Most of our friends have started for this aim. At the moment, we are struggling not to be defeated. We are not defeated in the system. We are still standing in this struggle.” (Mr C)

#### **4.8.3. “Having Our Rights Back Cannot Compensate For The Losses!”**

This major theme contains the commonalities in the participants' responses when they were asked whether the issue of getting the rights and privileges rights back would or would not compensate for their experiences. Their answers showed that nothing could reverse their experiences of being tortured, captivated, and expelled from a place they called 'home' for defending their own thoughts, and the further difficulties and losses in life because of being the 'expelled one'.

“We got back the our rights which had been already belonged to us. I mean, we couldn't tell people, even to the ones we were close to, that it was not a crime; It was not a crime to defend our personal thoughts and beliefs. This was proven when we got the rights back. But what had been lived through in those days, the event that had changed our whole life, the torture... This can never compensate for our losses.”(Mr A)

For the ones who could not gain their rights back, besides the financial advantages, the things they could not have experienced with their soldier friends in the same place remained within themselves for all these years. Therefore,

getting their rights back was explained as realizing their dreams that had been taken away from them. On the other hand, the request for an apology from the state for the things that had done to them was the common wish of all the participants before they die, which was beyond having a military membership card or increased retirement salary.

“..These rights don’t mean returning back, to me. But there is also another part of this. It would be better if they had apologized like: ‘So we had made a mistake. We had taken lives of these people, even though we had no proof, evidence or any document, solely with the power we have. We apologize.’ But all these things that had been lived through... It is not going to be forgotten. It is not going to be forgotten, while they didn’t apologize. We were able to reach these days for better or for worse. Today, maybe I would have gone to the officer’s clubs and eaten a dinner and so on... I might have... I mean, I might have gone to the officer’s club after many years and drank something, had chat with friends... But, I would have not adopted that identity and said ‘Oh what a nice thing to have, I’ve retired from the Armed Forces, what a good thing for me...’ It wouldn’t have been like this for me, I wouldn’t have felt those feelings. I am not a person who desired it. My quest is not for something like that, I don’t want anything like this either. I would have just wanted to see that my being right was proven. I mean, just an apology, I would have accepted that. There is this economic value of it, yes, it may be important but an apologize would have meant me so much more than this. And this had another meaning to me, at least for those days, Turkey had opened a door. When they were facing the unfair things that had been made in the past, it was also a process that these kind of things should be prevented in the future. Because they had been unfair to us, I really don’t want anyone in this country to face anything like this again.” (Mr C)

“No, it didn’t compensate for anything, as many years had passed until then... You had lived through so many things for all those years, they won’t give you these things back that will return those days... It doesn’t make them disappear, or never happened. Nothing would have changed in me. I mean, that emotion is not there anymore. There is this emptiness happened in me for once and for all. The things had got broken off... My relationships with all people had been affected negatively.” (Mr T)

“Nooo, we've lived through a lot for so many years, nothing can give them back or eliminate what happened. It can never be as “nothing happened”. Anything wouldn't change in there. I mean that feeling is broken. I've got that hole in me.. Something's gone. All my relationships with people have been affected.” (Mr I)

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to deeply investigate the experiences of the military members who were expelled from the Turkish Armed Forces due to their personal beliefs and values, as a result of the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980 Military Coup d'état in Turkey during the years between 1980 and 1984, and to examine the results within the light of previous research findings in the relevant trauma and coping literature. The sample of the study consisted of eight expelled military members between the ages of 57 and 62, who were involved in the armed forces since the age of 13, and expelled because of their personal values and thoughts almost 40 years ago. The participants reported that beginning with the 12<sup>th</sup> September Military Coup, they began to be taken into interrogations, captivated, and tortured by the military, and were expelled, because they were perceived as the 'unwanted ones' within army, although there was no court decision or crime committed to justify it.

Even though this study mainly focused on exploring their experiences in light of the literature on trauma, long-term effects of traumatic events and coping, it is significant to report that their experiences of loss including losing a place and profession became complicated, since they were being exposed to the devastating situations by the military officials with whom they were on the same side before the coup d'état. In addition, the results indicated that their post-expulsion experiences have had an important impact on their future lives as civilians. Therefore, as the results suggested, their experiences after the expulsion were also examined in terms of the traumatic loss, complicated grief, and mourning processes from a psychoanalytic perspective as well.

In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with eight participants, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003) was used for the analysis of the data. As a result of the data analysis, eight super-ordinate themes emerged: a) starting life from scratch, b) losing a profession idealized by others, c) having difficulties with explaining the



self to family, d) being the subject of discrimination, e) making sense of the expulsion, f) coping with life after expulsion, g) feeling the effects of expulsion for a life time, and h) meaning of getting one's rights back: 40 years later. These superordinate themes consisted of twenty two sub-ordinate themes: a1) feeling like being thrown out on to the street, a2) sense of emptiness and meaninglessness, a3) feeling betrayed and disappointed, a4) perceiving life as a struggle from then on; b1) "What is my profession?", b2) losing the respect of others; c1) disappointing family, c2) being accused by family; d1) being seen like a patient with "black death", d2) hardship of living in a hometown where you are seen as a "traitor"; e1) "Is thinking a crime?", e2) "We were the couch grass in a clover field"; f1) believing in the rightness of ones' thoughts for a life time, f2) emotions being of secondary importance, f3) comparing oneself with the expelled others, f4) ambiguous feelings toward the received support, f5) focusing on the positive sides; g1) experiencing disconnection in relationships with others, g2) never again: no more disappointments!; h1) the return of the reputation and innocence, h2) secondary victimization, h3) "Having our rights back cannot compensate for the losses!".

The results provided information compatible with the previous literature on the psychology of collective trauma, politically motivated violence, and coping mechanisms. The major commonalities with the existing literature were: increased possibility of the shattering of one's perceptions of the world as a safe and predictable place, others as benevolent and self as worthy in the aftermath of the traumatic events (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), traumatic events causing long-lasting negative impact on life including the ruptures in interpersonal relationships (Herman, 1992; 1997), constant avoidance of situations that may create similar feelings of shame, and feeling alone and isolated in community (Storolow, 2007), the importance of post-conflict social stressors after the traumatic events (McEvoy, Shirlow, & McElrath, 2004; Rasmussen, Yaqubi, & Daudzai, 2008; Betancourt et al., 2013), the psychological long-term consequences of collective trauma as a result of its creating and crystallizing "we" and "they" in a society

(Pennebaker, Rim, & Paez, 1997; Volkan, Ast, & Greer, 2002), and damaging the sense of belonging and attachment between individuals in a community (Erikson, 1976; Sironi & Branche, 2002), the possibility of having complicated mourning processes (Freud, 1917) of the expelled soldiers regarding its association with trauma, and inflicted feelings of shame, helplessness, and humiliation (Volkan, 2007a), the importance of making sense of the traumatic event, processing the emotional traumatic experiences in a relational context, and putting it into a narrative (Herman, 1992; Storolow, 2007; Carr, 2011), and the coping mechanisms that were used on dealing with trauma, complicated and difficult post-traumatic recovery processes, and while building a whole new life as a civilian.

