

ISTANBUL BILGI UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF HALF-SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS
IN TURKEY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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119647009

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İSTANBUL

2022

Exploring The Development of Half-Sibling Relationships in Turkey: A Qualitative Study

Annesi ya da Babası Bir Olan Kardeşlerin İlişki Gelişimini Keşfetmek: Türkiye’de Nitel Bir
Araştırma

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Koç Üniversitesi

Tezin Onaylandığı Tarih: 30.06.2022

Toplam Sayfa Sayısı : 163

Anahtar Kelimeler (Türkçe)

- 1) Anne ya da baba bir kardeşlik/Yarı kardeşlik
- 2) Karma aile
- 3) Kardeşlik ilişkisinin kalitesi
- 4) Kardeşlik
- 5) Üvey ilişkiler
- 6) Türkiye

Anahtar Kelimeler (İngilizce)

- 1) Half-siblings
- 2) Blended family
- 3) Sibling relationship quality
- 4) Siblingship
- 5) Step family relations
- 6) Turkey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my advisor Asst. Prof. Anıl Özge Üstünel Balcı for her invaluable support and guidance during this year. Working with her was one of the best choices I made during this master's programme. I have learned from her a lot and she provided me that sense of security which I needed most over the course of thesis writing process. And I would like to thank Asst. Prof. Yudum Söylemez for her precious support, compassion and everything she taught me not only during this year, but throughout the whole journey of becoming a clinical psychologist and couple and family therapist. I feel lucky for being her student. I also would like to thank Assoc. Prof. Gizem Erdem for her willingness to support and share her valuable knowledge with me.

I would like to thank my instructors and supervisors whom I met with in this programme. They encouraged me to discover and own the different parts of myself.

I also would like to thank the participants of this thesis for their genuine and transparent sharings and contributions. Hearing them out was a transforming experience for me.

I would like to thank Ülkü for her countless support, guidance, facilitating everything for me and containing me. It is ineffable for me to know she will always beside me whenever I need. Thank her for being such a great sister.

I also would like to thank Elif for being my everlasting childhood buddy and offering me unconditional friendship of hers. I feel grateful for her companionship which was inexpressibly precious for me during this year.

And I would like to thank Deniz for providing me a safe space to share my emotions and her readiness to hold me during this process. Her 'fellowship' is one of the greatest things this programme brought to me.

I also would like to thank Aybüke, my long-distance support, for always being there and making me laugh.

I would like to thank my friends and classmates whom I met within this programme. We have grown up together here by sharing all the difficulties and

excitements. Also, I would like to thank my ‘colleague’ Eda for motivating and supporting me during this year.

I would like to thank my mother Hülya for supporting me all the time via her endless compassion, love and understanding. She has always believed in me even when I doubted myself and followed me through my dreams. And, to my father Güven for supporting and believing in me. For uplifting me whenever I need. For being the one who made me believe that change is real. I feel lucky for having both of them as my parents. And, obviously, I would like to thank my siblings Murat and Danyal for being the sources of inspiration and support to me. Their genuine presence meant a lot to me during this process.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this work to my blended family that made me who I am.

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ABSTRACT

Half-siblingship is defined as a type of sibling constellation where sibling pairs have only one biological parent in common. While recent studies showed that family structures have been noteworthy transforming world widely, the subject of half-siblings is understudied, particularly within the context of Turkey. A majority of the previous work in this area focused on the influence of half-siblings' presence on familial dynamics and individual outcomes. Remaining work made an effort to acknowledge half-sibling relations and indicated the need for further understanding. With consideration of these points, the present study aimed to deeply explore the development of half-sibling relations in Turkey. Main research questions of this study were a) how do adult half-siblings establish a sibling relationship and how do they experience this process?, b) how do they describe their relationship quality and what role does their relationship play in their lives?, and c) what are the experiences that contribute to and diminish their perceived quality of the relationship. Ten participants aged between 19-37 ($M = 28,5$) were recruited for the current study, and semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom. The durations of the interviews were between 85-120 minutes. For the analysis of the data, thematic analysis method was utilized. On the basis of the participants' accounts, four main themes were generated which are a) building a sibling relationship, b) increasing belongingness, c) experiencing ruptures and d) maintaining the sibling relationship. Clinical implications of these results, limitations and suggestions for future studies are discussed.

Keywords: Half-siblings, blended family, sibling relationship quality, siblingship, step family relations, Turkey

ÖZET

İngilizce'den tam çevirisiyle 'yarı-kardeş' kavramı, kardeşlerin yalnızca aynı anneyi ya da yalnızca aynı babayı paylaştıkları kardeşlik ilişkilerini tanımlamak için kullanılmaktadır. Yakın zamanlı çalışmalar dünya genelinde dönüşmekte olan aile yapısına dikkat çekmiştir. Ancak özellikle Türkiye bağlamında, yalnızca aynı anne ya da babayı paylaşan kardeşlere yönelik çalışmaların sayısı oldukça azdır. Bu alandaki geçmiş çalışmaların çoğu, bu kardeşlerin varlığının aile dinamiklerine ya da çocuk ve gençlerdeki bireysel etkilerine odaklanmıştır. Diğer çalışmalar ise bu kardeşlerin ilişkilerini anlamaya odaklanarak bu alandaki eksikliğe işaret etmişlerdir. Buradan yola çıkarak, bu çalışma aynı anne ya da babaya sahip olan kardeşlerin ilişki gelişimini derinlemesine anlamayı amaçlamıştır. Çalışmanın temel araştırma soruları anne ya da babası bir olan kardeşlerin kardeşlik ilişkilerini nasıl kurduklarını ve bu ilişki kurma sürecini nasıl deneyimlediklerini; ilişkilerinin niteliğini nasıl gördüklerini ve birbirlerinin hayatında nasıl bir rol oynadıklarını; bu ilişkiyi olumlu ve olumsuz etkileyen deneyimleri keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla, 19 ve 37 yaş aralığındaki ($M = 28,5$) on katılımcıyla Zoom üzerinden yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu görüşmeler 85 ve 120 dakika aralığında sürmüştür. Verilerin analizi için tematik analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Tematik analiz sonuçları dört ana temayı ortaya çıkarmıştır, bu temalar: a) kardeş ilişkisini inşa etmek, b) artan aidiyet, c) ilişkide aksamalar ve d) kardeş ilişkisini sürdürmektir. Bu bulgulardan yola çıkılarak klinik uygulama ve çalışma önerilerinde bulunulmuştur. Ayrıca çalışmanın sınırlılıkları tartışılarak, gelecek çalışmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anne ya da baba bir kardeşlik, yarı kardeşlik, karma aile, kardeşlik ilişkinin kalitesi, kardeşlik, üvey ilişkiler, Türkiye

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Half-siblingship is a type of sibling relation where sibling pairs have only one biological common parent (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). With regard to increasing complexity of familial structure in contemporary world by increased divorce, remarriage and co-habitation rates, having children with multiple partners has been increasing (Amorim & Tach, 2019; Fomby et al., 2016). This, in turn, leads to a rise in different sibling arrangements such as half-siblings (Sanner et al., 2018). Indeed, according to the United States based research, it was reported that 30 % of individuals had half- and/or step-siblings (Pew Research Center, 2011), one out of ten children co-resided with their half-siblings (Ginther & Pollak, 2004), and approximately one out of five children shared the same household with their half- and/or step-siblings (Vogt-Yuan, 2009). Since previous work pointed out that sibling relationships have crucial importance in terms of each siblings' individual lives through the life course and familial well-being (Anderson, 1999; Baham et al., 2008), it was highlighted that there is a scarcity of research on understanding half-siblingship (Baham et al., 2008; Harcourt et al., 2015; Strow & Strow, 2008).

Nonetheless, some scholars have attempted to acknowledge half-siblingship by applying a different range of theoretical frameworks (McHale et al., 2009; Strow & Strow, 2008; Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2019; Vogt-Yuan, 2009). Existing empirical work mainly focused on examining the effect of having half-siblings on each sibling pairs in terms of non-traditional family dynamics among biological and step members of blended families (King et al., 2015; Vogt-Yuan & Hamilton, 2006), behavioral problems (Apel & Kaukinen, 2008; Natsuaki et al., 2009), educational attainment (Strow & Strow, 2008; Turunen, 2014), and physical (Tanskanen et al., 2015) and psychological well-being (Vogt-Yuan, 2009). Relatively fewer studies investigated the relationship dynamics and

perceived relationship quality among half-siblings (Steinbach & Hank, 2018; White & Riedmann, 1992).

