

İSTANBUL BİLGİ UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

BEING A WOMAN IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON REPRESENTATIONS AND EXPERIENCE OF
FEMININITY THROUGH THE NEW CINEMA OF TURKEY

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İSTANBUL
2021

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Yeni Türkiyede Kadın Olmak: Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Kadınlık Temsilleri
ve Deneyimleri Üzerine Nitel Bir Çalışma

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Date of Approval: 30.06.2021

Total number of pages: 131

Keywords (Türkçe)

- 1) Femininity
- 2) The New Cinema of Turkey
- 3) Gender Roles
- 4) Collectivism
- 5) Separation-Individuation

Keywords (English)

- 1) Kadınlık
- 2) Yeni Türkiye Sineması
- 3) Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini
- 4) Kolektivizm
- 5) Ayrışma-Bireyselleşme

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor Assist. Prof. Dr. Anıl Özge Üstünel Balcı. I would like to express my gratitude to my third advisor and mentor Dr. Taner Yılmaz. I am grateful for his feedback and guidance throughout the process. His ideas and understanding helped me to create this thesis from the beginning to the end.

I would like to thank my jury members Assist. Prof. Dr. Sibel Halfon and Assist. Prof. Dr. İshak Saygılı. It was very precious to hear their creative comments and perspectives.

I would like to thank many friends who supported and believed in me. I would like to thank all my classmates, Ece, Eda, Dilan, Gizem, Güler, Kaan, Merve, Selin, Sezgi, Rumeysa and Tunç. I would like to thank my dear friends, Ezgi, Oya and Hilmi, for their friendship and accompanying me during this difficult process. They opened the doors of their houses whenever I needed. Special thanks to Gizem Özkan and Merve Erkaya. I cannot imagine my master's years and the thesis process without you. I could not be here without you. I am grateful for your precious and warm presence that made possible this friendship.

I would like to thank my family for believing in me. They gave me the opportunity of getting a master's degree. Now, I can see how they affected me to pursue my dreams and write my thesis about the experience of being a woman.

I owe one of the biggest thanks to my love, my best friend and my seatmate, Zaim Sancaktar. Thank you for all the kicks you made, that help me to feel my heart beatings. Thank you for all the love, music, nights, understanding, support and care. Thank you for helping me to process difficult emotions and making them bearable together. Thank you for taking the load off my shoulders. I could not get through this rough process without you.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the representations and experience of femininity in the new cinema of Turkey to shed light on the predicaments, and intrapsychic dynamics of gender roles that interact with the socio-cultural changes related to being a woman in contemporary Turkey. In order to meet this goal, the present study focuses on the narratives and associations which emerged in the focus group meetings through four movies from the new cinema of Turkey. The movies selected for the aim of the study were “Mustang,” “Tereddüt,” “Ana Yurdu,” and “Kraliçe Lear.” They were selected based on three criteria: production time, inclusion of women as starring characters, and having a scenario without the male gaze. Eight participants (four women, four men) aged between 23 to 43 took part in five focus group meetings voluntarily. The methodology of grounded theory was used to understand the unique and collective experiences of the participants. Results depicted the image of a woman who struggles with difficulties and conflicts deriving from the intrapsychic aspects of gender roles and the conservative, collectivistic characteristics of contemporary Turkey. Clinical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *Femininity, The New Cinema of Turkey, Gender Roles, Collectivism, Separation-Individuation*

ÖZET

Bu çalışma yeni Türkiye sinemasındaki kadınlık temsillerini ve kadınlık deneyimini araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Aynı zamanda yeni Türkiye kadınının çıkmazlarına, ruhsallığına, içinde yaşadığı toplumla olan etkileşimine ve sosyokültürel değişimlerin katkıda bulunduğu cinsiyet rollerine ışık tutabilmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaca ulaşmak adına, yeni Türkiye sinemasından dört filmin izlenip tartışıldığı odak grup toplantıları düzenlemiştir. Çalışma için seçilen filmler “Mustang,” “Tereddüt,” “Ana Yurdu,” ve “Kraliçe Lear” dır. Üretim yılı 2000ler sonrası olan, kadın ana karakterlerin hikayelerine odaklanan ve ataerkil bakış açısından uzak üretilen filmler seçilmiştir. Çalışmaya dördü kadın, dördü erkek olmak üzere sekiz katılımcı gönüllülük esasıyla dahil olmuştur. Katılımcıların yaşları 23 ve 43 arasına değişiklik göstermektedir. Her bir odak grup toplantısı yaklaşık bir buçuk saat sürmüştür. Temellendirilmiş veri analizi metoduyla kodlama ve analiz yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar cinsiyet rollerinin ve yeni Türkiye kültüründe yükselen muhafazakar, kolektivist karakterin yarattığı ruhsal çatışmalar ve açmazlarla mücadele eden bir kadın imajını resmetmektedir. Sonuçlar ışığında çalışmanın kısıtlamaları ve klinik önerileri tartışılmış, gelecek çalışmalara dair öneriler yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Kadınlık, Yeni Türkiye Sineması, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini, Kolektivizm, Ayrışma-Bireyselleşme*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to investigate the representations of femininity in the new cinema of Turkey to contribute to exploring the experience of being a woman in contemporary Turkey. To achieve this goal, a focus group study that involved discussions on 4 selected movies is designed. The subjects in the study are 8 participants, four women, four men who grew up in Turkey. Specifically, how the participants approach and perceive the stories of the female main characters in the selected movies and how these stories were interpreted by the participants are examined through focus group meetings. Predicaments, coping strategies, relationships of women characters, and the relationship between social context and their issues are explored by following the associations, reflections and views of the participants. The data provides information about the prominent themes relating to the representations of femininity in contemporary Turkish cinema and the ways of understanding the gender roles of the participants.

The general purpose of the study is to elucidate some predicaments and psychological challenges women living in new Turkey are likely to face and how the recent social changes and cultural transformations contribute to the predicaments of women in new Turkey. The concept of “new Turkey” corresponded to the era that the AK (Justice & Development) Party and its neoliberal politics became dominant power in Turkey since 2002 (Keyman, 2014). The place of women in the society that has a dynamic relationship with socio-cultural context is also formed through the identification of the women with their femininity and gender roles. Accordingly, the social and cultural changes taking place in new Turkey are considered to play a significant role in intra-psychic, psychological and social dynamics of femininity. Thus, the present study aims to depict a better comprehension of the experience and representations of femininity, and provide helpful findings to be used by clinicians and psychotherapists who work with women living in new Turkey.

Hence, since gender is a social as well as an intrapsychic construct, the conceptualization of femininity will be firstly examined in terms of psychoanalytical and social psychological perspectives. The close relationship between cinema and psychology will be examined in terms of the representations of femininity in cinema in the next section.

1.1. PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES ON FEMININITY

The conceptualization of femininity has been discussed from several perspectives throughout the history of psychology and other fields of social sciences (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). In psychoanalytic literature, discussions on femininity begins with Freud's writings on the subject. In the Lecture XXXIII entitled "Femininity" (1933), Freud approached femininity based on sex differences which corresponded, in his account, to the mental qualities in terms of active and passive aim. As he declared in the article, it was an ambiguous analogy between the active-male and the passive-female representations in which the riddle of femininity was considered as a status of absence compared to masculinity. Even though Freud (1932) embraced the inner and external influences in his theories of psychic development, he approached gender differences by emphasizing the role of biology and anatomy. He attributed the specific characteristic differences of the psychic structures of each gender to biological predispositions (Freud, 1933). He considered a woman's castration complex as a central point of the personality development of her femininity (Freud, 1937, as cited in Freud, 1964). Whereas the love object of a boy remains during the formation of the Oedipus complex, the love object of a girl changes from her mother as the first object to her father in order to achieve the feminine position. When entering into the Oedipal phase, the girl builds an identification with her mother to seduce her love object, her father. He stated that the castration complex of women starts by being aware of the genital organs of the other sex, which is the penis. In the Oedipal phase, the girl who noticed the absence of the penis in her body ended up feeling envy for the penis. Thus,

she discovers the genital inferiority of women, and she stops clitoral masturbation. Thus, she enters the genital phase, and her erotogenic zone changes from her clitoris to her vagina (Freud, 1933). He argued that shame as a feminine characteristic has a purpose of “concealment of genital deficiency” (Freud, 1933, p. 132).

Freud (1933) also questioned the concept of active coinciding with masculine and the concept of passive coinciding with feminine considering the biological difference between sex-cells structures. He mentioned that if the relationship between masculinity and activity is explained based on the active position of the penis in human sexuality, it would be a limited and reductive idea. However, he exemplified active positions of women, such as the act of lactation of a mother. He mentioned other species that female animals are more vigorous and active than male animals. Therefore, he argued that a person might behave in a masculine way in one relation or feminine way in another, whether the person is male or female (Freud, 1933). However, he mentioned that he was aware of underestimating the impacts of social context and culture, which imposes women to a passive position. Accordingly, Freud (1933) claimed that the aggressiveness of women, which is suppressed constitutionally, leads to the development of masochistic impulses.

However, the emergence of the female sexuality topic (Freud, 1931, as cited in Freud 1961) led to various discussions about the dynamic nature of gender identity in the light of the feminist theory (Benjamin, 1988; Chodorow, 1995; Dimen, 1991). Horney (1924) considered Freud's theories about femininity as biased male fantasies because the concept of penis envy rationalizes women's feelings of inadequacy by referring it to an unchangeable situation. She stated that penis envy is not an essential but a cultural-based construct in the development of femininity. As Thompson mentioned (1943) if the penis is a sign of power in a particular competitive cultural setting, the place of women is the same as any other minority group in this culture. Similarly, Lacan (2011) considered the concept of phallus as a symbolic image of penis to highlight the distinction between penis as biological organ and the image of the penis. Therefore, the concept of penis envy can be considered as envy for men's place

in society rather than a genital organ. According to these critiques, because active traits have been attributed to men in society, penis was considered as a symbol of having power and autonomy.

Benjamin (1988) approached the classical psychoanalytic perspective on sex and gender from the intersubjectivity perspective. She criticized the dichotomization of love objects and identification in classical Freudian theory, and she defined *gender* as an unconventional and transitional construct (Benjamin, 1995). Benjamin considered identification not only as an internal structure, but also as a relationship between two subjects who recognize oneself in the other (Benjamin, 1991). Accordingly, she emphasized the role of rapprochement, in which the love of the father symbolizes the outside world during the separation-individuation process. Benjamin stated that the phallus symbolizes a revolt and a struggle for separation from “the original maternal power” (Benjamin, 1991, p. 281). In addition, she stated that psychic structures could change by interacting with internal and external worlds with respect to evolving gender roles. Thus, she moved away from a split concept of sex to a more fluid and social gender identity construct.

Graciela Abelin-Sas Rose and Leticia Glocer Fiorini (2010) have published a compilation of critical contemporary discussions of Freud’s femininity. They presented a large scope of discussions about the controversial issues of Freud’s approach to femininity, such as penis envy, weaker superego of women, or Oedipus complex. Kulish and Holtzman (2010) argued that even though the Oedipus complex has a central role in developing women’s sexuality, its dynamics are not adequate to explain women’s sexuality. They proposed the myth of Persephone and her mother Demeter, which provides a broader view to understand women’s sexuality by highlighting the importance of the cyclical nature of the female body. In addition, they stated that a girl’s genital activity, in general, encounters disapproval, and as a result, her erotic impulses might lead to a fear of loss of the mother’s approval. They disagreed with shifting love object from mother to father for girls, as classical psychoanalytical perspective assumed. They suggested that a triangular relationship is built by adding a

paternal figure as another love object for women rather than changing from one to the other. Accordingly, the separation process of girls has involved an experience of loss, because the separation from the mother evokes the fear of loss and abandonment that is essential for a triangular relationship.

Abelin (1971) stated that triangulation starts with the penetration and interruption of the father to the early maternal dyadic relationship as a third object. In this sense, they suggested that whereas the expressed aggression and destruction can be considered as an active, aggressive play for boys in their oedipal phase, girls need to be careful to protect the relationship with their mother (Kulish and Holtzman, 2010). About the feeling of envy as a part of triangulation, contemporary psychoanalysts have also criticized the maternal instinct concept, which is considered as a replacement for the envied penis by Freud (Benjamin, 1988; Chodorow, 1978). They explained girls' desire to have a baby as a recognition and appreciation of her body, which has the potential of reproduction and identification with her mother (Kulish and Holtzman, 2010).

From the perspective of contemporary psychoanalysis, gender formation is considered as a more dynamic lifelong process under the influence of intrapsychic and sociocultural experiences (Raphael-Leff, 2010). As stated by Tyson (1994), the concept of femininity is grouped under the titles of core gender, gender roles, and sexual orientation with the help of interdisciplinary discussions. The "intrapsychic sense of gender identity" has been distinguished from gender role as an "external expression of self" which fulfils "gender expectations" of the society and "a set of socially acceptable gender-related functions" (Meissner, 2005a, p. 2). He considered social expectations as stereotypical gender roles which are created and transferred traditionally as masculinity and femininity. As he mentioned, there are scientific findings showing that women's ways of emotional expressions parallel their gender role expectations, such as the expression of depression, shame, guilt, or the reflection of vulnerability. However, he stated that "gender differences in expression of emotion are greater than the difference in subjective feelings" (Meissner, 2005b, p. 34).

However, Meissner (2005b) argued that a healthy process of feminine development includes not only a positive identification with the mother, but also an emotional separation from her in order to accomplish individuation and establish one's own identity as a woman. In addition, intergenerational transmission of norms and ideals for feminine gender identity has to be altered and evolved in following generations by adapting to new standards, values and expectations. Thus, even though the way of development femininity can be sustained through generations, the characteristics of the gender roles which are attributed to being a mother or being a wife will not be the same in the subsequent generation (Meissner, 2005b, p.38).

Mahler and her colleagues (1975) considered the rapprochement crisis as experiences of three painful losses: the illusion of the symbiotic union with the mother, the illusion of genital perfection, and excretory freedom. Thus, the child experiences him/herself as shamefully weak. Similarly, Reenkola (2005) stated that shame as an inner conflict arises from the awareness of one's separateness and desire. As discussed above, since girls experience the separation from a maternal figure as a loss of love object, moving from symbiotic love with the omnipotent mother to the separate love is especially difficult for girls. In addition, girls generally prefer expressing agreement or remaining silent rather than saying no, objecting and expressing aggression against the mother (Reenkola, 2002). For this reason, expression of aggression, which is a necessity for separation and affirmation of ego boundaries is claimed to be difficult for girls rather than boys. She considered the ego ideal of the woman as bisexual, which includes the potential of being a perfect mother and being an attractive woman (Reenkola, 2005). She also stated that shame, which emerges in the inner conflict between ego and ego ideal of women, is related to an inner eye which evaluates and judges the self, comparing it to the ego ideal's perfection demands. The situation in which the girl experience rivalry with the perfect mother and love of the father may elicit intense feelings of guilt and shame. Therefore, the separation process by objecting to the mother and expressing desire evokes a powerful feeling of shame for women. In

addition, if a girl has been rejected by her father or has not been mirrored by her mother, she feels shame, and sees her body as repulsive (Bollas, 2000).

Overall, classical psychoanalytic perspectives focus on biological differences between sexes in their conceptualizations of femininity, tend to disregard the impact of sexist and patriarchal social structures, and examine women's development in the limited context of being a mother and a wife. Contemporary psychoanalytic thinking places more emphasis on fluidity and flexibility of gender roles, yet continue to dwell mostly on intrapsychic explanations with respect to women's shame, guilt and aggression. Contemporary theories continue to focus on separation and individuation processes, particularly in relation to the mother, and define them as key processes in the development of women's sense of self and identity. Since the impact of socio-cultural and contextual factors needs to be taken into account when understanding these processes, social psychological perspectives on femininity will be briefly summarized in the next section.

1.2. SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FEMININITY

Dimen (1991) pointed out that changing from sex to culture brings us a consideration of gender as not only a personal experience, but also as a social institution. Similarly, Chodorow (1995) emphasized the multifaceted nature of gender and offered a broad conceptualization, indicating that "The individuality and variability of gender, its multiple constructions, its inflection with other aspects of identity, and its situated, contextual, interpersonal and intrapsychic salience—where it is hard to specify what is gender and what is not" (p. 292). Since gender is a social construct and an intrapsychic quality, the concept of femininity came to be considered with power dynamics and inequality in the social and cultural context (Butler, 1990; O'Brien, 2009).

Although social contexts and cultures are studied and conceptualized in different aspects, the perspective of social psychology on the dimension of

individualism and collectivism as well as gender stereotypes will be examined in more detail in this section. The first sub-section will focus on individualism and collectivism for two reasons. Firstly, considering the context of contemporary Turkey with rising conservatism, it seems worthy to look at the individualism-collectivism in the literature (Çitak & Tür, 2008). Secondly, since psychoanalytic perspectives focus on separation-individuation processes in the development of feminine identities, understanding individualism-collectivism from a social psychological perspective can help to contextualize these processes, and provide a socially-informed perspective. The second sub-section will summarize social psychological perspectives on gender stereotypes and gender roles assigned to women.

1.2.1. Individualism-Collectivism and Conservatism

Many studies have explored psychological variations between individualistic and collectivistic cultures by making comparisons between “different countries,” “different societies,” and “individuals within the same society” or the “same culture in different time periods” (Hamamura et al., 2018, p. 370). Greenfield (2016), who conducted a longitudinal study by observing Mayan communities, related the increase in the economic prosperity to the changes in beliefs and values toward individualism. Accordingly, it can be said that the lack of economic prosperity can be related to a tendency towards collectivistic values and beliefs (Park et al., 2014). Hamamura and his colleagues have also examined the effects of historical migration, residential mobility, and agriculture on the dimension of individualism and collectivism. Thus, individualism and collectivism are studied in the context of economic and social changes that societies go through.

As Singelis and colleagues (1995) mentioned, whereas the collectivistic cultures tend to emphasize interdependence which serves to maintain harmony and order in relationships, the individualistic cultures emphasize independence which appreciates the uniqueness, personal preferences, and attitudes of individuals. In this

sense, Markus and Kitayama (1991) examined the differences between the characteristics of self-concepts in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. According to them, in individualistic societies, the characteristics of self are shaped by autonomous and socially independent entities attributed to specific emotions, behaviors and beliefs. This kind of self is called as independent self. On the other hand, they stated that in collectivistic cultures, the best way to comprehend the characteristics of self is to look at it in a relational context because the self is highly dependent on the social situations, roles and beliefs. Thus, this kind of self is considered as interdependent self.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) approached the characteristics and development of self in terms of emotions and motivations. As argued by Kitayama and his colleagues (2006), whereas people in collectivistic cultures tend to express socially engaging emotions such as friendly feelings or guilt, people in individualistic cultures tend to express socially disengaging emotions such as pride or anger. Accordingly, whereas the independent self is associated with emphasizing the personal needs of individuals, the interdependent self is associated with suppressing one's personal priorities and prioritizing the welfare of the society (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In this sense, it can be said that separation from society is encouraged for the independent self, because the protection of individual autonomy and integrity is an essential part of morality in individualistic cultures. However, since morality in collectivistic cultures is built upon the protection of societal values surrounding loyalty, respect for authority, and purity, the separation process for the interdependent self might be difficult compared to the independent self (Rozin et al., 1999). In a different vein, Kağıtçıbaşı (1996) offered a model that synthesizes the needs of agency and relatedness in a separation-individuation process, and introduced the concept of the autonomous-relational self. Her notion of autonomous-relational self suggests that autonomy and relatedness needs can be met simultaneously in a balanced manner. However, it can also be said that there is a tendency to conform to social norms and gender roles in collectivistic cultures because of the tendency to respect authority and others' opinions.

Many studies explore the relationship between gender roles and individualism-collectivism in terms of various aspects such as organizational roles, conflict styles or acculturation. Holt and DeVore (2005) conducted a meta-analysis to understand better the variables of gender, organizational roles, and culture as individualistic and collectivistic. According to their findings, whereas force can be considered as a conflict style for individualistic cultures, collectivistic cultures mostly prefer less overt conflict styles such as withdrawing, problem-solving, and compromising. On the other hand, they stated that compromising was observed in female participants more frequently than male participants in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. In parallel with the traditional gender roles, it was reported that forcing was observed as a conflict style in male participants more frequently than female participants. In another study, Zhang and colleagues (2011) discussed the impacts of vertical-horizontal individualism and collectivism on the acculturation process of heritage by considering the moderating role of gender. They observed that female individuals are more likely to acculturate than men, and there is no difference between genders in terms of heritage acculturation. They stated that the result could be explained by the different motivations and values of the gender roles, in that women are expected to provide care and maintain harmony within the family and their in-groups (Zhang et al., 2011).