The responses of the participants while explaining their expulsion experiences indicated that the expulsion event itself and the entire expulsion process seemed to have created a split both in their internal and external worlds in the first place (*starting life from scratch*) because in their perceptions, there were different lives before and after the expulsion. Their initial feelings (*feeling betrayed and disappointed; sense of emptiness and meaninglessness*), and perceptions (*feeling like being thrown out on to the street; perceiving life as a struggle from then on*) were interpreted as the impact of the trauma as it shatters the basic assumptions of the individuals in terms of their perceptions about world, others, and self (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), and the meaning-world (Smith, Abeyta, Hughes, & Jones, 2015). Also, this process seems to have affected negatively the major areas in the participants' lives. The participants reported their altered perceptions about life after their expulsion (*perceiving life as a struggle from then on*), in which they have been living in a world where there is a fight all the time to be opposed against, with full of challenges and difficulties.

In this manner, it would be appropriate to refer the arguments of Storolow (2007) about losing "absolutism" after the extreme traumatic situations that cause losing an 'illusion' or a 'healthy denial' that aid 'normal' people to live with less anxiety by perceiving life as always safe and predictable. Not being able to see the

world as just like a ‘normal’ person, and losing the feelings of safety construct a feeling of alienation, loneliness and isolation (Storolow, 2007). Additionally, they may have lost the sense of time by becoming past-oriented, and may feel trapped in the past emotional traumas. As Carr (2011) stated, for a person who experiences trauma that is hard to process, the way of viewing the world is changed forever after the event, as we can see this in the responses of our participants. Storolow (2007) also speaks about trauma as ‘shattering the existential world’ of people, that leads them to question all the meanings in their lives, and leaves them with the existential anxiety as Heidegger (1927) explained in his theory with “Being toward death”. For the participants, who were defending the rights and equality of all people as their ideology that led them to be expelled as they stated, being exposed to inhumane treatments such as captivity, and torture, especially from the people whom they knew and trusted since their childhood, seems to have resulted in an existential crisis (*sense of emptiness and meaninglessness*). They questioned all the meanings in their lives after being expelled. All the participants reported their feelings of shock, resentment and helplessness toward these people who interrogated, captivated, and tortured them because of the books or thoughts that they were asked to learn in the first place (*feeling betrayed and disappointed*). That trauma occurred in this relational context accompanied with the inflicted pain, shame, and humiliation seems to have led them to suffer from the long-lasting effects of the expulsion event that will be further discussed below; and it seems that these further experiences have created complicated grief and mourning processes as well. Additionally, as seen in their interpretations, their feelings of being abandoned (*feeling like being thrown out on to the street*), and being expelled from a place called ‘home’ revealed the massive losses they had experienced.

As the results show, the participants had not only lost their secure jobs, but were also left without a profession and an identity developed in their adolescent years. . Even though they acquired other jobs throughout their lives, they were still questioning the worth of these jobs, and stating their dissatisfaction with

them. . In addition, they reported a sadness and disappointment about not being able to accomplish their dreams about spreading the knowledge to others who would not have a chance to receive the education they had, and about making the army a more democratic and safer place. Hence, their questionings and ambiguous feelings toward their jobs (*“What is my profession?”*) can be also interpreted as their unfinished and unresolved mourning after losing so much.

Clinicians have highlighted the importance of going through the mourning process for accepting the loss and the changes in the outside reality, and explained how unresolved or avoided mourning may result in long-lasting uncertainty, and feelings of being stuck, and being preoccupied with what has been lost. Especially, when the loss is accompanied by trauma, and when a group is victimized by a large other group, feelings about losing various things and concomitant feelings of sorrow and pain are tear into pieces with shame, helplessness, and humiliation. As Freud (1917) explained, these disruptions in the psyche may prevent the victims, who must get through some psychological processes, like mourning, from being able to internalize or digest the difficulties of tragedy, and from developing the required psychological processes. Because the expelled military members were being victimized by the authorities, and later by the society at large, their loss of a profession seemed to have become complicated with their feelings of shame, betrayal, helplessness, and humiliation, and that seemed to have prevented them from experiencing a ‘healthy’ mourning processes. Also, because they were seen as ‘the others’ both in the military and later in the society, integrating these two identities of soldier and civilian seemed to have been difficult for the participants.

As Tähkä (1984) and Volkan (2007a) explained, mourning does not have a certain ending-point; however it reaches a ‘practical ending point’ when an individual is no longer preoccupied with the lost thing, and the mental representation of the loss is not hot in the mind by directing the wishes or behaviors of a mourner. As the responses of the expelled military members revealed, their complicated traumatic loss experiences were still ‘hot’ in their

minds with their continual sense making processes, with the feelings of resentment toward the society (*“Is thinking a crime?”*; *“hardship of living in a hometown where you are seen as a “traitor”*) and mental preoccupation with the lost identity of being a soldier. The way of narrating their past experiences during the interview showed that their internal struggle with the lost relationships, career, and basically with the evil side of humanity has been maintained in their psyche. In psychoanalytic writings, it is explained that continuous influence of the lost object can be abated with integrating some features of the lost thing into an identity, also called identification (Furman, 1964). However, this identification process can be problematic and ‘unhealthy’ when the loss is experienced with the trauma, and when a person has ambivalent relationship with the lost object like in the current study. The participants had lost their profession by being imprisoned and tortured by the familiar commanders. Thus, their pursuing conflict accepting the loss of the profession and internalizing the new ones, as seen in the theme *“What is my profession?”* can be also interpreted with their ongoing mourning process. They might be having difficulties about identifying with the adaptive functions and aspects of being a soldier that may enable them to go through the healthy mourning processes, because this process would require some level of anger that was not even stated in a single interview in this study. As Volkan (2007c) explained, for people experiencing massive losses with trauma, even normal levels of anger feelings may be difficult, because then it would mean identifying with the rage of the destructive and murderous perpetrator. The identification process with the lost thing might be especially difficult for the expelled military members, because the identity of their perpetrators also included soldiership that was the main thing they had lost.

