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THE DEVELOPMENT OF BODY POSITIVITY IN YOUNG ADULT
WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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The Development of Body Positivity in Young Adult Women: A Qualitative Study

Genç Yetişkin Kadınlarda Olumlu Beden Algısı Gelişiminin Nitel Olarak
İncelenmesi

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ABSTRACT

Research on the concept of body image has become a broad field in psychological and social studies due to its measurable consequences, which could be observed in everyday life. Its multifaceted nature took the attention of both researchers who worked with pathologies related to body image and those who investigated its effects on individuals. While negative body image has been studied extensively till this day, positive body image came into prominence when its preventive quality on body image disturbances, resulting pathologies and reinforcement on health-related behavior and attitudes were recognized. Broadly, positive body image is defined by the positive and accepting attitudes and behaviors that an individual has towards his/her body, while cognitively filtering the exposed negative critiques. However, although various studies are conducted on positive body image, its varying quality among individuals and the impact of social context on its development requires more research with different groups in order to understand it more deeply. Gaining more insight into what it is and how it develops can create a chance to establish early intervention tools and prevention programs for vulnerable groups such as adolescents and women who suffer from negative body image consequences.

This study aims to investigate what positive body image is and how it develops for young adult Turkish females. Main research questions of the study are how young adult women define and experience positive body image, how does a positive body image develop and what are the experiences which enhance and hinder its development in young women's lives and their social contexts. These questions aim to gain an understanding of positive body image for a specific group of participants. Ten female participants aged 18 to 25 were interviewed individually online. The interviews lasted 49-91 minutes and thematic analysis method was used for coding. The analysis revealed four main themes, namely a) body becoming an issue, b) transformation of body image from negative to positive, c) developing an alternative mindset on the body, and d) sustaining positive body image. The first theme involved the sub-themes of differing from standards, confusion and

estrangement and altering appearance. The second theme contained the sub-themes of appreciating diverse bodies, exercising autonomy and control, and getting external support. Perceiving body image as flexible and striving for balance were the sub-themes of the third theme. Lastly, listening to one's own needs, being open for positive feedback and focusing on the functionality of the body were explained under the fourth theme. Results showed that critical thinking on gender roles, focusing on inner needs and strengthening the body contribute to positive body image. Participants showed a tendency to engage in self-care activities and to filter negative messages on their appearance. Familial and societal support based on acceptance also served as a coping strategy that helped with maintaining positive body image. Clinical implications and limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Body image, positive body image, femininity, beauty ideals
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ÖZET

Beden algısı hakkında yapılan çalışmalar ölçülebilir ve gündelik hayatta gözlemlenebilir sonuçları nedeniyle hem psikoloji hem de sosyal bilimler alanında geniş yer kaplamaktadır. Çok katmanlı yapısı hem patoloji, hem de sosyal yapıların özneler üzerindeki etkilerini çalışan araştırmacıların ilgisini çekmiştir. Negatif beden algısı uzunca bir süredir çalışıldığı halde, pozitif beden algısıyla ilgili çalışmalar görece yenidir. Beden algısından kaynaklanan patolojileri engelleyebilmeyi ve kendine bakım verme davranışlarını pekiştirebilmeyi kolaylaştırdığından pozitif beden algısı çalışmaları günümüzde hız kazanmaktadır. Genel olarak pozitif beden algısı, kişinin kendi bedenine karşı olumlu ve kabullenici tutumlar içinde olarak dışarıdan gelen olumsuz mesajları filtreleyebilmesi olarak düşünülebilir. Ancak şu ana kadar yapılan çalışmalar bu terimin kişiye ve içinde bulunduğu topluma bağlı olarak değişkenlik gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu sebeple bu olguyu anlayabilmek için çeşitli gruplarla daha fazla çalışma yapılmalıdır. Olumlu beden algısını ve nasıl geliştiğini daha derinlemesine anlayabilmek, özellikle olumsuz beden algısından daha çok etkilenen gruplar için önleyici programlar ve erken müdahale yöntemleri geliştirmeye olanak sağlayacaktır.

Bu çalışma Türkiye’de yaşayan genç yetişkin kadınlar için olumlu beden algısı kavramı ve gelişimini araştırmayı hedeflemiştir. Çalışmanın ana araştırma soruları genç yetişkin kadınların olumlu beden algısını nasıl tanımlayıp deneyimlediğini, bu algının nasıl geliştiğini ve içinde buldukları sosyal ortamın bu algıyı nasıl etkilediğini anlamaya çalışır. Sorular genel olarak spesifik bir katılımcı grubu için olumlu beden algısının ne olduğunu ve nasıl geliştiğini anlamaya çalışır. On sekiz ila yirmi beş yaş aralığındaki on kadınla yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşmeler sonucunda elde edilen veriler tematik analiz yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Görüşmeler 49-91 dakika arasında sürmüştür. Analizin ana temaları a) beden bir mesele haline gelmesi, b) beden algısının negatiften pozitive evrilmesi, c) beden hakkında alternatif bir düşünce tarzı geliştirilmesi ve d) olumlu beden algısının korunmasıdır. İlk tema standartlardan

ayrışma, farklılaşma ve yabancılaşma, görünüşü değiştirme alt-temalarını içerir. İkinci tema ise farklı bedenleri takdir etmek, otonomi ve kontrolü deneyimlemek, dışarıdan destek almak alt-temalarından oluşur. Beden imgesini değişken olarak algılamak ve denge aramak üçüncü temayı oluştururken; kendi ihtiyaçlarını duymak, olumlu bildirimlere açık olmak ve bedenın işlevlerine odaklanmak dördüncü temanın altında yer alır. Toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri hakkında eleştirel düşünme beceresi, beden duyumsamalarını fark etme ve anlamlandırabilme ve bedenle birlikte benliğin güçlenmesi ve özgürleşebilmesinin olumlu beden algısına katkısı olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bu kişilerin kendine bakım verme ve dışarıdan gelen olumsuz mesajları filtreleyebilme beceresi geliştirdikleri saptanmıştır. Ailevi ve sosyal çevrenin şartsız kabul etmeye yönelik tutumlarının da olumlu beden algısını sürdürüebilme becerilerine katkıda bulunduğu görülmüştür. Sonuçlar ışığında klinik ve önleme çalışmaları için öneriler geliştirilmiş, araştırmanın sınırlılıkları ve gelecek çalışmalar içinde öneriler tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Beden algısı, olumlu beden algısı, kadınlık, güzellik idealleri, genç yetişkinler

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Body image is a complex construct that mainly describes the perception of an individual towards one's own body. The meanings attributed to one's body and the feelings that it evokes broadly define the concept (Fisher & Cleveland, 1968). Since both psychological and social factors influence body image, it shows variance among individuals, families and cultures, making it hard to derive direct inferences (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008). Ironically on the other hand, due to the similarities of messages through universal media, body image issues show commonalities, especially on its effect on mental health (Simonelli & Heinberg, 2009). This raises an interest in the scientific arena where both researchers studying individual differences and environmental factors coincide. Since most of these commonalities accumulate under negative body image issues, studies mostly focused on the reasons of negative body image, leading to a massive variety of labelling especially for women (Blood, 2005). Positive body image on the other hand is a recently studied construct that captures the capacity for both positive and negative attributions towards one's body and includes body acceptance as a component. Having positive body image is reported to show a buffer effect between media's infliction of beauty ideals and internalization of these ideals (Neff, 2003). Individuals with positive body image has been shown to be engaged more with self-care activities and less effected by body image concerns (Cash, 2008). This raises the question on its possible function as a preventative tool for vulnerable groups towards media ideals, such as young adolescent females.

Research done on body image in Turkey mostly focuses on body image attitudes and their relationship with certain measurable disorders such as eating disorder (Orsel et al., 2004), sexual dysfunction (Karaaslan & Hacimusalar, 2018), media's influence (Tosun & Coban, 2020) and mood disorders (Sanlier et al., 2016). Other measurement tools and studies explored body image by focusing mostly on the construct of negative body image and society's role in it. Positive body image is not widely studied in Turkey, although it is an important topic for psychological and physical well-being of individuals, particularly women. Therefore, this study

aims to gain an insight about positive body image and the development of it in the Turkish context for young adult females. Firstly, the literature on this concept and its evolution will be presented. Then, the context and the goals of the current study will be explained.

1.2. THE CONSTRUCT OF BODY IMAGE

The concept of body image has been investigated widely due to its relationship with psychosocial functioning and quality of life. This concept broadly encompasses how one perceives one's own body and one's attributions about it (Cash et al., 2004). Body image has become a prominent topic both in public and academic spheres, partly due to the associations it has with a wide array factors such as eating behaviors (Stice, 2002), health behavior (Cash & Fleming, 2002a), sexual performance (Wiederman, 2002) and self-esteem (Powell & Hendricks, 1999). The concept of body image starts to have a place in clinical work and related research with the reports showing the negative behavioral and adverse social effects of negative body image (Altabe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Therefore, a majority of research focusing on body image investigates the consequences and development of its negative forms.

Regarding the history of body image research, it is possible to encounter questions about whether body image issues are getting worse with time. However, according to Cash (2002b), the multidimensional nature of body image renders it meaningless to compare studies done in different social contexts and at different times. Since body image is not considered a stable trait, multiple measurement tools capturing numerous variables have been used to interpret and theorize the concept (Cash, 2002a). According to Cash (2002a), one way of understanding one's body image is understanding one's attitude towards his/her physical appearance and how much she/he is willing to invest in it. Similarly, Radley (1991) argues that these attitudes and cognitions should be elaborated on by regarding their social and historical contexts at the time of assessment.

Therefore, although the literature presents a general definition of body image, there is still ongoing debates on how to best define, assess and formulate it.

Next, a brief history of body image research will be presented to explain how it informs current debates in the literature.

1.2.1. A Short History of Body Image Research

One of the first studies on body image is done by Seymour Fisher (1986) and then Franklin Shontz (1969), both from a psychoanalytic perspective where they approach the body as an object. They claim that one's perception of their body might give insight into their inner world, predicting how one might react to external stimuli (Fisher, 1986). Interestingly in his studies, Shontz (1969) found that women have more discrepancy in their body perception, specifically on the parts where cultural desirability was emphasized. In other words, women showed less accuracy when they described their appearance. With a similar intention of gaining insight by reading body image, satisfaction with one's body was studied under the name of 'body-cathexis' by Secord and Jourard (1953). They interpreted this variable as an implication of a personality trait; a person who is dissatisfied by the body image might have certain negative personality traits.

Later work focused on how distorted one's body image is and studied the nature and extent of these distortions. For example, in an early study, Traub (1967) investigated body image perception by focusing on whether the perception of one's body is distorted or not. He developed the mirror experiment where subjects are asked to describe their own appearance in front of a mirror and their accuracy was measured. With his continuing mirror experiment, Orbach (1966) observed that attitudes, cognitions and affections interfere with the visual information, distorting individuals' perception of their bodies from mild to severe.

To construct and frame cognition of eating disorders, body-cathexis variable and mirror experiments has been used afterwards. Inspired by Hilde Bruch's (1962) emphasis on the relation between body-image perception disturbances and eating disorders, Slade and Russel (1973) conducted a detailed experiment with a woman diagnosed with anorexia. They measured participants' accuracy in estimating the size of body parts and non-body objects and saw that distortions happen with the perception regarding only body parts (Slade & Russel, 1973). The inference was that body image perception distortions that caused pathology were not general

perception deformation issues and were more complex than could be explained from a purely cognitive perspective. Although a body image definition, influenced by Freud's psychoanalytical view, was constructed by Paul Schilder (1935) to claim that interpersonal attachments and libidinal drives form body perception, Slade and Russel (1973) aimed to construct a simpler version for scientific replicability. Rather than elaborating on self-view, Slade and Russel (1973) focused on mental representations of the body, which caused distortions in body image perception, and derived a construct called 'body image disturbance.' This construct was recognized and added to DSM-III in 1980.

However, Slade and Russel's research has been replicated and critiqued by the other researchers. Results from other studies showed that not only diagnosed women, but nearly all women who were tested for their accurate perception of their body size failed to report it (Crisp & Kalucy, 1974; Garner et al., 1976; Hsu, 1982). Results showed that there was a common misperception among all women, but this factor did not lead to eating disorders for all. In his work, Slade (1985) meta-analyzed a wide variety of research, interpreting this misperception phenomenon as a changing entity influenced by the emotions reacting to both internal and external stimuli. Considering perception as a fixed entity was criticized afterwards widely, which will be discussed in more detail below.

In 1990s, Cash and Henry (1995) presented a broader approach by creating a framework called body image attitudes. This concept is formed by one's self-perception, cognition, affect, and behavior towards their body. Their work was recognized rapidly and led to various studies where measurement tools were established widely to contribute to the construct. Some of the developed measurements are Body Parts Satisfaction Scale (Petrie, Tripp, & Harvey, 2002), Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (Rosen, Srebnik, Saltzburg, & Wendt, 1991), The Appearance Schemas Inventory (Cash & Labarge, 1996) and The Body Image Quality of Life Inventory (Cash & Fleming, 2002). Besides their targeted results, these measurement tools emphasized the growing displeasure of women towards their bodies. Even those who were not diagnosed with a mental illness still

showed alarmingly significant negative attributions towards their bodies (Grogan, 1999).

1.2.2. Critiques on Body Image Research

As stated above, critiques have been held by the researchers on body image research techniques. Previous research has viewed the concept of perception to measure body image in a way where the body is considered as a separate entity from self, which is observed only by eyes that transmit reality to the mind (Grosz, 1994). From this perspective, perceiving the body becomes an objective action where the subject's unique existence that shapes the perception does not matter (Grosz, 1987). This type of investigation was also criticized by the contemporary feminist and social theorists in that the social and cultural effects on individuals' meaning-making process were omitted from the framework (Butler, 1990; Malson, 1998). They claimed that understanding the body was impossible without a culture's understanding of it and the language a society creates to talk about it.

In Slade's (1994) accurate perception studies, accuracy is described as seeing the body as it is. There is this notion that people need to know the size of the body and body parts as accurately as they see a non-body part object. Several researchers criticized this focus on accurate perception. They claimed that striving for this accuracy labels distorted perception as pathological, while disregarding personal, societal and environmental differences. For example, Wetherell and Potter (1992) strongly point out that body image is a 'social fact' which keeps changing with societal standards. With the ongoing relationship of the self with the familial, societal and cultural constructs on the body, a person internalizes external gazes and looks him/herself through others' eyes (Gergen, 1994). These researchers went on to argue that without understanding the social context in a certain period, understanding body perception distortion would be insufficient. Radley (1991) adds up to this view by saying that individual differences such as someone's unconscious drives, cognitive mechanisms on how they interact with the world and process information define how social context influences a person.

Overall, research on body image has started with a focus on its negative, pathological, stable qualities and put an emphasis on accuracy. Later research

argued for paying more attention to social, cultural and historical influences, and invited a deeper understanding of individuals' meaning-making processes within these influences. Regarding all these factors, measuring and standardizing a general construct of body image is challenging and complex. One widely used distinction in body image research is between negative and positive body image. In the next section, after presenting a short definition of negative body image, the construct of positive body image will be explained in detail.

1.2. NEGATIVE BODY IMAGE

1.2.1. The Construct of Negative Body Image

Negative body image is, as body image itself, a multidimensional construct defined as one's negative perception or attitude towards their own body that leads to discontent and dissatisfaction of some aspects of the appearance (Cash et al., 2004; Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Negative body image is strongly associated with eating disorders (Stice, 2002) and other psychosocial difficulties such as social anxiety, depression (Stice, Hayward, Cameron, Killen, & Taylor, 2000) and problems in sexual functioning (Cash & Deagle, 1995; Cash & Pruzinsky, 1990; Thompson, 1990). Blood (2005) claims that although there is a biological base for each of these correlated disorders, the psychosocial aspect of the problem, as in eating disorders or sexual functioning, is affected by negative body image element.

As a theoretical framework, body objectification describes how the female body is objectified and internalized in a sociocultural context (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The female body is an object used for others' pleasure; it is not sensed but looked at from the outside by the gaze (Barlow, 1986). This constant gaze and evaluation from the outside disrupts the pleasure that comes from the inside, blocking sexual responses and the activity itself (Meana & Nunnink, 2006). The same model also applies to eating disorders, where an objectified body is leading to body shame and disrupts inner pleasure and satisfaction of the eating process (Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005; Tylka & Hill, 2004).

In a supporting vein, researchers argue that it is not surprising to find a correlation between body image concerns and exposure to body-related social

contexts (Cash, 2002b). In the meta-analysis Groesz, Levine and Murnen (2002) conducted, the level of internalization of the media-promoted thin-ideal (Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas, & Williams, 2000) and social comparison processes (Heinberg & Thompson, 1992) were detected as strongly correlated factors with body image. In other words, these two factors helped researchers to understand the mentalization processes and how a person interprets body-related information through media. These processes seemed to exert greater influence on women (Fallon, Harris, & Johnson, 2014) as compared to men (Alleva, Martijn, Jansen, & Nederkoorn, 2014), since women are still more exposed to the thin ideal through media instruments (Grabe et al., 2008)

Besides societal and media influences, biological age and the developmental stage also seem to interfere with negative body image. In their research, Graber and colleagues (1994) point out that natural change in body fat volume in adolescent years mismatches today's beauty/thin ideals, increasing body dissatisfaction in teenage years. Since this weight gain is biologically interrelated to menstruation experience, both factors seem to create stress that overlap under negative body image issues (Petersen et al., 1991).