Sterling (1967, p. 10) mentioned that conservatism is one of the most “ancient and pervasive principles of accounting valuation.” Hofstede (2001) stated that conservatism as a norm of cultures with uncertainty avoidance is related to the conformity which can be high in cultures with high power distance, high collectivism and masculinity. As a part of collectivism, conservatism constrains women in public and private spheres throughout history (Celis & Childs, 2018). In this sense, it can be said that conservative characteristics of culture have a significant impact on the construction of feminine gender roles, because of the expected roles of women as transmitters and protectors of customs, traditions and collective identity (Moghadam, 1994). Accordingly, women are expected to be gatekeepers of social norms and values rather than individuals who can express desires and opinions freely in collectivistic and

conservative cultures compared to the representations of men in that culture. In addition to this, many studies showed that conservatism has been on a rising trend in Turkey since the 1990s (Kalaycioglu, 2007; Carkoglu & Kalaycioglu, 2009; Yeşialda & Noordijk, 2010). Yeşialda and Noordijk (2010) argued that rising conservatism in Turkey is closely related to rising religiosity and intolerance. Their results showed that the more religious people are less tolerant, and women tend to be more tolerant than men in Turkey (Yeşialda & Noordijk, 2010). Therefore, when approaching the representations of femininity from gender role theories, it can be said that the expression of aggression of women tend to be considered less acceptable by the society in contrast with men. Accordingly, separation process might evoke the feeling of shame when individuals experience inner conflicts between ego and ego ideal and intrapsychic conflicts through the constructed gender roles.

1.2.2. Gender Stereotypes, Gender Roles, and Femininity

The concept of gender roles as a social construct has been examined from different theories such as social construction or evolutionary psychology. As Eagly (1997) remarked, the social role theory approached the origin of differences between the roles of women and men as division of labour based on sex considering psychological and social processes. In contrast, the evolutionary perspective explained the origin of gender roles as biological differences between sexes. *Gender stereotypes* are defined as established beliefs about belonging to women or men in society (Archer & Lloyd, 2002). According to their perspective, gender stereotypes are shaped based on social desirability defined by society. Thus, individuals' gender role can differ according to the cultural values of the society in which they grew up and live.

Gender stereotype theory emphasized that male individuals are likely to be perceived as more masculine than female individuals, whereas female individuals are likely to be perceived as more feminine than males (Kachel et al., 2016). Various scales

were developed to evaluate essential aspects of gender-stereotypical behaviours such as assertiveness, communality, agency, competence, or instrumentality. For example, Bem (1974) created the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) to measure masculine and feminine personality traits. Ferrer-Pérez and Bosch-Fiol (2014) stated that according to the frame of traditional gender stereotypes scales like the BSRI, the constructs of femininity and masculinity are considered as bi-dimensional. However, they conducted a study using the BSRI, and they found that most of the items in the BSRI did not differentiate between characteristically masculine or feminine traits. Thus, it has been reported that a small portion of personality traits was attributed to feminine and masculine (Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014). According to their results, the only traits considered as feminine were being sensitive to others' needs, soft-spoken, tender, loves children, affectionate and understanding, whereas traits considered as masculine were merely being masculine, aggressive, athletic, forceful, dominant and competitive. Accordingly, it can be said that there is still gender-stereotypical traits viewed as typically feminine and masculine, although social roles dynamically change. Femininity has traditionally come to be associated with qualities such as communal, agreeable, affectionate, and nurturing (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Kachel et al., 2016).

The traditional gender roles divisions are inevitably related to the concept of sexism examined by many researchers. Swim and Hyers (2009, p. 407) defined *sexism* as “individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, and organizational, institutional, and cultural practices that either reflect negative evaluations of individuals based on their gender or support unequal status of women and men.” How individuals perceive and endorse traditional gender roles can be informative to assess sexist beliefs. They considered “modern sexism” under three titles: “denial of discrimination,” “negative reactions to complaints about inequality,” and “lack of support for efforts to reduce inequality” (Swim & Hyers, 2009, p. 414). They stated that the three beliefs are significant, since they are related to the protection of authority, and the endorsement of these beliefs contributes to gender inequality. In addition, they mentioned benevolent sexism as seemingly appearing positive side of sexism. On the

contrary, benevolent sexism can be harmful, because it can be easily ignored by focusing on its seemingly positive side. Swim and Hyers (2019, p. 415) described the concept of benevolent sexism by dividing it into three categories: “beliefs about the complementary nature of gender differences,” “endorsement of paternalistic behaviour,” and “beliefs in heterosexual intimacy.” In a cross-cultural study, the findings demonstrated that people who live in countries with a major gender inequality are inclined to endorse benevolent sexist beliefs more than hostile sexist beliefs (Glick et al., 2000).

In addition to personality-related stereotypes and sexist gender role expectations, women’s bodies are also a target of attention in society. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) mentioned that sexual and bodily objectification of women’s body is a common part of everyday sexism. Objectification puts women’s bodies in a passive position by separating a person’s body part/image from her/his personality and presenting it as an object for pleasure. Thus, the female body becomes an object which can be criticized and gazed at by society regardless of a person’s agency. As suggested by the objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), women have learned and got used to looking at themselves from an outsider perspective rather than an inner perspective. Thus, the power inequity between genders is expressed not only physically, but also psychologically. Some women internalize the male gaze at different levels by monitoring the body and seeing the self as an object. However, the internalization of objectification may lead to feelings of shame and anxiety and severe mental illnesses such as eating disorders or sexual dysfunctions (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). As Jack (1991) mentioned, self-silencing is a predisposition to internalize gender role beliefs that a woman should not express her feelings and ideas to preserve the harmony in her relationship. By internalizing the prescriptive belief, some women are socialized to prioritize the other’s need over their personal needs.

Therefore, Swim and Hyers (2019) stated that the direct effects of sexism could be considered physical harm through sexual and physical violence and psychological harm through internalization of a devaluated sense of self. The consequences of sexism

were considered as violence, objectification, and internalization of gender stereotypes and roles. However, the ways of coping mechanism and resilience of women differ according to social and individual differences. Saunders and colleagues (2017) demonstrated that whereas having a system justifying ideologies is positively correlated with women's benevolent attributions to sexual harassment and their self-blaming, self-esteem is negatively correlated with them. Accordingly, they suggested that women's coping ways with violence tend to stem from their ideologies that preserve patriarchal authority and status-quo.

Overall, social psychological perspectives on femininity and gender stereotypes reveal different pressures and expectations women are likely to face as they grow up. Some of these pressures and expectations are related to power inequalities and sexism prevalent in many societies, while others are internalized and endorsed by some women at different levels. Prevalent norms and stereotypes tend to emphasize women's roles and experiences in sustaining harmony in relationships and communities, acting as caretakers, facing violence and monitoring their bodies. Although many women oppose these norms and stereotypes in their lives, these are considered as central discourses that shape discussions on and representations of femininity. When considered in relation to psychoanalytic perspectives explained in the previous section, potential challenges women face both internally and externally in expressing their wants, desires, aggressive feelings and voices become more visible. In light of these discussions, the representations and predicaments of femininity will be briefly examined below in the context of Turkey.

1.3. FEMININITY IN TURKEY

Women's subordinate position in the society of Turkey, as a part of the Mediterranean culture, has been discussed by many researchers in terms of various aspects such as the power dynamics, modernization process, or gender roles of women. Keddie and Baron (2017) stated that the Mediterranean culture could be considered as

a base of Turkey's male-dominated culture, which follows the ethos of virginity, fidelity, and son producing. In the traditional family structure of Turkey, women who give birth to a son gain higher hierarchical status in society (Kıray, 1976). In terms of societal norms and discourses, women are expected to convey customs and traditions to later generations, and act as a social and biological conveyer in society (Arat, 1989; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982; Kandiyoti, 1982; Müftüler-Bac, 1999). However, the position of the father in traditional family dynamics of Turkey requires maintaining authority, discipline, honour and protection. Sunar and Fişek (2005) indicated that the behaviours of women are controlled under the cover of protection and honour, and patriarchal hierarchy is rationalized and endorsed.

Müftüler-Bac (1999) explored the predicaments of women in Turkey in terms of Turkish modernization. She stated that even though there is seemingly a dichotomy between two women stereotypes as “modern, Western emancipated woman” and “traditional and unliberated woman,” they have been exposed to the same predicaments (p. 304). However, many researchers suggested that whereas women in Turkey have been emancipated by gaining the voting right, they have not been liberated (Arat, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1987; Tekeli, 1995). Müftüler-Bac (1999) highlighted that the agents of oppression over women could be considered not only as of the Mediterranean conservative culture, including the codes of shame and honour, but also Kemalist ideology as a modernist and reformist approach which dignifies an asexual and self-giving representation of Turkish woman. Although these social discourses and norms have been subjected to criticism by the feminist movement in Turkey and challenged by social changes, such as urbanization and women’s increased participation in labor force, it can still be said that many women in still encounter sexist discrimination and controlled female sexuality in various domains of life.

As Kandiyoti mentioned (1987), one of the critical methods of control over female behaviour and body can be considered as sexual purity in Turkey and other traditional and conservative cultures. It was also noted that even though men are not concerned with their own sexual virginity, they consider the virginity of their brides as

an essential condition to be married to them (Kandiyoti, 1987). On the other hand, it was observed that whereas single women have been associated with personality traits like fragile and pure, married women have been described in ways that parallel stereotypical gender roles such as self-sacrificing, nurturing, mothering, warm and mature in Turkey (Uğurlu et al., 2018). Saktanber (1995) stated that a single woman is considered as a threat, especially by people living in middle-high class areas, because they do not conform to the values and expectations of the male-dominant society. She also highlighted that there is a split in the female representations in Turkey as “a woman devoid of sexuality in total” and “a woman having nothing but sexuality” (Saktanber, 1995, p.155). According to this, the sexuality of women in Turkey can be related to the Madonna-Whore complex (Kahalon et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be said that female sexuality and body have become targets of male-dominant society in Turkey. Women are expected to act as gatekeepers of chastity and honour and carry the burden of the responsibility of men’s desire. They should be honourable mothers who transfer the traditional values or modern Western codes to the next generations by avoiding expressing their desires and seducing men in society.

Many researchers have discussed the concepts of femininity and masculinity in the context of social and political changes in the new Turkey, which corresponds to the era since the rising of conservative Islamic ideology with the election in 2002 (Çitak & Tür, 2008; Boratav et al., 2015; Alemdaroğlu, 2015). It was stated that the construction of masculinity has been developing in negotiating gender roles between the traditional ideology rising in the public sphere and emerging egalitarian and modernist discourse (Boratav, Fişek, & Ziya, 2015). Accordingly, the construction of femininity has been evolving in negotiating gender roles in New Turkey. Alemdaroğlu (2015) stated that young women in Turkey tend to escape certain forms of femininity such as traditional, backwards, or submissive. As she mentioned, in the narrative of young women, they have been exploring new narratives such as “independence,” “career success,” “chastity,” or “modernization” in order to claim their “self-value” and “respectability” (Alemdaroğlu, 2015, p. 60).

1.4. CINEMA AND FEMININITY

As it is well known, the birth of cinema and psychoanalysis corresponded to the end of the 19th century, and they have been in a close relationship since then (Greenberg & Gabbard, 1990). As Erten (2010) suggested, cinema can be considered as a mirror of the unconscious of the collective mentality. Accordingly, movies can be considered a projector that sheds light on the cultural representations and collective unconscious. Winnicott (1971) mentioned that the functions of dreaming and fantasizing are significant for metabolizing experience. Thus, one of cinema's functions might be considered as metabolizing past memories and cultural accumulation.

Charles (2004) stated that if we consider myths as a form of symbolic expression of cultural representations, the cinema helps to vivify the complex aspects of cultural narrative and human experience, which are carried by myths. She also argued that films could be considered as “contemporary myths” which provide “shared values,” “the unconscious wishes, conflicts and fears,” and thus, they help us to step into the “as-if” realm (Charles, 2004, p. 209). Therefore, cinema can be seen as a transitional space that enables us to reach difficult experiences. She explored the female identity and myths of woman through the female representations in contemporary movies by analyzing them from the psychoanalytical perspective. Her analysis showed that the myths of female representations are mostly ego dystonic and overtly oppressive, and as those myths become implicit, they can oppress us easily.

In the “Visual Pleasure and Narrative” article of Mulvey (1989), *the male gaze* was defined as a view in which women are presented as passive and pleasure objects for men. She stated three crucial points to evaluate the male gaze in the context of cinema. The first one is the camera controlled by a man, the second one is characters' looking at each other in the presented scene, and the third one is the audience who influenced by the camera and characters. If women characters are presented as passive receivers of the male gaze and men are presented as active spectators in the movie in terms of these three points, the movie objectifies women. On the other hand, Jacobsson

(1999) criticized Mulvey's male gaze ideas to explore the possibility of the female gaze in the cinema. She stated that the possession of gaze and camera is not enough to understand the male gaze, because a woman can recreate the male gaze even if she possesses the camera and can objectify the male body. Jacobsson said (1999, p. 25) that “The masculine does not have to be the active, and the feminine the passive, although it might seem relevant in the social structures of today.”

Therefore, it can be said that movies with the male gaze present women characters as passive individuals who conform to existent gender roles, whether they are traditional or modern. There are also attempts to change this sexist representation of women in cinema and explore alternative ways of depicting women in movies. For example, Kaja Silverman (1988) examined the female voice in Hollywood cinema by elaborating on female subjectivity, experimental feminist cinema, and femininity from the perspectives of psychoanalysis, film theory, and feminism. She elaborated on the negative Oedipus complex based on Julia Kristeva's writings on motherhood through movies.

When examining gender studies on the cinema of Turkey, it was observed that the studies on the female representations in the cinema of Turkey have generally used the discourse analysis methodology. Güçlü (2010) discussed the silent representation of women on the verbal and visual level through a broad scope of movies in the new cinema of Turkey. She stated that the new cinema of Turkey presents new female representations as silent and inaudible women. It was stated that women characters were either provocateurs and seducers who direct men to commit a crime, or victims. As stated by Güçlü (2010), there is a tendency of depicting female characters as either silent - passive or active - seducer. However, Cengiz (2020) approached representations of femininity and female subjectivity through five movies with female main characters in the 80s cinema of Turkey. It was observed that the female characters who are powerful, vocal, independent have also been depicted, even though they are exceptional. Erdal (2016) conducted a study on the predicaments and representations of masculinity in the new cinema of Turkey. She collected data from focused group

studies in which the participants have discussed the selected movies for the study. In addition, she also criticized the movies from a psychoanalytical perspective, reporting that the construction of masculinity has a psychic background with “inadequacies and conflicts” referring the social context as well as the intergenerationally transmitted characteristic (p. 314). Available studies indicate that there are a few qualitative studies about the relationship between gender and cinema in Turkey. In order to contribute to the literature on this topic, the present study is explained in the next section.

1.5. THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study aims to investigate the experience and representations of femininity in the new cinema of Turkey, considering the intrapsychic and socio-cultural aspects. In order to facilitate an extended discussion through three-dimensional female representations, movies without the male gaze have been selected for the study based on the three criteria discussed above. Another objective of the study is to explore the predicaments and difficulties of female representations by considering the changing social and political structure of the new Turkey.

Movies have been used in therapeutic help in different settings, such as watching movies or making films (Kuriansky et al., 2010; Mann & Chang, 2006). It was observed that movies would be a valuable and facilitative context to reach out psychoanalytical factors in individual and group therapy settings (Dermer & Hutchings, 2000). Thus, the present study aims to provide a chance to discuss how movies can be used in psychoanalytic therapeutic work. On the other hand, this study aims to be helpful for a better understanding of clients who consume popular culture in daily life and their identifications in therapy sessions. Therefore, in terms of proposed clinical implications, the present study aims to contribute to enriching clues and identifications that psychotherapists can notice while listening to their clients.

This study aims to examine the dynamics which underlie the experience of being a woman and representations of femininity in contemporary Turkey cinema.

Accordingly, the research questions of the study are:

1. How are the experience and representations of femininity expressed in the new cinema of Turkey?
2. What kind of elements, conflicts and dynamics are involved?

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

2.1. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Upon the approval by the Ethics Board Committee at Bilgi University, the primary investigator (PI) used the convenience sampling method to recruit volunteer participants. An online invitation flyer was designed and shared on social media pages and cinema-related e-mail groups to reach the participants for the study. The inclusion criteria were a) ageing between 18 and 65 and b) being interested in cinema. The inclusion criteria were created in order to balance of focus group dynamic. The exclusion criterion was created as not having acute psychiatric symptoms by considering possible adverse effects of the pandemic on people's mental health.

Brief preliminary meetings were conducted with applicants individually by the PI. First of all, PI sent a passworded informed consent form to applicants via email (See Appendix A). After signing the informed consent form of the participants, they received the Symptom Checklist-90-Revised (SCL-90-R), which is a multidimensional self-report measure, assessing the severity of current psychological symptoms and distress presenting in the last one month (Derogatis, 1975; Derogatis & Unger, 2010). They received the SCL-90-R (See Appendix B) in a passworded word document via email, asked to fill the form at one sitting, and send it back to the PI before the meetings. Every password of these documents was different and shared only with the applicant. The SCL-90-R contributed clinical observation of the PI to distinguish any acute

psychiatric symptoms of clinical depression, acute psychotic disorder, or schizophrenia. Any cut-off point and numeric data of the SCL-90-R were not used for this study because it is a checklist rather than a scale, and it was only used for additional support for clinical evaluation in terms of determining which question should be asked in the brief meeting sessions.

After receiving and examining the forms, one-on-one brief interview sessions were conducted with applicants. At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study whenever they wanted. They will be notified whether they are involved in the study after the meeting via email as written in the informed consent form. After that, PI asked the questions presented in the demographic form (See Appendix C) and their mood in the last one month. Therefore, with the help of SCL-90-R and the meetings, it was observed that none of the volunteers were having acute psychiatric symptoms. So, recruitment was conducted based on demographic diversity in terms of age and occupation. People who were denied participation were informed about psychological help opportunities (hospitals, psychological counselling services of universities) via email by saying that they might be having difficult times in pandemic and the materials in the study (SCL-90-R and interviews) might have a negative triggering impact on their mental health. The reason of this informing is that having SCL-90-R and participation to brief interview sessions might have negative psychological impacts on applicants. The participants were also informed that if they feel the need for psychological help, they can reach the PI for a recommendation for psychological support if they would like to do so. Eight participants who met the criteria were recruited.

After confirming the availability of selected participants in terms of the date and time of the planned meetings, a passworded confidentiality agreement form (See Appendix D) was sent to be signed and sent back to the PI via email. They were also informed that the only requirement was to watch the week's assigned film before the discussion meeting. Thereafter signing confidentiality agreement form of all the participants individually, semi-structured five focus group study meetings were

conducted by PI through an online platform due to the pandemic. At the beginning of the first focus group meeting, the participants were given a briefing. In the briefing section, they have informed the aim of the present study and the flow of the meetings. First of all, they were informed that they were free to use any pseudo-name if they wanted while discussions and their names and participation were to be kept confidential. Secondly, they were informed that the goal of this study is ventilating the emotions, associations, and ideas that emerged while watching the movies, mainly through the female characters. Thirdly, they were supported to express their feelings and associations as much as they wanted. They were also informed that if they felt uncomfortable sharing or hear something, they could feel free to stop or ask for help from PI. Lastly, they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time they wanted.

A semi-structured interview guide (See Appendix E) was followed during the interviews to understand the participants' experiences, emotions, and associations related to the present research goals. The questions were also presented in the chat section on Zoom. Since the concept of femininity can be considered a co-created phenomenon by individuals and society together (Meissner, 2005), focus group design is advantageous in grasping its social and collective aspects. Each of the first four meetings focused on one single movie, and participants were informed about the name and brief plot of the movie previously. The last one was conducted as a closure meeting to overview the process. The meetings were audio-recorded following obtaining the approval of the participants and transcribed by PI. Each meeting lasted about 90 minutes.

The contribution of PI to the discussion was limited. PI was positioned as a moderator who basically followed the flow of discussions and tried to facilitate the participants' contribution. The position of PI was similar to a psychoanalytic psychotherapist in the therapy room. Her contributions were limited in order to follow the associations of the participants. When needed, PI reminded the group's questions

and sometimes asked directly to the participants who could not share their ideas if they did not have a chance to share during the discussion.

2.2. PARTICIPANTS

Four women and four men participated voluntarily. The age of the female participants varied between 23-35, and the age of the male participants varied between 21-43. The mean age was 28. They all defined themselves as heterosexual. Most of them live in different cities in Turkey, and two participants have moved to foreign countries from Turkey in the last five years. Their level of income is average. They belong to various occupational groups, and their level of education range from bachelor student to master graduate. Demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 2.2.