Moreover, their hesitations about being in an authority position, or failures when they tried to be a boss were noteworthy to discuss. Their training for being a military officer was mainly focused on the leadership skills and they were the successful ones in the army. Even though they usually explained these difficulties in business life with being in a strange world after the expulsion event, and being

a boss was contradictory to their ideologies, this may be also interpreted with the hardship of identifying even with the adaptive parts of their lost profession, because it would also contain the destructive parts as well. It seemed that the authority position was associated with being cruel and destructive toward the others in their internal worlds. On the other hand, some of them stated that they took advantage of their soldier skills including being hardy, and having planning abilities through their lives as civilians. However, identification with some mental representations of being a soldier seemed to be related with avoidance of emotions such that focusing on emotions would be a sign of weakness, and relying only on instrumental solutions was preferred. Their ambivalent relationship with their lost profession, and the conflicting mental representation of being a soldier can also be seen in their statements about the military.

In face of these complications, the majority of the participants may be considered with the term ‘perennial mourner’ who keeps the mental representations of the lost thing within their internal worlds as unassimilated or non-integrated foreign objects with an intense struggle between the fear of facing the loss, and desire of gaining it back (Volkan, 2007a). The statements of the participants within the theme “*meaning of getting one’s the rights back*” can be the illustration of their struggle; they both desired to have their rights back, and also hesitated to take their ‘soldier identities’ back as it would represent a compensation for their losses, which they do not agree with (“*having our rights back cannot compensate for the losses*”). They also clearly emphasized that getting the rights back did not mean being a military member again, but it was “*the return of the reputation and innocence*” that they felt had been taken away from them with the expulsion.

Furthermore, because the related law for giving their rights and privileges of being a military member had begun to be enacted since 2011, their ‘hot’ mental preoccupation with the expulsion can be associated with the reactivation of the previous feelings and experiences. As seen in the findings, they were feeling like re-experiencing the discrimination, and being downtrodden all over again,

because the execution of the law did not cover them initially or may still have not covered some (“*secondary victimization*”). The law that might have been an opportunity to heal the wounds of ex-military coup victims seemed to have become the reminders and triggers of previous trauma. This also indicates how the collective trauma that is experienced in a collective manner, requires a healing process that involves all parts of the society, and comprehensive strategies to accomplish forgiveness and recovery at a societal level (Zara, 2018).

Another long-term impact of the expulsion seemed to be the disruptions in their motivation to set higher goals for self-actualization (*never again: no more disappointments!*). As Park and Folkman (1997) asserted, meaning has a central role on adaptation to trauma. All people have a global meaning system including the subjective emotions, values/ beliefs, and aims that lead them to interpret their own experiences and also the world, and provide a cognitive framework and motivation (Dittman-Kohli & Westerhof, 1999; Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997; Park, 2010). The perceptions of people regarding the control, predictability, coherence, justice and personal views are considered as the global beliefs (Collie & Long, 2005; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Koltko-Rivera, 2004; Park, 2010), while the desired processes, circumstances, or results are comprehended as the ‘internal representations’ of global goals that are also explained as the purposes in life to sustain (Austin & Vancouver, 1996, Karoly, 1999, as cited in Park, 2010). The relationships, job, information, and success are indicated as the most reported global goals (Klinger, 1998; Emmons, 2003). As Klinger (1977) described, feeling “meaningful” can be understood as an individual sense of meaning that provides a person an aim or guidance (Park, 2010; Reker & Wong, 1988). It is explained that the emotional, cognitive responses and behaviors of people highly depend on these meaning systems and their actions are directed to their desired future purposes (King et al., 2006; Park & Folkman, 1997; Park, 2010). In this manner, it is also known that potentially traumatic events have a potential to disturb and challenge global meanings that lead people to reappraise the circumstances and attribute some meanings to them (Park & Folkman, 1997; Guo,

Gan, & Tong, 2013). Park (2010) emphasized that the discrepancy between appraised meaning and the global meaning determines the level of the distress that individual experiences. The literature suggests that people may begin to see the world as uncontrollable after trauma, and believe that no matter how much they try, they would not gain what they deserve, because this is not a fair and trustable place. This seems to apply to what the participants have been experiencing for many years especially in their work lives with the lost meanings.

On the other hand, besides their adverse experiences during the expulsion period, they had suffered from additional post-conflict social stressors that complicated their feelings about the lost profession, perceptions about the others in the society (*being the subject of discrimination; hardship of living in a hometown where you are seen as a “traitor”*), and these also seemed to have prevented their finding appropriate jobs compatible with their education that could help them to actualize themselves with novel goals (*losing a profession idealized by others; losing the respect of others*). Their responses indicated that after being ‘the expelled one’, the others in the society including closest family members of most of them, began to accuse and even found them as guilty for being expelled. Political traumas especially the ones involving captivity and torture, are already known for their significant negative impact on the victims’ self-esteem, feelings of trust, relationships, because the main purposes behind the actions are inflicting shame and helplessness to destroy the sense of self of the victims (Herman, 1992). These traumatic events may lead a person to suffer from learned helplessness, or privatizing own emotions to one self, and difficulties on social adaptation like in the current study, that would cause disintegration in the inner world when they would not be verbalized and put into a narrative in a meaningful way.

In addition, many authors explain that individuals who are exposed to political violence, especially human rights and political activists, do not experience only one event in their life time that could be labeled as ‘a single traumatic event’ (Becker, 1995; Montiel, 2000; Hernández, 2002), but rather because of the further traumatic situations they are being exposed to, they suffer



from life-long trauma. That seemed to apply to what the participants were experiencing through their civilian lives, because while they were already in the process of making sense of what they had lost while feeling like being the unwanted one (*“Is thinking a crime?”; “We were the couch grass in a clover field”*), trying to restore their self-esteem, self-worth and process what they been through during interrogations, they were also suffering from the others’ lack of empathy (*having difficulties with explaining the self to family; disappointing family; being accused by family*), and identification of the society with the perpetrator (being the subject of discrimination; *being seen like a patient with “black death”; hardship of living in a hometown where you are seen as a “traitor”*). They were additionally dealing with their lost images in the eyes of others (*losing the respect of others*). The results showed that they had difficulties finding a job compatible with their education, and also the employers did not want to give the jobs to the participants who were expelled from the army because of their ideologies. Thus, they both suffered from the financial hardships, and the discrimination (Başoğlu et al., 2004; Başoğlu & Mineka, 1992; Quiroga & Jaranson, 2005).

As Miller and Rasmussen (2010) argue, after traumatic events, the quality of relationships with family and social community affect, and threaten mental health in the long run influencing the adjustment processes of individuals by overwhelming the coping resources, especially in the context of poor communication. The mediation effect of the perceived stigma and family abuse have been revealed in the relationship between exposure to noxious violence, and depressive symptoms, and also social isolation that may lead to feelings of hopelessness after traumatic loss (Betancourt et al., 2010). In addition, stigmatization and the further negative psychological outcomes related to it, may restrict people from reaching other opportunities and protective resources that may be finding a job, involving in a social group or sustaining education (Link & Phelan, 2006). The results showed that the participants experienced great difficulties on explaining their innocence to the others, because being expelled

from the armed forces and having certain ideologies were not acceptable in the society. Their initial anxieties about the expulsion were related to how they would explain themselves to their families, and their families' reactions seemed to leave significant effects on their recovery processes.