As stated above, the construct of body image and negative body image seem to be multifaceted and dynamic, changing through time and social context. In other words, a person interacting with the societal norms and experiencing developmental challenges might experience negative body image at a point in his/her life. Therefore, striving for a non-negative body image is criticized on the grounds that it undermines societal learning and pathologizes a natural end product (Slade, 1994). Pope and colleagues (2014) claim that body dissatisfaction is different from positive body image and not at the ends of the same spectrum. In this study, most of the participants showed displeasure in their body parts, while overall feeling positive about their body image. Similarly, Webb and colleagues (2015) suggested that reducing the impacts of negative body image and enabling positive body image can be different and simultaneous strategies for optimizing health and well-being in clinical and community settings. The next section will dwell upon what the notion of positive body image entails and how it can be enhanced.

1.3. POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

1.3.1. The Construct of Positive Body Image

Since focusing on the negative body image and striving for accurate/normal body image perception have been criticized, aiming at the positive aspect of the body image phenomena has been considered complementary for preventive studies. Although most of the previous research has focused on the concept of negative body image, there has been an increasing emphasis on positive feelings, thoughts and attitudes towards one's body in the literature (Frisén & Holmqvist, 2010b; Wood-Barcalow, Tylka, & Augustus-Horvath, 2010). Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015) claim that although research has focused on reducing negative body image to eliminate its negative effect on health behaviors, positive body image should be enhanced for participants to internalize and maintain those attitudes that they benefited from.

Early research tended to consider positive and negative body image in the opposite ends of a spectrum (Mendelson & White, 2001; Cash, 2000), while contemporary research claims that the constructs that generate the concept of positive body image are far more complicated. Current studies characterize positive body image not as a lack of or low level of negative body image, but rather a combination of different positive experiences related to one's body. Positive body image research has its roots in positive psychology, where a broad definition is offered to capture the processes of sustaining body image satisfaction regardless of how compatible it is with beauty standards of the time (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Very few qualitative studies have been conducted with individuals with positive body image to understand this phenomena. These studies pointed out certain qualities such as unconditional acceptance from others, appreciation and acceptance of one's own body, spirituality and religion, engaging in self-care activities, filtering messages on negative body image, inner positivity and a broad conceptualization of beauty (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010; Tylka, 2011). In the literature, these themes are used to construct quantitative measurements to gain a more statistical understanding of positive body image.

Body appreciation (Avalos et al., 2005), positive rational acceptance coping (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002a), body image flexibility (Sandoz, Wilson, Merwin, & Kellum, 2013), body functionality (Alleva et al., 2014; Avalos & Tylka, 2006; Clark et al., 2009), are all considered as various facets of positive body image. Attunement (Cook-Cottone, 2006), body sanctification (Mahoney et al., 2005), a broad conceptualization of beauty (Holmqvist & Frisén, 2012; Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010), body acceptance by others (Avalos & Tylka, 2006) and positive and self-accepting body talk (Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994; Parker et al., 1995) are constructs that correlate with positive body image. All these constructs help us to gain a fuller picture about the concept of positive body image which clinical implications and social movements benefit from. The name positive body image as a psychological factor is used as body positivity in some social contexts, especially in social movement arenas (Ospina, 2015; Baker, 2017). This study will use both terms interchangeably.

1.3.1.1. Body Appreciation

Body appreciation is one of the most prominent constructs that positive body image is associated with. It is formerly developed by Avos and colleagues (2005) through examining training sources that enhance body acceptance (Cash, 1997; Freedman, 2002) and data on studies where internalizing sociocultural negative body image messages were low (Levine & Smolak, 2001). The final description, on the basis of which Body Appreciation Scale (BAS) was developed, contained three significant points: accepting the body as what it is, resisting unrealistic beauty standards internalization, and engaging in health-promoting behaviors. Body Appreciation Scale is used in a wide range of positive body image studies and found out to be positively correlated with other positive body image constructs such as self-esteem, body acceptance and body respect (Tylka, 2013).

Body appreciation does not mean that a person accurately perceives and estimates body size as prior research claims. Subjects who rate high on body appreciation scales favor attitudes towards their size and shape rather than the induced ones through media. Another common trait that the subjects with high body appreciation rates show is their consideration of body functionality. They seemed

to be able to consider their body more than its appearance, which lead them to be more protective of their body image (Andrew et al., 2011). They were more appreciative of their uniqueness and dismissed beauty standards (Halliwel, 2013).

Since beauty standards kept changing through time, this concept also seems to show a fluid quality over time (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Factors such as social identity and body acceptance by others also correlate with this construct, enhancing its flexible quality (Tracy & Tylka, 2012). The first version of BAS, which was standardized only with samples from Europe, showed non-significant results in non-European countries, pointing out that the construct varied among cultures and culturally bounded items were reconstructed for revised scale (Ng et al., 2015).

1.3.1.2. Positive Rational Acceptance Coping

After working on body image and corresponding behaviors, Cash (2002) developed a body image cognitive-behavioral process model. He explains which extrinsic factors affect the subject and what kind of cognitive processes lead to a particular behavior type. Cash, Santos and Williams (2005) identify the cognitive strategies subjects use when negative messages are encountered from that theoretical framework. Three strategies stand out, which correlates with their preventative behavior towards their body image. They use an avoidant strategy to avoid or escape from negative body images or an appearance fixing method where they change or cover their perceived flaws. The third strategy is the rational acceptance strategy, which involves accepting negative feelings and thoughts of the threat and behaving in a self-compassionate way towards self with realistic self-talk.

Existing studies show that positive rational acceptance coping is associated with indicators of psychological well-being and health. For example, in a study done with Canadian college women, Choma and colleagues (2009) found a correlation between positive rational acceptance and subjective well-being. The same subjects also showed low levels of self-objectification. In another study done with Australian female adolescents, higher affect regulation is identified among the ones who have high positive rational acceptance (Hughes & Gullone, 2011). In a

supporting vein, in a study where females with eating disorders and a control group were compared, the first group rated significantly low in positive rational acceptance coping skill measurements (Hrabosky et al., 2009).

1.3.1.3. Body Image Flexibility

Very similar to the positive rational acceptance coping construct, Sandoz, Wilson and colleagues (2013) describe a preventative cognitive factor where individuals accept negative feelings towards their body and be patient about it. It is a construct derived from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Ciarrochi, et al., 2013) where negative thoughts and feelings are observed until they pass. It is used as a subscale in Body Image-Acceptance and Action Questionnaire (BI-AAQ), and correlates with mindful acceptance, growth-promoting compassion and distress tolerance (Ferreira et al., 2011). In a study conducted with Portuguese adults and American young adults, the body image flexibility subscale was found to be negatively correlated with eating disorders and body dissatisfaction (Ferreira et al., 2011). Promoting mindfulness is one of the techniques that aims to increasing body positivity through the mechanisms of body image flexibility. Image flexibility also underlines one of the main definitions on the concept of positive body image; it is not about having positive feelings, but being able to deal with the negative ones (Webb et al., 2015).

1.3.1.4. Body Functionality

Studies conducted especially with female subjects has shown that understanding and valuing diverse functions of the body support positive body image (Rubin & Steinberg, 2011; Wertheim, Paxton, & Milgrom, 2009). Augustus-Horvath and Tylka (2011) state that encouraging body functionality transforms into an active form of mentalization process about the body, which contradicts the passive, objectified position of the body where it is vulnerable to negative extrinsic messages from beauty ideals. Alleva and colleagues (2015) talk about six areas related to the construct of body functionality which are internal processes, physical capacities, bodily senses and sensations, creative endeavors, self-care, and communication with others. By shifting the focus from the outside critical gaze to inner functionality, Alleva and colleagues (2017) state that subjects'

conceptualization of beauty expands, leading to higher self-esteem and lower self-objectification and depression.

Harrison (2006) uses the concept 'body complexity', derived from the concept 'self-complexity' (Linville, 1985), to define body functionality. The term self-complexity was used to define how many aspects a person sees in and define self. At the same time, body complexity means how many different aspects one can see when looking at one's body, such as its abilities, function for its communication, and inner working capacities. Various studies have shown that body functionality could enhance positive body image and self-esteem, which could be used as a preventative factor (Grabe et al., 2008; Koch & Shepperd, 2004). Although results were promising, more samples with different body function problems and longitudinal follow-ups are needed (Alleva et al., 2014)

1.3.2. Correlates of Positive Body Image

1.3.2.1. Attunement

Attunement is defined by Cook-Cottone (2006) as a concept which emphasized sensing the body's internal needs and reacting accordingly, contrary to body objectification. Two constructs for measuring attunement are used in the literature: body responsiveness (Daubenmier, 2005) and mindful self-care (Cook-Cottone, 2015b). Both of these constructs describe the level at which a person can sense the body's needs and acts upon them with their daily practices. Wood-Barcalow and colleagues (2010) underline that this construct is not directly related to the positive body image concept, yet is effective for maintaining it.

1.3.2.2. Broad Conceptualization of Beauty

Previous studies studied positive body image in the context of standards of beauty dominant in society, and how individuals think about beauty. In the studies conducted with adolescents (Holmqvist & Frisén, 2012) and women (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010), subjects who showed positive attitudes towards their bodies also described a much broader beauty concept than the ideals induced by the society. Subjects' definition included inner assets that a person had and were reflected in their appearance, such as self-esteem reflected on the posture. In another study Tylka and Iannantuono (2015) conducted, a broad conceptualization

of the body is negatively correlated with the internalized thin ideals and comparison of the body. It was highly associated with body acceptance and self-compassion and not associated with narcissism.

1.3.2.3. Body Acceptance by Others

When subjects feel accepted for how they look, no matter how, their notion of positive body image is supported (Avalos & Tylka, 2006). The accepting party could be family, friends, a partner or total strangers. It is observed that when individuals feel accepted and stop investing time and energy in how they look, they do focus more on what they sense, how they feel and function (Avalos & Tylka, 2006). Body acceptance messages could be transmitted directly (e.g. compliments on the appearance) or indirectly (e.g. making the individual feel accepted without including appearance-related information or valuing uniqueness). Interestingly in a study that Calogero and colleagues (2009) conducted, repeated compliments on appearance or body parts seemed to correlate with body dissatisfaction and body objectification. They conclude that cognitive processing of appearance-based compliments by individuals is a complicated process and seem to depend on variables such as frequency, characteristic of the recipient, the meaning of the compliment for the recipient, or reinforcing beauty standards. Some individuals declared that even on the surface, a compliment looks flattering, sometimes the underlying message includes a warning, which distresses them.

More detailed studies done with Swedish students showed that growing up in an accepting environment helped them develop a positive body image (Frisén & Holmqvist, 2010). Another study conducted with American young adults also indicate that significant others' compliments and accepting behaviors also directly contribute to positive body image (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). This makes body acceptance by others a contributor to positive body image, not a direct construct (Avalos & Tylka, 2006). After Avalos and Tylka (2006) established the Body Acceptance by Others Scale (BAOS), quantitative studies were conducted with different groups to see the effect on positive body image (Hahn Oh et al., 2012; Kroon Van Diest & Tylka, 2010). While body appreciation and intuitive eating

were strongly correlated with the construct, there was a moderate relation with body functionality.

Interestingly, in a correlational study between body mass index and body appreciation, perceived acceptance of others played an inverse mediating role, meaning that body dissatisfaction of the subjects was not about their appearance but how much they felt accepted (Augustus-Horvath & Tylka, 2011). Regarding this result, Calogero and colleagues (2009) underline the importance of messages from familial, social, and cultural contexts in a preventative area, where an individual's perception is affected immensely. Messages' context should be more acceptance oriented, not emphasize the importance of one's appearance.

Another factor that has been studied in the literature is the impact of religious and spiritual beliefs in body acceptance. Several studies investigate God and/or spiritual elements as others who convey acceptance. In the study McHugh and colleagues (2014) conducted, participants declared that believing that a higher spiritual force created their body made them felt accepted with their unique look. They reported that they liked to show compassion to an element of the body that is considered as a "gift from God" (Pope et al., 2014, p. 311). In another study Jacobson and colleagues (2013) conducted, participants conceptualized their body as a holy entity that should be respected, listened to and taken care of.

1.3.2.4. Inner Positivity

For Tylka (2011), being able to experience and integrate positive body image with positive feelings by acting upon preserving this connection is inner positivity. This might be represented by the posture, facial expression or communication style of the individual. For example, Wood-Barcalow and colleagues (2010) showed that participants described a person who has a positive body image with the words "sparkle in the eye". Engaging in pleasurable activities and self-care attitudes were also treated as traits of a person with inner positivity. Frisén and Holmqvist (2010) state that since these individuals find joy in exercising and self-care, they could find meaning in continuing exercise, contributing to their appearance and body functionality. Characteristics of the people who hold inner

positivity traits were also found to be related to attractiveness by a group of adolescents in Sweden (Holmqvist & Frisén, 2012).

Overall, the existing body of research on positive body image presents a complex picture and captures its different dimensions and experiences. Positive body image is understood as a state that involves different elements, such as an appreciation of one's body and its functionality, a sense of acceptance about one's body, a broadened perspective on beauty and an awareness of internal experiences rather than the external gaze. Next, previous research on how positive body image develops and what enhances it will be reviewed.

1.3.3. Development of Positive Body Image

As stated above, negative body image and dissatisfaction is correlated with multiple behavioral and emotional difficulties such as harmful eating behaviors (e.g. binge eating, compulsive dieting, self-induced vomiting) (Levine & Piran, 2004; Stice & Shaw, 2004); compulsive plastic surgery seeking (von Soest et al., 2006) and using dangerous amounts of steroids (Pope et al., 2000). As Diane Neumarck-Sztainer and colleagues (2006) state, adolescents are one of the most vulnerable groups that get affected by negative body image messages and react to them, which shows the need for a preventative solution.

Positive body image, on the other hand, is behaviorally associated with intuitive eating (Tylka, 2006), and negatively associated with eating disorder symptomology (Avalos et al., 2005), drive for thinness (Langdon & Petracca, 2010) and engaging in weight-loss-related conversation with friends (Wasylikiw & Butler, 2013). However, still, there is no solid overall framework to understand how body positivity develops through one's life and could be assessed in a clinical setting (Webb et al., 2015). Several factors have been implicated in its emergence, including media literacy (McVey et al., 2010; Neumarck-Sztainer, Sherwood et al., 2000), body acceptance by others (Avalos & Tylka, 2006) and self-esteem (Avalos et al., 2005) mainly in quantitative studies.

Available studies indicate that developing a positive body image plays a protective role in filtering appearance-related information (Holmqvist & Frisen, 2012). From a cognitive perspective, having a positive body image has been

associated with rejecting or reframing negative information on one's appearance from interpersonal relationships, society, and media (Wood-Barclow et al., 2010), developing critics on unrealistic thin ideals (Holmqvist & Frisen, 2012), and being able to propose alternatives to the standards via understanding and appreciating diverse appearances (Durkin et al., 2005). As Levin and Piran (2004) underline, media literacy on critical thinking about body ideals and femininity contributes to positive body image, which prevents internalizing beauty ideals and weakens them.

Exercising self-compassion also contributes to the development of positive body image, as Kristin Neff (2003) states. Mindfulness, compassion and interconnectedness are included in this construct and on the basis of this construct Albertson and colleagues (2015) developed a program to improve these skills, which displayed their positive effect even after three months. Yoga is another instrument that has been used for developing body-mind relationship, sensing internal cues, thus decreasing body objectification (Cook-Cottone et al., 2013). Although not a direct link has been found between practicing yoga and developing positive body image, increased body awareness is considered as a contributor to body acceptance and satisfaction (Scime & Cook-Cottone, 2008).

Other preventive programs focus on improving body functionality and decreasing body objectification in order to enhance positive body image. In one program lasting eight weeks, Alleva and colleagues (2015) aimed to promote body functionality by making participants think about, write down and experience other aspects of the body than its appearance. Increased body appreciation and decreased self-objectification were found in the experiment group in their study. In a similar vein, Grogan colleagues (2013) developed a dance movement psychotherapy program where body appreciation, functionality and embodiment was targeted. Since dance movement psychotherapy relies on feelings rather than self-surveillance (Hornyak & Baker, 1989), it is theorized that body objectification levels would decrease. As Johnson (2007) states, focusing on the feelings and sensation in dance movement therapy facilitates appreciation and awareness with respect to one's body. Both men and women in Grogan and colleagues' study (2013) where participants attended to one dance therapy session experienced joy,

and reported feeling more in control of their body parts and integrated at the end. The authors indicated that for more solid scientific correlations, however, further studies and replications should be conducted.