One female participant has only attended the first two focus group meetings, and one female participant missed only the third focus group meeting. Attendance of the participants is presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1.
Attendance Information of the Participants

Focus Group Study	Number of Female Participants	Number of Male Participants	Total Number of Participants
1	4	4	8
2	4	4	8
3	3	4	7
4	3	3	6
5	3	4	7

Table 2.2.
Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant No.	Education	Subject	Currently Working	Occupation	Level of Income
1	MA graduate	Business, Economics, Industrial Engineering	Yes	Revenue management Strategy	Average
2	BA graduate	Sociology, Philosophy	No	-	Average
3	MA student	Philosophy of Religion, Theology	Yes	Teacher	Average
4	BA student	Bioengineering and Genetics	Yes	Translator, Author	Average-High
5	BA graduate	International Relations and Foreign Trade	Yes	Foreign Trade	Average
6	BA graduate	Psychology	No	-	Average
7	MA student	Clinical Psychology	No	-	Average
8	BA student	Theology	No	-	Average

2.3. INSTRUMENTS

Four movies that were used in the study have presented in the table below. They are selected based on three criteria: production time, including women starring characters, and having a scenario without the male gaze, as discussed above. Because the new cinema of Turkey has been defined as films produced since the mid-1990s in general, the movies were selected based on their production dates (Güngör, 2014). Atam (2011) suggested that the era of “the new cinema of Turkey” started by 1994. This era is different than Yeşilçam cinema in terms of themes, approaches and the role of director on the process of movie production (Atam, 2011). Additionally, the directors' birth years ranged from the 1960s to the 1980s, corresponding to the effect of generations on the new Turkish cinema (Ottone, 2017). The second criterion was selecting movies which were focusing on women's stories and including women starring characters. The third one was that the scenarios of the movies should be written with the awareness of the male gaze. The movies were evaluated based on the male gaze criteria of Suzanna Danuta Walters (1995, p. 57-58). These four movies tend to have a perspective that is far from the male gaze. They all focus on stories of women living in Turkey. All the main characters are women. On the other hand, the order of movies was decided based on their themes, considering the possibility of evoking intense emotions and the group dynamics. For instance, in the first movie, the story focuses on five sisters who have traumatic experiences. It is likely that the participants could have a distance from the story in terms of feeling identified with the movie characters. The second movie has similar content with the first movie, but differently, it focuses on the stories of two women characters in the scope of their individual experiences. The third movie focuses on the relationship between a daughter and a mother. It has a potential of evoking more intense feelings and identification of the participants with the movie characters, because it mainly focuses on a separation-individuation process. Lastly, the final movie has a hopeful story of a theater group of women. Thus, it was considered to be a good option as a closure movie.

Table 2.3.*List of Movies Used in the Study*

Title of The Movie	Director	Production Year	Duration
Mustang	Deniz Gamze Ergüven	2015	97'
Tereddüt	Yeşim Ustaoglu	2016	105'
Ana Yurdu	Senem Tüzen	2015	93'
Kraliçe Lear	Pelin Esmer	2019	84'

2.3.1. Mustang

2.3.1.1. Identification Tag of the Film

Title: Mustang

Scenario: Deniz Gamze Ergüven, Alice Winocour

Director: Deniz Gamze Ergüven

Producer: Charles Gillibert

Cast: Güneş Şensoy (Lale), Doğa Zeynep Doğuşlu (Nur), Elit İşcan (Ece), Tuğba Sunguroğlu (Selma), İlayda Akdoğan (Sonay), Nihal Koldaş (Grandmother), Ayberk Pekcan (Uncle Erol)

Genre: Drama

Year of production: 2015

Duration: 97'

2.3.1.2 Setup and Main Characters

Mustang is a story of five sisters who live in a small town in the Black Sea region of Turkey. In order of age, they are Sonay, Selma, Ece, Nur, and Lale from the oldest to youngest. They are all underage teenagers, living with their grandmother and

uncle. They lost their mother and father ten years ago in an accident. So, their custody belongs to the grandmother and uncle. Briefly, this story is about conflicts, predicaments, and traumas that they encounter, fight or escape.

The film starts with Lale's voice, the youngest and rebellious one of the five sisters. She said, "Everything changed in the twinkle of an eye. First, we had it easy, and then suddenly everything went to shit." In the opening scene, on the last day of school, Lale says an emotional farewell to her teacher, who is moving to Istanbul permanently. The sisters decide to walk home with their friends on that sunny day. They drop by the beach and play with their schoolmates in the shallow sea. They start to play a game called camel wrestling (*deve güreşi*), the girls sit on the boys' shoulders and try to flop each other. Then, they come back home joyously without knowing the effects of this simple fun game on their lives.

Upon this day, women in their neighbourhood spread rumours about the girls and their chastity. Their grandmother accuses them of pleasuring themselves while playing with the boys, and their uncle Erol gets furious. The sisters are banned from going outside, even for school. Everything related to joy or pleasure becomes forbidden in the house, such as chewing gum, sunbathing in the backyard, wearing shorts, or listening to music. The grandmother makes them wear conservative long dresses and clothes with dull brownish colours. With the help of the neighbours, they start to learn how to cook, sew, knead the dough, and clean. Hence, they find themselves in a prison-like bridal factory because they feel that their grandmother and relatives try to prepare them for marriage. During these days, the girls try to escape from there in various ways. Sonay, the oldest sister, meets her lover sometimes secretly. One day, they learn that a soccer game will be played with only female audiences because men were banned for hooliganism. Lale, a soccer fan, tries to go to the match by pursuing her older sisters even though she was banned from going by Erol. They escape from the house and go to the match with the help of Yasin. The grandmother and the other women do their best to prevent their uncle's finding out their escape. Eventually, the grandmother tries to arrange a marriage for the girls via matchmaker, and soon enough, a suitor and his

family come home for Sonay. At that moment, she screams and says that she can only be married to her lover. So, Selma, the second oldest sister, has to marry the suitor instead of her. Selma's parents-in-law want to see a bloodstain on the sheet to test her virginity on the wedding night. In the virginity test scene, Selma says, "I slept with all the world."

The next one for the marriage is Ece. It can be seen that she was sexually abused by her uncle Erol. As Lale says, she starts acting "dangerously." She has a sexual interaction with a random boy in Erol's car while waiting for his coming into the parked car. Then she commits suicide and dies after the scene of joking and laughing at the launch table. Now, there are two girls left in the house. When Erol attempts to abuse Nur, their grandmother warns him and says, "Stop this, did you understand?" Then, the grandmother decides to engage her to be married. On the wedding night of Nur, Lale convinces her to escape, and they succeed in escape from the house with the help of Yasin, who is a friend of Lale since the match day. Finally, they arrive in Istanbul and find the teacher of Lale.

2.3.2. Tereddüt (Clair Obscur)

2.3.2.1. Identification Tag of the Film

Title: Tereddüt (Clair Obscur)

Scenario: Yeşim Ustaoglu

Director: Yeşim Ustaoglu

Producer: Yeşim Ustaoglu, Marianne Slot

Cast: Funda Eryigit (Şehnaz), Ecem Uzun (Elmas), Mehmet Kurtuluş (Cem), Okan Yalabık (Umut), Serkan Keskin (Husband), Sema Poyraz (Mother-in-Law)

Genre: Drama

Year of production: 2016

Duration: 105'

2.3.2.2. Setup and Main Characters

Clair Obscur is a story of two women who seem pretty different from each other. They have entirely different backgrounds. Şehnaz is a young psychiatrist who works in a hospital in a small remote town near Istanbul to accomplish her mandatory official duty. She is married to Cem. On weekdays, she lives in a simple flat in the town alone. However, at weekends, she goes to their house in Istanbul's hip neighbourhood to see her husband and dog.

On the other hand, Elmas is a young bride who lives in the town with her older husband and his diabetic bedbound mother. She was married off to a man who is almost 20 years older than her. Even though she was underage for marriage, her age was increased by her family via law-suit. In her document, she seems 18, but actually, she is a 15-year-old teenager. It means that, when she was married, she was only 13-year-old. One night, Elmas murdered her husband and the mother-in-law. She is hospitalized and become one of the patients of Şehnaz. Herewith, they meet each other.

Elmas grew up in a small village. She has been married off with her husband by her family. In the therapy sessions, Şehnaz tries to talk to her about her problems and past. Elmas seems an abused child who feels shame, guilt, fear and anger. She refused to talk about her marriage, sexual life and family. She is also a religious person who believes that her wishes come true if she does something right. Every night she does her responsibility as a wife who serves her body to satisfy her husband's needs. After having sex, she immediately goes to the bathroom and does the whole body's ritual ablution. She cries and suffers every night. She is banned from going outside. She can only leave the house for taking away her husband's lunch. Otherwise, her duty is taking care of her mother-in-law and doing housework. The only scene in which she is doing something for herself is smoking on the balcony secretly. So, one day she murdered two of them, and she expressed that she did not remember this and did not do such a thing to her husband. On the other hand, she tries to express her childhood

traumas by role-playing in the therapy sessions. It implies a possible childhood abuse in her childhood.

Umut is a colleague of Şehnaz in the hospital. They are also friends who have a warm and genuine relationship. On the other hand, Şehnaz has some problems in her marriage. Cem seems an egocentric man who does not care about the other's needs and opinions but his needs and desires. In one scene, while Cem cooking a meal, she says, “Do you want to drink raki today?” He answers, “Can you bring that wine.” He does not even care about her saying. They have an unsatisfying sexual life in which Cem always watch porn just after they have sex. However, sexuality is one of their relational problems, mostly related to appreciation, approval and respect. Cem is not involved in her life in general. She comes home in the city at weekends and meets their friends who work with Cem. We have never seen a friend of Şehnaz except for Umut. In addition to that, Şehnaz and Umut start to establish a close friendship and romantic bond while listening and talk to each other, watching the sea, drinking raki together. At the end of the day that they have romantic times together, they have passionate sex. After that, she comes back to the city's house, yet Cem suspects something about her. Upon that day, they fight tooth and nail after having dinner on the table. He almost locks her in the house by not letting her go out. After that night, she leaves the house and drives her car with a smile and tears on her face.

2.3.3. Ana Yurdu (Mother’s Land)

2.3.3.1. Identification Tag of the Film

Title: Ana Yurdu (Mother’s Land)

Scenario: Senem Tüzen

Director: Senem Tüzen

Producer: Senem Tüzen, Olena Yershova, Adam Isenberg

Cast: Esra Sezen Bilgin (Nesrin), Nihal Koldaş (Halise), Semih Aydın (Halil), Fatma Kısa (Emine)

Genre: Drama

Year of production: 2015

Duration: 93'

2.3.3.2. Setup and Main Characters

Nesrin is a modern and young woman who got divorced and quit her job in the city. She comes to her deceased grandmother's house in a small village to finish his novel. However, the mother, Halise, come to the house even though she is not invited at all. Even though Nesrin expressed her desire to be alone to write her novel, she accepts what the mother wishes at the end of the day.

Halise is a retired teacher who seems different from the other women in the village. On the other hand, she has mental health problems because she keeps saying that she hears something about the future and life. She has delusions and auditory hallucinations. She is also strictly religious and keeps trying to convince Nesrin to do religious rituals. They have an intense merger relationship. After almost every conflict, the mother cries and says sorry, and Nesrin ends up accepting what she refused beforehand.

There are so many women in the village except two men, including one repairman and one with mental retardation. Emine, who is the only friend of Nesrin in the village, is a single mother. She was left by a man who promised to marry her. She tries to maintain her children by shepherding. However, most of the women in the village consider Emine as a bad woman. They exclude her from society. However, Nesrin establishes a close relationship with Emine and tries to help her as much as she can.

Nesrin has difficulty writing and living with her mother in the same house while bearing delusional thoughts and childish wishes of her mother. At the end of the movie,

she has sex with a man with mental retardation. Even though she initiates the sexual relationship, the sex seems like rape or a wild animals' sex.

2.3.4. Kraliçe Lear (Queen Lear)

2.3.4.1. Identification Tag of the Film

Title: Kraliçe Lear (Queen Lear)

Scenario: Pelin Esmer

Director: Pelin Esmer

Producer: Pelin Esmer, Dilde Mahalli

Cast: Behiye Yanık, Cennet Güneş, Fatma Fatih, Ümmü Kurt, Zeynep Fatih, Hüseyin Arslanköylü, Ahmet Aksoy, Erkan Güzel

Genre: Documentary

Year of production: 2019

Duration: 84'

2.3.4.2. Setup and Main Characters

At the beginning of the 2000s, a small group of country women founded a theatre group in Toroslar which is located in the southern part of Turkey. These women have continued to play their stories at the stages in villages for almost 17 years. In this movie, five women of this theatre group came together and started to play Shakespeare's "King Lear" tragedy in remote villages. While performing the play, the "King" turned into a "Queen" who tried to divide her lands between her three daughters. She declared that the largest land will be given to the one who loves her most.

In the opening scene, five women were sitting in the sea while talking to each other. After that, they went to rehearse the play in an ancient theatre. They were

preparing to go on tour to perform in different villages around their hometown called “Arslanköy.” In every village that they went to, they tried to communicate with the villagers to invite them to watch the play. They were especially talking to the women in these villages about acting and joining the theatre group. These women were trying to encourage the other women by telling their own stories about starting to play. At the same time, these five women were listening to the problems, opinions and stories of the other villagers. By doing that, they were establishing communication off the stage. Sometimes they encountered bureaucratic difficulties such as trouble in receiving permission from the mukhtar of the village to perform in this village. However, they kept trying to feel motivated and pursue their dreams by following their genuine wishes. Even though they do not have professional acting style and costumes, they did not hesitate to go on the stage.

During their tour from one village to the other, they were travelling in a van. While traveling on rough roads, they were discussing destiny through their lives. Some of them argued that destiny is determined, and people cannot change their destiny. They used the word “kismet” which means unknowable and unchangeable things. On the other hand, Zeynep argued that destiny is created by individuals by making choices and acting on their decisions. She said, “I choosed to act, then it became my destiny. I could have chosen not to do it. Then it would be my destiny.” However, Fatma started to talk about the uncertainty of birth and death to support the idea of kismet. The movie ended with a scene in which these five women were dancing.

2.4. DATA ANALYSIS

All interviews were audiotaped and then transcribed by PI. Five focus group studies provided a total of 450 minutes of recorded data. The transcriptions of the meetings were read and re-read before starting to code to be familiarized with the data. PI used *Grounded Theory* (Charmaz, 2006) to understand the unique experiences of participants. Grounded Theory can be defined as conceptualizing the emerging patterns

and structures in data through the process of constant comparison (Walsh et al., 2015). However, in the conceptualization process, no theory was included in this study. The purpose was to ground a narrative based on the data by grasping participants' authentic contributions.

According to Charmaz's approach (2006), three steps were followed: (1) initial line-by-line coding, (2) focused coding, and (3) thematic coding. In the line-by-line coding process, all the sentences were coded by turning them into a passive voice focusing on verbs and emotions that the participants told. In the second step, the initial codes were combined under more general concepts as focused codes. Lastly, the themes were created by combining the focused codes based on their themes and contents. During the data coding process, the memo writing steps were included. MAXQDA (version 2020) Software program was utilized to code each meeting and form the themes. Interpretations were discussed and reinterpreted, if necessary, with the researcher to determine the final themes. Analysis was conducted and reported separately for each focus group study. However, a few repeated similar themes were observed in the analysis of different meetings. Since the experience of being a woman is closely related to the concept of self as an intrapsychic concept, findings and movies will be discussed from the point of psychoanalytic approach in the discussion section.

2.5. THE RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

As a master level clinical psychology student, I have always thought that predicaments of gender roles have an immense effect on the development of personality and behaviours. During my internship and clinical psychology education at İstanbul Bilgi University, I have had a chance to appreciate the uniqueness of the effects of gender roles on each individual with the help of approaching from the psychodynamic orientation. However, in the therapy room, as I experiencing transference/countertransference relationships, I have also realized that both a therapist and a client have been carrying shared gender role expectations unconsciously. Since

we, therapists and clients, as two subjects of a therapeutic relationship, live and exist in a society, we all have grounded in a narrative of gender. I believe that narrative of gender is co-created, intergenerational transmitted and inevitable discourse. Hence, my interest ended up with an examination of gender in a group dynamic and narrative. In addition to that, I designed a focus group study and preferred to use Grounded Theory for analysis.

This research is also crucial for me because, as a woman who grew up in a small city in Turkey, I have always found myself questioning the boundaries of gender roles, conflicting with my family's expectations, and feeling in a challenge of being a woman. When I started to live in a metropolis apart from family, I observed how the challenge persisted in different settings contrary to my expectations. It made me realize how much of various ways of living, challenging and expressing are experienced by women from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Observing such different ways of existence made me curious about exploring the representations of femininity.

On the other hand, cinema has always aroused my interest. I have had various art courses focusing on contemporary art and cinema in my bachelor's studies on psychology. As it is well known, the birth of cinema and psychoanalysis corresponded to the end of the 19th century, and they have been in a close relationship since then (Greenberg & Gabbard, 1990). So, in this study, I considered cinema as a reflection of the collective unconscious through an auteur's gaze on audiences' mind. Considering the current political atmosphere of Turkey, my interest turned into the new cinema of Turkey. Therefore, the present study aims to portray a profound exploration and better comprehension of the experience and representations of femininity in the new cinema of Turkey, considering the intrapsychic aspects and social structure of gender, such as identification, inequality or sense of self.

The ultimate goal of this study is to be able to approach representations of femininity and comprehend people's dynamics from a broader perspective. Therefore, during the focus group meetings, my position was close to a psychotherapist's position in a psychoanalytical therapy session. I began to speak just to remind research questions

and follow the flow of discussions by mirroring and summarizing. For the most part, discussions were like free association technique which a group carried out. The hardest part of being in the focus group study was trying to be neutral and not to bring my therapist identity to the discussions. Sometimes, I found myself linking the associations, commenting on symbols from a psychoanalytical perspective as dreams, or having an urge to interpret. However, being there as a moderator was so precious for me because of giving me the chance of looking from various point of view, observing how opposite sides conflict with each other, and change participants' opinions. The whole process was exciting and fruitful for me as a woman and a psychotherapist.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Grounded Theory was used to analyze focus group data. It was applied to every discussion separately to identify prominent themes for each movie. The results of the analysis were reported by subsuming under the titles of the movies below. Thereafter, the fifth focus group meeting as a closure session was analyzed in the same way, and its results were reported under the title of closure session. Themes were reported in parallel with the flow of events in the movies. It was observed that all the movies have a similar flow in terms of the sequence of the events. They started with presenting inner-outer conflicts and relationships of the characters and the social settings of the environments. Following this introduction, they continued with moments that the characters encountered these conflicts. Finally, they displayed exploration of the coping strategies of the characters. Therefore, the themes of the meetings were ordered by following the flow of the movies. The themes are presented in Table 3.1

Table 3.1.
The Themes of the Research

Meetings		Themes				
Mustang	Internalized Sexism	Sexual and Gender Based Oppression between Women and Men	Sense of Agency over One's Body & Self	Having the Courage to Object and to Express One's Desire	Splitting: Tradition and Religion	
Tereddüt (Clair Obscur)	Being Exposed to Violence	Freedom of Choice over One's Life	Being Unseen and Unheard in a Relationship	Homicide as a Solution	Building a Relationship as a Solution	Comparing Activity and Passivity of Female Characters
Ana Yurdu (Motherland)	Separation and Individuation	Social Roles	Sexuality	Splitting: Tradition and Religion		
Kraliçe Lear (Queen Lear)	Suppression and Authority	Destiny, Desire and Kismet	Meaning Making Effort	Having a Power of Creation and Transformation	Solidarity	Going into Action
Closure Session	Equality	Suppression and Tradition	Solution	LGBT+		

3.1. MUSTANG

3.1.1. Internalized Sexism

When considering the general outline of the discussion, it can be said that participants focused on how the behaviours of women towards other women are in the movie. It was pointed out that older and more experienced women might try to protect the girls from men's possible violence and harm by “restricting the girls' lives” and “forcing them to marry.” However, their protection ways were considered as “damaging” and “punitive.” It was also noted that their efforts aimed to “adapt the girls to the patriarchal system.” Many participants have agreed that the female characters' protective behaviours have protected the oppressive system rather than opposing the system codes. Some participants approached the grandmother's behaviours towards the grandchildren in terms of “solidarity” and “identification”:

The grandmother punished the girls when a female neighbour warned her... However still, the transformer was broken by the women in the movie. The grandmother tried to defend the girls against the uncle by trying to calm him down... The women in the movie were trying to act with solidarity with each other quote-unquote, yet, the purpose of this solidarity is not to break or to disrupt the patriarchal system. However, to adapt girls into the system, they are trying to act with solidarity by protecting the norms and rules of the system. However, they are protecting the girls against men there in their way.

Another participant commented about the snitcher movie character in terms of solidarity between women:

Even though the behaviours and attitudes of the women towards the children were considered wrong and cruel by the girls, we see that the grandmother protected the children from their uncle. She helped Sonay marry the boy she loved, so the whole environment cannot be considered bad... Some people were

trying to secure... Even the snitcher woman was trying to protect them in her own way. Maybe these women have experienced similar problems as the girls went through.