Also, beginning with the expulsion, participants mentioned experiencing disconnection with the closest soldier friends (*being seen like a patient 'with black death'*), because even being seen with them in the military were leading others to be interrogated or tortured as well. Even though they interpreted their friends being distant from them as a way of self-protection and understood their situations, their feelings of resentment, and others' denial, and silence toward their sufferings seemed to have affected their future relationships. All these can be considered with the long-term effects of collective trauma in the psyche of individuals. As Sironi and Branche (2002) stated, torture in the context of political trauma is not inflicted only to individuals, but also to the society for creating a fearful environment that would lead community to repress and keep silent. As Volkan, Ast, and Greer (2002) explained, when an intentional shame, humiliation and helplessness are inflicted on a certain group of people in a community, some psychological processes are created on the victims' psyche. Their collective identity involves the "we" differentiation, and as a result of the cumulative collective traumas, these differentiations become intensified and create 'enemies' in the same community. Throughout the history of Turkish politics, it can be briefly said that there have been several struggles between the leftist and rightist groups, and this differentiation between the groups were intensified especially during the military coup periods by impacting both sides negatively.

Many theorists in the field of collective trauma emphasized the significance of strengthening the resilience of community after such traumatic experiences for preventing the further violence, and the hatred between the two groups in a society; otherwise the lives of both sides pursue with the specific consciousness that searches for who the enemy or ally is, that also creates additional traumas. What the expelled military members had been experiencing as

being considered on one side because of their political views in the society (*“being the subject of discrimination; being seen like a patient with “black death”; hardship of living in a hometown where you are seen as a “traitor”*) can be interpreted as the impact of unresolved and unprocessed collective trauma of 12<sup>th</sup> September military coup d’état. As seen in the narratives of the participants within the theme *“We were the couch grass in the clover field”*, they were feeling like that they were collectively seen as different from the rest of the society. Also, they were using the “we” language instead of “I”, when the primary investigator was asking about their individual experiences. Various authors who studied the consequences of politically motivated violence indicated that not personalizing the reasons of the adverse traumatic experiences into one self, and attributing political meanings to the situations may increase the psychological well being of the victims, especially while describing their horrific experiences (Pennebaker & Lay, 2002). Also, this perception of not being the only victim of trauma seemed to have led them to cope better in the aftermath.

After being exposed to horrible and inhumane treatments of other people, because of their own values and thoughts, they were already feeling like being the ‘different and unwanted one’ and thrown onto the street from the belonged place (*“We were the couch grass in a clover field”*), and all of them stated their need to be understood by their families. However, the results indicated that most of them could not find a safe and holding relational environment where they could share and process their traumatic experiences, because their families were also criticizing them for having their own thoughts and values. In addition, they had been feeling guilty, because they thought that they disappointed their families by being expelled (*disappointing family*). As the responses of the participants suggested, both not being understood by their families although some of theirs stand by them, and the attitudes of the general society toward them (*hardship of living in a hometown where you are seen as a “traitor”*) have caused life-long damages both in their internal and external worlds (*experiencing disconnection in relationships, never again: no more disappointment!*). These seemed to have

contributed on their feelings of loneliness, betrayal, and disappointment by people.

Social support is a protective factor that helps individuals in their coping with the negative impact of the politically motivated violence (Sousa et al., 2013). However, not having approval or acceptance by the social group can result in the feelings of social isolation, and believing that the world they live is actually hostile. Because politically motivated violence, imprisonment, and torture occur in the interpersonal context, the long-term detrimental impact of these can be again seen in the further relationships of the victims, if the 'wounds' of the survivors do not get healed in the relationship context. Herman (1992) especially highlighted that the survivors' significant others' play essential roles on the healing process, because the empowerment of trauma survivors can be realized in the trusting relationships that provide a safe environment for sharing, processing and integrating their emotions. By doing so, they can mourn their losses, and reconnect with their lives again. Especially in the context of torture, shame is the emotion that is most likely to be felt by its victims, and it is not easy to share with the others, when people experience rejection and denial of people surrounding them (Carr, 2011).

The absence of emotional empathy and attunement may lead people feel more shameful, and solitude, which may end up with the sense of singularity. Therefore, emotion-focused coping has been explained as that it can be adaptive when people have an opportunity to actively express and verbalize their affective distress, and cognitively reframe them for regulating their emotions (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). However, as Rinker and Lawler (2018) emphasized, traumatized people become more silent in time, because of the social pressure, and the difficulty of re-experiencing past traumas that involve shameful feelings. On the other hand, various studies indicated that narrating the traumatic experiences help individuals to give meanings, organize and integrate their emotions and painful experiences that are shattered, unorganized, and messy in their minds after trauma. In their study with Holocaust survivors, Boals and Perez (2009) showed

the power of the cognitive words that function as relating emotions and circumstances, and providing insight, which is adaptive, both for the mental health and also psychological functioning. As the responses of the expelled military members within the theme *emotions being of secondary importance* suggested, that they could not have a real, holding and trustable environment to open up these emotions to the others. They also mentioned about their urgent needs after being expelled, and stated that there was no room for their emotions in their lives. It is noteworthy to mention that before the interviews, all of the participants stated their anxieties about sharing their personal experiences and emotions, because their feelings were never asked about this expulsion all these 40 years. There were long silences, or observable attempts to change the topic when their feelings were asked during the interviews. That brings to mind that they might be high on using rationalization and intellectualism as defense mechanisms in face of their unbearable emotions, also because when describing their experiences, they often quoted from philosophical, political and historical texts.

In addition, the results indicated that they have built a life for themselves in which there was no place for further disappointments, rejection, or shameful experiences (*never again: no more disappointments!*). This finding may be the example of the long-term impact of the expulsion related adverse life experiences, and the unprocessed emotions. As their statements indicated, this avoidance of later rejection or humiliation had contained the other people who they were interacting with. In the interpersonal context, their avoided and unprocessed emotions seemed to have led them to stop asking or desiring something from the others, and also from the life with the feelings of hopelessness. Some major life goals including aiming for better careers, and being assertive with their own self-wishes seemed to be damaged after the expulsion. Their feelings of being punished for their own values and beliefs, and for being different from the others, which also caused their feelings of disappointing their families, seemed to have resulted in their arranging their lives around not to feel these emotions again with

the circle of avoidance and intrusion.