Within the context of Turkey, despite the increased divorce rates and the evolving and changing perspectives towards marriage and family concepts both at societal and individual levels (Ünal & Avcı, 2019), it was suggested that much less effort had been made in studying remarriage, blended families and sibling structures (Demirci, 2015). Although, the presence of stepchildren was found to be associated with a decreased sense of satisfaction among remarried couples (Bir-Aktürk & Fıfılođlu, 2009), the development and influence of such dynamics, overall familial effect of half-siblingship and the relationship among half-siblings remain as understudied topics in Turkey. Therefore, in the present study, the aim is to investigate the development of the relationship of half-siblings who were reared in the context of Turkey. In line with this aim, in this section, the presence of half-siblings and associated outcomes, theoretical background regarding half-siblingship, findings of the relationship among half-siblings as well as influencing factors of this relationship, half-siblingship in the context of Turkey, and the purpose and connection of the current study with regard to this background are presented.

1.2. HALF-SIBLINGSHIP

1.2.1. Definition and Key Terms

Half-siblings are sibling dyads who have either biological mother or father in common (Ganong & Coleman, 2017). Ganong and Coleman (2017) have drawn attention to the diversity of types of half-siblings. They mainly defined three types of half-siblings. The first type is named as “resident insiders” (p. 193) who co-resided with both of their biological mother and father. Therefore, they also being called as mutual child of the blended family. The second type is namely “resident outsiders” (p.193) who co-resided with one of their biological parents and one stepparent who is either married to or cohabited with their biological parents. Thus, these half-siblings become the stepchildren of blended families. The third

type of half-siblings is “visiting outsiders” (p.193) who are the children of one of the parents from their previous partnership. These half-siblings do not co-reside with their half-siblings.

Blended families are different from simple stepfamilies by harboring step and half-sibling relationships since simple stepfamilies involve repartnered couples and child(ren) who are biologically tied to only one of the partners (Baham et al., 2008). Blended families consist of repartnered couples, biological and non-biological parents, biological and non-biological children and so, half-siblings and step-siblings. With consideration of given complexity, prior work underlined the uniqueness and therefore the significance of understanding these relations in terms of siblingship (Hetherington, 1999), familial dynamics (King et al., 2015) and individual outcomes (Harcourt et al., 2015; Sweeney, 2010). In the present study, the relationship between co-resided half-sibling pairs, in other words the mutual and step children within blended families, is investigated.

1.2.2. The Presence of Half-Siblings and Associated Outcomes

According to the systematic review of Sanner and colleagues (2018) regarding half- and step-siblingship, existing studies primarily focused on four different areas of outcomes in the presence of their half-siblings. These studies are summarized in the following sections below.

1.2.2.1. Familial Dynamics

Ganong and Coleman (1988) examined the influence of a having new child on stepfamilial ties. They pointed out that the birth of half-siblings neither positively nor negatively had a significant impact on familial dynamics compared to traditional families. Similarly, Stewart (2005) measured the effect of addition of new siblings on biological and step-parents’ investment in childcare. It was indicated that while having a new child was associated with decreased parental care for older children, this was the case not only for the addition of a new half-

sibling, but also in nuclear families as well. Indeed, parental investment rates were similarly and gradually lowered with the addition of full- and half-siblings for nuclear and blended families, whereas a dramatic decline was presented in stepfamilies without half-siblings. In contrast, Jensen and Clausen (2003) reported that older half-siblings' presence was significantly associated with further parental separation.

In addition to parental relationships, Aquilino (1991) pointed out that co-residence with stepparents, half- and/or step-siblings heightened the risk of prematurely leaving family home among children of blended and/or stepfamilies. Furthermore, Schlomer and colleagues (2010) showed that the presence of half-siblings was related with a higher level of mother-child conflict. Conversely, Vogt-Yuan and Hamilton (2006) found that not sibling composition, but the relationship quality of adolescents with their stepfathers was a determinant of well-being of the youth. King and colleagues (2015) reported that perceiving a good relationship with biological mother and stepfather was positively related with the sense of family belongingness among teenagers of blended families. Only important non-direct influential factors regarding sibling structure was the number of full-siblings which was positively associated with the perceived sense of belongingness. Differently, Gatins and colleagues (2014) highlighted that adolescents who had half- and/or step-siblings presented more positive adaptation than their counterparts with only full-siblings following a divorce process.

1.2.2.2. Behavioral Problems

Apel and Kaukinen (2008) emphasized the importance of meticulously measuring the effect of familial constellation on behavioral problems, since the level and type of familial dissolution as well as parental presence and parent-child dynamics may considerably influence antisocial act as presented in the former literature. They found that adolescents of blended families as well as co-habiting parent(s) were significantly more involved with delinquent behavior compared to adolescents of nuclear families. However, they operationalized blended families

as of youth who had half-siblings and not necessarily co-resided with them. Moreover, Natsuaki and colleagues (2009) revealed that although the level of biological relation among sibling pairs positively correlated with the delinquency, stepsibling pairs demonstrated a higher level of behavioral problems than full and half-siblings. They concluded that while genetic and socio-environmental factors can together influence involvement with antisocial behavior, the influence of dyadic aggressive dynamics of siblings ought to be highlighted as well.

Further, it was indicated that the presence of half-siblings was significantly related with higher likelihood of substance abuse, engagement with early sexual activities, and struggling to cope with encountered problems (Harcourt et al., 2015), an escalated level of antisocial behavior (Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008; Strow & Strow, 2008), and presenting behavioral problems in school (Tillman, 2008). Notably, Harcourt and colleagues (2015) highlighted that those youth with half-siblings who did not co-reside with both of their biological parents (i.e. stepchildren) were the most vulnerable group, whereas adolescents who lived within stepfamilies without half-siblings were as advantageous against risky sexual engagement as those youth who lived in traditional families. Similarly, Strow and Strow (2008) reported that stepchildren who did not have half-siblings did not significantly differ from the children of nuclear families in terms of the lessened involvement with delinquent behavior. On the other hand, Halpern-Meekin and Tach (2008) found that stepchildren without half-siblings were involved with significantly more antisocial behavior than children of simple nuclear families. Moreover, Fomby and colleagues (2016) found that young children who accommodated with their half and/or step-siblings had increased levels of externalizing behaviors than their counterparts who had no half and/or step-siblings.

1.2.2.3. Academic Achievement

Strow and Strow (2008) measured the educational success of children in terms of reading and math skills based on their family structure. In reading

performances, they highlighted that half-siblings' presence was revealed as disadvantageous on academic achievement compared to the scores of children without half-siblings. Although the authors' further analyses supported the previous suggestion, one exception was also found in that mutual children of blended families who had maternal half-siblings did score similarly with their peers who resided in simple families and/or had no half-siblings. Nonetheless, mathematical scores were found as significantly lower only in children with single mothers in comparison with children from any other family constellation. Furthermore, it was shown that half-sibling pairs (i.e. both shared children and stepchildren of blended families) had worse educational scores than children who had grown up in simple nuclear families (Ginther & Pollak, 2004) and reported more negative attributions to school (Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008). However, no significant difference was found among shared children and stepchildren of blended families.

Moreover, Gennetian (2005) documented that living in blended family with half-siblings somewhat negatively impacted children's educational attainment, nonetheless, the effect was not significant. On the other hand, Tillman (2008) highlighted that blended sibling structure, either half-siblings or step-siblings, was found to be related with increased academic difficulties in particular for male siblings. However, having step-siblings was revealed as the significantly most disadvantageous groups in terms of educational attainment among adolescents. The author also had drawn attention to two considerable points. One of them was that sibling constellation was a superior determinant of academic success compared to general familial factors. The second one was that increased co-residence duration with half and/or step-siblings was found to be associated with worse academic scores. Supportively, Turunen (2014) indicated that having maternal and/or paternal half-siblings was associated with lowered educational attainment compared to children who were reared in less complex family structures. It was also noted that the more complexity of family arrangement (i.e. having younger half-siblings both from maternal and paternal side) was associated with poorer academic performance.

1.2.2.4. Physical and Psychological Well-Being

Tanskanen and colleagues (2015) suggested that co-residing with fully biological siblings had significantly reduced the likelihood of non-deliberate injuries compared to co-residing with either both full and half-siblings and only half-siblings. Moreover, Halpern-Meekin and Tach (2008) showed that adolescents with half-siblings demonstrated increased depressive signs regardless of living with either one or two biological parents of theirs than adolescents who were reared in non-complex family structures. On the other hand, Tucker and Wiesen-Martin (2015) indicated that sibling arrangement was not associated with the ideation of suicide among sibling dyads. Indeed, they noted that suicidal inclination was decreased by increased warmth among siblings for the older ones of each sibling pairs.

Evenhouse and Reilly (2004) emphasized that being a step-child had become prominent as the most vulnerable group in terms of the children's overall well-being. Nonetheless, it was also shown that co-residing with half-siblings had been significantly beneficial for stepchildren than their counterparts without half-siblings. The authors suggested that half-siblingship in blended families seemed to be protective against detrimental effects of stepparent-child relationship. Moreover, shared children of blended families reported similar overall well-being with children of nuclear families for the half of the measured data. However, it would be noteworthy to add that a majority of the half-sibling pairs either lived with a single-mother or with stepfather families. Thus, the results may not represent the blended family dynamics as a whole. Similarly, Vogt-Yuan (2009) indicated that sibling arrangement was revealed to be not significantly associated with the depressive symptoms of youth. Although a weak negative association was found between increased time spent and depressive signs among either half or step-siblings, perceived positive relationship among sibling dyads regardless of the sibling constellation was related with reduced depressive signs.