In addition to that, participants discussed the meaning of “solidarity,” and questioned the motivations behind “having masculine roles” by women in the movie, such as “adopting the girls to the system.” In a dialogue in the movie, the grandmother said, “We all have been there, done that.” Some of the participants interpreted that the grandmother and other women in the movie might have similar experiences as the girls live through, such as “getting married off in the childhood” or “being abused” by a relative. One participant mentioned that the relationship between the older women in the movie and the girls seemed like a vicious circle because they all lived through the same predicaments, and they built the same coping strategies as “getting married” and “keeping quiet.” So that, the coping strategies of the female characters were associated with the “intergenerational transmission of gender roles” in the discussion.

Even though the female characters were aware of conflicts and problems that women live through, they have learned to cope with them instead of standing up against them. So, they did not try to break the established system; they developed some coping mechanism to deal with it.

Upon the intergenerational transmission of gender roles discussion, it was mentioned that their uncle, who has sexually abused his nieces, was not judged either by his mother or by the law. Some participants expressed that the uncle would not be “paying for his crime” in all likelihood. The grandmother did not have the courage to stop him until Ece, middle sister, committed suicide. It can be said that their grandmother knows about and ignores the sexual abuse by the uncle:

After the middle girl committed suicide, the grandmother tried to stop the uncle when he approached the younger girl's room. She said, “Do not continue this anymore.” So, we understand that the grandmother knew about the previous

sexual abuses, and said nothing to stop him. She could only have the courage to react after losing her grandchild... The girls, as victims of abuse, could not have the courage to oppose their uncle.

During the discussion on the transmitted intergenerational gender roles, some of the participants have linked the effort of protecting the women in the movie from protecting the system they suffer from. However, as opposed to the frequency and precision of the associations regarding the sexual experiences in adolescence, the word “child sexual abuse” has been uttered only a few times by the participants. The word “incest” was never mentioned in the discussion. Similarly, the uncle's scene of child sexual abuse was implied rather than being shown explicitly in the movie.

3.1.2. Sexual and Gender Based Oppression between Women and Men

All the participants contributed to the discussion about the experience of sexuality in adolescence in some way. Firstly, they have questioned the possibility of sexual experiences in adolescence in Turkey as it was depicted in the movie. At one point, the discussion turned to a reality check through the scenes of the sexual experience of Ece in the car and the girls playing in the water. In some participants' associations, the sexual experiences of the girls in the movie were considered “rebellious and protest action” and “a natural reaction to the sexual oppression.” One female participant expressed that sexuality was depicted as the only way of rebellion in the movie. She came up with that rebellion in adolescence can be expressed not only through sexuality but also through insisting upon going to school. She shared her personal experiences about rebellion in her adolescence, such as continuing her education regardless of what people think about going to school. Most of the participants linked the sexual experience as a “rebellious act” to the sexual and gender-based oppression which the girls have been exposed in the movie.

It makes sense that the women protest something over sexuality because sexuality has always been forbidden for women. There are various ways of inhibition and suppression through sexuality. For example, in the movie, every time the girls wanted to go out, they heard restrictive expressions such as “cover yourself properly,” “do it that way,” or “do not wear this.” Most women living in Turkey hear these expressions. So, I think the depiction of sexuality in the movie as a way of rebellion was realistic.

Upon discussing the sexual experiences of the teenage girls, participants started to argue the experience of sexual repression in terms of gender differences. Some of the male participants stated that male individuals experience sexual repression as well as female individuals in society, and there was no such example in the movie. However, some of the male participants expressed that the uncle and the other teenage boys in the movie were examples of how male individuals are exposed to sexual repression by Turkish society's “conservative culture.” It was stated that “sexual abuse” by the uncle can be considered as a consequence of repressed sexuality in society. The trail of thought stated that the sexual constraints and suppression that men are exposed to appears differently compared to women. Some of the participants remarked that maybe men who cannot have healthy sexuality because of the sexual suppression in the society develop some sexual deviations as the uncle did in the movie. Most of the female participants have identified themselves with the girls in the movie to search for a way out from the family and community pressure. They stated that they had encountered the “conservative codes” by entering puberty. One of the female participants stated that men experience suppression in the “men's world,” but they choose to be a part of the system even though they have the power to change it. She strictly highlighted that the only escape way for women in Turkey is in a struggle to survive by either fighting or adopting because they have been exposed to physical violence and might be a victim of femicide. It was observed that the participants started to discuss the current Turkey agenda in terms of women's right and experiences through the female representations

in the movie. Thereupon, one male participant said that he has never experienced the kind of sexual constrain as in the movie, and he felt guilt and sadness.

I mean, if we let sexuality be a little bit more, it would not be such a bad thing for this society, or it would not be worse than now... Nobody would approach animals or children sexually; nobody would try to abuse their own nephew.

Towards the end of the discussion, sexuality in the movie and Turkish society was considered “taboo.” Some of the participants mentioned how they carry and introject the societal codes and taboos about sexuality.

The only thing that bothers me is not the way of the depiction of sexuality but also the consideration of sexuality as the only way of rebellion in the film. Maybe the reason is that I have grown up with sexual taboos. In other words, as in every conservative society, as we grew up in an environment where tradition and religion were ultimately reconciled, for us, perhaps, many issues were spoken very little or learned soon before one’s marriage... These issues stem from the way we grew up, but you know, we have those taboos. Okay, I admit it, maybe because of my taboos; this part (related to sexuality) caught my attention in the movie.

3.1.3. Sense of Agency over One’s Body & Self

The concept of “body” was almost never mentioned in the discussion directly. However, the participants questioned many issues related to the sense of agency on the body, such as being a target of criticism, clothing style or chastity. Hence, the theme of a sense of agency is discussed under three titles: “virginity,” “committing suicide,” and “being a target of criticism.”

3.1.3.1. Virginitv

The participants uttered the virginitv theme through two scenes of “virginitv check” in the movie. However, most of the participants considered the realism of the scenes of virginitv check as controversial compared to the societv of Turkey. They explicitly questioned how Selma could say that she might have slept the whole world to the doctor when she was examined after her wedding night. During the discussion on the realitv check through the virginitv examination scenes, one female participant expressed that she did not notice their uncle “went that far,” whereas another female participant said that the female characters seemed too courageous to be true for Turkish societv. Hereupon, one of the female participants interpreted the discussion of realism through the virginitv scene as a rationalization. She approached the discussion from a symbolic perspective:

About the virginitv check scene, the girl saying that she might have slept with the whole world is one of the most important points... After all, the parents of the children died ten years ago. At the beginning of the film, we get this information, and we do not know how they died... Five siblings grew by upholding and clinging to each other... Their caregivers are the grandmother and the uncle... It seems to me that when we are born, we see our parents first. However, those children did not spend sufficient time with their parents. Their uncle is like an entrance door that is opened to the male-dominated world and outside of the home. It seems to me that the girl's saying, “I may have slept with the whole world,” might be related to the destruction of her world starting from the abuse by her uncle.

3.1.3.2. Committing Suicide

Another critical point of the sense of agency on the body that emerged in the participants' associations was committing suicide through the scene of Ece shooting herself death. In certain participants' associations, committing suicide was related to “a strong decision,” “rebellion,” “opposing to a life determined by the society,” “voluntary act,” and “brave action.” On the other hand, one of the participants has approached Ece as the most passive character in the movie and started discussing activity and passivity as ways of rebellion. Ece was associated with “playful,” “brave,” “angry,” and “bored” adjectives in the discussion.

I think that committing suicide or choosing to fight against the problems are bold decisions that cannot be competed with each other. The important thing is being able to choose something over the options... Having the power to choose.

3.1.3.3. Being a Target of Criticism

It was noted that being a woman in “this geography” was generally associated with being a target of criticism no matter how a woman dresses. The scene in which the girls had forcefully been dressed modestly was mentioned in the discussion. It was stated that the level of oppression that the girls have been exposed to had been aggravated by reaching puberty. In Turkey, no matter in which style or how much a woman covers herself, her body gets criticized by everyone. Thus, the female body is considered as a target of criticism. One of the female participants said that being a woman in Turkey is like being a “whipping boy” because everyone, including women, talks about the female body as having the right to criticize. However, the veiling style of the female characters became a topic of discussion through conservatism. Two female participants have pointed their identifications with the girls concerning being a target of criticism:

Women should be chaste. Women should pay attention to the volume of their laughter and speech in public. The only sex which is a target of criticism in society is woman... Maybe our misfortune is to be a woman in this geography, to be unshielded against criticism all the time because they talk only about us (women)... So, even if you veil yourself, they keep talking about you because then the way of veiling matters.

Another female participant shared her personal experience relating the movie characters:

When I was 12 -13 years old, I encountered something in my mother's eyes, which I had never seen before. She said, "What were you doing with boys by holding their hands, for all the world to see? Will you be a "bad woman" or what?" I do not use the "b" word here. The moment that I heard these sentences was like boiling water pouring over my head... The environment I lived in was conservative. However, I felt the devastating impacts of this environment when I became a teenager. When I started to feel sexual feelings by puberty, I have been exposed to more constraint.

3.1.4. Having the Courage to Object and to Express One's Desire

The theme of having the courage to object and expressing one's desire emerged as an essential point in the discussion. In the discussion, expressing one's desires were associated with having "power to cope," "resilience," and "willpower." Especially in some of the participants' associations, Sonay, who expressed her desire, and said no to her grandmother, was considered as "having the courage to make things in her own way," "having a protest attitude," and "laying a claim over her dreams and desires." In a scene in which she had been tried to get married off with a suitor, her screams were highlighted many times in the discussion as a way of "manifestation of willpower" and

“rebellion.” Accordingly, the meaning of rebellion was questioned in terms of the object of the rebellion. It has been stated that all the ways of rebellion in the movie were against the male-dominant society and its norms.

On the other hand, upon the discussion about rebellion, the scenes in which Lale and Nur escaped from the house were associated with “escaping from the prison.” The girls' houses frequently associated with prison in which the girls were “captured and punished.” Accordingly, some of the participants linked the prison-like the “lack of a sense of agency” because the girls did not have the power to choose over their lives. Some of the participants expressed a feeling of “relief” upon the scene of the girls' escaping from the house.

Another important point that emerged in the participants' association about having the courage to object was “building a relationship outside the family.” It can be deduced from the discussion that the girls who could object to their family were the ones who could build relationships based on “love” and “trust” with people outside the family. Whereas Sonay, who could “scream” her desire, had a relationship with her lover, Lale, who could escape from the house by persuading and encouraging Nur, had a friendly relationship with Yasin, who helped those girls a couple of times. On the other hand, it was stated that three siblings, who could not have the courage to express their desires and to object, had not built a relationship with a person outside the family: Selma, who obeyed the grandmother and married a suitor, Ece, who committed suicide, and Nur, who almost accepted to marry with an older man. The scene of Nur's eating biscuits and suddenly spitting out them was associated with a “metaphor of expressing a desire” because the brand name of the biscuit was “desire.” Moreover, in that scene, Nur was eating biscuits which a suitor gave Ece before her suicide. Based on this metaphor, the desire was associated with “disgust” and “the power of taking action.” Selma was considered a “passive” and “obedient” character in certain participants' associations because she did what she had to do. One female participant explained the importance of bonding a relationship with someone outside the family based on love and trust as a protective factor:

The elder sibling (Sonay) had established a love-trust relationship with someone outside the family. She had found the courage to object and declare her desire to marry her lover... She objected and went on her own path. We do not see that the other three middle siblings formed a trusting and loving relationship with someone outside the family. Finally, the movie already begins with the little sister (Lale) hugging her teacher. Lale was upset because her teacher was leaving. She had a loving relationship with her teacher as someone outside the family. She also had a sweet and friendly relationship with Yasin based on love and trust. These two girls (Sonay and Lale) have learned that they can trust people outside the family. Therefore, Lale is the youngest girl who dares to escape from the house.

The participants' expressions mainly referred to having the courage to object, highlighted that the female characters in the movie were considered “too courageous to be true” compared to female teenagers living in Turkey. In the discussion, the solution ways and behaviours of the girls in the movie mainly were considered “too sharp,” “too careless,” and “too protest.” Some of the mentioned examples of “too courageous” behaviours were “escaping of Lale and Nur,” “committing suicide of Ece,” “secret meetings of Sonay with her boyfriend,” and “their playing with their classmates in the sea.”

I think that suicide is one of the most courageous voluntary acts. Ece has been declared that she owns her body and her choices by ending her life. So, it seemed “too protest” to me that she can commit suicide. She does not seem like she could do this brave act.

Another participant said:

The culture of a village in Turkey should be stricter and more repressive than the village in the movie. You know, people raised in this kind of environment

should be more careful to hide romantic relationships. However, the girls in the film seemed a little bit more careless and bolder than they should.

On the other hand, some of the participants stated that the girls' attitudes, who objected to the repressive culture, are realistic as much as the attitudes of obedient characters are. When realism of the movie was started to be discussed frequently, some of the participants invited the group to talk about “as if” conditions. They emphasized that there is a “general belief and assumption” that the girls cannot take these bold and courageous actions:

Sexuality is a fundamental impulse, whether we are aware of it or not. We all interpret many things based on our beliefs on sexuality. However, it seemed to me that our approaches to the characters' behaviours might result from the traditional codes about sexuality. In the beginning, we insistently said, how could these girls behave like this? Why didn't they behave like that? What if they actually behaved as they did in the movie. We believe that they will not be able to act courageously. We asked, “Is it possible to go to play in the sea under such pressure?” Nevertheless, they went to play in the sea with their school friends. Is it possible to make love with a boy in her uncle's car? So, she made love to a boy... No one asked how the boy could make love with a girl... Hence, we have traditional and rigid internalized codes. I felt like we can get rid of these codes only by thinking and being aware of them.

Towards the end of the discussion, it was mentioned that the differentiation of stories and coping ways of five sisters might represent and symbolize how broad the scope of women in Turkey is. Whereas one of them may represent the women who are not able to escape and object, the other one may represent the women who feel that the only way of escaping is suicide. It was also mentioned that the stories of Sonay and Lale might represent the women who can find a solution somehow.

3.1.5. Splitting: Tradition and Religion

The relationship between tradition and religion emerged as another critical topic in the discussion. Some of the participants declared that religion and tradition are separate constructs, unlike those depicted in the movie. So, they needed to be approached by separating because something seemingly belongs to the religion belongs to the “traditional culture.” However, some other participants stated that tradition and religion are enmeshed structures, including similar norms and codes. Thus, it is hard to approach them separately. Nevertheless, one of the significant predicaments of the female characters in the movie was “traditional codes and moral sentiment.”

We live in a geography where religion and tradition are not very different from each other... Everything in the traditional context is presented as if it belongs to the religion... In the movie, even though men act as “guardians of morality,” they set up a hoochfest and drink raki altogether. Drinking alcohol is not appropriate from a religious perspective, yet it is a part of the traditional culture.

3.2. TEREDDÜT (CLAIR OBSCUR)

3.2.1. Being Exposed to Violence

One of the important themes that emerged in the discussion was that both female characters have been exposed to violence in the movie. It was observed that there was a tendency to make a comparison between Şehnaz and Elmas in terms of their predicaments and conflicts in their lives. Some of the participants stated that Elmas had been struggling with much more difficult problems than Şehnaz had. In certain participants' association, the predicaments of Elmas were associated with “serious,” “urgent,” “traumatic,” “concrete,” “explicit,” “not-negotiable,” and

“unsolvable” adjectives. All the female participants mentioned that Elmas was sexually abused by her husband, and she has been married off underage. There was a discussion about the personality of husband. Some of the participants noted that the husband was not depicted as a “disgusting man” and “monster,” yet he seemed like “confused” and “desperate.” On the other hand, the others mentioned that since he had sexual intercourse with a child as “rape,” his “pseudo” compassion and confusions were not important at all. Some of the participants stated that Elmas might also be a victim of incestuous sexual child abuse according to the symbolic play in therapy sessions. However, some of the participants remarked that Şehnaz had been struggling difficult problems as much as Elmas had. The predicaments which Şehnaz lived through were associated with “psychological manipulation,” “psychological violence,” “abstract issues,” and “obscure” adjectives. In the discussion, the issues of Şehnaz were linked to her relational and marital problems which can be more “subtle” and “hurtful.” It was stated that noticing the psychological violence in a romantic relationship might be more difficult than noticing “concrete” and “clinically traumatic” violence.

Şehnaz does not seem to have much trouble in her life at the beginning of the movie. She is a modern woman. She is doing her job weekdays and returning to Istanbul on the weekends. However, towards the end of the film, we have seen that she had severe problems. However, Elmas' issues which are more urgent and prior, should not suppress and overshadow the issues of Şehnaz. I mean, towards the end, we saw that Şehnaz had a very narcissistic partner. It caught my attention that she said, “Should I be your whore?” and Cem responded that it means nothing to him.

3.2.2. Freedom of Choice over One’s Life

All participants compared Şehnaz and Elmas in terms of having the freedom of choice over their lives. Most of the participants stated that Elmas did not have the

freedom of choice because it was seized by her family. It was also noted that Elmas was deprived of not only “her willpower” but also “psychological integrity.” In certain participants’ association, Elmas was associated with “having a strong feeling of guilt,” “having a rigid religious belief,” “having compulsive cleaning behaviours,” and “feeling desperate helplessness.” In the discussion, the scene of having ritual ablution after the sexual intercourse was considered as an indicator of how much “feeling of guilt” she had. It was also mentioned by half of the participants that her “obsessive” behaviors seemed to be related to “punitive” and “fear-based” religious understanding of the society.

I think that Elmas had a punitive religious understanding that suppressed her. When Şehnaz asked Elmas about her sexuality with her husband, Elmas said, “I cannot talk about it because it is a sin.” Elmas' mother probably have said, “My daughter, Allah wants us to marry. So, you won't go to school anymore. Look, you will marry, you will have a husband, and Allah will like it.”

On the other hand, Şehnaz was associated with “having willpower” and “having the freedom of choice to escape” by some of the participants. In the discussions, Şehnaz was considered as a “free and educated” woman who “has wrong decisions.” However, in one of the participants’ association, the predicament of Şehnaz was the internalization of “powerlessness” and “worthlessness” rather than having the freedom of choice.

3.2.3. Being Unseen and Unheard in a Relationship

One of the important themes that emerged in the discussion was “feeling/being unseen and unheard in romantic relationships.” In some participants’ associations, the main predicament of Şehnaz in her life was stated as “not being able to exist” in her relationship. The expressions which the participants particularly referred to Şehnaz were “feeling inadequacy,” “trying to cover her inner void,” “needing to be loved and

seen,” “having unsatisfying sexuality,” and “trying to attract her husband’s attention.” Hence, the theme of being unseen and unheard in a relationship is considered under three titles: “feeling worthless,” “lack of social connection/relationships,” and “sexuality.”

3.2.3.1. Feeling Worthless

It was noted that “feeling worthless” and having “lack of self-confidence” was attributed to both Şehnaz and Elmas characters. In some of the participants’ associations, the predicament of Şehnaz was stated as “her self-perception” rather than an impact of outer world because of her internalized “feeling of worthless.” The scene of dinner was mentioned frequently as a demonstration of how she felt “belittled” and “ignored” in her marriage relationship.

In the case of Şehnaz, I think her predicament is to succumb to her own inner barriers. In other words, her enemies are inside of her. She could not overcome her enemies. Her essential dilemma is her self-perception.

Another participant mentioned about internalized worthlessness of Şehnaz:

I think that the impasse of the Şehnaz was the internalized worthlessness. She did not even know the meaning of friendship because we have never seen a friend of her in the movie except the coworker Umut.

In the discussion about the main issues of the relationship between Şehnaz and Cem, it was stated that the feeling of worthless can be also related to being unseen in the relationship by her partner.

There is a problem in the marriage of Şehnaz. The problem is that there is no woman in this relationship. The only person in this relationship is the husband. Moreover, Şehnaz was aware of the one-sided relationship.

In parallel with the discussion about Şehnaz, Elmas was also associated with “having a feeling of inadequacy,” “feeling of guilt,” and “having no trust in her inner truth.” The scene in which Elmas was constantly repeating that “I have done all the things, fixed the sheets” was mentioned as a representation of her inner conflicts. In the discussion, it was mentioned that she had a “mental breakdown” when she encountered the huge difference between her experience and what she was told before.

The dilemma of Elmas is that she could not act based on her ideas and beliefs, even though she intuitively knew that there is something wrong with what she learned from her parents. This conflict may result from her inner superego, which she internalized from her parents... She exactly did what her husband or her mother has told her. However, when she saw that nothing good happened, she actually became aware of the conflict.

3.2.3.2. Lack of Social Connections/Relationships

Most of the participants highlighted that both Şehnaz and Elmas did not have good social interactions with friends or relatives. It was noted that the only connection of Elmas with social life was the neighbor who is also a teenage girl at probably the same age with her. However, it was also noted that Şehnaz was not appeared in a social interaction but in the environment of Cem’s friends.