The responses of the participants within the both themes *ambiguous feelings toward the received support*, and *emotions being of secondary importance* indicated their conflicting relational experiences with the others after the expulsion. They were stating their feelings of loneliness in the world while dealing with the adverse life conditions, but at the same time, were mentioning about others who supported them by mostly emphasizing their own abilities to cope on their own. This might be related to the discrepancy between the type of support they could receive, and what they actually needed. Punamaki and colleagues (2005) claimed that the perceptions and satisfaction about the received social support are important for the adults in face of political trauma. The two types of social support that have been usually mentioned in the literature are instrumental and emotional support. It was significant to mention that the social support the participants valued most was instrumental or functional. That may be the indicators of their avoiding the emotions and relying on the problem-focused coping, or their withdrawal from the others and denying their emotional needs because they do not have any hope for being held, and understood by the others.

On the other hand, most of the participants usually mentioned the solidarity between the other expelled soldier friends that was maintained all through their lives. They also stated their experiencing the disconnection and ruptures in their relationships with the ones who were not expelled, although they were like brothers to each other before the military coup. The results suggested that after the expulsion the participants have begun to connect truly with people who had experienced similar sufferings in the society. Also, another coping mechanism that they seemed to have been using while dealing with their adverse life experiences was the social comparison, which only included the comparisons with the other expelled military members (*comparing oneself with the expelled others*). The social comparison as a way of coping mechanism helps people to increase their self-esteem, promote well-being, and place themselves to understand their positions in face of self threatening and distress releasing

negative life events (Wills & Sandy, 2001). The expelled military members were engaged in downward social comparison, while feeling more fortunate compared to other expelled ones who suffered more than them in their perception. The downward social comparison is considered to be used when people do not find functional solutions to their problems, are not able to control their circumstances in face of self-esteem threatening situations, and do not believe that they are doing well. By comparing oneself with others at lower levels or worse conditions than themselves, people attempt to increase their self-esteem and sense of power for enhancing their self (Festinger, 1954).

In the current study, it was seen that some participants believed that being single was more fortunate when expelled, because then they did not need to worry additionally for their partners too, while some thought being expelled as a military cadet was worse, or people living in a small town suffered more from the post-social conflicts and so on. One way or another, all of the participants stated their feelings of being luckier than the other expelled ones, which seemed to help them on dealing with their own self-esteem threatening difficult life experiences. Buunk and colleagues (1989) suggested that individuals with ‘chronic self-esteem’ problems tend to perceive their positive parts as a result of the comparison, and that may apply to the participants in this study, because they often mentioned always trusting own internal resources. However, this expulsion, and related further life difficulties seemed to have threatened their self-esteem, and psychological well-being, since they were still needing to compare their situations to the other expelled people who managed worse than them over 40 years, like as a reference point for themselves.

Therefore, all these post-traumatic experiences including not finding a relational context to share their emotions, not being understood by people, and their financial difficulties seemed to have led them to engage more in problem-focused coping strategies (“*emotions being of secondary importance*”). As seen in the literature, problem-focused coping mechanisms involve changing the perceived problematic environment-person relationship, collecting information,

making plans, setting goals and finding solutions (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Folkman et al., 1986; Endler & Parker, 1990). The results in the current study indicated that the expelled soldiers had begun to work or tried to get into a college immediately after the expulsion event, and since the beginning of the interrogations, they were considering and planning about what they could do instrumentally if they would be expelled, like a mental preparation in advance. In the literature, many authors have discussed which types of coping strategies have a role on the complicated grief, and mourning processes or create a risk for PTSD or depression after political trauma, and problem-focused coping has been generally considered as a more adaptive way of coping compared to passive/emotion-focused coping, because it helps people to actively overcome the distressing problems, and lead better adaptation (Punamaki et al., 2007). In this manner, the participants' relying more on finding instrumental solutions seemed to have helped them on building whole new lives for themselves. But it also looked like that they had to engage more in problem-focused strategies, since there were basic needs to earn for themselves in their lonely worlds.

When a traumatic situation is uncontrollable, acceptance and finding or attributing positive meanings to the event has been considered as more adaptive (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). The results showed that there was no escape or control over their circumstances, but they relied on their personal resources, and all of them were able to evaluate this event by focusing on the positive sides after some time (*"focusing on the positive sides"*). They were stating that after dreadful experiences during captivity and torture, they have become stronger people, because nothing could be more difficult for them after that. Also, when they evaluated their expulsion after 40 years, they were interpreting their current lives as more meaningful, because they were able to live in accordance with their beliefs, and values. Because they felt like that they were able to build themselves a new life after the expulsion event, they were not devastated or destroyed, or surrendered as the perpetrators aimed at both in the captivity period, and in their future lives; they were perceiving themselves as coherent, and honourable men.



Moreover, as seen in their responses, this issue of expulsion has become a story of pride for them.

All this can be also considered with their specific personality characteristics as well, which seemed to have helped to cope with their difficult life events. Hardiness as one of the personality traits known as a protective factor of resilience in face of trauma (King & King, 1988), has some qualities that the expelled soldiers seemed to have, which are being committed to the assigned meaning of existence, and being open to see life changes as challenge or struggle that seemed to have motivated them to cope. Also, hardy people are known as more goal-oriented, more courageous in face of adverse events (Maddi, 2005) and search for more instrumental social support (Blaney & Ganellen, 1990). Moreover, as Gito, Ihara and Ogata (2013) indicated, when hardiness level increases, self-esteem is also enhanced. In the responses of the expelled military members, their self-esteem seemed to be high, because they were usually stating that they only believed in themselves, and that aided them to achieve in life.

Self-efficacy is also another individual characteristic that promotes resilience after trauma, because it enables people to perceive and believe in themselves that they can overcome the hardships (Benight & Bandura, 2004), and prevents them from developing depression, anxiety disorders, and PTSD. Many psychologists claimed that individuals who perceive themselves as self-efficacious are more inclined to engage in social relationships or able to use social resources that would guide them on their coping processes, while perceived social inefficacy can lead a social isolation that prevents engaging in supportive or satisfying interpersonal relationships, thus impacting coping in a negative way (Bandura, 2010). In this context, it is noteworthy to remember that the participants were aware of their needs to engage in social relationships after they were released, and searched for their available social resources. However, they encountered additional post-conflict social stressors in their available social context as seen in the themes *losing respect of others, having difficulties with explaining the self to family, being accused by family, disappointing family, being*

*the subject of discrimination, being seen like a patient with 'black death', and hardship of living a hometown where you are seen as a "traitor"*. Therefore, their maintaining problems in the interpersonal relationships may be more meaningful to discuss in terms of their post-traumatic experiences or secondary traumatization in the social community, rather than focusing only at the captivity, torture or expulsion event itself. As the results suggested, they did not seem to have avoided the social contact in the first place; instead, their social environment rejected or became distanced from them. Thus, their avoidance of the general community can be considered as their way of coping with the discrimination, social rejection or hatred toward them. On the other hand, they did not seem like they were feeling their self as inefficacious, as also because, they were able to see the positive sides of the negative events. They were also engaging in goal-oriented behaviors that they could achieve, although their motivation to set higher goals seemed to have been shattered after these cumulative and massive traumas.