Another helpful action that people with positive body image take is avoiding media instruments that induce thin ideals and fat talk (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). It is observed that, especially among young females, to maintain a better position in social standing among peers, they tend to guide fat-shaming and appearance critiquing conversations (Nichter & Vuckovic, 1994; Parker et al., 1995). These conversations are named fat talks and mainly include critiques on body shapes, mostly only weight and size (Corning et al., 2014). By considering this phenomenon, some self-acceptance enhancing programs design woman solidarity support groups where group leaders are trained to prevent body-focused conversations and fat talk, while emphasizing body functionality and personality of the participants (Grogan, 2016). Interestingly, in a study that Barwick and colleagues (2012) conducted, the women who were engaged in fat talk and body shaming attitudes were rated as unpleasant and unattractive regardless of their appearance. The imaginary protagonist who was engaged with positive body image and acceptance was rated as much more desirable and favored by the participants. It is paradoxical that while fat talk aims at social desirability, it ends up with creating an unfavorable perception about those who engage in it and increasing body-dissatisfaction levels of the exposed individuals who are already vulnerable to its effects.

Body acceptance by others has also been defined as an influential contributor to body acceptance and the positive body image of the individual who experienced it (Avalos & Tylka, 2006). Accordingly, cultural messages on acceptance play an essential role in individuals developing a positive body image. In the study Schooler and Daniels (2014) conducted with late adolescent Latin girls, participants showed internalizing their ethnic identity's look. The feeling of belongingness to their culture protected them from the thin ideal that media exposed them to. Their subcultural identification showed them that another beauty description could exist, and a sense of acceptance gave them a space for focusing

on other aspects of the body than appearance. In a consistent vein, Grogan (2016) points out that while designing preventative clinical work, the ethnic and cultural identity of the individuals should be kept in mind.

The effect of exercising on the development of positive body image is also investigated, yet precise correlational or causal results could not be seen. The overall exercise seemed to contribute to positive body image and body satisfaction in meta-analytical research (Hausenblas & Fallon, 2006). However, its physical effect leads to a desirable appearance (Thompson et al., 1999), and its direct relation to psychological well-being (Landers & Arent, 2001) plays a confounding role in existing studies. Grogan (2012) mentions the physical empowerment role of the exercise. One study reports that women with bodybuilding practice show high autonomy and confidence, influenced by their bodily power and muscle control (Grogan et al., 2004 as cited in Grogan, 2012).

Overall, available research point towards some strategies and practices that enhance positive body image such as meditating, exercising and developing media literacy. While available qualitative studies contributed to quantitative studies to develop and revise assessment tools, they also report that there is still more to understand about positive body image, especially how it develops and how it works as a preventative factor (Tylka & Wood-Barcalow, 2015). Thus, an in-depth exploratory investigation of women's positive body image and its development processes can contribute to a further understanding of this issue and to the design of practical applications which can be used in clinical settings, particularly for young women who present with problems related to body image concerns. In the next section, research on women and body image will be presented, and the characteristics of the social context in Turkey will be reviewed.

1.4. UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S POSITIVE BODY IMAGE IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

1.4.1. Women's Body Image and Related Social Norms

As stated above, studies show that women display more dissatisfaction with their body image (Monteath & McCabe, 1997) and have to deal with body image related problems more (Calogero et al., 2011). Therefore, research has took woman

into the focus of body image related research. According to Tiggemann (2011), although it is nearly impossible to reach the thin ideal, women showed higher internalization rates due to the frequent exposure to it through mass and social media. When age was considered, the traces of negative body image could be followed through six years of age (Bearman et al., 2006). However, longitudinal studies indicate that effects of negative body image peak in adolescent and early adulthood years, especially for females, reaching to a prevalence rate of % 46 of the total number of female participants (Bucchianeri et al., 2013). Van den Berg and colleagues (2002) claim that in adolescence additional to familial influences, peer and media effects on body image issues increase leading to body dissatisfaction. Mass and social media is one of the powerful mediums that beauty ideals are communicated through in our current society. By promoting ways to alter appearance, such as dieting, exercising, or plastic surgery, media portrays a thin ideal that Stice and colleagues (1994) found to harm females significantly.

According to Blood (2005), in the body image research history, initial studies have not included the effects of societal perception about gender roles on appearance. These norms cause stigmatization towards women, labelling them as having distorted perceptions of their body, prone to eating disorders and vulnerable to depression. Thompson and colleagues (1999) claim that sociocultural theory is the most empirically supported theory, when we consider perception disruption of the body, especially for women. When societal standards' effect on body image is the point in question, women's societal role and issues follow the topic. Feminist scholars contribute to the body image field by portraying unrealistic and unreasonable body standards that women are exposed to and how they do not need to fit into any of these ideals to be accepted (Grogan, 2016). Feminist literacy underlines that although most portrayed standards are marketed under wellness and health, they serve political and economic purposes.

There are certain social movements against induced roles and appearance and these movements target body acceptance, no matter how one's body looks. Fat-activism (Baumgardner & Richards, 2005) and body positivity movements in social media (Obar, 2014) are some of them. These movements aim to challenge body

standards, encourage critical thinking towards body ideals through art, social gatherings and support, and promote body acceptance and diversity as a perspective to understand the world and the self (Matacin & Simone, 2019). These movements claim that direction of change should happen from inside out, which is the opposite direction of social standards that come from outside to in (Hesse-Biber, 2007). For example, Linda and colleagues (2005) run a program where they teach media literacy and feminist sayings, and train participants about how and why one can resist portrayed thin ideals in the media. They emphasize the differences between well-being and fitting into standards by exemplifying media in literacy and history (Bacon & Aphramor, 2014). They underline the oppressed role of women in a society where beauty standards are prevalent and promote accepting the self and uniqueness of the body by getting liberated from the norms.

Similarly, from their research with women continuing for more than twenty years, Calder-Dawe (2019) derive the result that connectedness and embodiment play an essential role in positive experiences. For Piran (2001), supporting embodiment opens a gate for social power, mental freedom, and physical freedom. Piran conducted programs where feminist literacy, activism and space for dialogues has been created. Nichter and colleagues took this idea and contributed to the program by teaching skills to resist fat-shaming and induced ideals. Feminist researchers' contributions to literacy also stand out to elaborate on social identities' effect on body image (Tiggemann & Stevens, 1999; Tiggemann, 2001). From age to ethnic identity, income to feminist identity's impact on positive body image has been investigated. Connectedness to ethnic subculture and embracing feminist identity are shown to have a protective role when exposed to beauty ideals (Swami et al., 2009).

Overall, these critiques of body image research indicate that particularly for women, body image develops in a social context. This social context involves gender roles and societal expectations of beauty and thinness, on the one hand, and a resisting, critical, positive approach to women's bodies. In the next section, the characteristics of the social context in Turkey are briefly summarized and the goals of the present study are explained.

1.4.2. The Present Study

Turkish society is defined as a patriarchal structure, where men are considered as authority figures in power and women are expected to conform (Kağıtçıbaşı, & Sunar, 1992). Turkish society's traditional and patriarchal structure places an emphasis on women's compliance with societal expectations, and despite social changes that are taking place, men continue to have a sense of entitlement to control women's conduct. In this patriarchal system, possibility for a woman to feel discriminated and experience violence increases (Küntay, 2010:17). In terms of women's bodies and societal expectations, the most prominent issues relate to the notions of honor and women's sexuality.

Women as a subject are studied and discussed in the context of sexuality and their reproductive roles (Boratav & Çavdar, 2011). Regarding that view women's bodies are considered as objects to be held under control and this attitude reinforces the role of the man in the family which is associated with superiority (Sunar & Fişek, 2005). In a related vein, the concept of honor also grants men the right to control women's bodies and sexualities. When a woman's body holds the meaning of family's honor, individualistic acts cannot be considered anymore (Meeker, 1976 as cited in, Sunar & Fişek, 2005). Women's bodies are socially defined as belonging to the family and her sexual purity is controlled by the man of the family (Tahincioğlu, 2013). In this context, women who cannot have a say and control over their bodies are likely to have difficulty in exercising embodiment and connection towards herself, physically and behaviorally (Küntay, 2010).

In the context of these norms, available studies in Turkey have looked at women's body-related concerns and negative body image and demonstrated its links with various psychological issues ((Kalafat & Kıncal, 2008; Karaaslan & Hacimusalar, 2018; Sanlier et al., 2016; Tosun & Coban, 2020). On the other hand, women's positive body image have not received sufficient attention in the literature. The present research explores the construct of positive body image in Turkey using a qualitative design in a sample of young women aged between 18 to 25 years old. With the spreading use of media and social media, the rate of exposure to beauty ideals has increased with negative consequences which adolescent and young adult

females suffer from. In spite of that, encouraging positive body image seems to show preventative results, protecting individuals from negative consequences of body dissatisfaction, and giving them choice and empowerment. As reviewed above, although there are many highly correlated constructs with positive body image, it is still not clearly defined and measured. Cultural variety and different gender roles seem to contribute to this complexity. Since there is very limited qualitative research on positive body image in the international literature as well as in Turkey, this study investigates how positive body image is experienced and how it develops in this particular geography. Accordingly, the research questions of the study are:

1. How do young adult women define and experience positive body image?
2. How does a positive body image develop?
3. What are the experiences which enhance and hinder its development in young women's lives and their social contexts?

CHAPTER 2: METHOD

2.1. DATA COLLECTION

After the Ethics Board Committee's approval at Bilgi University, researcher used the convenience sampling method to recruit volunteer participants. A flyer was prepared and shared in psychology-related professional e-mail groups and social media pages for recruitment. Eligibility criteria for the study was a) being a woman b) aged between 18-25, and c) having a positive body image. Ten female participants who met the criteria were recruited. Women aged below 18 were not recruited, since varying maturation and pubertal timing in adolescence have been reported to interfere with the answers about body image positivity and body acceptance questions (Abbott & Barber, 2010). In a similar vein, Augustus-Horvath and Tylka (2011) showed that women over 25 have more settled ideas on their body and are more resistant to change. There were no exclusion criteria, besides age.

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to collect data. The interviews were carried out with participants by the researcher herself individually online (Zoom). Before the interview, the researcher sent all participants the informed consent form to read through e-mail and informed them verbally about the present research at the beginning of the interview (See Appendix A). Demographic information was collected after their consent by filling out a form (See Appendix B). Then, a semi-structured interview was carried out. An interview guide was prepared which involved questions about body image's transformation through time, causes of development of positive body image, effect of social context on experiencing body and self-strategies on how to deal with negative attitudes towards body (See Appendix C). The researcher conducted a pilot interview before starting data collection to review the questions on their strengths and weaknesses, while getting an insight into how the interview progressed. The interviews lasted 49-91 minutes. For the analysis, the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim.

Table 2.1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant No.	Education	Subject	Currently Working	Occupation	Level of Income
1	PhD. student	English Literature	Yes	Research Assistant	Average
2	MA student	Clinical Psychology	No	Psychotherapy Intern	Average
3	MA student	Psychological Counselling	No	-	High
4	BA student	Psychology	No	-	High
5	MA student	Psychology	No	-	Average
6	BA student	Visual Communication Design	No	-	Low
7	MA student	Operation Engineer	Yes	Project Management	Low
8	High school graduate	-	Yes	Music Teacher	Low
9	BA student	Law	No	-	Average
10	BA student	Psychological Counselling	No	-	Average

2.2. PARTICIPANTS

Ten women aged between the ages of 18-25 attended the research. They all stated that they have a positive body image, at least more than the average. None of the participants were married and they were all heterosexual. Education level varied between high-school graduate to PhD. students. They came from different socio-economic backgrounds and specialized in various professions. Most of them were interested in psychology professionally or went through their therapy. Nearly all of them were interested in arts, were interested in exercising and reading. Their demographics are presented in Table 2.1.

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher used Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) method to analyze the interviews. Thematic analysis is considered suitable for the present purposes, since it is a flexible method that helps to explore participants' experiences from a rich and detailed perspective and examine patterns of meaning in the participants' accounts and language (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher followed six steps to execute the analysis and used the MAXQDA Software program for coding. The first step involved transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews, reading the transcripts and noting down critical initial ideas about the data. The second step was labelling each emerging semantic as “codes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Then, the researcher “gathered codes under relevant themes”. When all the codes were grouped under a theme, as a fourth step, the researcher “reviewed the themes” to see if codes fit under the themes or if the themes needed to be changed, broken down to other themes or be eliminated (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). A thematic map was generated, and as a fifth step, the researcher “defined and redefined” each theme until they capture the core meanings of them (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The goal of the analysis was to create a coherent overall story based on the analysis as a response to the research question. After writing the analysis report, the researcher reached the participants again via e-mail for member-checking and shared a single-page summary of the themes to validate and explore whether themes are credible and reflective of their experiences.

Depending on their feedback, necessary changes were made in the final report of the analysis.

2.4. THE RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

The researcher of this study is a master level clinical psychology student. She is a psychodynamically oriented psychotherapist and works with adult individuals. She has started to engage in psychology first through her social psychology training, where she concentrated on the effect of a virtual environment on interpersonal communication. Then, she worked in online dieting and exercise planning company as a data analyst and product developer for four years. She witnessed that most website members were in the range of average weight during that period, and most compulsive dieters point out that they only wanted to lose at most 5kg. Dietitians were confused about why those clients were insistently applying for diets. Marketers were confused on how to market the product depending on which need. It seemed that losing or gaining weight was never only about the solid numbers on the scale and that reaching an idealized look promised different advantages to each individual, such as fewer critics from others, better-looking partners, wealthier life, and easier exit from problems. Trying to understand what the body represented became the researcher's focus in her job and following a training on dance and movement. Therefore, she started to engage in mental health through dance, movement and non-verbal communication before her clinical training. The impact of art, creativity and play in therapeutic progress became her central areas of interest.

Through her clinical internship, she chose to listen and observe dance therapy items in addition to listening narrated story. She observed how the client presented himself/herself within the body and how much space the body took in the room. Was the intended movement of the client was direct or scattered? How fast was the bodily movement, and did the speaking speed was compatible? How she/he interpreted what she/he wore or wanted to wear? Furthermore, did these cues told something about how one mentally functions, how one perceives self or the ideal fantasy? These observations and questions informed the research question addressed in this study.

Because of her prior training in social psychology, the researcher is interested in how social context influences an individual, which brings out how the manipulation of the environment could change behavior. Therefore, while interviewing the participants, how environmental factors were influencing the body image was also investigated. While analyzing the data, her ideas were about designing a clinical implication to strengthen positive body image and what kind of environmental modifications could encourage body acceptance. The researcher's prior knowledge of social and contextual influences on human behavior informed coding and data analysis, as she attended to the participants' references to social norms about beauty and thinness.

Regarding her knowledge of environmental priming, the researcher was sensitive about the interview setting. Since environmental cues might influence participants' association of ideas, the researcher tried to use neutral background and indeterminate clothes throughout the online interview progress. Interestingly, her age was commented on by most of the participants, who expected someone younger. Regarding her viewpoint, none of the participants was overdressed, mostly connected from their room with comfortable looks. They were motivated to help, enthusiastic about talking about their own body and opinionated on body issues in the current societal environment. Since the researcher had a psychodynamic background, she was sensitive to somatization cues. Was talking about the body was a way to express emotions? Strikingly, while talking about concrete topics such as body size and shape, clothing descriptions and regular life experiences were clear and accessible for all participants; most of them had to take time before answering questions about emotions and theory of mind. Only four of the ten participants did answer what metaphor could be associated with body or feelings about the body in the interview. In one of the comments at the end, when the researcher asked how this interview made them feel, they stated it was interesting to think about the body from this perspective, related to feelings and in a social context.

Due to her psychodynamic training, the researcher was sensitive to contradicting discourses of participants about the body. She interpreted the

discrepancy between how one experienced one's own body and statements on how one was supposed to feel about one's body as splits. In other words, in times of seeming contradiction between how one feels and how one thinks about the body, confrontation was made by the researcher during the interviews to see if the participants could hold both approaches in their inner world. Moreover, since the bodily experience was unique to the participants, they approached the same incidents differently, sometimes diametrically opposite to each other, in cases such as experiencing menstruation, getting a compliment, gaining weight, looking similar to or different from the mother. The researcher had to make inferences from these approaches regarding the social context and psychodynamic theories, and posed questions to herself to situate the participants' meaning making processes. By evaluating menstruation, is the participant trying to explain discomfort of the pain, resistance to growing up or the frustration about lack of prior knowledge? Do getting and liking compliments increase differences or similarities of the participants towards the beauty standards? Where do the participants position themselves in the spectrum between conforming to rejecting the beauty standards in terms of weight? Does valuing uniqueness and individuality plays a role in evaluating bodily experiences according to similarities from the mother? Lastly, how do one's separation and individuation issues affect one's bodily experiences regarding conforming or rejecting beauty standards?

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Four main themes were created using the thematic analysis method as explained above. These four themes were named as “body becoming an issue”, “transformation of the body from negative to positive”, “developing an alternative mindset on the body”, and “sustaining positive body image”. Subthemes of each main theme are presented and explained below (see Table 3.1).

3.1. BODY BECOMING AN ISSUE

All participants stated that the concept of body image took space in their agendas in the past. This theme described how the participants’ bodies started to become an issue for them and captured their negative experiences and concerns about their bodies. It covered the internal and external factors that gave rise to these concerns which affected the participants mentally and behaviorally, particularly in their adolescence. Sub-themes demonstrating this theme were “differing from standards”, “confusion and estrangement”, and “altering appearance”. “Covering one’s body” would be discussed as a subtopic under altering appearance.