To sum up, prior findings regarding the effect of half-sibling presence on children's and adolescent's family dynamics as well as behavioral, educational,

physical and mental well-being presented mixed and contradictory results. Many of these studies highlighted the expected proneness to negative outcomes either shared children or stepchildren of blended families experienced and the position of half-siblings in these studies were mixed as well. Thus, with consideration of all of these findings, it might be suggested that understanding the dyadic relationship among half-siblings would be a reasonable attempt. Moreover, most of these cited studies focused on these different areas of outcomes based upon suggestions of theoretical framework regarding half-siblings. Therefore, it would be crucial to grasp theoretical background to move towards the understanding of half-sibling relations.

1.3. DEVELOPMENT OF HALF-SIBLING RELATIONS

Within this section, the suggestions and findings of the previous research in terms of different theoretical views on half-siblingship, the relationship quality and the influencing factors of the relationship quality of half-siblings is presented below.

1.3.1. Theoretical Perspectives on Half-Sibling Relations

1.3.1.1. Evolutionary (Biosocial) Psychology Perspective

In line with the inclusive fitness theory (Hamilton, 1964), it was highlighted that genetic relatedness associated with the increased involvement of parents on childrearing since individuals are willing to maximize the likelihood of passing their own genes onto future generations, in turn, biological bonds are assumed to serve as strengthening factor in familial relationships (Daly & Wilson, 1996). Likewise, since half-siblings also shared considerable amount of genes but less than full-siblings may result in decreased investment among those dyads (Steinbach & Hank, 2018). Moreover, according to Hamilton's rule (1964), act of altruism towards siblings is related with the genetic bond which means individuals

would have a tendency to be altruistic, particularly in life-threatening situations, as well as being less hostile to their siblings whom they biologically more related. However, it was found that full-siblings had significantly more conflict and been more hostile with each other compared to half-siblings (Khan et al., 2020; Tanskanen et al., 2017), while full-siblings had been both conditionally and unconditionally help each other in comparison to their half- and step-siblings counterparts which may imply higher social effort among biologically more related siblings (Bressan et al., 2009; Pollet, 2007).

Furthermore, in step and/or hybrid families, parents would be less likely to invest their biologically unrelated children whom they co-resided. With consideration of this, monkey-wrench hypothesis suggests that when new children (i.e. half-siblings) is born in such families, stepparents might tend to decrease the level of their pre-existing parental care towards stepchildren and shift their attention onto their newborns (Stewart, 2005). Supportively, Santrock and Sitterle (1987) indicated that less closer relationship was reported among stepmother and stepchildren in the presence of half-siblings. On the other hand, Stewart (2005) found no significant difference among simple nuclear and blended families with the addition of new sibling.

Moreover, parent-offspring conflict theory (POCT; Trivers, 1974) proposed that conflicts among parents and children would be accelerated in line with the increased number of siblings over the resources that provided by their parents since the asymmetry of investment of which parents are able to offer and children demand from their parents would be inevitable (Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2021). Further, it would be expected that such conflict is escalated when genetic relations are diversified within families since sibling pairs would be more competing when they share less genes (full-siblings share 50%, half-siblings share %25 of genes) with each other for their benefits of survival (Harcourt et al., 2015; Schlomer et al., 2010). As a result, one might suggest that the birth of the half-sibling would increase conflict among older half-sibling and common parent in comparison to older full-sibling and parent (Harcourt et al., 2015; Schlomer et

al., 2010). However, half-siblings were reported significantly less conflicts than full-siblings (Gyuris et al., 2020).

In addition, Ginther and Pollak (2004) argued that evolutionarily, biological mothers rather than fathers more likely to provide resources for their offspring and stronger biological relation was presented in maternal kinship compared to paternal's (Michalski & Euler, 2008). Supportively, Schlomer and colleagues (2010) showed that the addition of maternal half-siblings was positively associated with escalated conflict among mother and children regardless of stepfather residence when compared with the addition of full siblings in traditional families. By highlighting the importance of motherhood in biological terms, evolutionary perspective had drawn an attention to possible differences among maternal and paternal half-sibling pairs which may further aid to comprehend the development of siblingship among half-siblings. Westermarck (1921) proposed that physical contact among siblings through earlier period of life becomes prominent for the detection of kinship which emphasizes the significance of co-residence during childhood. In line with this, maternal-perinatal association suggests that one of the most important factors through establishing siblingship witnessing own mother's caring and bearing half-sibling since it has become an indicator for older half-sibling pairs to embrace newly introduced half-sibling as sibling (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015). Gyuris and colleagues (2020) indicated that childhood co-residence was stronger predictor of the sibling relationship among both full and half-siblings rather than biological relatedness.

Other cues of kinship among half-siblings in terms of the relationship dynamics among half-siblings were suggested as perceived support of parents for each child and shared similarity in terms of physical presence and behavioral acts (Antfolk et al., 2014; Bressan et al., 2009; Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015) that in turn impact the relationship quality of half-siblings.

Additionally, a related model which makes a similar argument is the economical view. According to this view, resources provided by parents can be diluted with the addition of new half-siblings (Strow & Strow, 2008; Vogt-Yuan, 2009). Restriction of resources may have a detrimental effect on half-sibling

relations as well since it may lead to escalated conflicts, more rivalry, emotional distance and sibling jealousy (Vogt-Yuan, 2009).

1.3.1.2. Social Psychological Perspective

Bandura (1977) highlighted the importance of the processes of observationally learning among human beings and suggested that people would more likely to model and imitate others when there is higher perceived similarity in terms of various aspects, hierarchical relationships and closely established relationships among them. In line with this, one might say that sibling relationships naturally would be prone to such social processes and Baham and colleagues (2008) pointed out that as sibling pairs perceive their parents as role models, they may also imitate/model each other to a considerable extent.

Social comparison theory of Festinger (1954) proposed that similar aspects of siblings might make the sibling relationship more comparable for each dyad, and this relationship itself can impact psychosocial outcomes for sibling pairs. McHale and colleagues (2009) indicated that while genetic relation should not be disregarded, consideration of such social processes are vital, since biological ties actively interact with environmental processes. Supportively, they presented that similar characteristics among full, half- and step-siblings such as same gender of siblings revealed to be more influential than biological relatedness with respect to their involvement with risky behavior. Thus, they offered that overall similarity among half- and step-siblings, their birth spacing, and the degree of emotional closeness increase similar actions among siblings of blended families, and older half- and step-siblings can affect their younger half- and step-siblings in a positive and/or negative way.

At this point, some studies had made a distinction about familial positions of older and younger half-siblings, since in the process of family reformation older half-siblings as stepchildren would be more disadvantageous in demonstrating behavioral problems (Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008; Sweeney, 2010) compared to younger half-siblings who are likely to be mutual children of

blended families. This, in turn, may lead to crucial negative consequences for both older and younger half-siblings in the long run (Harcourt et al., 2015). Differently, Bernstein (1997) suggested that such social processes may aid remarried families in a bidirectional way, since older half-siblings might be influenced by their younger siblings to call stepparents as their parents (e.g. calling stepmother as mother) and this may influence familial re-adjustment positively. Vogt-Yuan (2009) indicated that although former work presented inconsistent results towards sibling characteristics such as age and gender, social processes need to be regarded as important, since similar qualifications among siblings would heighten the sibling similarity, and consequently sibling similarity might impact perceived relationship quality.

1.3.1.3. Family and Ecological Systems Perspective

Dupuis (2010) argued that Cherlin's (1978) famously cited work regarding blended families as "incomplete institutionalization" (p. 636) would also be evaluated from the systems framework. In this work, Cherlin (1978) suggested that step and/or blended families are prone to struggle with difficulties, since in the United States remarried families lack clearly defined rules, norms and roles. As a result of such ambiguity, half- and step-siblings' relationship may tend to be more aloof and/or conflictual (Sanner et al, 2018). With regard to this proposition, some studies found that although such families attempted to re-establish family rules, norms and roles, it was concluded that these attempts themselves would be problematic since step and/or blended families were more likely to internalize and imitate the rules, norms and roles of traditional families (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Visher & Visher, 1991). Therefore, it was suggested that time is required to process familial re-adjustment and develop new bonding among family members, and this situation differs from the simple nuclear family systems (Booth, 1992; Dupuis, 2010; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981).