Previous research emphasized that distancing is a way of coping used when traumatic situation is uncontrollable, and releases helplessness feelings, and for decreasing the associated emotions, people engage in avoidance coping (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000). However, that may cause more long-term distress in return, with the circle of avoidance and intrusion. Because then people do not have relational space to process these emotions and these avoided or denied emotions may cause further mental preoccupations within the psyche. On the other hand, determining whether avoidance strategies are adaptive or not mainly depends on the threat perceived by people, and some authors have suggested that disengaging from the relationships that causes damage in the psychological well being can be a way of protecting self, as also stated by participants. In this manner, the responses indicated that the participants were also in solidarity with their expelled friends, family members or people with the same ideology over 40 years, and not being entirely isolated. However, the impact of being socially rejected within the community accompanied by the expulsion related experiences seemed to have been extended into the quality of their relationships, and their

desire to seek for more social contact.

The results indicated that these long-lasting experiences caused problems on their social adaptation and generating new social connections as all of them indicated still communicating only with the closest family members or people who share the same ideology, but avoiding others who would criticize or humiliate them all over again. Therefore, they have been feeling like that they should not reveal their emotions, struggles, or weaknesses to the others, which creates a split in their relationships in which the way of presenting themselves to the others in the external world was different than their internal worlds. On the other hand, not revealing any signs of weakness toward the oppressors might be evaluated as their resistance against the societal rage toward them, which might be helping them to preserve their sense of self and agency (McEvoy et al., 2004). The results also indicated while dealing with the perception of '*We were the couch grass in a clover field*' in which they were feeling like they are the unwanted ones in the system, they reinterpreted their situation as that the others have never been as conscious, aware, and good people as themselves. That perception and devaluation of others as a defense mechanism seemed to help them to protect their sense of self and autonomy, and to restore their self-esteem while at the same time, affected their further relationships negatively with other people. Thus, they did not believe that there might be some people except their small circle, who could understand, support, and value them as they are.

This may also be considered with their interpreting the world from the ideological perspective in which they have been valuing the well-being of the entire society, and also with their given mission by being military officers, and in return, they were being wounded by the same society. All these further difficult experiences that occurred in interpersonal context seemed to impact the quality of their relationships with others, especially with people who are not in their close circle, and who do not share the same ideology (*experiencing disconnection in relationships*). Their responses showed that their feelings of not being understood, and valued by others have been still going on over 40 years.

In this manner, the participants' ideological commitment, political meaning attribution, political awareness, resistance during the torture sessions and life, also can be seen as enhancing their self-esteem. As Herman (1992) explained, many war veterans, and genocide survivors revealed that resistance is the way of not losing the self-control and autonomy of torture and captivity victims. Because the participants were not surrendering to the interrogators under captivity, and were not accepting the crimes that they did not commit in order to avoid torture, it can be seen as their coping with resistance. Also, their life-long ideological commitment to their own values and beliefs can be also seen as their resistance that might have positive effects on their coping processes (*"believing in the rightness of one's thoughts for a life time"*). All the participants had defended their innocence, and never given up on their political views that led them to be expelled, tortured and discriminated through their lives, and even their political commitment was stated as more intensified with time. Their appraising the world in terms of the politics, and attributing political reasons to their traumatic experiences can be evaluated as their coping mechanisms that helped to deal with the difficulties. It is also known that political prisoners are more likely to be resilient, because they believe that they sacrifice themselves for a higher mission (Ursano, Grieger, & McCarrol, 1996). Also they may be more prepared for the dreadful experiences or able to perceive uncontrollable circumstances as more like under their control, because they choose to do so. In the current study, the participants stated that they were expecting to be expelled, however did not escape or regret, because they believed in the rightness of their thoughts, and their innocence. Several studies indicated that people who bounced back from adverse life events had a sense of coherence (Lepore & Revenson, 2006). Sense of coherence, which corresponds a lasting feeling of confidence, enables people to evaluate their difficult experiences as meaningful and worthy, and hence their coping abilities on overcoming the hardships in the aftermath. The statements of the participants demonstrated that the political meanings attributed to the expulsion, and to the inhumane treatments of others toward them, and also the life-long commitment to their ideologies seemed to provide them a sense of

coherence. Their determination to live in accordance with their ideologies, and not compromising themselves through all these years can be also considered with their coherent sense of self. Thus, these might have protected the expelled soldiers from developing some psychological disorders, helped them to bear their traumatic emotions, and adjust better to the circumstances. Even though, the purpose of the study was not examining their symptoms related to any psychological disorders, or draw a conclusion whether the recovery from the trauma was accomplished or not, their ways of coping with the cumulative traumatic experiences, and some personal dispositions were seen as compatible with the previous studies that indicated the common aspects of resilient people who are more able to bounce back from political and collective traumas.

All these considerations could be beneficial for the clinical implication in the therapy processes of the expelled military members including both the ones who could or could not gain their rights and privileges of being a member of armed forces. Because the results suggested that the adverse traumatic experiences of the expelled soldiers have caused detrimental changes in their lives, and some impact has continued after 40 years, having a holding therapeutic space where they could share, process and integrate their various emotions could help them with their unresolved or complicated mourning processes. Since their previous feelings and experiences seemed to be triggered with the recent law, verbalization of these avoided emotions, and traumatizing life experiences with a therapist who they could trust, but would not judge them, would help them to narrate their unsymbolized experiences, and maybe in the long-term, aid them to restore the feelings of trusting to the others. Also, considering their current ages, and later elderly years, entering a process in a therapeutic environment where the old wounds could be healed, and reconciliation and forgiveness with the society, and maybe with some parts of their self could be achieved would be very useful for their psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and maybe for their physical health. During the therapy process, it is important to remember that these individuals have been constantly exposed to the discrimination, violence and

humiliation of the others; therefore there might be a possibility of them seeing the interpretations or even questions of a therapist as an assault toward their self. Thus, the therapist's attitude, language, and attunement would be especially important for the expelled military members, because their dreadful experiences seemed to lead them to be alert to the signs of discrimination, and stigmatization that would cause them to feel not being understood, or valued in the interpersonal context. Another suggestion would be that- while listening to their experiences in therapy; it would be useful to keep their post-conflict social stressors, captivity and torture periods in mind, although many years passed by these events, because their traces still seemed to be in the centre of their lives.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to remember that the collective recovery processes play significant roles on healing the impact of the collective traumas. In the Turkish history, there have been several military coup d'états, political and massive traumas that have accumulated in the psychic worlds of the citizens, which would continue with shared violence, victimization and hatred between the groups, unless comprehensive posttraumatic recovery projects and prevention studies are not developed in a community level. It is also significant in terms of the transmission of the trauma, that might have also affected the psychological well-being of the descendants of the expelled military members, because of the possibility of the transmission of unresolved mourning tasks transmitted to them. These considerations of the current study would be also useful and meaningful on understanding the children or grandchildren of the military members who were expelled because of the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1980 military coup in Turkey, as well as other cohorts expelled for different political reasons since then. The further studies may be conducted that would focus on the traces of their experiences on the psyche of their children.