3.1.1. Differing from Standards

All of the participants indicated that, in the past they somehow differed from the beauty standards or expected appearance. Some of them were too thin for their age according to the neighbors, some of them were the fattest in their friend group. One had just the perfect size yet, was uncomfortable since it was envied and talked about all the time in the family. It was her most important asset and she needed to work hard to preserve it. They all felt pressured about changing their looks and convinced that they needed to look like the set standards. Comparing their bodies to others, they shared a very negative experience, feeling uncomfortable in their own bodies.

“I was affected quite badly especially about these modelling trends and fashion shows. I was really interested in modelling those times and watching fashion shows all the time. The common woman figure there led me to think, since they all look alike this should be the way I need to look. This affected me quite

badly. Or the body images that keeps being photoshopped on Instagram -which still is by the way-, they led me to think that I had a really wrong and flawed body.” (P6)

Mass and social media, family environment, peer groups, dating settings and even baby dolls they used to play, all contributed to this pressure by shaping this standard with comments and looks. A couple of the participants stated that they felt uncomfortable even from the gaze of the women in public transportation where they knew their appearance was judged. Most of the participants did agree that men, quite comfortably, found the courage to criticize women’s bodies in a social and/or dating context.

“At the beginning of the university period I had attended to a party where I wore a crop top and sat on a couch while waiting for a friend. Apparently, my belly folded and bulged because I was sitting there. A guy who was passing by looked at me and said, ‘what the hell is this, you have these love handles around your belly, and you still dare to wear a crop top!’” (P2)

Another participant explained that she needed to prepare herself to defend her natural looks because a criticism might come up even at a dating context, where actually both parties tried to show their best selves to be more likeable.

“In my first undergraduate year there was a guy I was seeing, and he said, ‘would you think about getting your nose done?’. I was really angry yet get caught up by the comment. It’s not even his business, why does he care?” (P3)

Weight related agenda in the family also seemed to influence the participants’ sensitivity about their weight, body and appearance. Constantly dieting mothers, left participants worrying about their appearance and weight. While one of the participants declared that she was sick of her mother stating how beautiful and thin when she was at her daughter’s age, another stated that she had hard times making peace with her height since her mother wanted her to be taller. These comments left them feeling not accepted as how they look. When similarity was cherished, especially by the mothers, differing from their youth pictures or beauty ideals seemed wrong.

“In our family and I think generally in our culture people say this quite often; ‘I had tiny waist in your age.’ Like what is this, its not even possible, why are you saying that to me? At least I grow-up with that saying. My grandmother, my mother kept underlying that and cherishing their similarity. After a while I started to think ‘If my mother’s is like that why is mine is different?’ Then there should be something wrong going on with me.” (P5)

Most of the participants declared that they somehow wanted to look like their mother, while they wanted to be approved by their father. Four participants who had a female sibling close to their age declared that they had a rivalry on everything, especially appearance. If the sibling was fat, the participant was thin. If the sibling was inactive, the participant was constantly exercising. While looking similar to the mother was a positive experience, looking like the same-gender sibling was negative. The mental image of the body seems to be used for feeling accepted. Participants belong to their family with their body’s similarities to the mother. The same body image is cherished of its differences from the siblings so that it can be distinguished.

Table 3.1. Themes and Subthemes of the Research

Themes	Body Becoming an Issue	Transformation of Body Image from Negative to Positive	Developing an Alternative Mindset on the Body	Sustaining Positive Body Image
Sub-Themes	Differing from standards	Appreciating diverse bodies	Perceiving body image as flexible	Listening to one's own needs
	Confusion and estrangement	Exercising autonomy and control	Striving for balance	Being open for positive comments
	Altering appearance	Getting external support		Focusing on the functionality of the body

3.1.2. Confusion and Estrangement

While facing standards and being criticized for not fitting into them led to a negative body experience for the participants, hearing conflicting messages about beauty and ideal bodies also added to their struggles and body-related concerns. Most participants indicated that the standards that they faced were blurry and ambiguous with respect to how a woman's body needed to look like and how its shape needed to be. The participants stated that hearing conflicting messages on beauty ideals confused them, leaving them helpless about what to do.

"There was a guy whom I was recently talking to. He asked me if I like to do make-up and I said I don't. After that, I saw that he liked Kylie Jenner's and her look-alikes pictures in Instagram who were in the make-up industry. He says that he likes natural, but also likes the altered ones. Moreover, this was not even my only experience. Even with my previous boyfriends, I witnessed that they kept saying a woman should be natural and like women's pictures with plastic surgeries on Instagram. That is so confusing for me." (P6).

From the perspective of some participants, even the critics of beauty ideals who supported positive body image seemed to lack sincerity and consistency in what they preached. Three participants stated that since they could not identify with and understand body positivity movements and could not meet their requirements, this trend made them feel worse about themselves. Like all other beauty, definitive statements body positivity movement seem to talk to people with privileges where you need to buy expensive food to nourish your body; you need to do specific exercises such as yoga which is not something cultural or approachable. Even no make-up pictures did not seem sincere after going to facial cares and using expensive self-care products.

"My body wasn't in the range of beauty ideals, yet I couldn't meet up with the standards positive body movement required too. At some point, I felt really desperate about everything and thought I had a major deficit about myself." (P10)

"For example, I am quite uncomfortable about the messages like 'love yourself, take care of our body, let us be compassionate to ourselves, let's do yoga, let us meditate, let us eat healthy.' I think they don't seem sincere. I really don't like

these people, who live entirely different and privileged lives from others, handling a significant issue at this superficial level. It looks pretty pretentious and contradictory at the same time. 'Then why are you crying when you don't exercise just only one day?' It means that you also want to change; you also aren't happy about your body. It seems contradictory and unrealistic. I am left there confused, thinking what I was against, and what was I supporting." (P7)

Clothes also seemed to be setting standards and most of the participants decided how they felt about their body relying on whether or how they fit into ready-made clothes. Although they all knew that ready-made clothes could only fit a particular body type, making it impossible to fit into each unique body, they were still motivated and de-motivated by getting into that specific type of clothing.

"For example, a bad moment for the body might be a person who goes for a dress shopping, sees something she likes and thinks that it will not fit her even before trying. Or tries it and cannot fit into that clothe and thinks that none of the clothes would ever fit her and thinks more and more negatively about herself and will not even want to look at herself in the mirror, never wants to buy new clothes and things get worse and worse." (P8)

"For example, my shoulders are broad, which is an innate body type, and I always have a problem with that while buying clothing. Although I am size 38, I need to buy size 40 because my shoulder can't fit. This situation makes me upset. I am not a fat person, but I have to buy an item of clothing with a big-size tag. It feels like someone has sworn at me." (P4)

Besides ambiguity and inconsistency about body-related ideals and goals in the environment, physically growing up also added to the confusion the participants experienced. A majority of them indicated that adolescence was the period when they started to feel conscious of their bodies and felt estranged from their own bodies. Interestingly, most of the participants declared that they did not remember their body image in their childhood. They stated that in adolescence, when the body started to change and kept changing, instability and confusion brought up their body image concerns.

"I can't really go back to my childhood since I didn't have the need to criticize my own body back then?" (P6)

"In my adolescence, it was weird not to be able to shop at children's section or adult section. The children section seemed childish, and the adult section seemed too feminine and false. I don't remember those times as good times." (P7)

One of the participants declared that since her growth was so rapid, her body seemed and felt like someone else's body. Another one explained that since she was not properly informed about the menstrual cycle by her parents, she was afraid of her own body, and felt like she was unable to control what was going on. Words such as "ungainliness", "awkwardness", and "sloppiness" were repeated by the participants to highlight their negative experience of their rapidly and uncontrollably growing body in adolescence, and the resulting sense of detachment and estrangement from it.

3.1.3. Altering Appearance

Regarding their experience of facing the beauty standards, the participants described how their fantasies and behaviors were altered accordingly. They all admitted that changing their body one way or another in order to fit in with the set standards was on their agenda for a while. Four of them wished their legs were thinner, two of them wanted to change their nose, another two wanted to gain weight, one wanted to be taller, and one wanted to get rid of bags under her eyes. Some did act upon it by changing, because of the pressure they felt to conform to beauty ideals and to reduce their sense of discomfort with the way their bodies were.

"In my childhood, everyone kept saying this kid is skinny, and I thought - and I still think- I wasn't thin. I wasn't thin at all. My weight was fine, but everyone kept repeating that. In middle school, we were staying with a relative, and she had a nice lower belly. I then decided to gain some weight and look like her since that seemed to be the ideal." (P5)

Three of the participants declared that they chose to cover what was not in line with the beauty standards of their appearance. They declared that this was also a painful experience for them since they wanted to be seen and accepted as how they look. Most of them stated that they could not enjoy some significant life events because

of this pressure and missed beautiful things in their lives. Since they spend their time in front of the mirror, examining their body parts that did not fit into standards and feel depressed most of the time, they did not let themselves enjoy life. One said she did not even remember anything happy about a specific period where she spent her time self-loathing.

"I have a vivid and important memory from eighth grade. I was 14-15 years old, and I remember having a huge cardigan with zippers. I used to pull up that zipper all the way, even when it was too hot. I didn't want anyone to see my small breasts, swollen belly, or arms. Because it looked bad, and everyone was making fun of this kind of stuff. I constantly wore that cardigan for two years and zippered it all the way, got sweaty but never took it off. I didn't even like my cheeks; I found them chubby, so I never tied up my hair, tried to cover them, or myself from the external world. I can't forget about this. Maybe one, possibly two years had gone like that..." (P6)

3.1.3.1. Covering one's Body

Participants mentioned facing dominant societal standards that made them feel uncomfortable, and at times under threat. This led them to make a mandatory altering on their appearance, like covering their body for safety and protection. They explained that they do not decide to wear certain clothes by their own will but that of others', and this, in turn, led to a sense of alienation and estrangement from their way of presenting themselves. Messages on their body, that it belongs to others confused their sense of agency. Participants all agreed that negative messages about body image are dominant in societal and familial settings. They also underlined that some of these negative messages made them feel threatened physically and psychologically. Their strategy towards this type of oppressive messages was covering their body or consciously avoiding those environments. The most apparent threat element was physical and verbal harassment as stated by the participants.

"Since sexuality is attributed to the feminine body in Turkey, I am afraid of verbal and physical harassment most of the time. If I wear something short, would something happen to me? From an early age on, a woman is so sexualized that we need to be careful about what we wear." (P2)

“I wish we’ve passed beyond this point as a society, but we haven’t. So as a woman if I’m going out late at night, not to get harassed or raped, I cover my body. I wear baggy clothes and try to cover what could be appealing about me. This is ridiculous and ugly. I am troubled and furious about needing to act like this, needing to cover what I like about myself. We’re in a society where raped women are blamed for what they’ve worn. Therefore, I cover my body to protect myself.” (P5)

More implicit pressures were judgmental looks and non-spoken rules for the participants. They knew they had to hide their body in certain places and situations to eliminate these discomforting gazes, though these were never overtly spoken about.

“Sometimes I want to show my curves, but I know I can’t, but I don’t know why I can’t. There is no answer to that. There is only this sentence, ‘Don’t wear this there.’ I hate to be spoken like that.” (P7)

“Sometimes I catch myself walking anxiously on the streets. ‘Are people looking at me?’ Sometimes when I walk, I think about ‘what if I’m walking weirdly? Or is this body part of mine or are my clothes looking fine?’ There could always be something to be judged about me, and that’s tiring.” (P9)

3.2 TRANSFORMATION OF BODY IMAGE FROM NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE

This theme explains how the perception of the body image issues in participants’ lives transformed into a more positive state of mind. Developmental factors such as separation and autonomy and external factors such as support and connection to different groups play a role in this transformation. Participants reported changes in their mind set with exposure to new environments, new groups of people, and new realities. This change involved understanding the fact that there is not only one truth and standard about anything, not only one type of beauty, and also not a set of beauty standards verified and accepted by everyone. The participants learned to argue that appearance is not the only asset a person has, and it does not define who the person is. It seemed that while the participants gained autonomy in their lives, they did not feel dragged along by the imposed ideals. They

could afford to be different as much as they felt accepted and connected. Subthemes of this theme are “appreciating diverse bodies”, “exercising autonomy and control”, and “getting external support”.

3.2.1 Appreciating Diverse Bodies

This sub-theme explains how participants start to realize the beauty standards they were facing are a socially constructed phenomenon and learned to criticize them. From their perspective, standards of beauty and body image exhibited the fact that they were human-made and designed to be impossible to attain. By developing a critical view on these standards, participants declared that they started to see how many people are also different from these standards and each other, which they learned to appreciate in time.

Participants reported that they felt a wave of extensive anger after realizing that socially defined standards served purposes that are not even related to them or their well-being. They were angry because these standards generally applied to women, not to men. They were resentful because they were overtly pressured to fit into them and shamed if they did not.

“Women's bodies are under pressure. We only think about how a woman's body should be or look. We talk about men a bit, but the main issue is always how a woman should look. Even with female politicians, we discuss what she wears, how she looks. With men, we don't think about that. This is unfair. As women, we always need to be careful about how we look because that is what we are judged for.” (P2)

“I think women are getting objectified a lot, especially in a sexual manner, in this era. Everyone has something to say about women's bodies. I don't think anyone has any say on this, and this is very frustrating. I like to say, “this is none of your business”. Like if a woman is a bit overweight, everyone starts to say, ‘you'll look nice if you lose weight.’ I want to say leave her alone, no one needs to fit into standards. There doesn't need to be any standard to begin with.” (P4)

“I think woman's body is paired with honor. Honor and chastity. That's why people find the right to talk about woman's body.” (P1)

By understanding and investigating these constructs, participants seem to be able to open up a space for other ideas and possibilities. Being exposed to feminist literacy and positive body movements seemed to broaden the perspectives of participants on how one can look, what is normal and acceptability of differences.

"Reading about gender inequality and feminism, I feel more positive about my own body. Because now I know that these ideals came from gender inequality, and it is not even about how I look. They're unrealistic ideals. This saves me from the effort, and I don't even try to reach it. I have this realization that it is not about me, but society. For example, I think about cellulite, and we now know that everyone has it. Now it is normalized, and you don't need to be ashamed of it." (P2)

"I want to say that social media helped because my views on fat women are changed. I mean I've seen lots of pictures and posts on Instagram about fat shaming. I know that two years ago, they were not on social media, and it was bizarre for me to see a fat woman happy about her body. But now I am used to seeing those bodies, and I find them beautiful. It is fascinating that seeing an overweight woman on a crop top, posing in a confident posture for a while, changed my perspective of that image positively." (P3)

Being able to get out of the system that set the standards or creating alternative relationships with different people also helped participants to understand that there is no one set of truth for everything. Starting to question standardized notions about women's bodies, the idea of beauty standard, became inquirable. Being able to choose among different norms and having a control over adapting to the ideals or not seemed to give agency and freedom to the participants and transformed their negative feelings about their bodies.

"Especially in high school, everyone needed to be beautiful. There was a place where people walked and looked at each other that we called podium. There were these ideals where one should be beautiful, so we did dye out our hairs and so on. That also feels like a societal pressure from today's perspective. When I started university and relate to people from all other backgrounds, I realized that it was ridiculous. When I realize these ideals are an unnecessary pressure on women, I was able to let them go and free myself from them." (P2)

“If I haven’t gone to university, I think I wouldn’t be able to grasp and fully understood the truth about beauty ideals. In our university environment we thought about women’s rights and minorities. You think about LGBT+ groups, Kurds, women and all the other disadvantaged groups, you hear people talking about it, you go to seminars. Even in classes, you know how societal rules and norms are subliminally imposed on us. At university the reverse happens where suddenly you find yourself questioning all the norms that was imposed on you. I think that was the university culture, but I also think that I also was prone to question all these from the start.” (P3)

While differing from the main status quo and common knowledge, being identified by different subcultures embracing different ideals helps participants feel accepted and still be able to have the courage to be different. When they can be different, or when their difference was appreciated, they also could be the one can see and appreciate differences.

“Although my university was known with its diversity, I somehow felt a little bit left out because of my religious beliefs. But then in one lesson I heard a term called Islamist feminist or something like that. That just struck me, and I felt included. I remember feeling like if this is possible then I can be included in this movement, and I don’t need to be accepted by everything everywhere. I don’t claim that is my life philosophy or anything but that was the time where I see there is place for everyone and every idea that one feels accepted and belonged to. After realizing that I knew I could drag myself out of the hole every time I tumbled back there. Knowing that there is always a place you can just be yourself.” (P3)

The space that has opened up for the participants, allowing them to evaluate different possibilities, seemed to be supported by daily experiences in their social contexts. Most of the participants stated that they started to accept and love their differences by primarily starting from their close friends and family members. They explained their sense of comfort and acceptance with their close networks who happened to have different body shapes and sizes.

“We’re very close group of 3-4 girls that look quite different, with different heights and weights. But I think we’re all beautiful and I feel really comfortable

with them. We don't compare and contrast each other; we're accepted there as how we look and who we're." (P9)

"Being in solidarity with other women seems to work for me. Having different looking female friends who I appreciate and like. In time I find myself valuing their differences. Mine is beautiful as is hers. I think this really works" (P2)

However, affording to be differentiating from the standards still needed other internal and external sources, which are explained in the upcoming subthemes.