Minuchin and Fishman (1981) highlighted that dynamics within one subsystem would affect the others and the family as a whole. Within blended

families, Hartin (1990) indicated that there is a wide range of different subsystems which include couples, genetically related resident parent-child, stepparent-stepchild, stepsiblings, and former spouse-resident parent. In addition, it would be reasonable to add different sibling constellations (e.g, full-full, full-half) and siblings subsystems as a whole as well as non-resident parent-child subsystem. Previous literature emphasized the parental and couple subsystems' key function since perceived quality of couple relationship influences the overall well-being and adjustment of blended families (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). However, couple subsystem of blended families was characterized as having difficulty in establishing a strong and dyadic relationship among partners without the presence of children (Bernstein, 2000; Papernow, 1987). Further, pre-built genetically related parent-child relationship increased the complexity of the couple relationship and tension among them as well (Dupuis, 2007; Visher & Visher, 2003). In a similar vein, selection theory posits that having half-siblings may imply previous family dissolution, instability of relationships which might refer to parents' incompetency to establish stable and strong relationships (Harcourt et al., 2015). In turn, half-siblings would be more prone to develop more distant and less steady relationships.

Importantly, such complexity may also lead to blurring and over-flexibility of boundaries between subsystems (Coleman et al., 2000; Dupuis, 2007; Dupuis, 2010) and this might result in disorganization among parental and sibling subsystems, unhealthy coalitions among parent-sibling pairs which could negatively influence functioning of complex sibling structures (e.g., half-siblings). Sibling subsystems and parental subsystems would impact each other in a bidirectional way (Baham et al., 2008).

Dupuis (2010) indicated that the other key subsystem which is increasingly been investigated in the area of step and blended families is, as one can expect, the relational dynamics of stepparent-stepchild subsystem. Moreover, it was revealed that the solidity of re-formed families and positive experiences of remarried couples were highly related with the functionality of stepparent-stepchild subsystem (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004). Taken together,

strengthened relationship dynamics of genetically unrelated family members may affect couple subsystem and consequently every subsystem of blended families (Dupuis, 2010). Supportively, in their systematic review, Jensen and Howard (2015) highlighted that there was an interrelation between perceived quality of relationship of stepparent-child and parent-stepparent relationship quality from the perspective of stepchildren. Furthermore, the importance of the relationship within (step)sibling subsystems were highlighted in terms of the sustainable functionality of blended families (Visher & Visher, 2003; Walsh, 1992), yet this area is seemingly understudied, in particular regarding different sibling arrangements in blended families.

Prior work has drawn attention to the idea that difficulties of shared children within blended families might have been overlooked compared to stepchildren of blended families, since they might be as disadvantageous as or at a more risky position due to additional complexity of parent-older half-sibling subsystem dynamics (Dupuis, 2010; Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008; Harcourt et al., 2015; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981). Differently, Ganong and Coleman (1988) suggested “concrete baby hypothesis” which posits that the introduction of a younger half-sibling may make stronger ties among biologically unrelated family members and facilitate familial re-adjustment process of blended family. As a result, it would increase the connection as a whole. However, the authors showed that the birth of younger half-siblings neither positively nor negatively influenced such familial processes. Further, both stability and changes are the natural parts of family life cycle (Minuchin, 1985, 1988), and since extra time is required for blended families during family reformation process as previously indicated, a half-sibling’s birth might unbalance the familial homeostasis and make the change more stressful and challenging for the members of blended families than expected (Baham et al., 2008).

McGuire and Shanahan (2010) suggested that as Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) proposed, complex sibling relationships need to be examined through the lens of microsystems, mesosystems and macrosystems since such a perspective would encapsulate the constituents of the formerly offered theoretical

views. Likewise, Dupuis (2010) emphasized that “the meta-family system, consisting of the extended family, and the meta-system consisting of society as a whole, also play an important role within the blended family system.” (p. 242). McGuire and Shanahan (2010) indicated that cultural context and beliefs as well as societal-level may considerably work as a part of macrosystemic influences in blended families, and thus, in half-siblings’ relationships. Moreover and crucially, they pointed out that complexity of sibling relationships ought to be considered along with the various ecological elements, since former research showed that different ethnic background, non-traditional sibling arrangement, cultural context, and parental resources are associated intra and interrelatedly with the perceived relationship of siblings.

In a supporting vein, Harcourt and colleagues (2015) found that while European-American sibling dyads were more prone to the negative impact of the presence of half-siblings, African-American sibling dyads were not negatively influenced by their half-siblings’ presence compared to their counterparts. Likewise, White and Riedmann (1992) found that full, half, and step African-American siblings had significantly more contact with each other in adulthood. Kumar and colleagues (2015) highlighted that in Indian culture, siblingship tends to be defined by cultural values, and individuals may perceive not only their household residents but also their extended family members as siblings. However, although there is an increased attempt to acknowledge cross-cultural influence on siblingship, there is a paucity of further research towards both traditional and non-traditional sibling relationships in different cultural backgrounds (McGuire & Shanahan, 2010). In addition, cultural myths, stereotypes and societal ideas especially about stepparents affect intrafamilial relationships of blended families, including siblingship (Adler-Baeder & Higgenbotham, 2004). Moreover, inadequate legal protection, unclear institutional procedures and policies may lead an added stress and decrease the cohesiveness of blended families, particularly among stepparent-stepchild subsystems (Ganong & Coleman, 1988; Ganong & Coleman, 1997).

Altogether, theoretical views highlighted the importance of biological relatedness, social processes, family system as well as higher-order systems in consideration of half-siblingship. In addition, it might be suggested that these perspectives mostly proposed the possible negative consequences for half-siblingship. With consideration of these perspectives, the importance of acknowledging half-sibling relations becomes more prominent since establishing half-siblingship tends to require effort and attention.

Moreover, a review of these theoretical perspectives shows that they generally tend to underline the dynamics between parental, familial and external factors and half-sibling pairs. All of these factors are shown to have a crucial impact on relations between half-siblings. Nonetheless, the examination of dyadic half-sibling dynamics can also increase the understanding of half-siblingship in detail. Thus, this relationship itself might require further understanding in terms of how half-sibling pairs perceive the quality of their relationship.

1.3.2. The Relationship Quality of Half-Siblings

Research indicated that sibling relationships may considerably become determinants of various positive and negative psychosocial outcomes of individuals throughout each pair's life course (Baham et al., 2008; Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2021). Siblings could be crucial support networks and decrease the sense of loneliness by being life-long companions (Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2021; Milevsky, 2005; Steinbach & Hank, 2018). Therefore, the quality of sibling relationships might have utmost importance in one's life through different developmental cycles, specifically in terms of psychological well-being (Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2021; Milevsky, 2005).

Tillman (2008) argued that within blended families, internalizing the role of sibling with the birth of a new half-sibling would be difficult to adapt for adolescent older half-siblings, and in turn, they might experience feelings of aloofness and/or hostility towards them. Moreover, among adult siblings, it was revealed that both half- and step-siblings had contacted less with each other

compared to full-siblings. However, this effect was stronger when adults had both half/step and full-siblings and the frequency of contact was found to be independent from the presence of a stepparent (White & Riedmann, 1992). Similarly, among young and middle adults, increased level of contact, and feeling emotionally closer were reported by full-siblings compared to half-siblings, whereas both half and full-sibling dyads rated their level of sense of distance towards their siblings as similar (Steinbach & Hank, 2018). Additionally, Salmon and Hehman (2021) reported that prosocial behavior among half-sibling pairs were significantly lower compared to full-siblings.

Danielsbacka and Tanskanen (2015) noted that maternal and paternal half-siblings were not different from each other and both of them felt significantly less close to their siblings in comparison to full-siblings. In contrast, it was indicated that full and half-siblings did not differ from each other in terms of feeling of closeness for siblings (Khan et al., 2020), and half-siblings had significantly less conflicts with each other compared to full-sibling dyads (Khan et al., 2020; Salmon & Hehman, 2021; Steinbach & Hank, 2018). Moreover, Tanskanen and colleagues (2017) found that in comparison of older and younger generation adult sibling pairs, older generation full-siblings had significantly more conflicts than paternal half-sibling pairs, whereas the latter generation full-siblings reported significantly increased level of conflicts than both of their paternal and maternal half-sibling counterparts. Moreover, Anderson (1999) examined full, half and step adolescent siblings in terms of various aspects of positivity (directiveness, empathy and companionship) and negativity (rivalry, aggression and avoidance). The author found that in terms of negativity, full and half-siblings did not differ from each other, whereas only step-siblings showed significantly less negativity towards each other. They also added that in every sibling constellation, sibling dyads tend to evolve as having less positive and less negative sibling relations with time. Both Anderson (1999) and Ganong and Coleman (1994) argued that despite some differences, half-siblings developed a similar dyadic relationship with full-sibling dyads.