One of the main limitations of this study is that even though the number of the participants and qualitative method made the deep investigation of the experiences of a specific group possible, they have limited the generalization of the results for other expelled military members. Also, although it is known that

approximately 1020 soldiers were expelled as a result of the 12<sup>th</sup> September military coup between the years of 1980 and 1984, the sample could only be reached via contacting their own foundation. Therefore, it may be considered that these individuals were already the ones who were still in solidarity with each other, or maybe more resilient than the others expelled in terms of maintaining their struggles all together by also finding themselves a suitable venue to discharge their psychic energies. Also, because participation in this study required remembering, and sharing of the previous traumatic experiences, the ones who found themselves as more psychologically resilient, or coped better might be the ones who chose to participate. Also, some of the expelled soldiers hesitated to participate in the study by stating their fears about getting into a trouble by sharing their experiences, although they were informed about the confidentiality of the study. Their ongoing fears and anxieties about being punished for sharing their own thoughts and feelings can be also seen here. It should be also acknowledged that some military members committed suicide both during the period of captivity and torture, and also after their being released, while some of them died during those periods or later.

Another limitation is about that the study was based on the retrospective self-reports of the participants who were expelled, captivated and tortured almost 40 years ago. Even though, the purposes of this study was already exploring the long-term impact of the expulsion event, post-expulsion conflicts, and personal meanings and coping ways over these years, it is important to keep in mind that there may be some distortions in the memory including misremembering, forgetting, or intentionally disguising the details of the experiences as a result of the trauma or the time. As van der Kolk (1998) explained, although trauma leaves ineradicable traces, like every other memories, they are open to be distorted when individuals begin sharing their feelings, and making sense of these. However, the use of retrospective self-reports as a method may be the only way of gathering information, because interviewing trauma survivors under those difficult conditions would not be possible. In this manner, whether the law that has began

to be enacted since 2011 has an influence on their participation to the study or not might be an issue to be investigated. Because their association was established at the same year with the law execution, they might be more able to talk about their experiences with the ‘recognition of their innocence’ by the state after all these years. The unique impact of this law on their psychologies may be the focus of another study.

On the other hand, using qualitative method provided the opportunity for exploring the post-expulsion experiences in the context of political and social environment, and ongoing stressors related to the expulsion including the changes through their lives with unique details that would not have been obtained with quantitative methods. The qualitative interviews seemed to have just opened a window through their never heard experiences, since there was no previous study that examined the psychologies of the soldier victims of the military coup d’états in Turkey. One of the suggestions for the further research in this field may be focusing more on the deep investigations of the mourning processes, or changes in the post-traumatic stress. The studies that would combine the qualitative method with the measures of resilience, post-traumatic stress related or other disorders, and life-satisfaction may present more comprehensive framework about the current psychological well-being and recovery levels of the expelled military members. It is significant to note that these participants were the soldiers whose training and education was toward becoming more resilient and strong in life, which might also pose a limit for the generalization of the findings to the other victims of collective trauma and politically motivated violence. However, it should be remembered that trauma studies have also begun with the investigation of post-traumatic experiences of the combat soldiers in the literature, and that opened a gateway for the further considerations and investigations in the trauma field.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Informed Consent Form

#### Gönüllü Onam Formu

Sayın Katılımcı;

Bu çalışmanın konusu, 1980 Askeri Darbesi sonucunda askeriyedeki görevlerinden kişisel inanç ve görüşleri sebebiyle 1980 ve 1984 yılları arasında ihraç edilmiş ordu mensuplarının yaşadıkları deneyimlerinin derinlemesine araştırılmasıdır. Çalışmaya katılan her bir katılımcının, ordudan atılmayı değerlendirme ve deneyimleme şekillerini derinlemesine araştırarak anlamak, hayatlarında karşılaştıkları hayat zorluklarını nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını ve onlarla başa çıktıklarını araştırmak hedeflenmektedir. Bu çalışma, Aslı Uzel'in İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji yüksek lisans programında Prof.Dr. Hale Bolak Boratav danışmanlığında hazırlayacağı bitirme tezini oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz sizinle yaklaşık 2 saat süren bir görüşme yapılacaktır.

Yapılan çalışmaya katılımınız durumunda görüşme sürecinde konuşulacak konuyla ilgili deneyimlerinize dair farkındalığınızın artması ve daha önce fark etmediğiniz yönlerini keşfetme imkanınız olacağı umulmaktadır. Bu çalışmaya katılımınız sizinle benzer deneyimleri yaşamış ve sesleri hiç duyulmayan bireylerin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunacaktır. Yaşanılan deneyimlerin paylaşılması ile birlikte, hayat döngüsünü değiştiren olaylar yaşamış bireyler için geliştirilmesi ve iyileştirilmesi gereken alanların saptanması beklenmektedir. Bu bağlamda, ruh sağlığını etkileyen bu önemli olaylar sonrasında, deneyimleyen kişilerin yaşadığı zorlukları ve adaptasyon süreçlerini anlamak, daha iyi tedavi modelleri ve önleyici çalışmalar yaratılmasını sağlayacaktır.

Çalışmaya katılımınız durumunda, yaşadığınız belli deneyimleri derinlemesine paylaşıyor olmak yer yer duygusal olarak rahatsız edici gelebilir. Görüşmenin süresi uzun gelebilir. Soruların bazıları içerik olarak rahatsız edici

olabilir. Belirgin bir rahatsızlık hissetmeniz durumunda görüşmeye bir süre ara verilebilir,

istediğiniz zaman görüşmeyi sonlandırabilirsiniz. Çalışmaya katılımda gönüllülük esastır. Çalışma sonrasında rahatsız hissettiğiniz herhangi bir durum olursa görüşmeciyile iletişime geçebilirsiniz. Böyle bir durum olması durumunda ek bir görüşme talep edebilirsiniz.

Bu formu imzalayarak araştırmaya katılım için onay vermiş olacaksınız. Bununla birlikte kişisel bilgileriniz çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında açıkça kullanılmayacaktır. Görüşmede verdiğiniz cevaplar ve araştırma süresince görsel/işitsel cihaz kullanılarak edinilen her türlü bilgi yalnızca bu bilimsel araştırma kapsamında kullanılacak, başka hiçbir amaç için kullanılmayacaktır. Transkripti alındıktan sonra tüm kayıtlar silinecektir.