I remembered now, and I feel a bit annoyed again. Throughout the film, Şehnaz was going to his husband’s place either weekday after work or on the weekends. We have never seen that her husband was coming to the place where Şehnaz lived.

3.2.3.3. Sexuality

Another important theme that emerged in the associations of the participants was sexuality of the female characters in the movie. In some of the participant's associations, both two women were associated with the feeling of "alienation from the body." It was noted that Elmas has experienced her sexuality as a "punishment" or "rape." The participants stated their hesitation about using the word of "rape" because she seemed to give her consent. Considering the scene of therapy, it was stated that Elmas refused to talk about her sexual life because it is "sin." On the other hand, sexuality of Şehnaz was associated with the expressions of "unsatisfying," "make her feel like incompetent," "feeling worthless," and "unfulfilled need of being seen and to be desired."

When I think of the problem that both two women experienced, the word 'inability to live' comes to my mind as a common point. Whereas Elmas cannot even live her life except in the balcony scenes, Şehnaz cannot live her sexuality.

Upon the discussion about sexuality, the participants started to discuss why sexuality would have an important role on the inner conflicts of Şehnaz. One of the participants stated that the issue of sexuality was the only problem in Şehnaz's marriage relationship, because Cem was a kind of porn addict, and he made her to feel "unhappy" and "inadequate." Nevertheless, most of the participants disagreed with this idea. They stated that sexuality and sexual experience can be considered as an area in which people need to connect with each other. In the discussion, it was stated that Şehnaz and Cem have not been communicating in their daily lives as well as in their sexual life. Accordingly, the "outbreak of crisis" was associated with their sexuality in which they have to communicate with each other.

When we look at her sexual life, she seems alienated from her own body and her desires... She feels incomplete and inadequate in her marriage. She tries

to attract him by wearing different clothes. However, her effort doesn't work. He husband (Cem) doesn't see her desire and needs. He considers only his desires. He ignores her presence in the relationship. Şehnaz has cried after making love with Umut because she realized that a man could see and understand her desires.

Another participant commented about the relationship between Şehnaz and Cem:

There is no relationship between Şehnaz and Cem... We can observe their relational issues through their sexual life. They could not establish communication in sexual experiences, just like in their relationship. I think that a sexual relationship is a kind of trade in which you trade for emotions and expectations... They have never asked each other about their daily lives. They have never chitchatted. Even in the scene of preparing food, their communication way seemed mechanical and nongenuine... Şehnaz insistently wants to drink raki, but the man never accepts her wish.

Based on the train of thoughts in the discussion, it can be said that the issue of sexuality was considered as a place where the female characters have encountered explicitly the predicaments of their romantic relationships. In some participants' associations, sexuality was associated with "wild," "concrete," and "conflictual" adjectives.

3.2.4. Homicide as a Solution

The theme of committing homicide was emerged as an important point in the discussion in terms of the female character's searching for a solution in the "helpless" conditions considering that Elmas has a lack of freedom of choice over her life and body. In the discussion about the homicide by Elmas, it was stated that committing a

murder was considered as an “only way of escape,” a “wild and natural reaction to the violence,” and a “self-defense,”

Some of the participants stated that they cannot blame her because she has no option other than murder in her desperate condition. It can be said that the participants started to discuss about the “agency” by arguing about the criminality of the murder by Elmas. Some of the participants expressed that they have felt a “relief” and “happiness,” when they saw the murder in the movie. On the other hand, the discussion of the realism started through the homicide. Some of the participants stated that they have been suspicious about the subject of the murder until the end of the movie.

Elmas married two years ago, so she must be 14 or 15 years old when she murdered her husband and mother-in-law... She could kill without blinking an eye because she was in a dead-end situation... Maybe it would be a Freudian interpretation; protecting herself is a survival instinct that is the most primal defence. The only reaction she could reveal might be committing a homicide... As I said, I was happy that they died, whether Elmas killed them or not.

3.2.5. Building a Relationship as a Solution

In the discussion, building a relationship has been emerged as important resilience for Şehnaz. It has been noted that Şehnaz has been able to look at her “toxic” relationship with her husband after she got closer with her friend Umut, who was also her coworker. She started to build relationship by spending time together, talking about their personal lives, and their memories. In the discussion, the relationship between Şehnaz and Umut was associated with “warm,” “kind of romantic,” “genuine,” “sharing environment,” and “friendship.” It has been also noted that Şehnaz might start to “see her desire” by having sexual experience with him who can give her pleasure and “see her needs.” Therewith, in some participants associations, it has been noted

that she might bring herself to break up with her husband after she made love with Umut.

When she started to establish a friendship with Umut, Şehnaz began to understand herself. Well, in a scene in which Cem wasn't at home, she cooks meat herself, pours raki. She said, "It is better this way." Therefore, she began to feel and realize her own desires.

As we have seen, Şehnaz established a friendly relationship with Umut for the first time. After that, we began to see the transformations and the enlightenment in her life.

Therefore, establishing a friendship has been considered as resilience for the female characters in the movies. On the other hand, some of the female participants have expressed that they felt relief and happy when they have seen the final scene in which Şehnaz went out of the house, drove the car with both a subtle smile and tears on her face.

3.2.6. Comparing Activity and Passivity of the Female Characters

Comparison between Şehnaz and Elmaz in terms of activity-passivity of her behaviors emerged as an important point in the discussion. Their coping strategies with the predicaments in their lives were evaluated in terms of the activity-passivity dichotomy. Accordingly, some participants stated that the murder in the movie can be considered as a self-defence, because Elmaz murdered them to save her life. Her action was associated with an "active position," an "explosion of accumulated pain inside of her," and a "consequence of the feeling of disgust." On the other hand, in some participants' associations, the coping mechanisms and the decisions of Şehnaz were linked to "being in a passive position," "feelings of shame" and "feeling of hesitation all the time."

For example, an educated woman (Şehnaz) was a little bit more passive than an uneducated teenager (Elmas). Elmas escaped from the house where she imprisoned by murdering her husband and mother-in-law. However, in the case of the educated woman, Şehnaz could not confess her problems even to herself because she feels ashamed of her position in her relationship. Maybe she said to herself, “A woman like me should not experience such things.”

3.3. ANA YURDU (MOTHERLAND)

3.3.1. Separation and Individuation

One of the important themes in the movie that emerged in the discussion relating to the female representations was separation and individuation. All the participants agreed that the predicaments of the female characters were mostly related to their mothers. The relationship between Halise (mother) and Nesrin (daughter) was discussed in terms of the individuation process. They all mentioned that Nesrin could not “say not to her mother” and “set the personal boundaries.” Based on the discussion, the theme of separation and individuation is considered under two main titles: “poisonous mother: intrusive and manipulative” and “setting personal boundaries.”

3.3.1.1. Poisonous Mother: Intrusive and Manipulative

In the discussion about the female characters' predicaments, most of the participants mentioned that the mother figure was an important part of the predicaments of Nesrin and Halise. One male participant stated that the predicament of each woman in the movie was “her own mother” because a woman who could not set the personal boundaries and individuate in her personality development transmits the values of her “enmeshed” relationship pattern to the relationship with her daughter. In addition to

that, the scene in which Halise was crying in her deceased mother's room was occasionally mentioned while discussing the effects of the mother figure in their lives.

The mother said, "My daughter! Your grandmother would say that she would rather be a stone than a mother." ... This scene aroused many question marks in my mind. The mother married at a very early age. She said that she had no story in her life... Maybe the reason for her behaviours and attitudes toward her daughter is her difficult memories from childhood.

According to the narrative that the associations of some participants constituted, Halise was associated with "demanding," "intrusive," "manipulative," "internalizing victim role," "blaming," and "poisonous" words. It was noted that the film, as a whole, has evoked "disturbing emotions," as most of the participants mentioned. Three male participants mentioned their identification in the relationships with their mothers in terms of demanding mother figures who "take too much of space" and "know the best." One of them mentioned that he noticed how "hurtful" and "traumatic" his relationship with his mother when he looked back as an adult man. The other male participant stated that he felt excessively disturbed while watching the scenes of crying and demanding of Halise. However, some of the participants linked the situation of Nesrin to the women living in Turkey:

The mother is intrusive, getting involved in everything and knowing the best all the time... When the mother couldn't force Nesrin to do something as she wanted, she started immediately to use emotional manipulation. She makes Nesrin feel bad by emotional manipulation... I have similar experiences with Nesrin in my life. However, I think that a few per cent of Turkish people can escape from this kind of manipulation.

It was also mentioned by most of the participants that the mother "got her way" by talking with "soft words," "putting her motherhood forward," and "crying like a baby." The way of communication of Halise mainly was associated with "childish" and

“manipulative.” In the discussion, it was remarked that Halise has never listened and understood her daughter genuinely. Every time Nesrin objected to Halise, the mother started to do psychological manipulation by crying and showing herself “fragile.” On the other hand, Nesrin was associated with “fearful,” “indecisive,” “wavering,” and “mothering to her mother” words. In the discussion, it was highlighted that even though Nesrin has said “no” and tried to object to her mother’s desire, she could not stand with her words, and eventually, she has done what the mother wanted. The participants linked the submissive position of Nesrin to respecting the “blessed motherhood” and “not being able to tolerate unpleasant feelings” in her relationship with her mother.

The daughter kept saying, “I won't do this. I won't go to the mosque.” ... The mother said, “Take a bath.,” and the daughter said, “I don't need it.” Even though the daughter expressed herself, we eventually saw that the mother has got what she wants. They were fighting about leaving the mother. Nesrin was clearly telling her wish. After that, the mother cried and said, “Here I will go, okay. Let's not buy now. We can buy the ticket later.” Therefore, the mom didn't leave the house because she didn't want to go. The mother always gets what she wants.

Most of the participants stated that the mother had taken advantage of the “victim role” because she could make things she wanted by using the victim role. Most of the participants related the “victim role” to “being self-sacrificing.” One participant stated that one of Halise's predicaments was “her regrets” because she has always “sacrificed her life and desires” for the sake of her children and her husband. However, it was also stated that because Halise did not take responsibility for her actions and decisions while sacrificing her desires, she owned a victim role, and she can easily blame the others as she blames her daughter Nesrin. Upon discussing the victim role, it was also mentioned that Halise made Nesrin feel “bad” and “guilty” by mentioning her motherhood and sacrifices. Therefore, Nesrin was overwhelmed by her mother's sacrifice.

Some participants considered the mother as “poisonous like a tarantula” because she poisoned her daughter by “crossing the personal boundaries” and “exposing her daughter to negativity” all the time. It was also mentioned that Halise believed that Nesrin would “go mental,” even though her mental state was worse than Nesrin. Some participants linked the “prophecy of Halise” to Nesrin's novel, in which the protagonist, a woman who is a psychiatrist, has been hospitalized because of choking her child to reach her lover, who also had a mental illness. On the other hand, the final scene in which Nesrin had sex with a man who seemed like a “lunatic” was associated with the prophecy of Halise. The relationship between the final scene and “losing her mind” will be discussed in detail below.

3.3.1.2. Setting Personal Boundaries

Another important theme that was mentioned by all the participants in the discussion is “protecting personal boundaries.” Some of the participants stated that Nesrin, who is an “independent,” “modern,” “educated,” “self-ordained,” and “sophisticated” woman, behaved as a “5-year-old child” in her relationship with her mother. In the discussion, Nesrin was also considered as a “powerful” woman who is “able to divorce” from her ex-husband and “have an abortion.” Nevertheless, it was highlighted by most of the participants that Nesrin had an inner conflict because this “modern” and “educated” adult woman could not have the courage to object to the desires of her mother. In addition to that, she could not be separated and individuated as an “independent” woman who can “embrace her own beliefs and desires.” It was also discussed that Nesrin could not object not only to her mother but also to the “traditional values” in the village as her “motherland.” It was stated by all the participants that Nesrin somehow ended up doing something which she denied beforehand. Therefore, she could not “protect her personal boundaries.” One female participant described Nesrin as “not being able to break her mental umbilical cord” from the mother. Some of the other participants used the expression of “mental

umbilical cord” in their comments regarding the relationship between Nesrin and her mother. The expression of breaking one's mental umbilical cord was also associated with an “abstract death,” which symbolizes the end of the childhood era. One male participant described the relationship of them as a “buffer zone” because both Nesrin and the mother have refused “to grow up,” “to take the responsibility of their desires,” “to be an individual” and used each other as a “buffer” in order to avoid difficulties in their lives. In some participants' associations, the problem of individuation was linked to the “living and growing in Turkey” because the cultural settings of this geography are required to “belongingness to something or someone.” Most of the participants noted that being an individual is required to “pay the price,” and the process of individuation is “painful” and “difficult” as much as the process of the cutting umbilical cord is.

The hardest part for me is that... Can a child separate from his mother? Can a daughter cut off ties with her mother? An umbilical cord is cut after the birth. Can we cut the umbilical cord of spiritual maturity or adulthood? Maybe we can cut it, I don't know. However, Nesrin didn't cut her spiritual umbilical cord in the movie. The mother continued in her own way. The mother's faith doesn't have any open door for doubt and different opinions... And the mother doesn't know about her daughter's life. She doesn't know what Nesrin is going through. She doesn't know how her daughter feels. She approached her daughter based on a few pieces of information she knows. The image of her daughter in her mind is far from the real Nesrin. Because Nesrin could not break her mental umbilical cord, what the mother wanted became real. The daughter finally becomes the woman just as the mother wanted her to be... I don't know... It was a toxic relationship. The mother was toxic like a tarantula's venom...

In the discussion, half of the participants stated that they had identified themselves with Nesrin in terms of having difficulty in “objecting to their mother’s desire” and “breaking the mental umbilical cord” from their mothers. Two female

participants expressed that their relationships with their mothers are different from Nesrin's one. One of them shared a memory about how she had struggled with her family about "building a relationship with her mother as an adult."

Aren't our relationships with our mothers always like this? We get furious sometimes. However, we can never stand against our mothers in such a rigid way. We yell and scream, and then we regret it. Especially if our mothers start to cry, we feel all the pressure of the "holy motherhood." We immediately apologize for what we did.

3.3.2. Social Roles

It was discussed that the female characters in the movie have many different social roles. In the discussion, it was stated that whereas some characters in the movie behaved in concordance with society's expectations, some characters have struggled with these expectations and tried to push the borders of the assigned social roles. In some of the participant's associations, the consequence of Nesrin's struggle was considered as "ambiguous." According to the discussion, the theme of social roles was examined under three main titles: "intergenerational transition," "parenting your parent," and "masculine roles."

3.3.2.1. Intergenerational Transition

Through the discussion, one of the predicaments of the female characters in the movie was stated as "intergenerational transition" of gender roles as a "vicious cycle." In some participants' associations, the film, as a whole, is about a "story of a vicious cycle." In the first place, Nesrin is a "granddaughter" who came to her grandmother's house as a motherland to "find herself." It was noted that Nesrin might actually try to find her "root" and "rebuild" herself based on her own root. According to the narrative

that the associations of some participants constituted, the problems of Nesrin were related to the problems of past generations because the “traditional codes and social norms about being a woman” have been transferred by the “mothers” in a society. It was also noted that the transition of “traditional gender roles” might be “unconscious” because of the long history of the “established masculine culture” in our mindsets. All of the female participants mentioned their identifications with Nesrin in terms of fighting against the intergenerational transition of gender roles in their personal memories. On the other hand, some of the participants noted that they had difficulty understanding why Nesrin preferred to go back to her grandmother’s house. The house was associated with “lousy,” “prisonlike,” and “community pressure.”

The impasse of both two women is the tradition. If we think of the tradition as a coin, Nesrin is the one side of the coin, and her mother is the other side. Nesrin is the side that fight against the tradition because the tradition was harmful to her... Halise is the mother figure who transmits and keeps the tradition alive. Mothers always convey the customs and tradition to their daughters... For example, about Nesrin’s abortion, her mother said, “What kind of a man would want such a woman in his bed?” The mother internalizes and transfers the tradition which imposes that abortion is a sin, and men can do whatever they want in their lives.

3.3.2.2. Masculine Roles

Regarding the discussion about the social roles, most of the participants noted that the female characters in the movie have “internalized” the masculine roles in terms of “suppressing each other” based on “the codes of the masculine culture.” The behaviours of the female characters were associated with “restricting each other's freedom,” “dispraising a single woman,” and “maintaining the masculinity.” Especially the mother character was associated with “having and pursuing masculine roles”

because she has always tried to adopt her daughter Nesrin to the “men's world.” In the discussion, it was also noted that the mother has always blamed her daughter for “having an abortion,” “being divorced” and “having a blockage in writing” because the image of Nesrin is a “sinner,” “guilty,” “cursed” and “bad” woman in the mother's mind. However, most of the participants noted that Nesrin internalized these images at some level. On the other hand, the female characters in the village, including the mother, stamped the only single women in the village as a “bad woman” like a prostitute. Some of the participants shared their stories relating to internalizing masculine roles by women. They identified themselves with Nesrin in terms of having maternal characters like Halise in their personal histories, such as mothers, grandmothers or neighbours.

3.3.2.3. Parenting Your Parents

In the discussion about social roles relating to the female characters in the movies, it was stated that there was a role conflict between mother and daughter figures in terms of “caretaking” and “caregiving.” In some participants' associations, Nesrin's attitudes towards her mother were associated with “mothering her own mother,” “comforting,” and “consoling.” Half of the participants highlighted that the mother came to her daughter's place to escape from her husband or problems under cover of helping and accompanying Nesrin, just as mentioned by Nesrin in the movie. Referring to the scene in which Nesrin took the maternal position when her mother felt disappointed and sad, some participants estimated that maybe Nesrin has always experienced role conflict since her early childhood, and so, she has internalized the “maternal role” by parenting her parents. Parallely, some participants considered the mother character as a child because she has always childishly insisted on her desire such as “going to the mosque” or “staying the house a little bit longer.” It was also mentioned that the father figure has been absent not only in the movie's storyline but also in the characters' lives.

3.3.3. Sexuality

Relating to the final scene, some participants remarked that Nesrin has gone out of her mind eventually according to her mother “expected” and “prophesized.” They linked Nesrin's “ambivalent behaviours” in the final scene to her mother's prophecy. However, some of them described the final scene as a “symbolic narration” of the relationship between the mother and the daughter.” They also mentioned a resemblance between Nesrin's relationship with her mother and with Halil in terms of her ambivalent behaviours such as “pushing and pulling the other person.” In the final sex scene, she was either “grabbing” or “trying to escape from” him. They remarked that she deliberately had sexual intercourse with a “village idiot” in order to “drive her mother crazy.” In certain participants' associations, the final scene was considered as a “perfect way of revenge from the mother,” because she has done “all the things that her mother afraid of” by having sex with Halil. Upon the scene in which they had sex under “a wild tree,” one female participant remarked that the “wild tree” might be a metaphor of “wild,” “natural,” “animalistic,” “instinctual” and “savage” sides of Nesrin. On the other hand, almost all the participants mentioned that the sexual intercourse scene was “vague” and “ambiguous” because they could not decide whether it was a “rape” or a “consented sex.” There was a consensus among the participants regarding the feeling of disturbance evoked by the final scene. However, participants noticed that the name of Halil has never mentioned in the discussion, and they have called him a “village idiot” or “mad.” They started to discuss the tendency of using those words. Some of them mentioned that they felt ashamed of not remembering his name because Halil was a person with mental retardation rather than a lunatic.

Eventually, we turn into our mothers in a way. We don't want to turn into our mothers. However, at the same time, we want to be like them. We have such a strange love-hate relationship with our mothers. Nesrin turned into her mother quote-unquote because she used the feminine emotional manipulation to

provoke Halil by pushing and pulling just as her mother did to her. The scene ends by depicting Halil as if he raped her... However, she was not escaping from him, and she was the person who seduced and started to sexual interaction. She turned into her mother. She avenged upon her mother by having sex with a “lunatic” man.

The masturbation scene emerged as an important point in the discussion. One female participant linked the scene in which Nesrin masturbated to the scene in which one old woman villager has spitted on her hands while she was walking on the street at night. The participant remarked that at first sight, the old woman’s spitting seemed like saying a prayer for Nesrin to “cure” and “ease” for writing blockage, but it can also be considered as a “symbolization of punishment” due to her sins just like “stoning of the devil.” It was also stated that the scene of spitting comes right after the masturbation scene. Whereas some participants agreed with the “symbolization of punishment,” some considered it an “extreme interpretation” because Nesrin did not see her behaviours as a sin.

3.3.4. Splitting: Tradition and Religion

The relationship between tradition and religion emerged as another important topic in the discussion. Some participants expressed that codes and norms of tradition and religion are enmeshed structures, and it is hard to approach them separately. However, some participants declared that religion and tradition are separate things in their opinions, and there was no “healthy” and “right” understanding of religion in the movie. Nevertheless, one of the significant predicaments of the female characters in the movie was stated as “traditional codes” and “traditional moral sentiment.”