3.2.2 Exercising Autonomy and Control

All of the participants commonly reported that they felt like their body didn't belong totally to them, as explained in the previous theme. Most of them stated that this sense of estrangement and alienation experience started in adolescence where their body started to change, and they felt like they lost control over it. They also spoke about women's body in their culture when they were critiquing it. Disempowering and alienating quality of these attributions were understood and underlined by most of the participants. They acknowledged that they kept hearing the message about how their body belonged to others, and thus could bring shame to others. Before developing a critical perspective on these messages, they believed that their bodies should be covered and controlled by others' expectations and directions.

"This is enough; why am I covering myself and my body? If I want to look this way, then that's it, period! For example, my brother says, 'don't dress up like that, don't wear tights...'. We are going to exercise; for example, he warns me to wear something long on my tights because I would shame him by my look. These are disgusting words, and I am negatively affected by them. Like I am guilty because of my existence as a woman. Why can't I show the beautiful parts of my body, why do I feel this is some sort of crime, why do I feel guilty all the time because I am a woman? Really, what am I doing to these people? Obviously, I am going to decide for my body because it is my own body. Why should it supposed to feel so wrong?" (P5)

“When I think about the body of a woman, the first thing that comes to my mind is the feeling that it belongs to another. Firstly, it belongs to the mother and the father, then to another man. Somehow I need to be beautiful for someone outside.” (P3)

Three of the participants underlined the association between what is supposed to be controlled and covered by women, and women’s sexuality. Most of the participants declared that when they embraced their womanhood, their body image got affected positively. All of them, at least once, stated that they liked their body parts that feel feminine such as breasts, slim waist, buttocks or hair. Experiencing sexuality or trusting romantic relationships were also noted to help their positive relationship with the body.

"Experiencing sexuality affected my perspective on my body in a positive manner. I think I wasn't that young, twenty-three years old. But after that, I felt more like a woman in my body, and this definitely affected my relationship with myself and increased my confidence." (P1)

Exercise was significantly mentioned as a factor that played a role in the transformation process. Although some participants primarily struggled because of its competitive quality, all participants found an enjoyable way to include exercise and movement in their lives at the end. Five of them described exercise as a practice that contributed to having a desirable look. Three of them mentioned its help in relieving stress. Nevertheless, all of them remarked that they witnessed how much their bodies can change through exercise and appreciated their bodies' functionality when they exercised. The sense of empowerment and autonomy on the body was maintained through exercise for most of the participants.

"When you exercise, you are well-built. It is such a beautiful thing that changes your posture, makes it more confident. Your strength increases. In every way you feel less tired, you can breathe more and freely."(P1)

"I started exercising at home to have abdominal muscles, a bigger butt and so on. Then, I continued exercising to have a thinner waist and legs, and suddenly I realized that I just loved my legs. I didn't care how they looked from the outside. I liked that they got stronger and couldn't carry more and more weight each day.

My body was weak initially, but got stronger; I felt more powerful, which made me feel excellent. Then I realized that skinny or fat, I don't need to fit into these definitions." (P6)

Similar to exercise, most participants gave examples of other experiences and practices which showed them that their bodies are under their control. The feeling of control over one's body and how one felt about it was mentioned repeatedly. While dieting and losing weight showed some participants that they could achieve a change in the body, others knew they could choose not to go out when they feel bad about themselves. They emphasized that they could choose not to be exposed to negative comments, or they could dress up to feel better and invite compliments.

"For example I am not wearing pants that I don't feel comfortable in. I wear things like mom jeans or sweatpants that I feel more comfortable in. Even after I lost weight, I found out that some pants are just not comfortable. Why would I wear something uncomfortable while things exist that I find myself beautiful and relaxed?" (P9)

"If someone feels bad about his/her body, exercise or balanced diet might help. These things help with the acceptance too. But if this is a really big problem one can strive to change the body too. At the end we all try to feel better." (P7)

Examples of economic independence, being able to buy one's own clothes or having their personal space were also mentioned by the participants, emphasizing the fact that a sense of autonomy helped them free themselves from the imposed rules and ideals about their bodies.

3.2.3 Getting External Support

A majority of the participants reported that the compliments and support they got from their social context played an important role in transforming their body image towards the positive. Strikingly, eight of the participants described at least one incident where their 'undesirable' or 'different' body parts were complimented and embraced by their friends. Family members and romantic partners' encouragement also played a part in feeling desirable.

“Even when I look at my body, I see my size being close to what we call the ideal or the standard. However even with that, I was really uncomfortable about how my buttocks looked. But in high school all of my close friends were saying how desirable it was, and how people wanted buttocks like I had. Now I still look the same, but I am not as much uncomfortable.” (P9)

“I remember feeling really good when I had people around, I liked and they liked me back. I knew they saw me as beautiful as a whole. Like as in my body, my face or personality and when I get compliments from them, it feels very powerful. I know that they contributed a lot to my perspective about myself.” (P3)

While family’s compliments were approached ambiguously by some participants, the way they made them feel was clearly stated. Sometimes, compliments were interpreted as not sincere, as in “of course they’ll compliment because they’re my family.” (P2). Even so, four of the participants stated that they felt accepted by their families with regards to who they are and how they look. They interpreted this as the building blocks of body acceptance and positive body image. Several participants also mentioned learning about accepting their bodies from their mother or other family members, modelling their positive relationship with their own bodies.

“In my family I just know that I am loved and cared for who I am and how I look wouldn’t change that. This is a baseline; things could come and go, but these this acceptance stay. I think this baseline helped me a lot.” (P3)

“For example, I always ask to my mother about her tummy. She had three pregnancies and her tummy has wrinkles. I always ask are those bothering you and she says no. She always makes me think about myself; would I be able to love my body if it looks like that? Then she says that those wrinkles are memories of the births she gave and they are good memories. People see how they look I suppose, so now I have some wrinkles in my back because I lost weight and I think them as memories of my effort to lose weight. I feel good about those wrinkles and connected to my mother somehow.” (P4)

3.3 DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE MINDSET ON THE BODY

This theme addresses how participants' mental definitions and attitudes towards their body image have evolved after their transformation from negative to positive, as explained in the previous theme. Although they've stated that they hold a positive body image, they did not consider their positive emotions and attitudes towards their body as fixed. They declared that their view of their body fluctuated and got affected by both external and internal factors. This flexibility helped them not to conceptualize body image in a static manner. Especially not defining it solely with the physical appearance allowed them to be able to get out of the negative state of mind towards their body image. This fluctuating quality of the mindset that got influenced by internal and external factors helped participants to find a balance and internalize a coherent sense of body image. Since they described their environment and societal messages on the body as unfavorable, they had to choose when to adapt and differentiate from them, according to their conditions and resources. Therefore, these concepts' flexible quality helped them make these choices accordingly and still preserve their body image mainly in a positive manner. Sub-themes of this theme are "perceiving body image as flexible" and "striving for balance."

3.3.1 Perceiving Body Image as Flexible

One of the most addressed facts on body image was its relation to their state of mind and mood in participants' accounts. All of them stated that when they feel pessimistic about their body, they know it is not just about their appearance but also their attitude. In other words, they had the notion that just changing their appearance wouldn't directly help their negative mood or dissatisfaction with their body. Since they defined their attitude towards their body, their mood and mental state as naturally changing and fluctuating, they believed that negative feelings towards their body were not going to last. They underline that body image is not static and influenced by constantly changing self-esteem, mood or energy level.

"For example, if I'm laying at the house feeling lethargic, I feel like my appearance is awful." (P2)

"What I'm trying to say is when I'm struggling between my job and home and not doing anything else for myself, not investing in myself, then I find myself in

a very negative mood, and that mood leads me to not like my appearance, myself overall." (P1)

"I don't feel bad about my body so frequently, so when I feel terrible, I don't act immediately upon it. I do it purposely because I believe whatever happening at that moment means something; there is a time for everything. Also, I think I have a place in myself for feeling unhappy and dissatisfied with myself. I don't freak out if I'm feeling sad if it is not disrupting my everyday functionality. I would say to myself, I look terrible, and that is okay. There were days when I wake up to feel awful and go to bed again for a better start. If I feel that my unhappiness is disrupting my day, I will try to remember the days that I felt good about myself and my body, check videos or photos that I was satisfied with. I would think, 'you were happy that day you'd be again! This is a transition moment; don't panic.' That usually makes me good." (P3)

Participants emphasized that their negative feelings and attitudes towards the body are not about appearance, as stated above. All of them associated having a negative body image with low self-esteem and self-worth. Since both these variables are dynamic, participants claim that altering and stabilizing the weight in the perfect number, changing the nose or the lips won't contribute to the self-image. Most of them suggested that gaining confidence and changing their perspectives about themselves would help change their negative feelings about their bodies. They stated that with the help of therapy, self-help, arts, or anything that will support their esteem and change their perspective, people could gain a more realistic and positive body image.

"I would suggest them to take therapy because I don't believe that this is just about their appearance. It's deeper and about self-worth... I'm saying this based on my own experience. Probably they're precious as who they're and how they look, and they don't need to change anything. I also know that changing this perspective is not that easy. That's why I suggested therapy. Rather than changing their appearance, understanding what the main problem is and what started these negative thoughts primarily." (P3)

"I think a positive image is about confidence; how you appreciate yourself is related to how much you value your body. I think they are connected. When I think about the times that I feel more satisfied with my own body, it coincides with the times I get to know and value myself more. When my identity and personality clarified for me, I felt much better about my body too." (P2)

When participants were asked to describe a woman with a positive body image, they portrayed her as confident, expressive of her needs and emotions, comfortable in her skin and clothes. Most of them stated that the confident posture and the self-assured way a woman communicates through her behavior is a signal of her positive body image. Rather than a fixed, standardized look, positive body image relied upon inner assets reflected differently by each person. Through their experiences, six participants shared that broadening their intellectual perspective and enriching their lifestyle helped them feel more confident and optimistic about themselves. They declared that with an enriched life and varying standards and truths, the importance of appearance and the space it took in participants' agenda seemed to decrease.

"I think I was interested in a lot of things, and that helped me to change my perspective. When I see myself as capable of doing different things, I could be happy with something other than romantic ideals. Being satisfied with the thing I was interested in made me feel better. When there are loving and accepting people around, and when you have things you're happy to do, you don't obsess about your mouth or nose or whether someone likes you. I don't mean that nothing invalidating is happening in my romantic life. Sometimes I like someone, and he doesn't reciprocate; it still happens. But I just know that this is not the essence of life; it's just a part of it." (P3)

"I don't exist in this world only through my body. I am here with my mind and with my opinions, and when I develop my self-confidence and sense of self, I think my body image has changed." (P10)

Seven participants stated they knew that people around them might think and perceive the outer world differently. This fact is valid for their body image too. Understanding that there is more to the external world than how they perceived it

helped them to cope with their negative feelings about their body. What they see and feel about their body is not valid for everyone; although it's the same body, everyone sees it differently. This gave them comfort when they feel bad about their body, and the whole world didn't dislike them. It also provided a space for them when someone made a negative comment about their body. They knew that they do not need to believe in them immediately, can think differently and separate themselves from others' view.

"Five percent of the time, I feel bad about myself because ninety-five percent of the time I feel good about myself, but I also know that I don't look that good or some people won't like how I look. This is also not realistic; I can't be looking good all the time to everyone, so I visit that five percent from time to time and come back to my usual positive self-image." (P3)

"I remember my mother's friends saying how thin I was when I was a kid, with pitying looks as if I was sick. She made me believe that I looked sick, like a monster. And I wasn't even that thin and sick. People have standards in their head and comment according to them. I wish I know these then." (P4)

Four participants stated that when they feel pessimistic about their body image, they knew that sometimes these feelings do not reflect reality. Therefore, accepting that it felt terrible and nothing needed to be changed, felt better and worked for them. Most of them believed that negative mood and their body image are not fixed but a temporary state of mind. Letting attitudes toward their body come and go helped more than trying to alter the body all the time. However, some participants stated that sometimes when they couldn't mindfully stay with the feelings when they couldn't rely on the flexible and varying quality of their body image, they had behavioral tactics to cope with negative feelings.

"Sometimes I do feel negative about a body part, and I think 'this was not there before!' For example, I gain weight, and my tummy grows; I feel terrible and think this was not there. However, I realize that it was not there before, so it does not mean that it will be there in the future. It can change, or I can change and be okay with it. When I was younger, these negative feelings would affect me differently, but now I approach them differently; I know everything changes." (P6)

"For example, when I eat junk food, I feel like my tummy becomes paunchy like my legs got wider and thicker. I know that our body sometimes swells after eating a meal, but my feeling is more than that; I feel that I grow bigger and fatter. There is no reality in that, I know it is impossible, but sometimes it still feels like it. So if I am in a bad mood or a low self-esteem period, I just avoid eating junk food."(P9)

3.3.2 Striving for Balance

Regarding the concept of an alternative mindset on body image, participants portrayed a dialectical attitude towards beauty standards. All of them described a mental state that involved both defying and adapting to these standards. They all revealed their appreciation for the uniqueness and supported being different from the norm. Yet, they had a conscious idea of how much they can afford to differ from standards and still be connected to a community. They form a balance between what they want to do with their appearance, which beauty ideals they've internalized, which standards are induced from the external world and the cost of differing from those standards. However, they've all unified under one saying: they wouldn't consider changing for another. Half of them stated that they wouldn't consider plastic surgery and described that it is possible to accept one's body by finding a balance in positive and negative moods.

"I don't like the concept of plastic surgery. I feel like that someone's nose is looking good on them. I am just not supporting surgery. Bodies are different from each other, and I think we have to accept them as they are. I don't mean that we always have to be happy about them but okay with them. Accept them as what they are." (P2)

"I've lost nine kgs, and there is extra skin on my back. Other people whose weight are similar to mine probably don't have that, but I do. But my body is a whole, and if I lose more weight, probably there would be other changes happening there too, but I don't despise them. I feel like they're my evil eye, and I accept them. I know that everyone has a different body, and I don't need to fit in with the standards." (P4)

While participants valued being different from everyone else, they also described how beauty standards and environmental cues influenced them. They were aware of the beauty ideals, and they had a critical approach to their longing to achieve that standard rather than simply following it. Six of them declared that what they liked about their body fit into general beauty standards and showed they were affected.

“I feel like my body is beautiful and feminine, but I think my appreciation both comes from the inside and the society. My mother is also like me, she has a thin waist, and big hips and I would like that for myself which I have now. But like I said, I don’t know if this is my taste or influence of the society.” (P3)

“I gained weight on my waist and, you know, there is this norm on how thin waist looks good on a woman. I do agree with that because although structurally I don’t have a thin waist when I gained weight on it, I didn’t like that.” (P4)

Although desired appearance ideals were described as partly internalized standards by the participants, dressing up according to external expectations and situational demands was considered differently. Participants stated that they needed to dress up according to the situation they are in, because they were evaluated by it or in danger of harassment. Although four of them said that they enjoyed dressing up according to the occasion, all of them complained about dressing according to extrinsic impositions rather than internal motivations.

“I am extra careful when going to work about not wearing anything sexy or appealing. I am also careful at events where males are dominating. I went to Erasmus previously and abroad or in seaside resorts; I felt much more comfortable about this issue. But generally, I am cautious to protect myself.” (P1)

Between differentiating and adapting, the repetitive theme of striving for balance stood out from the participant’s declarations. Eight of them described a scene about a mental calculation until they might afford to differ from a norm and then need to conform to a standard later. There are beauty norms that they internalize or chose to go along with for every single of them. There are also standards and criteria that they will not obey and apply in everyday life. Some participants, for example, choose to wear clothes according to the situation, while

opposing to hair removal or make-up appliances. While others don't care about what they wear, but focus on their haircut or the appearance of their skin. They support acting against norms and welcome times when adapting to the standards are necessary or willfully practiced.

“I don't do make-up at all, maybe a maximum of five times a year. That's how much I am not interested in investing in change. I'm applying for nail polish for the last two years at most, in the university I've never had. However, I am cautious about how I dress. I like to dress fancy and according to the atmosphere. That is important for me.” (P1)

“I think there should be a balance about the appearance because when you're too different, then everyone looks at you in a bad manner, but when you're similar to everyone and the norm, that is also not welcomed either. I think balance should be the word.” (P10)

However, they knew their limits on how much they can bear, ignore or live with. Some stated that they could live with body hair; some did not care about gaining weight but needed to do something about their hair. Some also confessed that they had the same judgmental opinions and standards in their minds, too. When they said they have a positive body image, they did not mean that they resolved all their body-related issues once and all and never get affected by the prevalent beauty standards. However, they are critical about the appearance-related, fat-shaming thoughts they have. They have a notion of where it came from and how it contributes to the concept of appearance ideals.