**SORU VE PROBLEMLER İÇİN BAŞVURULACAK KİŞİLER :**

Prof. Dr. Hale Bolak Boratav

Klnk.Psk.Yük.Lis.Öğr.Aslı Uzel, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi  
asliuzel@yahoo.com

**Çalışmaya Katılma Onayı**

Bu bilgilendirilmiş onam belgesini okudum ve anladım. İstedğim zaman bu araştırmadan çekilebileceğimi biliyorum Bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyor ve bu onay belgesini kendi hür irademle imzalıyorum.

|                              |  |                       |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Katılımcı Adı Soyadı:</i> |  | <i>Tarih ve İmza:</i> |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------|

|                                |  |                       |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Araştırmacı Adı Soyadı:</i> |  | <i>Tarih ve İmza:</i> |
| <i>Adres ve Telefon:</i>       |  |                       |
| <i>Adres ve Telefon:</i>       |  |                       |

## Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1) Bana biraz ordudan atılma deneyiminizi anlatır mısınız?

- Askeriyedeki pozisyonunuzdan ne zaman çıkarıldınız?
- O dönemde orduda hangi pozisyondayız?
- Bu olay olduğunda kaç yaşındaydınız?
- Çıkarılmanızın sebebi neydi?
- Askeriyeden çıkarıldığınızı nasıl öğrendiniz?
- Bu olay gerçekleşmeden önce herhangi bir zaman ordudaki pozisyonunuzdan çıkarılabileceğinizi düşünmüş müydünüz?
- Evet ise, Bu ihtimali düşündüğünüzde neler hissediyordunuz?
- Bu olasılık aklınıza geldiğinde neler başa çıkmanızı sağlıyordu?
- Çıkarıldığınızı öğrendiğinizde ne hissettiniz?
- Bu olay gerçekleştiğinde hangi yollarla başa çıktınız?

2) Bana askeriye den çıkarılma sürecinizde yaşadığınız deneyimlerinizden bahsedermisiniz?

- Bu süreçte cezaevine girmiş miydiniz?
- Tutuklandığınız süre zarfında ne tür deneyimler yaşadınız?
- Ordudaki göreviniz, yeriniz haricinde, ordudan çıkarılmakla herhangi bir kayıp yaşadığınızı düşünüyor musunuz?
  - Evet ise, ne tür kayıplardan bahsedebiliriz?
- Bu zorlu süreçleri atlatmada size neler yardımcı oldu?
- Bu süreci geçirirken hayatınızı kolaylaştıran ya da zorlaştıran faktörler nelerdi? (Bahsedilmediyse, toplumun, yakın çevreniz, arkadaşlarınız ve ailenizin tepkileri nasıl oldu?)



3) Bu olaya ne gibi anlamlar atfettiniz?

- Askeriyeden çıkarılmadan önce mesleğiniz sizing için ne anlamlara gelirdi?
- Ordudan çıkarılmanızı o dönemde nasıl değerlendirdiniz?
- Şimdi geriye dönüp baktığınızda bu olayı nasıl anlamlandırıyorsunuz?

4) Bana askeri okul yıllarınızda yaşadığınız deneyimlerden bahseder misiniz?

- Bu yıllarda herhangi bir zorluk yaşamış mıydınız?
- Sizi strese sokan durumlarla, zorluklarla o dönem nasıl başa çıkardınız?

5) Bana ordudan çıkarılma sürecinizden bu güne kadar olan süreçte, bir sivil olarak yaşadığınız ileriki deneyimlerden bahseder misiniz?

- Bu olayla birlikte hayatınız hangi açıdan değişti?
- Hayatınızın ileri aşamalarında bu olay yüzünden zorluklar yaşadınız mı?\_
- Bu zorluklarla nasıl başa çıkardınız?
- İlişkileriniz nasıldı?
- Bu olayın ailenizle, arkadaşlarınızla olan ilişkilerinizi, sosyal hayatınızı ve kariyer gelişiminizi etkilediğini düşünüyor musunuz?
- Evet ise, hangi yönlerden etkilediğini / değiştirdiğini düşünüyorsunuz?
- Ne tür deneyimler yaşadınız?
- Bugünkü hayatınızda bu olayın kalıntılarını deneyimlediğinizi düşünüyor musunuz?
- Güncel olarak sizde stres yaratan durumlarla nasıl başa çıkarsınız?

6. Daha sonra askeriye mensup olmakla edinilen hak ve ayrıcalıklarınızı geri alabildiniz mi?

Evet ise;

- Haklarınızı geri alacağınızı öğrendiğinizde ne hissettiniz?

- Haklarınızı alma deneyiminizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Bu durumun hayatınızda herhangi bir değişikliğe sebep olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Ne gibi değişimlerden bahsedebiliriz?

Hayır ise;

- Haklarınızı geri alamayacağınızı öğrendiğinizde ne hissettiniz?
- Haklarınızı alamama deneyiminizi nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz?
- Bu durumun hayatınızda herhangi bir değişikliğe sebep olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Ne gibi değişimlerden bahsedebiliriz?

**ETİK KURUL DEĞERLENDİRME SONUCU/RESULT OF EVALUATION BY  
THE ETHICS COMMITTEE**

(Bu bölüm İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurul tarafından  
doldurulacaktır /This section to be completed by the Committee on Ethics in research  
on Humans)

**Başvuru Sahibi / Applicant:** Aslı Uzel

**Proje Başlığı / Project Title:** Being a 'Wounded' Civilian: Understanding the  
Experiences of the Military Members Who Were Expelled From the Army Due to  
1980 Coup in Turkey with the Focus on the Resiliency Factors

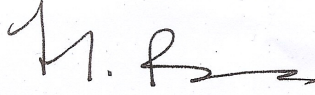
**Proje No. / Project Number:** 2018-20024-113

|    |                                                                       |    |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Herhangi bir değişikliğe gerek yoktur / There is no need for revision | XX |
| 2. | Ret/ Application Rejected<br>Reddin gerekçesi / Reason for Rejection  |    |

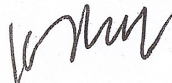
**Değerlendirme Tarihi / Date of Evaluation:** 1 Kasım 2018

  
Kurul Başkanı / Committee Chair

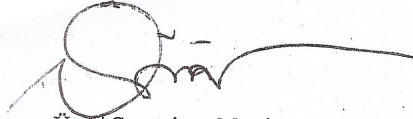
Doç. Dr. İtir Erhart

  
Üye / Committee Member

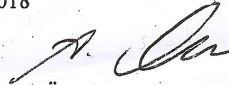
Prof. Dr. Hale Bolak

  
Üye / Committee Member

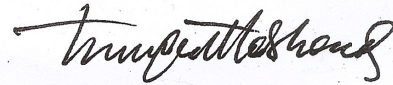
Prof. Dr. Koray Akay

  
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