3.4. KRALIÇE LEAR (QUEEN LEAR)

3.4.1. Suppression and Authority

According to the narrative that the associations of all the participants created, one of the most important predicaments of the female characters in the movie can be considered suppression and authority. Most of the participants have mentioned that the female characters in the movie struggled against the difficulties of “patriarchal geography” through their lives even though they live in the “coastline towns” in which people who are less conservative live. On the other hand, it was also stated that the history of the geography might play an important role in the female characters’ stories and successes because they are living in the southern Mediterranean part of Turkey, in which there are numerous precious heritages of various ancient artists and philosophers. However, most of the participants stated that these women, who had gone on the stage in their small towns, struggled against the structure of the hierarchical relationships in their towns. The scene in which women who played the “Queen Lear” tried to deal with some officers and the “mukhtar who did not like them” was mentioned frequently as an example of their struggle against authority. Most of the participants highlighted that the authority figures in the movie have not been “concretized” by a “real figure,” and they emerged in an “abstract way” comparing with the other movies that have been discussed in the study. Some participants described the authority figure as the characters themselves and their “inner voices.”

While watching the movie, I noticed that there were no parental figures such as parents or grandparents... Wasn't it a relief? Weren't we all getting so gloomy because of the mothers and fathers in the movies? You know, there wasn't an authority figure in this movie. How beautiful this movie is. Everyone could do whatever they wanted, even if their efforts were sloppy, serious, or funny. How nice it was to see that.

On the other hand, in the discussion, suppression was mostly associated with the “community pressure” and “taking into consideration what the other people think.” Some of the participants stated that the female characters have fought against the “relational pressure” because they were living in small provinces in which social relationships are “too close” and “enmeshed.” It was also remarked that women in the movie have probably experienced too many difficulties even with their spouses until they have gained “their freedom” and started acting. One male participant linked the choice of the “Queen Lear” play to the reality of the geography in terms of gender inequality in the portion of the inheritance.

In Mersin and Antalya territories, people treat women as low-class people. You all probably know the story of these territories. In former times, the fathers gave all the forest lands to their sons because they were profitable and fertile. However, the fathers gave the regions by the sea to their daughters because these lands were sand pile and infertile. In the future, I mean now, all of the women living in this geography, who hold the unproductive seaside lands, sold their properties to hotels or something else. Even at worst, one of these lands made the women very rich. I think that one of the reasons for the selection of King Lear play is the story of these lands.

3.4.2. Destiny, Desire and Kismet

Another important theme that emerged in all the participants’ associations regarding the female representations in the movie was “destiny” and “kismet.” They all mentioned the van scene in which the women have discussed the issue of destiny and kismet based on their personal experiences with “their own words.” Some of the participants shared that they felt “powerful positive feelings” while watching the van scene. However, it was stated that the film, as a whole, evoked positive feelings such as “relief,” “happiness,” “hope,” or “heartwarming.” All the participants remarked that

the women who played roles in the theatre had been differentiated from the other women in the village, in which they grew up, in terms of “taking the responsibility of their lives,” “being assertive and decisive,” and “creating their own destiny.” It was also noted that the other women in the villages had kept mentioning “kismet” when they were asked to come to see or join the theatre play. Therewith, the scene in which a little girl who lives in a yuruk village in Toroslar has said “kismet” when she was asked about her desire of going to school was highlighted. It was stated that the little girl probably said what she has heard from her mother. Maybe she asked her mother about the school, and her mother answered as “kismet.” However, the women in the play were associated with “pursuing their dreams,” “expressing their desire,” and “not being afraid of failing.” Most of the participants considered the ability to “have a dream” as a driving force for the main female characters in the movie.

In one of the car scenes, the female characters were talking about their thoughts about destiny. The woman playing a chubby good son said, “When the theatre idea emerged, I accepted. I said okay, and entered the group. Therefore, this pathway became my destiny. However, I could have said, ‘What do the other people say about me? How can I manage this?’ In that case, I wouldn't choose to play in a theatre. Therefore, it would be my destiny.” So, she was trying to explain her free will. What were their motivations? Maybe their self-confidence, the courage to choose, the driving force, or aggression were their motivations... Whatever their reason is, they found it, chose it and kept going on it.

3.4.3. Meaning Making Effort

The theme of having a meaning-making effort emerged as an important subject in the discussion of the female representations in the movie. Most of the participants mentioned that the main women characters in the movie have talked about the “basic

issues of life” such as “fear of death,” “motherhood,” “destiny,” or “social roles.” Some participants remarked that these women have been searching for meaning-making for life by acting theatre play because they have explored their “desires” and “expectations” by doing this. It was also stated that even though they were not educated women, they had an “empirical knowledge” based on “their life experiences.” Thus, as some participants declared, these women were able to talk about the “fear of death” and “freewill” with their own words. Some of the participants mentioned that they have lots of “common concern” with the main female characters in the movie.

3.4.4. Having a Power of Creation and Transformation

In the discussion, the female characters in the movie were associated with some positive expressions such as “having a power of creation,” “having a desire of changing,” “thinking solution-oriented,” “not complaining all the time,” “improving and transforming oneself,” and “having self-confidence.” It can be said that the participants' associations can be considered under the theme of having a power of creation and transformation regarding the female representations in the movie. All the participants mentioned that these women had a “power of creation and transformation” and a “desire of changing” the environment and people around them. One female participant declared that the movie, as a whole, has a message that women can do anything if they want:

The message of the movie is that a woman can do whatever she wants. For example, in the scene in which the main characters were talking to a woman in a village, the woman said that she could not even tell a doctor about her problem without her husband. Then, one of the women who played in the theatre said, “You can herd these cattle and cows. If you can do this, you can also play in the theatre. What you do every day is harder than acting.” Throughout the whole film, there is an emphasis that a woman can do anything if she wants to

do it. The movie conveys this message without dramatizing or exposing it. You know, there is a slogan "a woman is a woman, a flower is a father." I think that the movie is not parallel with this slogan.

Accordingly, the other participants shared their opinions about the movie that the director of the movie has a "realistic" and "genuine" perspective rather than a "romantic" and "sloganist" point of view. One male participant associated the women in the movie with an image of "a flower blooming in a concrete." Upon the association, participants linked the women's acting in a theatre to "bringing novelty" and "making a difference" in their "destiny." It was also noted that they had broken the "cycle that has been determined as a destiny" by society.

On the other hand, regarding acting ways of the women in the movie, most participants highlighted that these women had been transforming not only their lives but also the lives of the other people living around them, in virtue of the "self-confidence" which was developed by "acting," "socializing" and "going out of their town." Almost all the participants noted that the most impressive thing in the story of the movie was women's having the power to transform the environment and the "other women living in their neighbourhood" by starting with "transformation of their identities."

I remember the scene in which Zeynep Hanım, who plays the "Queen Lear" role, talked about something in the van. She said, "I realized my self-confidence, identity, and personality in this theatre. If this theatre did not happen, could I have divorced from that man?" She gained self-confidence by acting... The transformation process of the female characters was not depicted as a heaven-like state like tra-la-la and rose-coloured happiness. I mean, we see a process of their transformation and strengthen their willpower, including its pain and sweetness.

Another most highlighted scene in the movie was the scene in which a man who was a mukhtar in the village has played a woman character in one of their shows. The man who has always helped the women characters was associated with having the “power and resilience of creation,” too. Accordingly, most participants emphasized that the women in the movie have not been searching for a “perfection”; instead, they have acted with a sense of “good enough.” They related having a “sense of good enough” to having the “courage of creation.”

3.4.5. Solidarity

Another prominent theme mentioned by all the participants regarding the female characters in the movie can be considered “solidarity.” The theme of solidarity in the movie was approached from two aspects: “women solidarity” and “solidarity in marriage.” Some participants remarked that these women had always been inviting the other women living in other villages during the tour to join the theatre team. All the participants mentioned that the women in the theatre team have been encouraging the other women and men living in the village to play a role in a theatre and watch the plays. It was also stated that the women encouraged young girls living in other small villages to live in some other places where “they can feel free.” As mentioned by participants, women solidarity can be considered as “empowerment.”

In a village where the mukhtar did not like the actresses, two young girls came to support them... While chatting, these teenagers said that the villagers do not welcome things like theatre... After that, a woman actress said, “Oh, they found the theatre as improper ('abes' in Turkish).” Zeynep, the king, said, “Well, girls, go out from this village. Don't spend your life here.” It was so interesting. It was one of those touching moments.

On the other hand, half of the participants mentioned the solidarity between the women and their husbands and the positive effects of their marriage relationships on

the process of acting in theatre. Some participants considered the scene in which one woman called her husband “my love” in their dialogue as a sign of “affectionateness” in her relationship. The participants linked affectionateness to the “solidarity in the relationship.” It was also stated that the women's husbands in the theatre team have not been “restraining” their spouses' lives, unlike other men in the town did. Moreover, considering the ages of the characters, it was also mentioned that the spouses' supporting each other in old ages is crucial because getting older might make a person more dependent on others.

Men in the movie didn't make an effort to lock their wives into the house. I can say that the husbands supported their wives for acting. In other words, they helped their wives to be outside the home. I don't want to use words like giving permission... Let's say that the husbands didn't prevent the women in the movie.

3.4.6. Going into Action

The last theme that emerged in the discussion about female representations in the movie can be considered “going into action.” All the participants mentioned that these five women characters took action based on their own “decisions and desires.” In some of the participants' associations, the five women have been associated with “following the inner fire,” “having the courage to take action,” “being determined,” and “remaining steady on their pathways” expressions. It was stated that performing is not an easy action, especially in a small village where people have restricted perspectives. Being a performer “needs having the courage” in this kind of places. The attitudes and behaviours of these women were associated with “having the courage to stay in uncertainty.” All the participants expressed their positive emotions evoked by the film and “the story of five brave women.”

This movie motivated me, even me, as a city-dweller. I mean, the light in the eyes of the women in the film... Wherever the female characters went, they said to the girls, "If people don't value such things in your village, don't stay here."

It was also remarked that the essential characteristic of these women was not only going into action but also having determination and consistency to keep doing what they wanted. One male participant stated that another important strength of these women was "being rational" because they have "trusted and valued" their own ideas while making a decision, such as starting to play in a theatre. On the other hand, the "importance of togetherness" was highlighted by some participants as "focusing on the same goal." It was remarked that since difficult things might get more manageable when people are together, having a common purpose together might catalyze the going into action process for the women in the movie. Toward the ending of the discussion, participants started to discuss the female characters' motivations behind going into action by "having a role in a theatre." How did they start acting in theatre? Why did they want to play? One participant stated that the women had encountered the opportunity of acting:

They want to play a role in theatre. Why did they want to do? Because they actually came across such an opportunity. They saw it and said, "We can do it" ... While discussing, it always came to my mind what if they went to the girls' village in the Mustang movie. If this play was presented in the elementary school in the town of the five girls in Mustang, would the girls choose to be an actress? If they tried to pick, what would happen to them? Therefore, whether the individuals or the environment determines the conditions that people deal with?

One female participant stated that maybe these women had an "inner fire" as an initiator, and they used the opportunity of joining the theatre team through their inner fire and courage. Some participants stated that these women might have seen a

brilliant opportunity and showed the courage to take action. However, it was hard to decide whether the women had already self-confidence or not. Therefore, the participants started to discuss the effects of childhood on “personality development,” “behaviours,” and “decision-making mechanisms” in adulthood.

A woman's life is shaped by her father's decisions from birth to a certain period of life, such as marriage. If your father didn't let you continue to school, you could not do it even though you wanted to study. After that, your husband decides about your life instead of you. You have no right to speak for your life. You're at home, feeding chickens and cows, collecting eggs or something... The women in the film had an environment where they could have the courage to take action. If you have been suppressed since your childhood, you will not be assertive in your adulthood. You wouldn't be so eager to say your own opinions.

Another participant said:

On the other hand, some of the participants mentioned that the women had a chance to have an opportunity to have a role in a theatre with the help of a teacher in the village's school. Accordingly, it was declared that “having inner fire” is not an “exceptional” thing; instead, it blazes under the influence of the “environment.” In addition to that, as mentioned by the participants, the discussions regarding the characters' motivations behind going into the theatre were carried out on the path of the nature-nurture debate. One male participant stated that the experience of staying “uncertainty” and “undecisive process” might be more critical than the decision-making process.

3.5. CLOSURE SESSION

The date of the last focus group discussion session coincided with the date in which the Turkish President has announced Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention signed by 45 countries and the European Union to prevent violence against women. While discussing the representations of femininity through the movies, the effects of the withdrawal announcement on the participants' associations have been observed saliently.

In the beginning, the participants started to discuss the common points of the four movies which have been watched and discussed in the present study. Some participants considered these movies as the story of the "self-actualization" process of the female characters rather than the story of "women rights" or "violence against women." One male participant defined the movies as an "existential movie series" and highlighted that the issues of the female characters in the movies could be considered as "universal" as much as specific to Turkey. One female participant mentioned Simone de Beauvoir's "Woman is the other" and stated that women's issues are specific to "patriarchal culture" rather than universal. All the female participants declared that they are familiar with the problems and experiences of the female characters in the movies based on their personal experiences. One female participant stated that one of the common points of four movies was the absence of a father figure. She said, "In all four films, we did not see the father character directly. It is as if we watched the projections of the father character." On the other hand, another female participant remarked that while discussing the issues of femininity, the starting point is always "the predicaments of women" rather than talking about their success and resilience. By means of the retrospective reflections of the participants about the study, the scale of the discussion became wider. In addition to that, the issues which were mentioned and discussed mostly can be subsumed under the four main title: "equality," "suppression and tradition," "solution," and "LGBT+."

3.5.1. Equality

One of the important themes that emerged in the discussion is equality between women and men. Some of the participants highlighted that there are “biological differences” between men and women, such as “being able to get pregnant,” “having menstrual cycles,” and “having stronger muscle structure.” These participants also declared that the term of equality should be approached from the perspective of “human rights” and “law” rather than from the “physical equality discourse.” One of the male participants stated that he considered the equality discourse over sexes as problematic because the discourse might “re-create the sexism” by “emphasizing the sex.” He also stated that the concept of equality is a much more extensive issue that includes various problems such as “gender inequality” or “income injustice.” On the other hand, some participants remarked that the differences between women and men could be explained with “gender” inequality “constructed by society.” One male participant emphasized that upbringing is very different for boys and girls from the very beginning. So, most of the biological differences are related to gender roles.

3.5.2. Suppression and Tradition

All the participants mentioned the collaboration between “social suppression” and “traditional culture.” It was stated that the female characters in the movies have been struggling against “social suppression,” “community pressure,” and “patriarchal society.” One female participant expressed that society has always been trying to “tame” and “adjust” women according to the values of the men’s world, yet the female characters in the four movies were fighting against “taming” just like a “Mustang” which means an undomesticated horse. On the other hand, some participants highlighted that men had been exposed to the same suppression as women have in the patriarchal culture.

3.5.3. Solution

At some point, the discussions concentrated on searching for possible solution ways to solve women's issues discussed throughout the focus group studies. In most of the participants' associations, the solution is related to "being aware of differences," "respecting and accepting individual differences regarding gender or else," "starting to question gender roles," and "being tolerant of different others." Based on the discussion, it can be said that the solution can be considered as seeing and accepting the other's existence and respecting personal boundaries. One female participant said, "In short, I am on the side of the weak against the side of the strong, without separating men and women, humans and animals." However, it was noted that "owning the victim role" and "just complaining" are not solutions just as in the movies that were watched in the study.

3.5.4. LGBT+

Upon discussing equality and gender roles, homosexuality and the rights of the LGBT+ community emerged as another critical topic. Some of the participants declared that even though "homosexual" individuals should have equal human rights, they do not fit the "norms" based on "human nature" and "biological codes." One female participant stated that sexual orientations other than heterosexuality should not be considered as "normal." In addition to that, the participants discussed the concept of "normality" and "LGBT+ activism." On the other hand, the other participants remarked that the normative perspective of gender is "dangerous" because it prevents understanding and approaching people with their unique experiences, and it "strengthens and contributes" to the patriarchal culture. It was also noted that the "normative structures" constructed by society are part of the oppression, and so all the individuals as LGBT+, women, men have been exposed to the patriarchal norms together.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study investigates the representations of femininity in Turkey's new cinema to contribute to the studies that explore the experiences of being a woman in contemporary Turkey. Predicaments, coping strategies, the relationships of the female characters and the relationship between social context and their issues were explored by following the participants' reflections and associations in the discussions.

The results of the focus group meetings revealed the main themes regarding the representations of the female characters in the movies. First of all, the main themes of “Mustang” movie are named “Internalized Sexism,” “Sexual and Gender-Based Oppression between Women and Men,” “Sense of Agency over One’s Body & Self,” “Having the Courage to Object and Express One’s Desire,” and “Splitting: Tradition and Religion.” Secondly, the main themes of “Tereddüt” movie are subsumed under the titles of “Being Exposed to Violence,” “Freedom of Choice over One’s Life,” “Being Unseen and Unheard in a Relationship,” “Homicide as a Solution,” “Building a Relationship as a Solution,” and “Comparing Activity and Passivity of the Female Characters.” Thirdly, the main themes of “Ana Yurdu” movie are named “Separation and Individuation,” “Social Roles,” “Sexuality,” and “Splitting: Tradition and Religion.” Lastly, the main themes of “Kraliçe Lear” movie are titled “Suppression and Authority,” “Destiny, Desire and Kismet,” “Meaning Making Effort,” “Having a Power of Creation and Transformation,” “Solidarity,” and “Going into Action.” The themes that emerged in the last focus group meeting are subsumed under four titles as “Equality,” “Suppression and Tradition,” “Solution,” and “LGBT+.”

For providing a background for the discussion, it seems significant to state that the primary goal of the present study was to illuminate the representations of femininity established in the minds of people living in the new Turkey by considering the social and cultural changes in the society. In addition, it aimed to shed light on the predicaments and conflicts experienced by women regarding the place of women in the

dynamic social structure of Turkey. Nevertheless, the present study has certain theoretical and methodological assumptions. The first one states that femininity is a gender role identity that is a dynamic, flexible, and transformative construct created by a woman's personal and interpersonal experiences, conscious and unconscious. Secondly, the concept of femininity is formed by social and cultural transformations; in this example, the conservatization process of Turkey has the potential to affect it. It is also affected by the traditional gender roles, which are constituted by collective conscious and unconscious since adopting a settled life in this geography.

On the other hand, it was assumed that cinema, as a tool, can provide a fertile ground in which "the unconscious of the collective mentality" emerged, as mentioned by Erten (2010). Cinema can be considered as a "transitional space" that makes it easier to talk about things that are difficult to talk about. Based on these assumptions and ideas, the present study was conducted the qualitative methodology was found beneficial for the purpose of the study, because the thesis aimed to examine a complex social and internal experience of being a woman in contemporary Turkey through the participants' reflections and associations with the female representations in the movies.

Accordingly, the four movies which were created without the male gaze have been selected for the study. All these movies focused on the stories of the female main characters who struggle for their lives.

When considering the potential contributions of the study to psychology literature, it should be noted that one of the most important goals of the study was to contribute to conceiving possible meanings and experiences related to being a woman from a broader perspective. However, since psychotherapists are not immune to the internalization of society's cultural and social codes, it is crucial to comprehend these established structures, and to observe and understand the relationships between psychotherapists and clients in this context. For this reason, during the focus group meetings, the researcher's position was similar to the position of a psychoanalytic psychotherapist in the therapy room.

4.1. DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

As mentioned above, the themes that emerged in the discussions have been ordered in parallel with the movies' flow of events and stories. The flow of the events in the movies was also parallel with the order of research questions asked in the meetings. In short, participants started to discuss the predicaments of the female characters firstly, and then they continued to discuss the solution and coping ways of the characters against their difficulties. Below, common issues that emerged across the themes related to four movies will be discussed.

4.1.1. Women's Struggles with Gender-based Oppression and Sexism

Sexual and gender-based oppression was one of the most prominent issues that emerged in the participants' associations regarding the predicaments of the female characters in the movies. Some of the main themes that exemplify this issue were "Being Exposed to Violence," "Suppression and Authority," "Suppression and Tradition," "Sexuality," and "Social Roles." It was stated that almost all of the female characters in the movies have been struggling with the norms and values of society's patriarchal culture in different ways. Whereas some of the female characters have been exposed to physical and sexual violence directly by their relatives or husbands, some have been exposed to suppression by the authority figures with power, the customs, and traditions in Turkey. In one way or another, all of the female movie characters struggled to build or protect their sense of agency over their body and self. However, the important thing is that being in a struggle was not up to their choices, and they landed in the struggle of survival. Sometimes, they found themselves in a situation that they have to choose the lesser of two evils, such as getting married to a complete stranger to escape an abuser. One female participant mentioned the expression of Simone de Beauvoir, "Woman is the Other." It seems that women need to be in a

struggle for their existence as humans. Therefore, it can be said that women have to be in a struggle even for the basic human rights.