“There is this thing that comes from my family. Even my ideas differ mostly from them; still I wouldn't like myself if I gain a lot of weight.” (P2)

“Sometimes, when I'm outside, I see an overweight woman; I think about how much she ate to get this big. I am not proud of this, and I don't consciously do this, but this idea is just there. I would never say that out loud to anyone, but I know sometimes I hold the same idea in my head too.” (P9)

3.4 SUSTAINING POSITIVE BODY IMAGE

This theme includes strategies participants used to protect and sustain their positive body image. Since they all agreed that in all sorts of environmental settings,

they are and will be exposed to negative sayings towards their body. Therefore, there needs to be a skill set to get through these encounters. The most effective strategies are to hear their own inner needs, use positive comments around them as a source and broaden their view on what body means for them. Participants doesn't try to strive a world without appearance ideals or negative comments. What they do is to hear their own voice to diminish outer voices. They sense and experience what their body could do for them. Thus, appearance-based comments lose their importance. They don't hear only the critics, but also the positive comments that reinforce uniqueness of their body. Sub-themes of this theme are, 'listening to one's own needs', 'being open for positive comments' and, 'focusing on the functionality of the body.'

3.4.1. Listening to One's Own Needs

As stated in previous themes, participants agreed that they keep getting exposed to the external negative critiques on women's body, and most of the time, it is impossible to avoid them. The messages they get is various, conflicting and impossible to achieve. They suggested and applied as a strategy primarily to hear more about their own needs and make peace with themselves. Most of the time they have clear understanding of what they want and could differentiate it from what others want. Most of them defined dissatisfaction with their body as a result of their comparison to an ideal. However, when the ideal doesn't make any sense, there is room for their own voice and satisfaction comes with it.

"I think we should just make peace with ourselves rather than trying to avoid what society says. If we try to get into a fight with what everyone says, we'll lose sight of what we want and need. Since it is not realistic to totally close our ears to society, we should prioritize our needs... We should think like this 'What matters more? My needs or their sayings?'" (P4)

"One says 'get a nose job done.' Another says, 'get your lips done.' Some say, 'your eyelids have wrinkles.'" Or "should you lose some weight, should you gain some weight? You gain a lot of muscle; you look masculine.'" There is no end to this, and if we keep asking for approval from others, we never will achieve it. Therefore, we should focus on what we want. We should ask this question 'Do I like

myself? Am I satisfied with myself?' If we learn how to ask and answer this question, change will happen." (P5)

Rather than what to alter or not, participants focus on their wish to make changes in their body. Four of them emphasized that this standpoint is not against changing appearance. They felt comfortable with the idea of changing, adapting or adjusting their appearance. What was essential for them was the source of this motivation. If a woman could differentiate inner needs and external demands and acted upon their intrinsic motivations, changing her body could support maintaining a positive body image.

"I wouldn't like a woman to listen to external voices about their bodies. I would like them to respect their body as it is. If they feel terrible in that body, they could also go for a change. Not because of pressure or making someone love them or approve of them, but if they want to for their own sake. If they'll feel comfortable with changing their appearance, of course, it is okay, but if that idea belongs to them." (P5)

"They could like their appearance, or they could change it only if they want to. Not because someone else asked them to or pressured them for a change. No one needs to change, if they don't want to. Saying and repeating 'I love myself as I am, I am happy with myself!' could silence everyone; that's what I believe." (P8)

Eight participants also stated that when they hear their own needs and appreciate their bodies, external voices seemed to lose their power. Negative critics seems to lose their power and participants could even respond playfully or easily reject the damaging message. They wished they had found this voice before and not suffered by dignifying the critics. They've also stated that they know and experience how filtering these critics were hard and seemed impossible previously, but after passing a threshold where they got to accept their body, filtering occurred automatically.

"My previous boyfriend would mock me and say 'you gain some fat, aren't you chubby, aren't your legs are chubby?' and I would've responded as 'yes aren't they cute' and mock him back. With time accepting my look made me confident

about it, and I don't see any defects. Those negative words and critics don't get stick in my head anymore.” (P6)

“When I get a negative comment, I would directly say ‘It’s not your business’ or not consider giving it a thought at all. My ideas on my appearance already satisfies me.” (P8)

3.4.2 Being Open for Positive Comments

Both negative and positive attributions were made for comments and compliments by participants. While some of the compliments felt genuine and motivating for them, some seemed insincere and hostile. They explain this difference through the motivation of the compliment. If the compliment was done with envy or reinforced beauty ideals, they disliked it. If the compliment was appreciating their uniqueness with an accepting attitude, it was a positive experience for them. All of the participants described moments in their life when they felt inspired by the compliments.

“I just had so many compliments on how I exercise that I felt euphoric. I exercise to feel better as a hobby. But to get attention from all these people and to see the result of the thing I work for; that means something to me.” (P1)

“My tummy is a bit big, and I feel a bit uncomfortable about it. But people compliment me beautifully most of the time, so I guess I am convinced that I look good. But other than that, I also find myself beautiful when I look at the mirror.” (P5)

“For example, I have a standard size body. When we go dress shopping for my cousin at least three shop assistants look at me and says this dress looks perfect for your size. If I got fat, I know they wouldn't look at me and say that. That's why I don't think they are sincere, and I don't feel positive about those comments.” (P3)

When participants described a time they felt pessimistic about their body image or people they knew who had negative body image, they pointed out that hearing the compliments or believing in them seemed impossible. They only considered the negative perception they have and the external cues that supported that perception. Although complements played a crucial part in sustaining positive body image, a majority of the participants and people around them recognized the

difficulty of accepting and benefiting from positive comments of others. At times, negative perceptions persisted, regardless of external feedback.

"I have a friend with a body image so negative that she won't hear or understand anything positive about her appearance. Like we could've changed our bodies, I'll still love it, and she'll still hate it. It's not about the appearance at all. She wears size thirty-six and says she has a tummy. How can you have a tummy in that size? If your eyes are determined to see that way, nothing and no one seems to be able to change it by saying the opposite to you." (P3)

Four participants stated that they'd ask for support and solidarity, if they felt that they are getting dragged towards that negative perception where they hear and believe in no one. In this sense, they emphasized how adopting an open state of mind, being receptive to feedback and sometimes actively seeking it played an important role in sustaining their positive feelings and views about their bodies.

"I did get trapped to this view in my adolescence years, so I'll try not to visit it again... There are lots of negative comments around us, and it is impossible not to get affected by it. I think we primarily need to realize that and be alert to those messages. And in times of need, we have to act against it with support and solidarity. I try to do this with my friends; I try to compliment them and underline that body change is normal, gaining weight is normal, sagging breasts are normal. I don't think how we look is actually that important; how we feel about it is important, and if we feel much better about it, it spreads to everyone and brings change. I saw something on the internet the other day; a girl said I'll pretend that I look much better than I am. Because for all those years, I felt much uglier than I was, and it didn't work for me, so I'll pretend that I am much better looking. I do believe in that too; I don't think we'll lose anything when we believe that we look good and support each other about it, give compliments and take their compliments until negativity in the society balances out with our positivity." (P3)

They explained the moments and body parts they felt insecure and conscious about and how their friends and family's support made them like these body parts. One participant cut her hair short against the feminine stereotype; one

started to wear her glasses back, one gained weight, one stopped wearing a bra or compulsive exercising with the support and compliment of the loved ones.

3.4.3. Focusing on the Functionality of the Body

Participants explained how approaching their body as an asset that is more than an appearance contributed to their positive body image. As stated above, they demonstrated how investing in their personality and confidence affected their views positively. Six of them praised their bodies on their functionality. They explained that appreciating their bodies' capacity and capability helped them to see how the body is more than its appearance. This made it easier to accept the body as it is.

"When I love myself and care for myself, this starts to happen. The thought in my head, such as 'I don't like my feet, they are too big. I don't like it; I would like them to be more delicate.' It turns into 'My feet are big, but I can run with them, hang somewhere with them. They carry me the whole day.' I start to see its advantages, see how my body helps me through the day, and I love it more." (P5)

"I can just get up and run. Or I can do push-ups whenever I want. These are all supporting my health, enhancing my exercise. My body helps me because it's healthy, and I feel positive about it." (P6)

Health is an important aspect for the participants to focus on their bodies. Although healthy dieting and exercising have its effects on desirable appearance, most of the participants stated that how both practices made them feel better. They stated that when they exercise for a desirable look, they felt that they forced their body. While when they exercise for health, they feel like they give care and compassion towards their body. Three of them stated that when they exercise primarily for their health, they could ensure continuity which gave them joy.

"Primarily, I had a realization, then I lost weight after my adolescence, and my body gets into shape. The body just takes a form, I guess after a while. With some sort of drug, you can handle your pimples, and after that, I think my thoughts have changed. Let us prioritize health and respect our being. The body keeps changing, but we don't know if we're going to get injured or lose our lives tomorrow. I don't say that we should change our thoughts on our appearance right

now; I know change takes time. But I decided that I should prioritize health and self-respect, and it worked till now." (P10)

"For example, I think I look healthy because I see myself good. Not feminine, not masculine but I say "I look good." After the period that I felt negative about myself, I made a peace myself and when I look at the mirror, I started to see how healthy, how nice I look and feel compassion and love towards my body." (P6)

A sense of gratitude accompanied when participants described what their body can do for them. They appreciated their health, what their body could do comparing to the ones who cannot.

"I think appearance can change, but our health can be damaged at any time. Lots of people have car accidents, these are not up to us, but perception is ours. We can change it. Or it changes in time anyway. So I feel like I have to cherish my health, and rest would adjust accordingly. (P10)

"Previous year, I decided to gain the habit of running. I've never tried that before, but when I see, I could it just amazed me. Witnessing what could my body do. I feel blessed." (P7)

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The present study aims to explore positive body image in the current societal context in Turkey, and to investigate its perceived meaning and development with young adult women aged 18 to 25. Individuals' history of bodily experiences, transformation point where their perception changes, how they position their bodies in their social context, and mental strategies to preserve their positive body image have been explored. Four major themes were identified from the semi-structured interviews: a) body becoming an issue, b) transformation of body image from negative to positive, c) developing an alternative mindset on the body, and d) sustaining positive body image.

Three subthemes fall under the theme of body becoming an issue and they are differing from standards, confusion and estrangement, altering the appearance. This theme includes experiences and mindsets when participants first encounter with beauty standards, their confusion about those standards and their changing body, and how they reacted to them. The second theme transformation of body image from negative to positive includes participants transforming mindset, from the primary one when they formed when they differed from the standards towards a more processed and with their words "positive image". Appreciating diverse bodies, exercising autonomy and control, and getting external support are subthemes that participants pointed out in their transformation process.

With that transformation, participants described an evolving mindset described under the theme of developing an alternative mindset on the body. Participants describe an understanding of their body image that is influenced by their mental processes such as mood and self-esteem. Body image is not about a two-dimensional appearance for them anymore. Rather than focusing on and altering their appearance, participants choose to accept this varying quality and strive for a balance between investing in inner and outer needs, sometimes allowing themselves to feel inadequate and unsatisfied under this dynamic perception. Perceiving body image as dynamic and striving for balance are subthemes

discussed under this theme. Lastly, in sustaining a positive body image theme, participants describe how they manage to maintain their body image through sub-themes, listening to one's own needs, being open for positive comments, and focusing on different aspects of the body other than appearance.

In the next section, these four themes will be discussed in relation to previous findings on this subject. Possible clinical implications will be presented, and limitations of the research will be examined. Future research suggestions will also be discussed.

4.1. DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

All participants mentioned that they started their journey towards positive body image by crashing into appearance and body-related ideals. They were exposed to particular messages telling them that they would not be accepted as how they looked, that there are better options than their current appearance, or that they should not ever change their appearance because they are the ideal. These messages created body-related concerns and drew their attention to their bodies in a negative way. Consistent with this, recent studies show that most women of varying ages are displeased by their appearance and want to alter it one way or another (Grogan, 2017).

In the present study, most participants stated that they do not even remember what their body image was like in their childhood, because there was not anything to consider. With the emerging adolescent era, the change in their biological structure and social context, body-related conversations started to lead to preoccupation and doubt about appearance for participants. Similarly, Petersen and colleagues (1991) emphasize that biological change in adolescent years, especially for girls, is a stressful experience, since pubertal shapes are not welcomed, especially in Western beauty standards. Several studies have shown that early developed women tend to have more body-related issues in adolescent years than the later ones (Tobin-Richards et al., 1983). In this research, menstruation experience, changing body size and shape have also been stated as a negative body image issue. A feeling of confusion and resistance to grow up accompanied these changes.

Since Erikson (1968), adolescence is considered as a life period where individuals face with “identity crisis”. In this period, the ongoing idea of self and identity starts to get questioned by individuals, while taking truths and values for granted starts to shift and their meaning are reflected upon (Pearlman, 1993). Rosenbaum (1993) adds up to this transition period the change in the body where adolescents start to relate to the world, especially to their parents differently with their more adult looking appearance. For adolescent girls significantly, as the urge to separate from the mother strengthens, opposing the parents’ rights also includes opposing the entitling attitudes of parents towards their body (Rosenbaum, 1993). Since recent studies have stated that the effects of adolescent period last till the age of 25, participants in this study could be considered in relation to the identity and body-related issues coming up in this period of life, particularly separation and individuation processes (Jaworska and MacQueen, 2015). Consistent with this view, most of the participants underlined in their experience that when they feel separated from their mother’s ideals of their body, they felt more in control of their body and felt more satisfied with their body. Moreover, discovering new truths and new possibilities about beauty ideals and appearance in life makes it possible for them to separate from the previous standards they thought they had to conform to. This fact shows parallels with the separation-individuation progress through adolescence, where the adolescent starts to explore different values, opportunities and perspectives in life, while questioning and at times quarrelling with familial truths (Sugar, 1993).

Another fact participants underlined is how exposure to media, especially social media, affected their body image negatively, especially in adolescent years when they felt much more vulnerable. This finding is consistent with a study where 77 studies were analyzed, showing that exposure to media increased the internalization of the thin ideal in adolescence significantly (Grabe et al., 2008). In the present study, the participant’s portrayal of the thin-ideal was also noteworthy. They described lean, muscular ideals with rounder hips and breasts with expressions like “Kylie Jenner look-alike”. Bordo (2003) explains this change of appearance ideal, especially in the United States, with increased diversity in culture.

Since different body types from different cultures cannot be ignored, such as curvy figures that Latin celebrities represent, they started to be presented with other standards such as “tightly controlled, hard, impermeable body” (Lupton, 2013, p.105).

Additionally, critics exposed in familial context was frequently stated as a negative influence for the body image. Most participants described a situation where their mother or father had an ideal appearance that participants could not achieve. Some parents wanted their daughters to look like them in shape, size, or height; others wanted a better-looking version that they all kept stating. Consistent with this finding, Rodgers and Chabrol’s review (2009) found a direct relationship between parental criticism and body image as well as eating behaviors for female participants. Significantly daughters’ body dissatisfaction was influenced by mothers’ criticism. Participants added that sometimes even their parents did not say anything, yet growing up with a mother who is constantly dieting and exercising made them think they had to do something about their weight.

However, the same participants also declared that their behavior has changed over time, and they did not repeat the same behaviors as their parents. Tiggemann and colleagues (2003) state that a mother’s dissatisfaction with their body and behavioral attitudes directly influences her daughter's body satisfaction significantly in early childhood. In a longitudinal study Paxton and colleagues (2006) conducted, this early influence of parental attitudes on the body loses its effect on adolescents and young adults later. This result is promising in the context that body image attitudes are varying by age and could be altered via clinical implications that will be discussed in the next section.

Another frequently discussed pressure by the participants was related to social and dating contexts. Interestingly, they emphasized that teasing came from male friends, potential romantic partners or acquaintances about their or another female’s appearance. Female friends did engage in fat or body-related talk around the participants and that caused body dissatisfaction. However, males did directly criticize and found the right to pressure the participants, which mostly infuriated them. Similarly, Jones (2011) explains that fat talk and appearance-related talk

among female adolescents emphasizes social comparison where these talks set rules and standards. Indirectly, these talks lead to body dissatisfaction among female friends and have a lasting effect. Jones (2011) also claims that direct teasing on appearance has more impact on disturbing emotional affect than academic teasing for adolescence. Cross-sex bullying has also led to more internalization of victimization (McMahon, 2006) and cross-sex teasing in young adolescents correlated significantly with body dysmorphic symptoms in a study done in Australia (Webb et al., 2015). Some of the participants also related their body satisfaction rate with dynamism in their romantic life. Desirability in romantic settings affected how they see their appearance; how many boys asked them out indirectly showed them how good they looked. Paxton and colleagues (2005) highlight that male adolescent also internalize feminine beauty ideals and seek partners who fit into these standards, reinforcing the internalization of current beauty ideals for adolescent girls.

Interestingly, with the changing structure of beauty ideals, participants declare that they are confused about what is desired and what is not. Both beauty ideals and body positivity movements seem to them confusing and not sincere. They declare that while not doing makeup or promoting different sizes and wellness are popular, they still see people desiring photoshopped pictures. Participants describe how confused they are with this new and seemingly positive standard. They state that this confusion lead to more desperation and a sense of not being in control. What they had to reach is promoted under the name of body positivity and acceptance. However, they still need to use overly priced products, exercise immensely and feel optimistic about it. Consistent with this, Bordo (2013) explains this new norm with the words, “having a body that is not thin is acceptable only if it is worked out and firm” (p.190). Boepple and Thompson (2015) elaborate on the term “fitinspiration” and “thinspiration” to point out the paradoxical situation in the current ideals. Both these movements strive to change the focus from thin to the strong, from altering one’s body to accepting it. However, strong means heavily exercised and toned. Anti-plastic surgery attitudes continue by promoting particular organic food and self-care products that would still aim for a younger, flawless

look. In a study where Boepple and Thompson (2015) studied social media posts promoting alternative beauty ideals, stigmatization towards overweight and not-fit looks were detected.