With respect to how half-sibling relationships develop, Baham and colleagues (2008) attempted to fill the gap in this area and proposed a model. They derived and integrated what former theories suggested regarding the quality of full-sibling relationship (Brody, 1998; Dunn, 1983; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) and findings in regard to half-siblingship in order to offer a solid and measurable model and to understand the interrelation between influencing factors and the relationship quality itself, which in turn affect the wide range of psychosocial outcomes for siblings. In this model, the relationship quality of sibling relations are examined along three dimensions, namely conflict, support and emotional attachment. The authors underlined that “At the heart of research on sibling relationships in blended families is the quality of the relationship itself...” (p. 187) which suggested that the quality of relationship is the core determinant of both siblingship and the psychosocial development of each sibling.

Taken together, prior work of the relationship quality among half-siblings mainly focused on the differences among full- and half-siblings. Although there is seemingly consensus on lowered conflicts among half-siblings, contradictory and/or mixed findings were also presented. Moreover, it might be suggested that both similarities and differences of relationship among full and half-siblings may make half-siblingship more complex and unique. Baham and colleagues (2008) proposed a model regarding siblingship in blended families and highlighted the significance of the relationship quality as well. Specifically supportiveness, emotional attachment and conflictual dynamics among siblings were indicated as prominent aspects of the half-siblingship. Thus, it would be useful to understand influencing factors of such relations.

1.3.3. Factors that Influence the Relationship

Ganong and Coleman (2017) emphasized that most of the research focused on the effect of half-sibling presence effect on sibling and familial relationships, although potential cruciality of wide range of other factors such as gender constellation, age gap as well as personality of each child, motivations and dreams

about having kids following remarriage. Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2021) suggested the factors that impact relationship quality among siblings, specifically in adulthood. They accumulated these factors by considering the degree of genetic relation among sibling pairs with regard to former work of which showed that sibling arrangement could be influential on the quality of sibling's relationship (Pollet, 2007; Steinbach & Hank, 2018) as mentioned previously. They highlighted that gender, number of siblings, order of birth, age differences, socio-economic status, duration of co-residence in childhood, geographical closeness, unequal parental treatment might be considerably effective on sibling relationships. In addition to what Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2021) offered, Baham and colleagues (2008) pointed out that one of the most developmentally important factors that influence the quality of sibling relationship is the relationship among parents and children. Therefore, this factor was also added.

1.3.3.1. Gender

Research indicated that females showed more openness to get support from others (Turner & Marino, 1994, as cited in Vogt-Yuan, 2009) and more likely to develop closer and reciprocal relationships (Umberson et al., 1996, as cited in Vogt-Yuan, 2009). Thus, Vogt-Yuan (2009) suggested that siblings who both are female may tend to get along better and establish more solid relationships with each other, since this gender combination seemingly would be the most rewarding relationship. Supportively, emotional closeness (Bernstein, 1997; Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015; Pollet, 2007) and higher contact frequency (White & Riedmann, 1992) among female-female half-siblings were reported to be significantly higher than other gender constellations. Moreover, females demonstrated significantly more empathy and they were also more directive in a positive way to their siblings (Anderson, 1999). In addition to increased level of emotional closeness, female sibling pairs experienced more conflicts with each other (Kersting & Feldhaus, 2016, as cited in Steinbach & Hank, 2018; Pollet, 2007). However, Vogt-Yuan (2009) indicated that spending time together affected

female-female constellations more positively compared to other gender structures. To sum up, it might be suggested that female sibling pairs may tend to invest in and interact with each other more and this seems to influence their perceived relationship.

1.3.3.2. Number of Siblings

Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2021) suggested that size of sibling structure might impact the quality of relationship, since the increased number of siblings may restrict individuals' resources which they could offer to each of their siblings. In line with this, Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2014) showed that increased sibblingship size was associated with decreased contact among sibling pairs. Differently, Steinbach and Hank (2018) argued that higher number of siblings may be related with less conflictual relationships among siblings. Further, it was revealed that number of siblings was not significantly associated with different aspects of perceived quality of siblings' relationships (Pollet, 2007; Steinbach & Hank, 2018). It may be suggested that findings regarding the effect of size of sibblingship are inconsistent as well as seemingly understudied.

1.3.3.3. Order of Birth

Being an older and younger half-sibling may also mean being the shared child and stepchild of the blended family. As previously highlighted, shared children (Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008; Harcourt et al., 2015) and stepchildren (Evenhouse & Reilly, 2004; Sweeney, 2010) of blended families may have default burdens and disadvantageous positions, which in turn might damage the perceived quality of sibling relationship. Thus, the influence of the birth order could be a considerable subject of interest. Anderson (1999) found that older half-siblings' behavior towards their siblings were rated as being significantly negative by their siblings, parents and a neutral observer, while older half-siblings themselves did not report such negativity towards siblings. However, there was a decreased trend

of negative attitude in older half-siblings by time. Additionally, more guiding attitude in a positive way was found among older ones towards their younger ones. Bressan and colleagues (2009) showed that being older or younger half-siblings influenced the direction of support among them, while older siblings were more likely to offer support, younger ones were more likely to receive help. Moreover, increased level of offered support were associated with a higher sense of closeness and contact. However, Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2014) indicated that the frequency of contact was not associated with birth order of siblings. Thus, while being an older half-sibling could be associated increased sense of responsibility towards younger ones, it may also be bidirectional.

1.3.3.4. Age Differences

Age differences among half-siblings tend to be large, since familial reformation processes might require time (Baham et al., 2008). It was found that larger age difference among half-siblings was associated with an increased sense of closeness (Baham et al., 2008; Khan et al., 2020), whereas closer age among siblings was positively associated with sibling rivalry (Khan et al., 2020). However, this was the case for older siblings and sense of closeness decreased when age difference was larger for younger sibling pairs. Moreover, Tanskanen and colleagues (2016) examined sibling relations of two adult generations and reported that larger age gap was associated with a lowered level of conflict among sibling dyads. Nevertheless, Danielsbacka and Tanskanen (2015) revealed that higher age differences of siblings were related to a lessened sense of emotional closeness towards each other, especially for the older ones. Similarly, it was shown that when age difference was larger, siblings' hostility and withdrawal towards each other also heightened and level of sibling companionship decreased (Anderson, 1999). In contrast, longitudinal study of Ahrons (2007) highlighted that although initially large age differences were perceived as weird by half-siblings, they established positive relationships with each other. Although larger

age differences among half-siblings tend to predict better relations, previous studies showed inconsistency regarding this influencing factor.

1.3.3.5. Socio-Economic Status

Khan and colleagues (2020) suggested that rivalry among siblings may be escalated when their family's socio-economic status was lower, since parents' distribution of resources would be more limited for each sibling. Nonetheless, Tanskanen and Rotkirch (2018) found no significant relation between the perceived quality of sibling relationship and economical condition of siblings. Moreover, the authors suggested that as siblings grow up and leave apart, their individual socio-economic level may also impact their relationship. Likewise, as educational level of each sibling increased, their contact with each other increased as well (Pollet, 2007; Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2014). However, Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2014) found this association for adult siblings who are older than their younger counterparts. On the other hand, Steinbach and Hank (2018) reported that there was not significant association between sibling relationship and level of education of siblings. It seems that the effect of socio-economic status on half-sibling relations is ambiguous.

1.3.3.6. Co-Residence in Childhood

Being reared in the same household, shared experiences and time together have been suggested as factors that strengthen siblingship among children of blended families (Dupuis, 2010). Prior research tremendously highlighted the importance of co-residence among half-siblings to experience bonding (Bernstein, 1997; Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015; Gyuris et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020). Bressan and colleagues (2009) revealed that individuals' intense altruistic behavior towards siblings was strongly predicted by duration of co-residence in childhood. Similarly, it was found that compared to half-siblings who had not co-resided, those who did demonstrated significantly higher levels of perceived

quality of sibling relationship in terms of their sense of closeness, increased level of contact (Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2019) and more conflict (Steinbach & Hank, 2018). Moreover, Gyuris and colleagues (2020) presented that as the childhood co-residence duration increased, half-siblings were significantly more supportive to each other. In sum, previous research offered consistent findings on the vital importance of co-residence of half-siblings in childhood for perceiving their relationship quality as higher.

1.3.3.7. Geographical Closeness

During adulthood, siblings may fall apart due to various reasons such as leaving for college or marriage, and in turn, such physical distance might lead to changes in siblingship dynamics. White and Reidmann (1992) reported more contact among siblings who were geographically closer, whereas Steinbach and Hank (2018) showed that when geographical proximity was low, siblings were more likely to report a lower level of contact and conflicts with each other, whereas sense of emotional closeness increased among them. Differently, Danielsbacka and Tanskanen (2015) found that being geographically more distant to each other was significantly associated with an increased level of conflict and emotional distance as well as a decreased sense of closeness. Findings regarding the effect of geographical closeness on relationship quality between half-siblings seem mixed.