When discussing the sexual and gender-based oppression, the participants frequently mentioned the current agenda of Turkey in terms of women's rights and experiences. It was mentioned that whereas the rates of femicide, physical and sexual violence are still high, the Turkish President has announced Turkey's withdrawal recently from the Istanbul Convention which was aiming to prevent violence against women. Especially in the last meeting as a closure session, most of the discussions concentrated on this announcement and the protests by women and LGBT+ communities against the withdrawal. However, the withdrawal decision which concerns women's rights has been declared without considering the agency of women citizens. In addition, it was observed that the participants expressed their emotions and identifications with the characters more in the last couple of sessions than in the first ones. When considering all this together, it can be said that the participants might have identified with the female characters in terms of the sense of agency which is ignored by the authority figures.

These results showed that Turkish society's norms and values are still considered as conservative and suppressive by the participants, and that patriarchal norms and practices continue to limit and shape women's lives in diverse ways. Although many public and legal reforms have been made since the establishment of the Turkish Republic to grant women with citizen rights, such as the right to vote, women's liberation in social, public and family spheres is defined as an ongoing process (Arat, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1987; Tekeli, 1995). As mentioned by Müftüler-Baç (1999), when considering the sexist discrimination and controlled sexuality of women, the results reveal that the struggle for women's human rights maintains its importance.

It was also stated in the discussions that when women declared their opinion either by protesting or living their values, they have been exposed to gender-based violence and suppression more harshly. Based on the female characters in the movies, it was stated that some of them were suppressed by male figures, whereas some of them

were suppressed by close female figures such as the grandmother in the “Mustang” movie or the mother in the “Ana Yurdu” movie. At this point, it seems worthy to note the concept of “bargaining with patriarchy” (Kandiyoti, 1988). She highlighted that the coping mechanisms of women could be developed considering the real possible consequences of actions and “concrete constrains” within patriarchal structures. Women could strategize their coping skills in order to “maximize security” and “optimize life options” (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 274). Therefore, the female movie characters who treated the other women characters in restrictive and suppressive ways could be approached by considering the concept of bargaining with patriarchy, and by attending to their contextual realities. The results showed that one of the most common experiences of the women in the movies and women in Turkey was being in a struggle. All female participants expressed that they are familiar with the problems and experiences of the female characters in the movies based on their personal experiences. At this point, the question which should be asked is what these women fight against.

The results support the idea that the female characters have to deal with a patriarchal, sexist system, as defined by Swim and Hyers (2009), and face the institutional and cultural practices that reinforce women's unequal status and the superior status of men. The challenges they face when navigating a sexist system is exemplified by some themes such as “Internalized Sexism,” “Sexual and Gender-Based Oppression between Women and Men,” “Being Exposed to Violence,” “Freedom of Choice over One’s Life” and “Social Roles.” These cultural practices were carried out and preserved by authority figures (either concrete or abstract). The concrete authority figures were depicted as the uncle, the husband or the mukhtar who tried to block and restrict women's behaviour. However, there were also abstract authority figures which were described as the “probable gossips by the neighbours,” “female characters' inner voices,” “relational pressure,” and “community pressure.” The participants noted that all of these abstract authority figures can create pressure and have an impact on women’s sense of self and identities. Moreover, it might be said

that the abstract ways of the authority might be more harmful than the concrete ones, because they are subtle, veiled and obscure.

The results showed that some female characters are viewed by the participants as having internalized sexist gender roles and embracing patriarchal roles in all four movies. “Internalized Sexism,” “Social Roles” and “Separation and Individuation” themes showed that some women movie characters acted as masculine authority figures to some extent, and focused on shaping and changing other women’s behaviours based on traditional gender roles in society. In addition, they tried to block other women who tried to differentiate from and fight against the traditional gender roles and social norms. The participants’ emphasis on women’s patriarchal roles and internalization of sexist attitudes can be related to the concept of modern sexism generated by Swim and Hyers (2009). The concept of modern sexism was approached by subsuming under the three groups: “denial of discrimination,” “negative reactions to complaints about inequality,” and “lack of support for efforts to reduce inequality” (Swim & Hyers, 2009, p. 414). They have also mentioned the concept of benevolent sexism as seemingly positive sides of sexism and its harmful effects as much as hostile sexism. Finally, they stated that the consequences of sexism could be approached as internalization of gender stereotypes and roles, objectification, and violence. All of the three consequences of sexism that were observed as prominent themes in the discussions will be discussed one by one below.

The abstract ways of the authority as mentioned above can be conceptualized with benevolent sexism, which was described as beliefs about the complementary nature of gender differences, endorsement of paternalistic behaviour, and beliefs in heterosexual intimacy by Swim and Hyers (2009). As it was mentioned in the results, some of the participants stated that women and men are “*complementary sides*” of each other. Since they have different natures, they cannot be the same/equal. “*They are equal from the perspective of human rights yet they are not physically equal.*” These ideas mentioned by some of the participants regarding the female film characters can be related to the beliefs about the complementary nature of gender differences as a part of

benevolent sexism. While discussing the female characters' internalized sexism, the participants started expressing these beliefs as internalized by themselves. Accordingly, the prominent LGBT+ community theme that emerged in the last session can also be related to internalized heteronormative beliefs. In addition, the discussion about nature/nurture and normativity emerged while discussing LGBT+ and the coping strategies of the female characters. On the other hand, the endorsement of paternalistic behaviour has been frequently mentioned regarding the maternal characters in the movies. As mentioned in the literature, benevolent sexism can be harmful because it can easily be ignored by focusing on its seemingly positive side, just as some of the participants did. Therefore, these findings might support the arguments of the study by Glick and colleagues (2000), showing that people who live in countries where there is a major gender inequality are inclined to endorse benevolent sexist beliefs more than hostile sexist beliefs.

Saunders and colleagues (2017) stated that having system justifying ideologies is positively correlated to women's benevolent attributions to sexual harassment and their self-blaming. They also argued that the self-esteem is negatively correlated with having system justifying ideologies. Therefore, the female characters attempting to protect other women by justifying the system codes can be explained by benevolent sexism. Significantly, all of the maternal film characters can be considered as women who internalized benevolent sexism as their actions actually served to protect and recreate the patriarchal values. The maternal movie characters' behaviours toward other women have been frequently mentioned in the discussions as "seemingly protective" and "so-called solidarity," because these behaviours served to protect traditional gender roles and norms. For example, the girls in the movie *Mustang* have been forcefully married off to the suitors who were either old or stranger by their grandmother. Nesrin has always been warned and restricted by her mother for behaving properly as a chaste woman under the cover of protecting her against the rumours of people in the village. Elmas got married off to an older man when she was just a little child. In light of these findings, their coping strategies with violence tended to arise from their beliefs and

ideologies, which preserve the authority and status-quo as mentioned in the literature (Saunders et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, one less frequently mentioned issue in the discussions was the contextual realities that the maternal figures represented in the movies lived in. Although their internalization of sexist beliefs was extensively discussed, there was little attention paid to their life circumstances and their encounters with the patriarchal system. As Kandiyodi explained (1988), in patriarchal settings where women's access to power and resources are limited, women find ways of bargaining with the system. One speculation could be that these maternal figures have difficulty to oppose to the authority figures, whether concrete or abstract, or choose not to that in the movies in order to maintain their own life options and optimize their security as Kandiyoti mentioned (1988). However, very few participants offered this kind of contextual understanding, and tended to individualize the issue.

The behaviors of maternal figures in the movies can also be examined in the context of conservatism, individualism-collectivism and gender roles. In their discussions, the participants made a lot of references to tradition, religion and conservatism, as exemplified by the themes such as "Splitting: Tradition and Religion," "Sexual and Gender Based Oppression between Women and Men," "Having the Courage to Object and to Express One's Desire," "Setting Personal Boundaries," and "Intergenerational Transition." Accordingly, the results showed that some female characters in the movies tend to have the role of transmitters and protectors of customs, traditions and collective identity (Moghadam, 1994). In a supporting vein, several researchers have emphasized the societal expectations which place the responsibility of preserving traditions on women. For example, Müftüler-Baç (1999) stated that women have a role as the guardians of customs and traditions in Turkey. In another study, Moghadam (1994) related the transmitter roles of women to the conservative characteristics of a culture, claiming that women try to conserve the customs and traditions by conveying them to the next generations, as observed in the movies.

Conservatism as a part of the cultures with uncertainty avoidance has been related to high collectivism and masculinity (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, the perceived tendencies of the women to have protective and transmissive roles can be explained by the values and norms of the collectivistic culture in Turkey. In addition, when considering the current agenda of Turkey, it is worthy to note that rising conservatism might have a significant impact on the participants' views about women and their perceptions of the feminine representations in the movies. On the other hand, the coping mechanisms of the female characters who internalized traditional gender roles as transmitters and protectors of customs and traditions can be considered as avoidance from the uncertainty and conformity, which can be seen in the cultures with high collectivism, masculinity and power distance. These findings support the idea that the conservative characteristics of the collectivistic culture might play an essential role in constructing femininity as a gender role and perceptions about women (Celis & Childs, 2018; Moghadam, 1994). Therefore, women can be seen as the gate-keepers of the norms and values of the collectivistic culture, rather than individuals who can freely express their personal opinions and emotions.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the participants' views on women's autonomy and shame, as expressed in the themes such as "Internalized Sexism," "Sexual and Gender Based Oppression between Women and Men," "Sense of Agency over One's Body & Self," "Freedom of Choice over One's Life," "Social Roles" and "Sexuality," is consistent with pre formed conceptualizations. The female character's internalization of traditional gender roles and sexism can be associated with the inner conflict between ego and ego ideal of women related to the development of a judgmental inner eye. Reenkola (2005) stated that the inner eye judges the self by comparing to the perfectionist demands of the ego ideal. If the difference between ego and ego-ideal is high, the self starts to feel shame because of imperfection. Accordingly, these attitudes of the female characters can be considered a defense against feeling shame derived from the differences between ego and ego-ideal. When

they stick with the expectations of ego-ideal, they feel accepted by society. When considering the collectivistic culture of Turkey, individuals might have a chance to develop a sense of agency on the issues which are approved by the society (Müftüler-Baç, 1999). Accordingly, it can be said that women's internalizing traditional gender roles might be considered as a defense against feeling shame induced by the separation from the values of the collectivistic culture.

What the female characters fought for can be considered as one of the critical questions for the present study. According to the results, it can be said that women in the movies have fought for their sense of agency over their bodies and their identities, based on some themes such as "Sense of Agency over One's Body & Self," "Having the Courage to Object and Express One's Desire," "Going into Action," "Destiny, Desire and Kismet," "Meaning Making Effort" and "Having a Power of Creation and Transformation." Objectification of women's bodies in patriarchal, sexist contexts as well as in Turkey have been previously discussed in the literature (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) As suggested by the objectification theory, in such contexts, women might internalize an observer's perspective while looking at their bodies (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). According to the results, it was observed that some of the female film characters have the objectifying perspective while looking at their bodies and the other women's bodies. Significantly, discussions about the styles of veiling of the female characters can be associated with the objectification of the female body. The theme called "Being a Target of Criticism" showed that how women should cover their bodies becomes an issue of societal critique regardless of their covering style. In other words, as mentioned in the results, even if a woman veiled herself, the type of veiling became a target of criticism. When considering the objectification theory and the ego-ideal together, it can be said that to satisfy the expectations of the ego ideal in this social context seems almost impossible for women. On the other hand, women's feeling of shame, which Freud and the contemporary psychoanalysts conceptualized, seems to be related to having a female body as a target of criticism, objectification and, at times harassment and violence. However, it is worthy to highlight that the word of body has

not been mentioned in the discussions, even though the participants mentioned the female body by talking about dress styles, veiling styles or the society's criticism on the female body. The avoidance attitude of the participants might also be related to the internalized feeling of shame about the female body.

4.1.2. Women's Sexuality and Desire

The sexuality of the female characters was one of the essential themes in the discussions. The results showed that the sexuality of the female characters has always been problematic in terms of sexual satisfaction or sexual repression based on the themes of "Being Exposed to Violence," "Freedom of Choice over One's Life," "Being Unseen and Unheard in a Relationship" and "Sexuality." Women have been exposed to the expectations of society about being honourable women and mothers. However, most of the female characters in the movies have struggled against sexual repression by following different strategies. Some of them have been accused of being a "bad woman," which means unchasteness and having active sexuality without marriage. *The bad woman* and *the good woman* representations can be related to the Madonna-whore complex in parallel with the literature. As Saktanber (1995, p. 155) highlighted, there is a split in the female representations in Turkey as "a woman devoid of sexuality in total" and "a woman having nothing but sexuality." In addition, as stated by Kahalon and colleagues (2019), the female sexuality in Turkey can be related to the Madonna-whore complex. Accordingly, the concept of virginity through the female representations in the movies can be related to the beliefs of sexual purity in Turkey, which have been mentioned by many researchers (Kandiyoti, 1987; Saktanber, 1995).

Individuals who internalize these codes try to preserve the split of the female representations in their minds to avoid the threat of being bad. Thus, the attitudes of the maternal characters towards their daughters and granddaughters can be explained by their internalized gender roles as a gatekeeper of chastity and honour, and their role of carrying the burden of being a good woman who does not seduce men. As observed

in the male-dominant collectivistic cultures, women as honourable mothers transfer the traditional beliefs of being a good woman by avoiding expressing their desires and seducing men (Saktanber, 1995; Kahalon et al., 2019). Accordingly, it was mentioned by the participants that the single female characters were considered as bad women and as a threat by chaste women in the movies. This observation supports that a single woman can be seen as a threat, since they do not conform to the traditional values and expectations of the male-dominant society (Saktanber, 1995).

Some of the female film characters have been punished by either the maternal figures or themselves for being a whore. The expression of being a whore seemed to be related to having sexual pleasure by having a sexual experience with someone who is desired. Significantly, according to the experience of teenage girls in the movie and the participants' accounts, puberty is a milestone of encountering sexual repression and gender-based oppression for women in Turkey. The theme called “Virginity” indicates that puberty is considered as a litmus test identifying whether a girl will or will not be a whore. Kulish and Holtzman (2010) considered a girl's genital activity as encountering the mother's disapproval. Thus, the erotic impulses might cause a fear of loss of the mother's approval. Accordingly, some of the female characters in the movies have encountered mother's disapproval, and they developed some coping strategies with the feeling of disapproval. These coping strategies of the female characters have been discussed by the participants in terms of the dimension of being active and passive, as stated in the theme of “Comparing Activity and Passivity of the Female Characters.”

In the focus group meetings, whereas the position of the female characters who committed suicide and homicide have been considered as an active position, the position of the female characters who felt shame and hesitant to take action for their desire have been considered as a passive position. The attitudes of obedience to authority figures, accepting to get married off, and adapting to the male-dominant society have been considered as passive positions that preserve masculine norms and sexism by some of the participants. It was noteworthy that the participants placed a

great amount of responsibility on individual women to resist the attitude they defined as passive, and paid little attention to the contextual restraints that might pose some significant risks to their lives. A decontextualized and individualizing discourse was evident in their way of understanding women's reactions to external realities that limit their sexuality and voice.

Regarding their discussion, the first important point is that all participants have discussed and argued about women's taking action, having the power of creation and transformation, having the courage to object and express their desires. Thus, their focus on active coping strategies might indicate a need for taking action about the position of women in society. They have also considered the power of creation and transformation as a resilience factor that empowers the women and the next generations. At this point, it can be said that the participants discussed the possibility of intergenerational transmission of empowerment and solidarity as opposed to the transmission of the traditional gender roles. On the other hand, the theme of "Destiny, Desire and Kismet" can be related to developing the sense of agency as a coping mechanism. The female characters who were considered as powerful, independent and resilient were women who followed their desires and talents rather than saying kismet as an excuse. All the participants have expressed their happiness and excitements to see powerful women characters. Therefore, it can be said that women's going out of the traditional gender roles has been considered powerful and encouraging. The only example of women's solidarity was stated as the solidarity of the female characters who encouraged the other women to change their lives and pursue their dreams. The theme called "Destiny, Desire and Kismet" showed that some participants considered the concept of kismet as opposite of an active position. In that sense, kismet can be considered as an example of the interaction between traditional gender roles and coping mechanisms that are developed by women against these roles.

The second point that emerged in the discussions is that some of the female movie characters' attitudes were considered as "too courageous" and "too sharp" by some participants compared to the realm of Turkey. Significantly, the female characters

who rebelled against the authority and objected to conforming to the assigned gender roles were found “not realistic” by some of the participants. It was also observed that the participants who tended to discuss the characters from a rational and realistic viewpoint had shared less emotional expression and identification with the characters. In the light of these findings, it can be said that the participants were aware of the prevalence and dominance of traditional gender roles and the norms of collectivistic culture. As stated in the literature, individuals in collectivistic cultures tend to express socially engaging emotions and prefer covert conflict styles such as withdrawing or compromising (Kitayama et al., 2006). Concordantly, Holt and DeVore (2005) argued that female individuals have a tendency to develop covert conflict styles more than male individuals. Reenkola (2002) also reported that women are more likely to prefer an agreement or silence over objecting and expressing aggression. Therefore, the participants’ views reflected questions about the nature of women’s resistance to patriarchal authority and what kind of overt and covert coping strategies can be invented and utilized in real life.

4.1.3. Women’s Separation-Individuation Processes

Separation and individuation of the female characters appeared as another main issue regarding the female representations in the movies. Some of the themes related to the issue of separation and individuation were “Parenting Your Parents,” “Setting Personal Boundaries,” “Having the Courage to Object, and to Express One's Desire.” The results demonstrated that all the participants have remarked and discussed the female characters who have shown ambivalent relationship patterns in their close relationships. Mainly, their ambivalent attitudes were observed in their relationships with the mother, the spouse, or the men they have sex with. These female characters in the movies could not easily restrict the other's desire and expectations, affecting their lives and emotions. They could not claim their desires easily and set personal

boundaries in their relationships. Even though they seemingly rejected the others' demands, they have ended up with satisfying them.

The participants considered the ambivalent attitude of the female characters towards the mother figures as avoidance of losing the “mental umbilical cord” which needed to be cut for individuation. The expression of cutting the “mental umbilical cord” has also been depicted by the participants as an “abstract death,” which symbolizes the end of the childhood era. The participants stated that cutting the “mental umbilical cord” is painful as cutting an umbilical cord after birth is, because the process of individuation needs to involve paying some a price. However, in the participants' reflections and associations, the problem of individuation of the female characters have been related to the experience of living in Turkey because the culture of Turkey promotes the feeling of belongingness to something or someone.

On the other hand, the mother figures have been considered as problematic in terms of setting and respecting personal boundaries. The mother figures have been considered by the participants as “intrusive,” “childish,” “manipulative,” “self-sacrificing,” and “poisonous” mothers who have demanded childishly without seeing the other's existence and needs. The mother figures have also been considered as being not genuine and caregiver. Thus, the daughters had to take the maternal role by parenting their parents. The relationship between the mother and daughter has been described as a “buffer zone” that helps them avoid the conflicts, take responsibility for their desires, and grow up as an adult. It was noted that both the mother and daughter characters had taken the victim role, instead of taking responsibility for their desires. The victim role can be associated with a sense of lacking agency. The ambivalent behaviours of the daughter in the scene of having sex with a man who had mental retardation can be associated with the victim role. All the participants expressed their obscure ideas and uncertain feelings about the scene, which raised questions about the definition of rape and consensual sex. On the other hand, the spouse figure in the ambivalent relationship pattern has been considered as narcissistic, because he has not seen his wife's need and sexual desires. It seems that the common point of the

characters in ambivalent relationships is having difficulty seeing the other's existence, desires and identities.

The results regarding the theme of "Separation and Individuation" can be explained from a psychoanalytic approach and the perception of the individualism-collectivism dimension. Tyson (1986, p. 360) stated that inclination to avoid the fear of loss of the mother's love and approval, which is threatened by the conflicts, might lead girls to remain in a childlike frozen position and dependency. The position of the female characters who could not object and separate easily from the mothers and the spouses can be explained by this concern over losing the other's love and approval. It might be also worthy to think that whether this position (concerning over losing the other's approval) is childlike/submissive or not. On the other hand, by meeting others' expectations, these female characters might avoid feeling shame and the loss of the mother's approval, which Mahler conceptualized (1997). Reenkola (2005) stated that the awareness of her separateness and desire from the mother might evoke the feeling of shame and weakness in girls. Therefore, it can be said that these female characters might have challenges related to their individuation process and experience difficulties with establishing a separate identity as a woman, and that they have experienced some fraction in the process of positive identification with their mothers (Meissner, 2005b).