Dress shopping and clothing size were also mentioned frequently by participants under confusing negative messages. They complained about how standardized clothing confused them while buying a dress, making them feel like there is something wrong with them if they can't fit in. Participants who have different shoulder length or leg length needed to buy sizes that seems too big for them and made them unhappy about it. They didn't want to be ten if they are eight, they were fine with six until they see four and two on the shelves. A couple of them said they felt teased, when they had to buy larger clothes in size. Bordo (2003) claims that clothing size might make individuals feel stereotyped by numbers and labels. Puhl et al. (2012) describes negative stigmatization weight as a culturally bound phenomenon. Exemplifying the American culture which autonomy and "personal responsibility" is emphasized, they explain how weight and appearance is perceived as under individuals' control (p.15). If they don't lose weight and change their appearance they are to blame. In other words, people who don't fit into ideals are stigmatized as lazy, stupid, dishonest, and lacking control (Puhl & Peterson, 2012).

Furthermore, when participants were asked about the standards and pressures on their body in their societal context, they agreed that they need to cover their body for protective reasons. They explained how sexuality was attributed to the feminine body that made them feel unsafe on streets, in male-dominant settings, or public transportation. The emotion of anger and hopelessness accompanied this fact, and they are all displeased by needing to cover their own body and sexuality. Protection of the self and avoiding shame was the most emphasized reasons for avoiding sexuality and restricting some clothes and behaviors. Tahincioğlu (2013) draws a detailed portrayal of the woman's role in Turkish society in a historical context, where the traditional understandings are still maintained. She explains how a woman is objectified and sexualized in the culture, always need to feel shameful and needed to be detected by other men for the honor of the family.

Participants seem to deal with this physical and psychological threat by conforming to societal and patriarchal standards in certain settings. They stated that they cover their bodies in certain places with clothes and hide their femininity and sexuality by their behaviours and attitudes. However, they verbalize this as an obligation with phrases such as “had to” and “have to”, demonstrating that they disagree with what they had to do to survive and to feel safe in some settings. In this particular societal context, they observe and experience harassment, labelling, and control towards their body from external parties. Still, they don’t comply with these standards in other settings where they feel safe. Some participants stated that they show up with genderless outfits in workplaces while feeling quite comfortable on dates, summer-places, or foreign countries. They seem to navigate the social settings and contexts they interact with safely by assessing what they want and how they want to feel in their outfits and in their bodies, and what they’re expected to do and look like. In addition, they all are resourceful to create or find situations where they feel comfortable to act according to their wishes. Moreover, these participants show the capacity to hold both self-aspects together such as, the part that conforms to society and the part that disagrees with and acts against the standards.

Because of all these standards and pressures, participants explained a time where they wished some specific parts of their bodies were different. Some of them wanted to be thinner, some of them fatter. Wishing their legs were thinner or longer was also stated. Wanting to change the nose, covering under-eye bags, narrower shoulders or fuller hips were all wished for. This wishing and longing to look like a different version of themselves were explained as a miserable state of mind and mood. Most of the participants portrayed a scene where they are in front of the mirror, loathing themselves, feeling really depressed, unable to think and invest in anything else. Petersen and colleagues (1991) find a significant correlation where female adolescents with negative body images are prone to show symptoms of depression. Participants explained how much time they spend feeling depressed and fixated on how different could they have looked, how much energy it took and how that make it impossible to enjoy other things. Not wanting to leave the bed or the

house, not wearing what they want, constantly trying to cover their body parts because they were ashamed of it, hiding their character like their body because they were embarrassed, not enjoying friendships or social events, and not focusing on their lessons because of these anxieties are some of the experiences participants shared.

After this self-doubting and appearance-related insecure period, participants describe a transformation point where their perceptions shift towards a more positive attitude and they do not feel constantly negative about their body anymore. One of the main reasons for this transformation is clustered under the theme of appreciating diverse bodies. For some participants, it is the school; for some it is their friends, for some it is random social encounters, but for all, there came a time that they understood beauty standards and appearance ideals serve political, cultural or economic purposes. Most of them encountered feminist literature and got to know why they were forced to look a certain way in the first place. After getting rid of the fixated goal to achieve the optimum look, they declared that they started to see differences in every woman and appreciated these differences. Similarly, Swami and colleagues (2009) emphasize the relation between feminist literacy and feminist identity with positive body image. Framing body image issues under feminist ideas has shown a buffer effect, preventing women from internalizing beauty ideals immediately (Peterson et al., 2006).

Changing social context and being included in different sub-groups with different interests also broaden participants' perspective on beauty image issues. For some participants, leaving high school and going to university was single-handedly enough to understand other definitions and understandings of beauty. Other participants explained how learning a new language, an artistic skill, and intellectual investment or social interactions showed them they have other aspects than just an appearance. They can define themselves by what they can do, what they know or what they like, rather than just how they look. In a consistent vein, Holmqvist and Frisé (2012) show in their study that women who have a broad conceptualization of beauty showed positive body image attitudes. They define beauty not only by appearance but with the postural, behavioral and personality

traits of a person. They emphasized that what is reflected by appearance is the tangible inner assets of an individual.

Appreciating beauty of friends and loved ones were also underlined repeatedly. Participants explained a close girlfriend group where everyone looked different, but beautiful. When one starts to appreciate differences, starts to find them beautiful, and understands the context of beauty in different bodies accompanied by love, they could see that having a body is not about reaching an ideal look. They also underlined that accepting their appearance that differs from the beauty ideals and being okay with that was the key to attaining a positive body image. For some, the skill to appreciate differences was already in the family, and some gained it by separating from the family. Some gained it with the support of their friends; some did with theoretical knowledge and some with practicing art. They all faced beauty standards and had different opportunities giving them a space for developing a critical lens.

When participants were talking about their negative experiences related to societal pressures, they underlined how their body was claimed and controlled by others, due to gender roles and cultural reasons. Therefore, gaining control and empowerment has served a function leading to a positive body image for them. Exercising was one thing that led participants to feel better about their appearance and accept how they look. Although exercise has the effect of making appearance closer to the current beauty ideals, participants also emphasized how empowering it was to see what their body could do and felt fascinated by how it could function. They also stated that certain exercise types such as yoga and dance helped them sense their inner needs, leading to pleasure just by being inside their body. Various studies have shown that experiencing and appreciating different body functions correlate with positive body image attitudes (Wertheim et al., 2009; Rubin & Steinberg, 2011). Wood-Barcalow and colleagues (2010) explain the function of attunement on raising positive body image attitudes. With attunement, pleasure and embodiment of one's body increases where objectification attitudes decrease. In other words, when an individual starts listening to the body from the inside, outer critiquing eyes dissolve, leading to a sense of joy and acceptance. Being able to buy

their clothes rather than wearing uniforms, moving out of the family house and having personal space, or starting to gain their own money and being independent economically also coincide with the times where participants feel much more comfortable about and accepting towards their body and their selves.

External support plays a significant role in participants' lives, especially when they gain courage to differentiate from the comforting environment of dependency to traditional familial or cultural standards. Most of them find support in their friendship environment where their friends appreciated their differences and supported them when they express who they are appearance-wise. While participants differed and differentiated from the society level standards, they felt connected and accepted by these small, secure social circles. For some participants, this acceptance was felt in the family; for some it is in close friends; for some, it is in political groups or romantic relationships. If there is a secure place or connection, then longing for societal acceptance and approval seems to decrease for the participants, which leads to a decrease in behaviors on striving for beauty ideals. In a consistent vein, Avalos and Tylka (2006) claims that when individuals feel accepted by their social environment, they could change their focus from appearance to inner needs where they could experience embodiment and positivity. Some participants stated that they have grown in an accepting environment that appearance was not in the family's agenda. Some of them emphasized how positive their mother was towards their own body, which becomes a model for them. Calogero and colleagues (2009) underline the direct implication of acceptance in familial settings on self-acceptance perception. They state that rather than body-oriented talks, these families emphasize the importance of uniqueness and authenticity of self, which is recommended for clinical implications for clients with negative body image.

Participants explained their history towards positive image starting with the negative image issues and a transformation period where their body image expanded and transformed. With that transformation, their mindset also changed and expanded in a positive way. One main change in their mindset was that body image was a flexible concept that could change according to mood, self-esteem or

psychological state of mind. In other words, they realized that how they see their body was not an accurate perception. That is, when they change their appearance; their life, their mood and their mental state were not going to change magically. They knew that they could not fully acknowledge other people's state of mind and intentions. When they felt bad about themselves and felt criticized by other people, they reminded themselves that it might not be the case and might just be their perception. When the world seemed threatening and the body seemed flawed, knowing that this could be a perception issue and it would pass seemed to reduce negativity.

This varying quality of the body image gave participants a chance and hope, when they feel negative about themselves. Rather than obsessing on their look, participants declared that they know their body image will change, and with that hope, managing their depressive mood and getting over it was possible. Similarly, Wilson and colleagues (2013) describe a cognitive factor where individuals accept their negative feelings towards their body with the presupposition that it will pass in the future. This cognitive asset correlates significantly with body acceptance and positive body image attitudes in the literature (Ferreira et al., 2011). While participants described those negative feelings on the body image as about perception, they also stated that positive feelings were not about appearance. They claimed that accepting oneself, self-improvement, self-esteem, and embodiment were the reasons why women felt positive about their body and can be seen from their attitudes and behaviors from outside. A group of studies Wood-Barcalow and colleagues (2010) have conducted showed that people did value and find attractive behavioral attitudes of individuals who feel positive about their bodies, carrying “inner positivity” inside them. On the other hand, self-loathing and individuals who engaged in fat-talk were perceived as displeasing and unattractive beyond their appearance. Participants declared that when they feel bad about themselves, rather than thinking of altering their appearance, they try to engage in self-care activities, socialize, or spend more time with intellectually stimulating practices.

The participants' positive body image attitudes are described as not always being positive, accepting, and loving towards the body. They declare that they do

at times feel negative about their body or body parts and that they want to alter some of them in the future. As stated above, they can manage and accept negative feelings internally. Moreover, they design a living plan to balance out their need for approval, belonging and connectedness with their authenticity and uniqueness. They realize the parts where they internalize beauty standards such as liking a slim waist or feeling sad about gaining too much weight. However, some individuals who carry internalized beauty standards also appreciate their differences like extra skin on their back or being against plastic surgery. They have a specific limit on how much they can differ from the norm and how much they can conform, regarding social desirability needs. They have a clear notion of an intrinsic and extrinsic, pressured motivation when they dress up or alter their appearance, which gives them control of choosing. They could choose to wear not-feminine clothes to protect themselves from harassment, and when the risk is gone, they could change into what they want to wear. This protects their body image integrity while managing the risk of exclusion or attack from the community.

One effective strategy for sustaining a positive image is listening to one's own needs for the participants. In a social context with a dominant public saying where the feminine body is objectified and sexualized, it is difficult and not realistic to avoid or ignore the comments made about appearance. In addition, participants took a standpoint about being connected to and accepted by certain social groups. They accept that they have a longing for social approval to a certain extent, and since they have grown up being exposed to beauty standards, they have internalized some undeniable aspects of it. Rather than totally denying the beauty standards, participants come up with another solution. They claim that when they are sufficiently attuned to their own body and self, they can hear their needs, desires, and their own voices as much as the societal ones. This balance gives them the freedom to choose which one to listen. Participants declare that when they ask this question to themselves, they usually favor their own needs most of the time. However, when they cannot stop thinking negatively about their appearance and keep feeling bad about it, most of them also declare that it is okay to alter their appearance. The primary standpoint is that individuals could alter their bodies if

they do it for themselves, not for others. Therefore, what others say, daily critiques and comments they encounter lose their importance and effect most of the time. Participants explain that in time, they developed the capacity to make fun of the critiques or to be not bothered by them.

Previous research shows that body and appearance-related talk is primarily associated with negative body image and body dissatisfaction (Jones, 2011). Participants also state that they don't always like it even when someone compliments their appearance. They sometimes do not find them sincere or feel uncomfortable, because the compliment underlines beauty standards, not their uniqueness. However, nearly all of them had positive experiences when they get compliments. Most of them make peace and accept the body parts that they did not like by the support and the compliments of their loved ones. Some of them even stated that not to feel vulnerable against the critiques, they developed a habit of giving and asking for compliments as a solidarity strategy against fat-shaming.

Another strategy for participants is to consciously choose to invest in the body's different functionalities than appearance. Nutrition and exercise are the most common areas that interested them. The feeling of compassion accompanied their practices; they fed the body with nutrients and exercised to strengthen it. When they take care of the body, they felt a sincere love towards it and their body responded by getting stronger and healthier. Other varying strategies to sustain the positive body image has been described by the participants. Some chose to wear looser clothes in times of stress to feel better about themselves. Several of them stated that they choose to focus on what they like about their body when they dislike another part. One suggested personification of the body, treating it as a friend, talking to it, and showing compassion. Asking for help or support was indicated for people who feel negative about themselves, and one participant declares that she uses it as a strategy to sustain her restore her sense of positivity about her body.

4.2. CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Previous research shows that imposed beauty ideals and negative body image lead to certain mood and eating disorders, mainly affecting adolescent and adult females (Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010, Wilson et al., 2013). On the contrary,

females with positive body image are observed to develop cognitive and behavioral skills that protect them from the negative results of these ideals (Cash et al., 2005). The present research has been conducted to understand how positive body image develops and how it is sustained by individuals. With the understanding of previous research, the results of the present study will be gathered to present clinical implications in this section.

Since the concept of body image is multifaceted and complex, risk factors caused by disturbed and negative body image issues are not entirely identified. Although more research has to be done for etiology, it is theorized that the interaction of internal variables such as physiological, cognitive and emotional variables, and external factors such as familial, societal and cultural factors, play a role in distorted body image and lead to eating disorders (Tylka, 2011, Wood-Barcalow et al., 2010). Participants in this research also stated that with the change in their adolescent body, fat-shaming and beauty standards contributed to their body dissatisfaction. They also stated that biological change in their body estranged them from their body, causing an inability to coordinate and understand what was going on inside.

For Cook-Cottone (2006), discrepancy in attunement between internal and external factors occur for individuals with negative body image. Body ideals and social standards become dominant in an individual's life while the needs of the inner self are silenced (Tylka & Augustus-Horvath, 2011). In other words, an individual's appearance becomes objectified and turns into an object that is only seen and evaluated from the outside. Participants support this view by saying their appearance-related concerns had decreased, when they re-connected with their bodies, which helped them feel acceptance and compassion towards it. Seligman (2011) claims that with an adequate embodiment, an individual could engage with the world while attuning to inner aspects of self. Participants stated that exercise, therapy, body-mind practices and art helped them hear their inner needs and embodiment. Cook-Cottone (2015) introduces and practices a two-stepped program for attunement, where awareness of needs and mindful self-care is encouraged. In both steps, certain tools are thought, as the participants in this study stated, All these

suggestions show that tools for attuning to the inner needs such as mindfulness or movement practices that encourage individuals to sense inner needs, art-forms or therapy techniques that give a language for those needs and a safe environment for this need to be expressed, contained and supported, could be used as an intervention frame.

Another main point participants made on societal messages they get is how people claim their rights over their bodies under honor and culture. With certain practices such as exercise, yoga and dance which they get to control their muscles and movements, they claim their right over their body back again. Reel and colleagues (2007) review research on moderate exercise done for self-efficacy that leads to improvements in individuals' body image. Participants also declared that when they have their economic independence, diplomas or intellectual skill sets, they do not need to define themselves only by their appearance. Individuals could be encouraged to define themselves from different aspects and explore different skill sets. Experiencing exercise by focusing on how empowering it is could also be another suggestion that could be made. Peterson and colleagues (2008) underline that gaining empowerment and perceiving the self as empowered is the major predictor of decreased self-objectification. Therefore, developing scales and tools for a woman to express their empowerment seems to be beneficial.

Understanding the societal factors of their prior body dissatisfaction helped participants get liberated from the appearance-related ideals, regain control of the body, and listen to its needs. Piran and colleagues (2004) position critical thinking about society and women's roles at the starting point of empowerment progress. Participants' narratives also supported this view. Their transformation progress started when they started learning and thinking about their gender role in society, why these roles were imposed, and whom they served. In some studies, knowing feminist theory and identification served a protective role against body ideals (Murnen & Smolak, 2009). Some programs have been developed to teach about critical thinking on gender roles and media exposure as a preventative factor for body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

With the presented results, clients' ability to differentiate their inner views and outer expectations on their appearance, their ability to understand body image's flexibility and their resourcefulness on strategies to maintain positive body image could be elements to observe for psychodynamically oriented psychotherapists through sessions. Clients' ability to perceive reality and safely navigate patriarchal settings, their developmental level, their capacity for mentalization and extent of social support might give insight into the client's body image issues. Another important point is that when women present with body-image related issues in therapy, psychodynamic therapists can examine these issues in context and look at the societal underpinnings of these issues, rather than formulating negative feelings about the body as a solely intrapsychic phenomenon. Looking at the impact of the societal context and how women respond to expectations about their body can offer a new and broader perspective to understand women's negative body image in psychotherapy.