1.3.3.8. Parent-Child Relationship and Unequal Parental Treatment

As indicated previously, within blended families, former studies suggested that the introduction of a new half-sibling negatively influenced the relationship between parents and older half-sibling (Schlomer et al., 2010), and stepparents and older half-siblings (i.e. stepchildren) (Santrock & Sitterle, 1987). In addition, parents showed significantly greater affection to their biological children compared to resident stepchildren (Ganong & Coleman, 1993). Such a change

within familial dynamics would also impact the relationship of half-siblings. Moreover, Baham and colleagues (2008) measured the workability of the model with a longitudinal study among teen members of biological mother-stepmother blended families. Results revealed that good relationship quality with shared mother was related with the increased sense of closeness among full- and half-siblings. The authors highlighted that all parent-child constellations' (e.g., stepparent-child, non-resident parent-child) relationship would have an influence on half-siblingship. Supportively, Bernstein (1997) found that non-resident parents' positive or negative attitude influenced the perceived the relationship quality of half-siblings depending upon these attitudes. Moreover, she also added that gender of the (step)parents might impact the half-siblingship quality.

It was found that half-siblings were more prone to different parental treatment in comparison to full-siblings (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015; Mekos et al., 1996). Importantly, Danielsbacka and Tanskanen (2015) noted that this difference was statistically meaningful whether the mother was common parent who treated half-sibling pairs unequally. Moreover, they also qualitatively investigated that how sibling pairs perceived the treatment of parents as unequal. Their analysis showed that parents' differential treatment was experienced via "1) material, 2) emotional, 3) practical support and 4) distribution of tasks and restrictions, and 5) distribution of emotional and physical violence." (p. 502). Further, Danielsbacka and Tanskanen (2015) highlighted that unequal treatment of parents had left a mark on the memory of sibling pairs which was seemingly not easy to forget through life. Baham and colleagues (2008) suggested that unequal treatment of parents and attributions regarding it are important aspects of the perceived quality of the half-siblingship.

O'Connor and colleagues (2006) showed that unequal parental treatment was positively associated with the hostile behavior of sibling pairs, and led to more emotional distance towards each other (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015). Additionally, it was suggested that unequal parental treatment was associated with the difference of age and sex composition of siblings (O'Connor et al., 2006) which implies that factors that affect relationship quality were also interrelated

with each other. With consideration of these factors, both (step)parent-child relationship and different parental treatment to each half-sibling may in turn influence their perceived quality of siblingship.

In addition to these influencing factors, qualitative analysis of Bernstein (1997) indicated that half-siblingship quality was perceived to be better when blended family relations consolidated at later stages of remarriage when younger half-sibling was introduced. Moreover, the quality of half-sibling relations was reduced when the baby was born within earlier years of remarriage and older half-sibling was aged between 6-9. She also highlighted the subjectivity of remaining contributing factors by individual experiences.

Taken together, these findings point out that being female siblings, sharing the same household (co-residence), and perceived unequal treatment by parents are the influencing factors of half-siblingship quality by consensus. However, remaining factors seemingly offered mixed findings which may suggest the necessity of further effort to comprehend its underlying mechanisms holistically. Moreover, these findings put forward the importance of examination of the experience of half-siblingship itself in detail.

1.4. HALF-SIBLINGSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF TURKEY

It was reported that remarriage rates within Turkey had an increasing trend (Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu et al., 2012). In 2011, Beşpınar (2014) indicated that remarriage rates comprised 15,4 % of the marriage ratios. Moreover, from 2001 to 2019, prevalence of remarriage rates among both men and women rose to 44 % (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2014; Çobanoğlu & Tek, 2021). Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu and colleagues (2012) found that divorced women in Turkey are likely to get remarried within two years. This dramatic trend may be interpreted in terms of the changing perspectives and expectations towards marriage (Bir-Aktürk & Fışıloğlu, 2009) and changes in cultural values regarding remarrying in the 21st century Turkey. Further, Bir-Aktürk & Fışıloğlu (2009) found that there was not any significant difference among remarried and married couples in terms

of perceived marital satisfaction. However, importantly, remarried couples with resident stepchildren showed significantly lower levels of marital satisfaction. Thus, one might argue that increased remarriage rates also mean increased complexity in family constellations with the addition of step and/or mutual children to remarried families.

Demirci (2015) interviewed remarried women and men and indicated that remarried couples tend to have a child together in order to increase the sense of normalcy within their marriage. This might be interpreted as an attempt to re-adjustment to familial change. Moreover, the participants in this study reported an increased sense of commitment within family as well as among stepchild and shared child (i.e. half-siblings) with the help of this change and the effort of remarried partners. Additionally, the participants highlighted the changing dynamics among stepparent-stepchild as well as parent-child dynamics. Generally, with the introduction of a younger half-sibling, stepparents expressed putting more effort not to discriminate their stepchild from the new child, not to favor stepchild, and to prevent unequal treatment, and any resentment of stepchild positively contributed to close family and sibling relationship. However, it was also reported that stepparents had a tendency to withdraw themselves due to feelings of not being entitled to intervene in the lives of their stepchildren. Importantly, it was also highlighted that parents were more likely to be protective towards their first-born children (i.e. children of first-marriage). Furthermore, Aslantürk and Kaya Kılıç (2020) qualitatively investigated the perception of family belongingness within non-traditional family structures among young adults. Their results indicated that lower quality of relationship with stepparents as well as the presence of half- and step-siblings were related with the decreased sense of family belongingness, whereas some of the participants indicated that they perceived half- and/or step-siblings as siblings, and stepparents as parents.

Previous work in the context of Turkey may underline the complexity of relationship dynamics which influence every member of blended families both individually and as a family. These, in turn, potentially impact the half-sibling relationships as well. Moreover, Kale and Siğirtmaç (2020) indicated that

although the family culture of Turkey has been transforming recently, sibling relationships are still being influenced by the collectivistic culture of this country. In a supportive vein, Sirman (2014) argued that siblingship cannot be thought by disregarding the effect of such understanding. To put this together, the influence of complex family structure as well as the contextual factors of Turkey may remarkably impact how half-sibling relations are shaped. However, despite of the attempts to examine the effect and the relations of non-traditional family dynamics in the literature, the subject of half-sibling relations have received limited attention in Turkey.

1.5. THE PRESENT STUDY

As indicated in previous sections, on the basis of theoretical perspectives regarding blended families and sibling relationship within blended families, research arena regarding half-siblings mostly concentrated on the half-sibling presence and its influence on dynamics of family and individuals, and their well-being in various domains of life. Increasingly, with consideration of these findings, researchers emphasized the importance of examining siblingship in non-traditional families (Jensen & Howard, 2015; Jensen & Lippold, 2018). In line with this, the perceived relationship quality among half-sibling pairs as well as influencing factors of the relationship were also investigated. Although there is a partial consensus on these influencing factors, some studies report mixed results, as explained previously.

Additionally, most of the existing literature involved half-sibling pairs from the US (Sanner et al., 2018) and Northern European countries such as Germany (Steinbach & Hank, 2018) and Finland (Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2019) and employed quantitative designs, while there is a scarcity of qualitative research on this subject. Despite of the underlined importance of racial and cultural influences on half-siblingship (Kumar et al., 2015; McGuire & Shanahan, 2010), no study was found in Turkey that solely focused on half-siblingship.

Taken together, the present study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of emerging and young adult half-siblings in the context of Turkey, and to aid clinicians, particularly family therapists who work with blended families and half-sibling pairs, in the future. In addition, as explained above, there is a lack of understanding on how half-siblingship has been established and how this dyadic relationship evolve through life stages remain unanswered. Thus, the present study aims to explore the steps of the development of half-sibling relations as well. In this regard, through a qualitative research design, the current study answers the following research questions:

1. How do adult half-siblings establish a sibling relationship? How do they experience this process?
2. How do adult half-siblings describe their relationship quality? What role does their relationship play in their lives?
3. What are the experiences that contribute to and diminish their perceived quality of the relationship?

CHAPTER II: METHOD

2.1. DATA COLLECTION

Following Istanbul Bilgi University Institutional Review Board approval, convenience sampling method was used for recruitment process. The research was announced via various social media accounts by using the researcher's network, psychology-related professional e-mail lists as well as some relevant social media groups regarding family dissolution and graduate studies support groups. Inclusion criteria of the study were a) being aged 18-45 b) having maternal and/or paternal half-sibling(s) c) having co-resided with half-sibling(s) for at least 2 years and d) currently living in or having lived in Turkey. These inclusion criteria were set on the basis of previous research. Regarding age criteria, Arnett's (2011) definition of early adulthood was used, as he proposed that 18-45 age interval encapsulates early adulthood. Regarding the characteristics of half-siblings, some of the prior work focused and/or included only maternal half-siblings because each child is given custody to their mothers following divorce in general or the importance of maternal kinship (Khan et al., 2020). Nevertheless, Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2019) highlighted that paternal half-siblings resided together as well and such exclusion might be misleading, since the likelihood of one child's having half-siblings both from their mother and father was revealed as high (Amorim & Tach, 2019). Thus, both maternal and paternal siblings were included in the study. Regarding co-residence, former work emphasized the crucial importance of co-residence of half-siblings which led them to develop more emotionally close relationships and strengthened bonding (Andersson, 2020; Baham et al., 2008; Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2019). In addition, it was noted that a minimum of 2 years was required to adjust to family re-formation (Bray & Berger, 1993, as cited in Baham et al., 2008). Thus, it was considered that co-residence and having maternal and/or paternal half-siblings would serve as complementary criteria. Lastly, currently living and/or having lived in Turkey added to examine the influence of the context.