On the other hand, the female characters who have opposed the authority and pursued their desires have been mentioned in the discussions. They have also been considered powerful, active, and independent women who can support and empower other women in their lives. These findings can be explained by the dynamic structure of the construction of femininity as a gender role and the separation and individuation process. As stated in the literature, the characteristics of the gender roles which is attributed to women as mother and wife will be changed in the subsequent generation even though some part of the attributions and the way femininity is constructed can remain the same through generations (Meissner, 2005b, p.38). Even though the roles which are attributed to women cannot be reduced to being a mother and wife, they seemed to be dynamic structures. Therefore, building a relationship based on love and

trust with someone outside the family can be related to the separation and individuation process. In the movies, the female characters who could build those relationships could pursue their desire and object to the authority figures.

From the perspective of the individualism-collectivism dimension, the attitudes of the female characters who had separation-individuation issues can be explained by internalized collectivistic norms. Separation from society is not promoted for the interdependent self in collectivistic cultures, because morality is built upon the protection of loyalty, conservatism, purity, and respect for the authority figures. Thus, the separation-individuation process is difficult for the interdependent self as well as the autonomous-relational self (Kağitçibaşı, 1996; Rozin et al., 1999). The results might support that the interdependent self is encouraged to prioritize societal norms over one's personal needs (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, it can be said that the female characters attitudes regarding the process of separation from their mother and the gender roles can be associated with the collectivistic culture in Turkey. The separation from the mother might also mean the separation from the norms and values which are transmitted by the mother figures. However, the participants have mentioned that the mothers have taken the father role because the father figures were absent in the movies.

The absence of the father figures has been mentioned rarely in the meetings, whereas the splitting between tradition and religion have been frequently mentioned. It is worthy to note that traditions and religions might symbolize father figures with paternal roles in the movies in terms of the means of authority. These findings can be explained by the need for triangulation which started with the involvement and penetration of the father as a third into the maternal dyadic relationship (Abelin, 1971). If the father figure is not involved in the merger of a baby and mother, the separation process becomes difficult according to psychoanalytical perspectives. It has been suggested that the separation and individuation process of the girls is experienced as the mother's loss, which is an essential part of the establishment of the triangular relationship (Kulish and Holtzman, 2010). In the light of these ideas, searching for a

father figure can be explained by searching for a triangular relationship that enables the expression of desire. In this case, the tendency of the participants to split the concept of tradition and religion can be considered as searching for a good father figure that can provide an opportunity for the expression of desire and the process of separation and individuation for women. If one of the paternal figures (tradition and religion) can be preserved as safe and good, maybe women can protect a good internal object by internalizing the good paternal figure.

Furthermore, despite increasing conservatism in the current socio-political climate of Turkey, feminist and human rights movements continue to push for social and legal changes that protect women and girls from gender-based oppression, and to prevent other forms of discrimination. Collectivistic values have also been shown to change, with the rise of individualism, urbanization and liberal values, particularly in younger and educated segments of society. The discussions about Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention can be understood in this context. The participants questioned the positions of women and LGBT+ individuals in Turkey's current agenda, and expressed their hope and wish for a social context where women and LGBT+ individuals can live and make decisions safely and autonomously.

However, despite these hopes for positive change, the participants mostly discussed the internalized sexism and intergenerational transmission of the traditional gender roles through the maternal figures. Even though the paternal figure as a legislator was absent when women have been struggling against their predicaments in the movies, it was observed that there was a tendency to blame the maternal figures because they took the paternal and punitive roles. The tendency to blame mothers and individual women surfaced again in these discussions, demonstrating the lack of attention to context and patriarchal figures who play a large role in creating a system of inequality. Although some women do play an active role in sustaining patriarchal relations, the participants' tendency to minimize the role of context and to focus on mothers' as well as women's individual faults in their discussions was concerning. On the other hand, one male participant defined the movies as an "existential movie series"

rather than “women’s movies,” because the movies did not focus on mainly women’s rights. He also mentioned the universality of women’s right issues. This approach can be considered as an example of the tendency to decontextualize the issue of women from its societal context in Turkey. The mother-blaming and gender-neutralizing attitudes that emerge in the discussions might indicate the impact of covert sexism on the participants’ discourses.

4.2. CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present research results are hoped to contribute to understanding the interaction between femininity and sociocultural dynamics of the new Turkey, considering the current agenda regarding the issues of women living in Turkey. In addition to this, the present study's findings are hoped to contribute to the clinical practice of psychotherapy in Turkey.

Psychotherapists tend to approach the identity construct as universal. However, it cannot be ignored that the local, cultural and social structures, changes and fluctuations have significant impacts on individuals. Moreover, intra-psychic structures are evoked by social and inter-personal spaces as expected. From this viewpoint, a rising question would be how identity is affected by social context. For instance, do social changes in society reflect on individuals as only a stress factor? Do they also impact individuals' sense of self? When it comes to social restrictions - for example, because of being a woman- how do these reflect on the intra-psychic space? Do social dynamics form the individuals who grew up with these dynamics? Or do the social sphere that individuals are exposed to in adulthood reflect on their sense of self and identity? While living in a society in which women could be murdered or assaulted by a husband or an ex-partner, , is silence really a choice or a personal weakness? Considering the concepts of “bargaining with patriarchy” and “negotiation with traditional norms,” could the maternal movie characters be blamed for their coping mechanisms without considering the “absence of father figures”?

All these discussions take place in the field where the inner world and the external reality encounter. This field substantially corresponds to the space that a therapist and a client work with. In this sense, one of the aims of this study is to bring an integrative perspective to the discussions that the therapist is already in, both theoretically (structuring of the self and the individual's self-perception) and practically (social conflicts and social roles).

In the therapy settings based on psychoanalytic approaches, psychotherapists work with the intrapsychic dynamics of clients by establishing a secure therapeutic relationship. The therapeutic relationship is two-sided. For this reason, it is significant to comprehend the established structures which therapists and clients carry in order to understand the transference and countertransference relationships between a psychotherapist and a client better. Because almost everyone is exposed to popular culture in one way or another in contemporary society, the results are hoped to be helpful to psychotherapists for a better understanding of the relationship between social context and identifications of clients.

Furthermore, the study might contribute to the idea of using cinema as a tool for group therapy settings. Movies have been used in therapeutic help in different settings, such as watching movies or making films (Kuriansky et al., 2010; Mann & Chang, 2006). Movies have the potential to be a facilitative medium to reach out to the psychoanalytic factors in individual and group therapy settings (Dermer & Hutchings, 2000). They can also present the opportunity to observe the context in which different characters, mothers and women in the present case, negotiate with their external realities, and manifest their agency and voice.

4.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In order to comprehend the representations of femininity through the new cinema of Turkey, the present study was conducted based on a qualitative method through five semi-structured focus group meetings. Discussions regarding the results

and the methods might suggest some different agendas for future research and demonstrate the limitations of the present study.

First of all, one of the limitations of the study is that the meetings were conducted online via using virtual meeting tools (Zoom) because of the pandemic. Therefore, two possible limitations can be offered regarding the online setting. One of them is that being in an online setting might restrict the transition and share the participants' emotions and the group dynamic, which affects the flow of the discussions. The second one was not being able to watch the movies together. Thus, the associations and emotions of the participants are affected by the recency of watching the movies. Upon these limitations, future studies could consider conducting the study in person.

One of the critical limitations of the study can be considered as sampling methodology. All the participants have declared their sexual orientations as heterosexual, and their gender identities were stated as men and women. Thus, the results reflected the experience and perspectives of heterosexual individuals. It is possible to observe different themes and dynamics regarding the research questions if people with various gender and sexual orientations have been included. On the other hand, all the participants are educated and middle SES individuals. The education levels of the participants ranged from bachelor's degree to graduate. Future research could consider sampling participants from more heterogeneous groups.

Two possible limitations can be stated regarding the lack of generalizability of the results. Firstly, the grounded theory analysis and coding of the data have been conducted by only one coder, PI, who is a woman. Thus, the gender identity of the researcher might be effective in the analysis in terms of the internalization of gender roles and possible biases. The involvement of a second coder would increase the trustworthiness of the analysis. Secondly, it can be argued that the representations of women in the movies do not represent every female individual in Turkey. It is a worthwhile question that should be considered. As mentioned above, the present study conducted based on some assumptions. One of them was considering cinema as a

transferential space that provides a ground to evoke participants' associations and to help them express difficult issues which are hard to talk about without a medium.

On the other hand, considering Butler's ideas about "gender trouble" and "gendered spaces," could it be possible to look at femininity without dichotomization with masculinity? Moreover, could it be possible to approach the concept of gender from a broader perspective without restricting with the concepts of "femininity" and "masculinity"? Considering the emerged theme of "LGBT+" in the closure session, it could be said that the terminology of feminine/masculine might be limited itself for enriching the discussions related to gender. Future studies might consider to have a perspective with less dichotomization to enrich and create an imaginary space for participants.

Therefore, future studies could consider including more movies created by different directors and produced in different times corresponding to different Turkey processes such as before the 2000s. On the other hand, the metaphors of being a woman, being a mother, being a daughter could be examined in a more detailed manner by focusing on different aspects and phenomenon such as modernization, women's sexuality, women rights and movements, genocides, or ethnic origins.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the representations and experience of femininity in the new cinema of Turkey to shed light on the predicaments, intrapsychic dynamics of gender roles that interacted with the socio-cultural changes in the society of the woman in contemporary Turkey. The results portrayed an image of a woman who struggles with difficulties and conflicts which stem from the intrapsychic aspects of gender roles and the collectivistic characteristics of the new Turkey.

The predicaments and coping mechanisms of the female representations that emerged in the analysis of focus group studies were discussed from the point of individualism-collectivism dimension and individuation-separation process of women.

The prominent themes regarding the predicaments of new Turkey's women can be summarized as sexual-gender based oppression, the sense of agency, internalized sexism and the traditional gender roles, and separation-individuation process from the maternal figures who seemed as conveyers of customs and traditions. The maternal figures were depicted as poisonous and intrusive, whereas the paternal figures were depicted as absent in general. The findings pointed out that all of the female characters have struggled to survive and exist by using various coping mechanisms. Some of them tried to own and pursue their desires by objecting to the expectations and oppression of the authority figures. Some of them tried to deal with the problems by adapting themselves and their upbringings to the values of the traditional culture. However, all of the women in the movies have been struggling to develop a sense of agency over their bodies and selves. In addition, taking or not taking a part in this fight was not up to their choices. They had to develop strategies even only to survive.

This thesis claims that the construction of femininity, which contains a psychic background including inner-conflicts of gender, interacted with the socio-cultural dynamics and changes in new Turkey and intergenerational characteristics of these dynamics. It suggests that the social changes, significantly rising conservatism as a part of the collectivistic culture and the interdependent self in Turkey, and gender roles attributed to the woman in the movies have an essential role in constructing the participants' understandings of femininity in Turkey. Thus, the thesis talks about a depiction of a woman who struggles in a "clair obscur."

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APPENDIX A – INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu

Araştırmanın Yürütüldüğü Kurum:	İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın Adı:	Günümüz Türkiye’inde Kadın Olmak: Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Kadınlık Deneyimi ve Temsilleri üzerine Niteliksel Bir Çalışma
Araştırmacının Adı:	Sümeyye Avşar
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 Sümeyye Avşar tarafından Anıl Özge Üstünel danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, günümüz Türkiye’sinde kadın olmak ve kadının Türkiye sinemasındaki temsillerini katılımcıların bunlara ilişkin deneyimleri üzerinden anlamaktır. Araştırmanın Türkiye örnekleminde yapılan kadınlık kavramı ile ilgili araştırmalara katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda 5 oturumdan oluşan sinema tartışma ve paylaşım grubudur. Katılımcılara sinema filmlerini psikolojik açıdan değerlendirme/tartışma deneyimi ve bir grupta birlikte sinema üzerine paylaşım yapma imkanı sunar.

Bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde, yaklaşık 90 dakika sürecek beş görüşmeye ve bir kısa ön görüşmeye online olarak katılmanız beklenecektir. Katılımcılara yapılacak ön görüşmede güncel ruh sağlığına dair klinik bir değerlendirilme uygulanacaktır. Katılım durumu yapılacak klinik değerlendirme sonucuna göre belirlenecek ve katılımcılara email yoluyla haber verilecektir.

Çalışmada izlenecek ve tartışılacak filmlerin isimleri ön görüşmede size bildirilecektir. Onayınız alındığı takdirde çalışma grubuna dahil edileceksiniz. Bu görüşmelerde sinema filmi örneklerindeki kadın temsilleri ve kadınlık deneyimi üzerine fikirlerinizi ve gözlemlerinizi öğrenmek için sizden bazı sorulara yanıt vermeniz istenecektir. İlk görüşme araştırmacı ile birebir, diğer beş görüşme bütün katılımcılar ve araştırmacı olmak üzere grup halinde gerçekleştirilecektir. 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 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 kişi isimleri kullanılmayacak, elde edilen bilgiler anonim olarak değerlendirilecek ve bilimsel yayınlarda kullanılacaktır.

Bu araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Görüşmeye 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 kaydı 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.

Araştırmayla ilgili bilgi almak, soru sormak veya yorumlarınızı paylaşmak isterseniz, araştırmacı Sümeyye Avşar 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 – THE SCL-90-R

Açıklama : Tarih :

Aşağıda zaman zaman herkeste olabilecek yakınma ve sorunların bir listesi vardır. Lütfen her birini dikkatlice okuyunuz. Sonra bu durumun bugün de dahil olmak üzere son bir ay içinde sizi ne ölçüde huzursuz ve tedirgin ettiğini göz önüne alarak aşağıda belirtilen tanımlamalardan uygun olanının numarasını karşısındaki boşluğa yazınız. Anlamadığınız bir cümle ile karşılaştığınızda uygulayan kişiye danışınız.

Örnek :	Cevap:	Tanımlama :
Aşağıda belirtilen sorundan	0	Hiç
ne ölçüde rahatsız olmaktadır?	1	Çok az
	2	Orta derecede
	3	Oldukça fazla
	4	Aşırı düzeyde

1. Baş ağrısı
2. Sinirlilik ya da içinin titremesi
3. Zihinden atamadığımız yineleyici (tekrarlayıcı) hoş gitmeyen düşünceler
4. Baygınlık ve baş dönmeler
5. Cinsel arzuya ilginin kaybı
6. Başkaları tarafından eleştirilme duygusu
7. Herhangi bir kimsenin düşüncelerinizi kontrol edebileceği fikri
8. Sorunlarınızdan pek çoğu için başkalarının suçlanması gerektiği fikri
9. Olayları anımsamada (hatırlamada) güçlük
10. Dikkatsizlik veya sakarlıkla ilgili endişeler
11. Kolayca gücenme, rahatsız olma hissi
12. Göğüs veya kalp bölgesinde ağrılar
13. Caddelerde veya açık alanlarda korku hissi
14. Enerjinizde azalma veya yavaşlama hali
15. Yaşamınızın sona ermesi düşünceleri

16. Başka kişilerin duymadıkları sesleri duyma
17. Titreme
18. Çoğu kişiye güvenilmemesi gerektiği düşüncesi
19. İştah azalması
20. Kolayca ağlama
21. Karşı cinsten kişilerle ilgili utangaçlık ve rahatsızlık hissi
22. Tuzağa düşürülmüş veya tuzağa yakalanmış hissi
23. Bir neden olmaksızın aniden korkuya kapılma
24. Kontrol edilemeyen öfke patlamaları
25. Evden dışarı yalnız çıkma korkusu
26. Olanlar için kendini suçlama
27. Belin alt kısmında ağrılar
28. İşlerin yapılmasında erteleme düşüncesi
29. Yalnız hissi
30. Karamsarlık hissi
31. Her şey için çok fazla endişe duyma
32. Her şeye karşı ilgisizlik hali
33. Korku hissi
34. Duygularınızın kolayca incitilebilmesi hali
35. Diğer insanların sizin düşündüklerinizi bilmesi hissi
36. Başkalarının sizi anlamadığı veya hissedemeyeceği duygusu
37. Başkalarının sizi sevmediği ya da dostça olmayan davranışlar gösterdiği hissi
38. İşlerin doğru yapıldığından emin olabilmek için çok yavaş yapmak
39. Kalbin çok hızlı çarpması
40. Bulantı veya midede rahatsızlık hissi
41. Kendini başkalarından aşağı görme
42. Adele (kas) ağrıları
43. Başkalarının sizi gözlediği veya hakkınızda konuştuğu hissi
44. Uykuya dalmada güçlük

45. Yaptığınız işleri bir ya da birkaç kez kontrol etme
46. Karar vermede güçlük
47. Otobüs, tren, metro gibi araçlarla yolculuk etme korkusu
48. Nefes almada güçlük
49. Soğuk ve sıcak basması
50. Sizi korkutan belirli uğraş, yer veya nesnelere kaçınma durumu
51. Hiçbir şey düşünmeme hali
52. Bedeninizin bazı kısımlarında uyuşma, karıncalanma olması
53. Boğazınıza bir yumru tıkanmış hissi
54. Gelecek konusunda ümitsizlik
55. Düşüncelerinizi bir konuya yoğunlaştırmada güçlülük
56. Bedeninizin çeşitli kısımlarında zayıflık hissi
57. Gerginlik veya coşku hissi
58. Kol ve bacaklarda ağırlık hissi
59. Ölüm ya da ölme düşünceleri
60. Aşırı yemek yeme
61. İnsanlar size batığı veya hakkınızda konuştuğu zaman rahatsızlık duyma
62. Size ait olmayan düşüncelere sahip olma
63. Bir başkasına vurmak, zarar vermek, yaralamak dürtülerinin olması
64. Sabahın erken saatlerinde uyanma
65. Yıkanma, sayma, dokunma gibi bazı hareketleri yenileme hali
66. Uykuda huzursuzluk, rahat uyuyamamak
67. Bazı şeyleri kırıp dökme isteği
68. Başkalarının paylaşıp kabul etmediği, inanç ve düşüncelerin olması
69. Başkalarının yanında kendini çok sıkışık hissetme
70. Çarşı, sinema gibi kalabalık yerlerde rahatsızlık hissi
71. Her şeyin bir yük gibi görünmesi
72. Dehşet ve panik nöbetleri
73. Toplum içinde yer içerken huzursuzluk hissi

74. Sık sık tartışmaya girme
75. Yalnız bıraktığımızda sinirlilik hali
76. Başkalarının sizi başarılarınız için yeterince takdir etmediği duygusu
77. Başkalarıyla birlikte olunan durumlarda bile yalnızlık hissetme
78. Yerinizde duramayacak ölçüde rahatsızlık duyma
79. Değersizlik duygusu
80. Size kötü bir şey olacakmış duygusu
81. Bağırma ya da eşyaları fırlatma
82. Topluluk içinde bayılacağınız korkusu
83. Eğer izin verirsiniz insanların sizi sömüreceği duygusu
84. Cinsellik konusunda sizi çok rahatsız eden düşüncelerinizin olması
85. Günahlarınızdan dolayı cezalandırılmanız gerektiği düşüncesi
86. Korkutucu türden düşünce ve hayaller
87. Bedeninizde ciddi bir rahatsızlık olduğu düşüncesi
88. Başka bir kişiye karşı asla yakınlık duymama
89. Suçluluk duygusu
90. Aklınızda bir bozukluğun olduğu düşüncesi

APPENDIX C – 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

Cinsiyetinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?

Cinsel yöneliminizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?

APPENDIX D – CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Gizlilik Sözleşmesi

Araştırmanın Yürütüldüğü Kurum:	İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın Adı:	Günümüz Türkiye’inde Kadın Olmak: Yeni Türkiye Sinemasında Kadınlık Deneyimi ve Temsilleri üzerine Niteliksel Bir Çalışma
Araştırmacının Adı:	Sümeyye Avşar
Araştırmacının E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:	
Araştırmanın Danışmanı:	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anıl Özge Üstünel
Danışmanın E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:	

Katılacağım araştırmanın beş oturumdan oluşan “kapalı grup çalışması” olduğunu biliyorum. Bu görüşmelerde katılımcıların belirtilen filmlere dair bireysel yorumlarını, kişisel deneyimlerini ve kimliklerine dair bilgileri paylaşabileceklerinin farkındayım. Bu sebeple görüşmelerin içeriğine ve katılımcıların kimliğine dair kişisel mahremiyete zarar verebilecek herhangi bir bilgiyi hiçbir şekilde grup dışına çıkarmayacağıma ve paylaşmayacağıma onay veriyorum. Buna ek olarak bu görüşmelerin herhangi bir şekilde (görüntülü, sesli ve yazılı olarak) kaydını almayacağıma söz veriyorum.

Katılımcı Adı-Soyadı:	
Tarih:	

APPENDIX E – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Görüşme Soruları:

- 1) Bu film sizde hangi duyguları uyandırdı?
- 2) Bu filmdeki kadın temsillerinin temel çıkmazları/çatışmaları nelerdir?
- 3) Karakterlerin öyküsü ve yapmış oldukları seçimler kişisel olarak sizde neler uyandırdı?
- 4) Kadın temsillerinin cinselliği nasıl ele alınmış?
- 5) Karakterlerin içinde buldukları sosyal koşullarla etkileşimleri ve ilişkileri nasıldı?

ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

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