Participants emphasized that their social support mechanism was essential and effective on their journey towards body positivity and acceptance. Although compliments of others raised doubts from time to time, especially at times when they emphasized gender roles, the participants still liked to be complimented. The differentiating quality was that the compliments' purpose was supporting their uniqueness and helping them accept their shape. Creating an environment where fat-talk or appearance-based conversations were reduced, and acceptance-based interventions and social interactions are encouraged would contribute to building positive body image. All these suggestions could be gathered under an intervention program where participants are thought skills for listening to their inner needs, gaining empowerment and expressing these changes in a supportive, accepting environment where appearance-focused talk is diminished.

Although body-image issues seem to increase during the adolescent period, literature shows that these issues can also start earlier in childhood (Bearman et al., 2006).). In addition, from a developmental perspective, childhood is critical for prevention of later body-image issues. Thus, prevention programs can be developed correspondingly to facilitate an accepting view of one's body starting

from childhood. Age-appropriate tasks on experiencing bodily sensations and emotions, separating them from that of parents and external voices could be designed via play, dance, and other art forms. Furthermore, advancing theoretical and applied education on gender roles, body politics, stigmatization, and biases could be integrated with a long-lasting intervention program accompanying a standard curriculum for children. Parents and their communication with their children with respect to body-related issues can also complement these preventive efforts and increase their effectiveness.

4.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research aimed to understand how young adult women develop and maintain positive body image in Turkey. There were certain limitations of the study which will be mentioned in this section. First of all, ten females aged 18 to 25 were interviewed online. Although this facilitated the data collection process and made it possible for participants from different cities to attend, visual data was partly lost. A face-to-face interview with participants could be designed in the future to see how they represent themselves and what sort of visual cues they attend to. Participants were recruited via flyers sent to psychology and dance related e-mail groups. Therefore, participants who attended to the study mostly went through therapy or engaged in art, dance, or some sort of body work. This decreased the diversity of the participant pool. Moreover, all ten of the participants contacted the researcher for voluntary participation by declaring themselves as having positive body image. Therefore, positive body image criteria was self-reported. Furthermore, the effort that participants made throughout the process, such as contacting the researcher, sparing an hour for the interview and reading the themes for writing feedback without any incentive, might indicate that they have altruistic motivations or/and in need of explaining themselves. Thus, some self-selection was involved in this recruitment method. As an alternative way, a two-step research can be designed combining qualitative and quantitative tools in future work. A quantitative measurement tool that could estimate individuals rating higher positive body image qualities from a much bigger and mixed participant group and interviews could be conducted afterwards. Thus, further investigation should be

done with a broader sample to clarify what positive body image means for women in Turkey.

Regarding the demographics, most of the participants seem to come from a middle-class background. To understand whether the results represent the realities and experiences of women with average income or not, the participant pool should include participants with more diverse backgrounds concerning income in future work. Moreover, all participants have declared that their body image issues started as negative at the beginning, particularly in adolescence. For further research, people who report always having a positive body image could be targeted for exploration and compared with the present results.

Thematic analysis is used for analyzing the interviews and only one coder who also did the interviews coded the data. The involvement of a second-coder would increase the reliability of coding. This could be a further suggestion for future work. Lastly, participants were asked to define positive body image and then describe their experiences about it. Terminology of positive body image seemed to be a not-common wording for them, and it took time for them to access the information they wanted to tell. Alternative wording that is much familiar to the participants could be considered for the further studies. In addition, familial relationships, especially the relationship between mother and daughter seemed to be involved in the development of positive body image. Separation and individuation processes may be particularly relevant. Future work can investigate this issue and contribute to the understanding of the link between body image and family relationships.

4.4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand what positive body image is and how does it develop in young adult females in Turkey. There were certain commonalities in developmental story which developed into common cognitive and behavioral attitudes. This was important to see since studies on positive body image studies with Turkish women are scarce. In a traditional culture where feminine body is sexualized and objectified, understanding how women could develop and maintain a positive body image seems fruitful.

Nearly all participants grow up with the pressure of societal body image rules and they all described this experience as negative which they resisted to internalize. Most of them had a familial or social support where they feel how they look like is accepted, no matter what. Another source was their academic or artistic education which they utilize to criticize beauty standards and explore their body's different aspects. With those explorations, they enriched their views on their bodies which took out the major focus of appearance out of their life. They enjoyed this sense of freedom and comfort, and their negativity diminished along with their obsessions and depressive mood.

These results are encouraging, since disturbance caused by negative body image issues are common among females in current Turkish society. Literacy for critical thinking on media and gender roles, body-mind enhancing exercises for attuning to the body, learning new skills for exploring and empowering self and body, creating a supporting environment where appearance focused communication is omitted are some of the suggestions that could be integrated under a program as an intervention as well as for further investigations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu

Araştırmanın Yürütüldüğü Kurum:	İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın Adı:	Genç Yetişkin Kadınlarda Olumlu Beden Algısı Gelişiminin Nitel Olarak İncelenmesi
Araştırmacının Adı:	Gizem Özkan
Araştırmacının E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:	
Araştırmanın Danışmanı:	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anıl Özge Üstünel
Danışmanın E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:	

Bu araştırma, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Gizem Özkan tarafından Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anıl Özge Üstünel danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, kadınların olumlu beden algısı kavramını nasıl tanımladığını ve deneyimlediğini anlamaktır. Araştırma olumlu beden algısının nasıl oluştuğunu anlayarak kadınların ruh ve beden sağlığını destekleyecek klinik çalışmalara katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

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

Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmakta ve katılımcı bilgilerinin gizliliği esas alınmaktadır. Verdiğiniz tüm bilgiler gizli tutulacaktır. Ses kayıtları ve doldurduğunuz anket, araştırma süresince yalnızca araştırmacının ve danışmanının erişimi olan bir harici bellekte muhafaza edilecek, araştırma ve bilimsel yayın süreci sona erdiğinde silinecektir. Araştırma bulgularının sunumu ve

raporlamasında gerçek kişi isimleri kullanılmayacak ve katılımcıların kişisel gizliliği korunacaktır. Elde edilen bilgiler bilimsel yayınlarda kullanılacaktır.

Bu araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Görüşmeye ve ankete katılmanın üzerinizde herhangi bir olumsuz etki yaratması beklenmemektedir. Ancak görüşme sırasında yanıt vermek istemediğiniz, size kendinizi rahatsız hissettiren sorular olursa bu soruları yanıtlamadan geçebilirsiniz. Görüşme sırasında dilediğiniz zaman kaydın durdurulmasını isteyebilirsiniz. Görüşme başlamadan önce, görüşme sırasında veya sonrasında dilediğiniz zaman soru sorabilirsiniz. Katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında herhangi bir sebep göstermeden araştırmadan çekilme hakkına sahipsiniz. Araştırmadan çekildiğiniz durumda verdiğiniz bilgiler değerlendirmeye alınmayacaktır. Görüşmenizin sonuçları, araştırma sonlandırılmadan önce gözden geçirmeniz için sizinle e-mail yoluyla paylaşılacak ve geri bildiriminiz doğrultusunda gerekli değişiklikler yapılacaktır. Burada amaç, sizin görüşlerinizin ve deneyimlerinizin en doğru şekilde anlaşılmasını sağlamaktır.

Araştırmayla ilgili bilgi almak, soru sormak veya yorumlarınızı paylaşmak isterseniz, araştırmacı Gizem Özkan ile ... adresinden iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ediyorsanız, aşağıdaki metni e-mail yoluyla araştırmacıya iletebilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum. Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu'ndaki açıklamaları anladım. Çalışmaya katılmayı, görüşmenin ses kaydının alınmasını ve verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

Katılımcı Adı-Soyadı:	
Tarih:	

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

Demografik Bilgi Formu

Eđitim Durumu: İlkokul Ortaokul Lise Lisans

Yüksek Lisans Doktora

Okuyor musunuz? Evet Hayır

Evet ise hangi bölüm?

Çalışıyor musunuz? Evet Hayır

Meslek:

Gelir Düzeyi: Düşük Orta Yüksek

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Görüşme Soruları

1) Tanışma

- Biraz kendinizi tanıtır mısınız? Ne işle meşgulsünüz? Hangi bölümde okuyorsunuz/ bitirdiniz? İş dışında nelerle ilgilenmekten hoşlanırsınız? İlgilendiğiniz bir hobiniz var mı?

2) Giriş: Beden algısı

- Bedeninizi 3 kelimeyle tarif etmenizi istesem aklınıza neler gelir?
 - Kelimelerin anlamı tek tek sorulur.
- Bedeninizle ilgili duygularınız ve düşüncelerinizi tanımlamanızı istesem, aklınıza neler gelir? Bedeninizle ilgili duygularınızı nasıl tanımlarsınız?
- Bedeninizle ilgili düşüncelerinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
 - Aynaya baktığımızda aklınızdan, içinizden neler geçer? Anlatabilir misiniz?
 - Size göre bir kadının bedeniyle ilgili olumlu duygulara, düşüncelere sahip olması ne anlama gelir?
 - Bir kadının beden algısının olumlu olduğunu nasıl anlarız?
 - Bedeninizle ilgili olumlu duygular hissettiğiniz bir anı anlatmanızı istesem, aklınıza neler gelir?
 - Nerede, kiminle, hangi olumlu duygular gibi sorularla durum anlaşılır.
 - Ek anı örneği istenir.
 - Size göre bir kadının bedeniyle ilgili olumsuz duygulara, düşüncelere sahip olması ne anlama gelir?
- Bir kadının beden algısının olumsuz olduğunu nasıl anlarız?
 - Bedeninizle ilgili olumsuz duygular hissettiğiniz bir anı anlatmanızı istesem, aklınıza neler gelir?
 - Nerede, kiminle, hangi olumsuz duygular gibi sorularla durum anlaşılır. Ek anı örneği istenir.

3) Beden algısının gelişimi

- Bedeninize ilgili duygularınızın, düşüncelerinizin nasıl geliştiğini merak ediyorum. Çocukluğunuzu, ergenliğinizi ve şu anı düşündüğünüzde, beden algınızı nasıl tarif edersiniz?
 - Çocukluğunuzda beden algınız nasıldı?
 - Ergenliğinizde beden algınız nasıldı?
- Bedeninize ilgili algınız nasıl oluşmuş olabilir? Genel olarak düşündüğünüzde aklınıza ilk neler geliyor?

Ailenizden bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?

 - Arkadaşlarınızdan bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
 - Partnerlerinizden bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
 - Toplumdan bedeninizle ilgili neler öğrendiniz?
- Zaman içinde bedeninizle ilgili duygularınızda, düşüncelerinizde herhangi bir değişim oldu mu?
 - (Bir değişim olduysa), nasıl? Ne yönde bir değişim? Bu değişim nasıl gerçekleşti?
 - (Bir değişim olmadıysa), nasıl?

4) Olumlu beden algısı

- İçinde yaşadığımız toplumda kadın bedeni deyince aklınıza neler geliyor?
 - Size göre içinde yaşadığımız toplum kadın bedeni hakkında kadınlara nasıl mesajlar veriyor? Nasıl?
 - Bu mesajlar hakkında siz neler düşünüyorsunuz? Bu mesajlar sizin bedeninize bakışınızı nasıl etkiliyor?
 - Size göre kadınların olumlu bir beden algısı geliştirmesi nasıl mümkün olur/oluyor?
 - Sizin bedeninizle ilgili olumlu duygular, düşünceler geliştirmenize katkıda bulunan deneyimler neler?
 - Yaşadığımız toplumda kendi bedeninize bakışınızı olumlu olarak etkileyen mesajlar var mı?
 - (Varsa) bunlar neler? (Yoksa) bunu nasıl açıklayabiliriz?
 - Bedeninize ilgili olumsuz duygulara, düşüncelere kapıldığınızda, neler yaparsınız?

- Bu duygularla nasıl baş edersiniz?
- Bu şekilde baş etmeyi nasıl öğrendiniz? Nereden öğrendiniz?
- Bu duygularla baş etmede size yardımcı olan deneyimler desem, aklınıza neler gelir?
- Bedeniyle ilgili olumsuz duyguları, düşünceleri yoğun bir şekilde yaşayan kadınlara nasıl öneriler vermek istersiniz?

5) Sonlandırma

- Sizin eklemek istediğiniz herhangi bir şey var mı?
 - Benim sormadığım, ama önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz bir şey var mı?
- Bugün burada konuşmak, bu görüşmeye katılmak size nasıl geldi?

APPENDIX D: MEMBER CHECKING E- MAIL CONTENT

Genç yetişkin kadınlarda olumlu beden algısı gelişiminin incelediği bu çalışmanın bulgularının özeti:

- Bedenin bir mesele haline gelmesi
 - Standartlardan farklılaşmak
 - Kafa karışıklığı ve yabancılaşmak
 - Görüntüyü değiştirmek
- Beden imgesinin olumsuzdan olumluya doğru dönüşmesi
 - Farklı bedenleri takdir etmek
 - Otonomi ve kontrol kazanmak
 - Dışarıdan destek almak
- Beden hakkında alternatif bir düşünce şekli oluşturmak
 - Beden imgesini esnek olarak algılamak
 - Dengeyi hedeflemek
- Olumlu beden algısını sürdürebilmek
 - Kendi ihtiyaçlarını dinlemek
 - Olumlu yorumları almaya açık olmak
 - Bedenin işlevlerine odaklanmak

Yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen bilgiler ışığında, olumlu beden algısının doğuştan beri var olan değişmez bir algıdan çok, zaman içinde gelişen ve dönüşen bir olgu olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. İlk olarak, beden ve görüntünün kişilerin gündemine girebilmesi için bir mesele haline geldiği, yorumlarla ve sözsüz iletişimle belirli güzellik standartlarına ve/veya “münasip” görünüme yönlendirilmeye çalışıldığı anlaşılmıştır. Katılımcıların bu standartlardan farklı olmaları ya da olmamaları gerektiği konusunda belli şekillerde uyarılmaları sonucu bu konuyu sorgulamaya, düşünmeye, zaman zaman daha negatif duygu ve düşüncelere itilmelerine neden olmuştur. Ergenlik sürecindeki beden formunun değişimi ve uyarılar sırasında kadın bedeninde başka mecralarca hak iddia edilmesi, bedene yabancılaşma ve kafa karışıklığı yaratması ihtimaller dahilindedir. Sonuç

olarak bedeninin veya bazı beden parçalarının daha farklı görünmesini düşünme ve bedeninin beğenilmeyen parçalarını saklamaya çalışma davranışlarının ortaya çıkması olasılığı doğmuştur.

Bütün bunların yanında yakın çevre, medya veya sanat içerisinde karşılaşılan farklı bedenleri sevebilme, beğenebilme ve takdir edebilmenin kişinin kendisinin farklılıklarını da sevebilmesine yardımcı olduğu görülmüştür. Egzersiz, sanat pratikleri ve entelektüel uğraşlar sayesinde katılımcıların hem bedenleri hem de hayatları üzerinde kontrol sahibi olabildikleri, özgürleşebildikleri imkanlar kazandıkça, çevrelerinden biriciklikleri ve otantik yanlarına dair kabul mesajları aldıkça beden imgeleri olumluya doğru evrilmiştir.

Katılımcılar beden imgesinin sadece nasıl göründükleriyle ilgili olmadığını, kendilerine olan güvenleri, ruh halleri ve düşüncelerinden etkilendiğini bilmektedir. Bu nedenle bedenleriyle ilgili hislerinin değişeceğini, kendilerini gördükleri halin başkaları tarafından da öyle görülme ihtimali olduğunu bilmekte, kötü hislere kapıldıklarında bunun geçici olduğunu anlamakta ve bu sebeple iyi hissetmek için kendi iç dünyalarına yatırım yapmaya eğilimlidir. İçinde buldukları toplumdaki gelen mesaj ve müdahalelerin değişme imkanının zor olduğunu bilmekte, buna karşın kendi iç sesleri ve isteklerini de duyarak bir denge kurmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Ne toplumdaki tamamen farklılaşıp yabancılaştıkları ne de beden açısından dikte edilen her şeye tamamen uydukları bir duruşu istemektedirler. Bedenlerine dair kendi isteklerini, zevklerini duyabilir ve farklılıklarını kabul edebilir bir pozisyonda, değer verdikleri sosyal gruplara bağlı bir noktada konumlandırmayı dilemektedirler.

Olumlu beden algısını sürdürebilmek için katılımcılar kendi iç seslerini duyma ve gerçekleştirme yönünde hareket etmekte, kendilerine yapılan olumlu yorumlara açık bir tutum içinde bulunmaktadır. Bedenin sadece bir görüntüden ibaret olmadığı, yapabildikleri, işlevleri ve sağlıkları üzerinden de bir anlamlandırma yaptıklarında, katılımcılar bedene karşı bir şefkat ve takdir içinde olabilmektedirler. Beden nasıl görüldüğünden daha fazla bir anlam taşıdığına görüntüsüne dair gelen eleştiriler önemini yitirmekte, zaman zaman filtrelenerek kişinin gündemine neredeyse girmemektedir.

ETHICAL APPROVAL BY THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

I. ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

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