Exclusion criteria of the study was demonstrating signs of acute stress which stem from familial disturbance such as death of a family member, recent divorce, housing instability, and/or acute loss. This exclusion criterion was set, since Hadjistravropoulos and Smythe (2001) emphasized that during qualitative research interviews, specific topics might accelerate participants' sensitivity, induce negative feelings and as a result may cause an emotional burden to participants. Since the research itself aimed to deeply investigate non-traditional familial bonding and its development, such participants were excluded from the study in order to prevent any kind of psychological harm as well as impediment of the research process. Ten volunteer participants were recruited accordingly.

In order to screen the eligibility of the participants, the researcher initially contacted them via phone before proceeding with the interviews. During the call, the participants were informed briefly about the research, interview process and how to proceed if they would like to take part in the study. Their questions, such as the length of the interviews, content of the questions and whether there would be additional interview stages, were addressed properly as well. In screening, the participants were asked about their age, half-sibling constellation, for how long they co-resided with their half-siblings, where they were born, raised and currently living, and whether they have been going through recent familial difficulties and disturbance. Those who fulfilled the indicated criteria and were willing to take part voluntarily were invited to the interview either in the researcher's office or over Zoom. Interview appointments were scheduled. All participants chose to be interviewed via Zoom due to pandemic precautions, geographical distance and transportation difficulties.

Before the Zoom interviews were carried out, an informed consent form (Appendix A) was sent to each participant via e-mail and their written statement of consent was taken. Following the consent of the participants, a socio-demographic information forms (Appendix B) was filled out by the participants and collected via Google Forms. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom. During the interviews, the participants were initially asked about their current daily lives, what they enjoy to do and other relevant topics in order to

get to know them, establish initial rapport and make participants feel more comfortable. Then, semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) was followed thoroughly.

At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were reminded about their rights as indicated in the informed consent form and their permission to record the interview was requested one more time. The interviews took 85-120 minutes. All interviews were recorded via Zoom's recording function and these recordings were also stored in the researcher's hard-disk following the interviews. For the analysis, these audio-recordings were transcribed by the researcher.

2.1.1. Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) was prepared by the researcher on the basis of the study goals as well as suggestions and gaps in the previous research, in particular Baham and colleagues' (2008) proposed model of the quality of the sibling relationship in blended families. With the guidance of the former literature regarding siblingship and blended families, Baham and colleagues (2008) suggested that perceived relationship quality of half-siblings is the main indicator of either positive or negative lifelong consequences, and that perceived relationship quality involved an evaluation of "conflict, support and emotional attachment" (p. 191) aspects. Further, according to their model, these aspects were closely interrelated with the factors of each parent's (e.g. stepparent and non-resident parent) relationship with children and their siblings, familial conditions (e.g. lifestyle of the family) and influencing factors of dyadic relationship (e.g. each sibling's personal characteristics, differences of age). Informed by Baham and colleagues' (2008) model, main topics to be explored in the interview guide were selected and these main topics involved the issues of support, conflict and emotional bonding with half-siblings as well as the participants' overall perception of half-siblingship. After these main topics were determined, open-ended and non-directive questions were generated to develop the initial interview guide, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013). All of these

main topics in the initial guide were enhanced with questions on other family members' influences on different aspects of the half-sibling relationship, the evolution of the relationship over time as well as the contextual factors that might have shaped it. Additionally, questions about the story of family formation were also asked in order to deeply understand the participants' experiences with their half-siblings from the beginning and the development of their relationships. .

In order to test the initial interview guide, two pilot interviews were conducted by the researcher. The first pilot interview took 2 hours and 50 minutes to complete. Following the first pilot interview, the researcher and the advisor had a meeting and decided to remove some probe questions from the guide, since the first pilot interview overly exceeded the expected time. Detailed probe questions about family story, half-siblingship and), support and emotional bonding (i.e. "how is it to be older/middle/younger half-sibling?", "is there anything you wish was different with regards to your emotional bond with your half-sibling?") were eliminated in order to keep the interview focused and prevent disruption of the interview. Rather, it was decided that these kinds of questions would be explored if they were brought up by the participants themselves in the natural flow of the interview. In addition to revision of the questions, the advisor gave feedback for enhancing interviewing skills, particularly with regards to staying on topic and not getting sidetracked with discussions not related to study goals. This pilot interview was excluded from data analysis. Afterwards, in line with the given feedbacks, the second pilot interview was carried out via Zoom. The second pilot interview had a better flow, worked to collect rich data and lasted 105 minutes. After the second pilot, no changes were made in the interview guide and it was finalized.

The final guide consisted of seven sections, 29 main questions and 13 probe questions. The main sections were introduction, family story, half-siblingship, support, conflict, emotional bonding, termination.

2.2. PARTICIPANTS

Ten participants took part in the semi-structured interviews. Age of the participants ranged between 19-37 ($M = 28,5$) years. Nine of the participants were female, only one participant was male. The participants were mostly residing in Istanbul, only one of them was not currently residing in Turkey. The level of income of the participants ranged between lower-middle and upper-middle while a majority of them indicated their level of income as middle. Education level of the participants varied from undergraduate student to master's degree and most of the participants had an undergraduate degree. Six of the participants were living with at least one family member (either parent or spouse). Only one of them indicated that she is currently co-residing with her half-brother. In addition, three participants were married and two of them had children of their own. Further sociodemographic information of the participants are presented in Table 2.1.

Moreover, co-residence duration of the participants with their half-siblings varied from 3 to 22 years ($M = 12,2$). Eight participants reported that they co-resided with their paternal half-siblings, while two participants co-resided with their maternal half-siblings. Age of the half-siblings of the participants differed between 10-54 years ($M = 30,12$). With respect to birth order, half of the participants had older half-siblings who lived with their biological parents and stepparents, whereas half of the participants had younger half-siblings who lived with both of their biological parents. With respect to gender, only one participant co-resided with both female and male half-siblings, three of the participants co-resided only with female half-siblings and six of them only co-resided with their male half-siblings. Additionally, six of the participants indicated that they were raised in urban areas with their half-siblings, while four of the participants were raised in rural areas.

In addition to half-siblings, four of the participants had full-siblings and one of them had a fraternal twin. None of the participants either had been or currently were in touch with their stepsiblings.

Lastly, brief family stories of each of the participants were given below in order to provide better understanding of the present study:

P1 indicated that her biological parents got divorced when she was in puberty and both of them were remarried and had children in a short span of time.

P2 indicated that her biological parents got divorced when she was a baby and her mother remarried when she was 3,5. She calls her stepfather as father as well. She found out in her teenage years that the reason of divorce was infidelity. She keeps in touch with her non-resident father.

P3 indicated that her biological father was married twice before he married to her mother. Her half-siblings' mother was the first marriage of his father and she died in a car accident. She also highlighted that in her father's second marriage her half-siblings were unwanted by her father's mother-in-law, therefore, ended-up with divorce.

P4 indicated that her parents married following her father's divorce. She heard that this remarriage was welcomed unpleasantly by her half-siblings' mother. She lost her father 8 months before the interview.

P5 indicated that her parents separated when she was 50-days-old and got divorced when she was 1. She stayed with her paternal side since her maternal grandfather did not accept to raise his granddaughter especially due to economical reasons. Her father remarried when she was a toddler, primarily for confiding her daughter to a maternal figure. Her mother was remarried and had children as well.

P6 indicated that her biological parents had always a problematic and conflictual relationship and got divorced when she was little. Both of her parents remarried.

P7 indicated that his biological parents were remarried to each other and both of them had children from their first marriages. He described that his parents had a problematic relationship and in spite of getting divorced, they are still living together but have aloof relations.

P8 indicated that her biological parents got divorced when she was 7 and her father remarried when she was 9. Before remarriage, she and her full-siblings were raised by their cousin (i.e. niece of the father). In following years, her

mother remarried, moved to abroad and had a child. She lost her father 16 years ago.

P9 indicated that her father was remarried to her mother following his first wife's death, especially since he was struggling to look after 3 teenage sons. This remarriage was arranged by her paternal aunts.

P10 indicated that her mother remarried to her father following her divorce. Her parents got divorced when she was 6 and she stayed with her mother. When she was in puberty, her father remarried and had a son. Also, she described that she raised in culturally diversified family in which her maternal side rooted in Germany and her paternal side came from a very traditional Turkish family.

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic Analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2006) was utilized in the current research. TA method had been chosen mainly due to its flexible approach. The goal of the present study was deeply investigating how adult half-siblings establish their relationship and how do they experience its quality as well as how they perceive the influencing factors of the relationship. However, there were either inconsistent findings of various theoretical roots or lack of understanding towards the relationship experiences of half-siblings in the former research. Therefore, it was critical to acknowledge the participants' unique experiences both with openness and guidance of previous literature. To put this together, TA allows to analyze the collected data without strict theoretical boundaries while it also aids to capture complexity and richness of the data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this reason, TA was considered as compatible with the aim of the present research and the researcher mainly focused on manifest content during analysis process.

The six steps of TA as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. As a first step, the interviews of the participants were transcribed verbatim. Following transcriptions, initially emerging ideas as well as the reflections of the researcher had been noted in order to enhance the sense of engagement with the data.

MAXQDA Software Program was used for further steps of TA. Secondly, transcriptions were coded. Initial coding process was guided by the advisor and then the researcher completed the coding step by briefly noting down the perceived experiences of the participants regarding research questions as a preparation for further steps. Some examples of the initial codes generated in this step were “having parent-child relationship”, “interference of stepmother”, “effort to become an ideal sister” and “perceived threat of others”. The researcher also kept memos to note down ideas and observations about the codes and the participants in order to inform later analysis. Thirdly, candidate themes were sought and formed mainly by examining the frequencies and meaning of the initial codes. Some of the candidate themes defined in this step were “meaning of the siblingship”, “team spirit” and “sense of belongingness”. As a fourth step, the advisor and the researcher revised and elaborated on these candidate themes. In order to accurately capture and represent participant accounts, candidate themes were reviewed by re-reading codes, extracts and researcher memos. Following this step, emerged themes were refined, defined and named concisely as a result of repeated discussions with the advisor.

In order to increase the trustworthiness of the analysis, investigator triangulation was carried out when coding data and generating themes. When the first transcription had been coded, that coded dataset was sent to the advisor and discussed. According to the advisor’s feedback and discussion of codes, some of the initial codes were revised. In the coding process, the researcher put greater effort to mirror what the coded parts semantically told (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Thus, some of the previous codes were amended and further coding was conducted accordingly. During the process of generating themes, the advisor guided the researcher in particular to name and organize themes in accordance with reflecting the data in an illustrative way and presenting a meaningful as Braun and Clarke (2013) suggested. In addition, member-checking was carried out to ensure that the results reflect participant experiences, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013). The researcher sent an e-mail to the participants with a brief summary of the themes and asked whether revealed

Table 2.1*Sociodemographic Background of the Participants*

ID	Age	Gender	Location	Education	Occupation	Level of Income	Living Condition	Half-Sibling Constellation
P1	27	F*	Istanbul	Undergraduate	Pre-school Teacher	Middle	Lives with mother	2***, F, Paternal
P2	26	F	Istanbul	Undergraduate	Industrial Engineer	Middle	Lives with family	1, M**, Maternal
P3	35	F	Istanbul	Master's degree	Assistant Manager	Middle	Lives with spouse and child	2 M, 1 F, Paternal
P4	28	F	Istanbul	Undergraduate	Social Media Specialist	Middle	Lives with mother	1, M, Paternal
P5	26	F	Istanbul	Master's degree	Clinical Psychologist	Middle	Lives with spouse	2, M, Paternal

P6	19	F	Ankara	Undergraduate student	Dentistry Student	Middle	Lives in student accommodation	2, M, Paternal
P7	24	M	Istanbul	Master's student	Clinical Psychology Student	Middle	Lives with partner	1, F, Maternal
P8	37	F	Izmir	Undergraduate	Unemployed	Middle	Lives with roommate	1, M, Paternal
P9	36	F	Aydin	Undergraduate	Science Teacher	Upper-middle	Lives with spouse and children	3, M, Paternal
P10	27	F	London	Master's degree	Logistics	Lower-middle	Lives with partner	1, F, Maternal

Note. F*= Female, M**= Male, ***= Number of co-resided half-siblings

themes reflect their experiences appropriately. None of the participants gave feedback. Thus, as a last step of TA, analysis was finalized and narrated cohesively.

2.4. THE RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

As a member of a multicultural blended family, based on my personal experiences, I had constantly increasing curiosity towards the nature of the communication itself among such family members, specifically among sibling dyads. Some of the initial questions I had were “how does communication work both verbally and non-verbally in forming and developing a sibling relationship?”, “how does each one acknowledge what is exactly meant?” and/or “are there any missing pieces?”. Such inquiries led me to consider the main question of “what makes siblingship a unique bond or relationship?”. Then I wondered, if one individual embraces the other one as a sibling regardless of parental, biological and cultural differences, how does this process work?. Is siblingship established through words, gestures, little precious moments, shared pains and joys? I also personally believe both the meaning and need of siblingship tend to change as your life and age changes. Thus, how it evolves through the life-cycle became another subject of interest for me. I realized I needed further answers and wanted to hear others' experiences. These questions led me to focus on the development of half-sibling relationships in the present study.

As a systemic therapist in training, these personal questions inspired me to investigate what family therapy can offer to blended families and half-siblings. I especially felt surprised when I realized that there is not even an exact translation of the word half-sibling in Turkish language. There are critical contributions and increasing interest towards this topic. However, overall, this subject is seemingly understudied throughout the family therapy literature. As an intern family therapist, I knew that divorces, experiencing loss of a parent and remarriage/re-partnering influence the homeostasis of the system and require re-adjustment processes in order to enhance the family functioning. Such important changes

might impact every single part of the system as well as the system as a whole. Consequently, these changes do not only affect the family members' individual well-being and their familial relationship, but also influence other interpersonal relationships. As an intern family therapist, I also knew that in addition to difficulties and possible negative consequences associated with them, it is important to grasp the strengths of a system, its capacity to grow and protective factors which may make the system more resilient. As a result, I wanted to understand how half-siblings experience their own system both positively and negatively.

During data collection, I tried to establish a balance between my insider and outsider identities. As an insider who had relevant personal experiences with blended families and half-siblingship, I felt comfortable to understand and articulate narratives that were told by the participants. However, at some moments, I found myself seeking positive aspects of the relationship and focusing on the strengths, despite the difficulties that the participants essentially experienced and reported. Especially with the support and guidance of my advisor, I had become gradually more reflective and was able to rely on my outsider identity as a researcher more. In the process of data collection and analysis, when I recognized the confusion between the insider and outsider roles, I tried to put question marks and note down ideas to re-evaluate them in the future and consult my advisor, if necessary. Overall, I believe my personal and professional curiosity nourished each other and guided me through the research process.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS

On the basis of the participants’ perceptions, experiences, descriptions and comments, four main themes were generated. These four main themes were named as “Building a sibling relationship”, “Increasing belongingness”, “Experiencing ruptures”, and “Maintaining the sibling relationship”. Three of these main themes consisted of 2-3 sub-themes which were formed to understand the experience of the participants cohesively. All main themes and sub-themes are presented and illustrated below (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1.

Themes and Sub-themes of the Research

Themes	Building a Sibling Relationship	Increasing Belongingness	Experiencing Ruptures	Maintaining the Sibling Relationship
Sub-themes	Being the Older or Younger Sibling	Half Siblings as Similar to Full Siblings	Lack of Support from Parents and Family	Dyadic Issues
	Team Spirit	Parents’ Uniting Attitude	Sense of Distance	

3.1. BUILDING A SIBLING RELATIONSHIP

In this main theme, how half-siblings built and developed their relationship throughout childhood and adolescence was described. This main theme involved two sub-themes of “Being the older or younger sibling” and “Team spirit” which encapsulates the development of these relations from birth to growing up gradually. In the subtheme of “Being the older or younger sibling”,

the participants expressed how they positioned themselves in forming half-sibling relations initially, what were the influencing factors on consolidation of these chosen or assigned roles as a sibling. The participants indicated how these positions influenced their emotional bond as well as their dynamics in terms of support and conflict. In the sub-theme of “Team spirit”, the participants described the evolution of their sibling relations into more a dyadic and mutual relationship.

3.1.1. Being the Older or Younger Sibling

The participants described how they positioned themselves towards each other and established close relationships in the early development of their half-sibling relationships. All of the participants highlighted the hierarchical relationship with their half-siblings through childhood and adolescence to some extent, although in different ways. Most of the participants indicated that their half-sibling relations evolved as if they were parent-child dyads. They stated that this dynamic was shaped by several factors, including age differences between siblings, given roles and responsibilities by family members, familial chaos, parents’ lack of involvement or neglect of childcare, and/or personal attributions to being the ‘older sibling’ by the participants.

One participant indicated that they had reversed roles as siblings, since she was mothering her older half-sister as a younger one. She stated that such change occurred due to ongoing chaos in the family and her older half-sister’s psychological difficulties in the past. Another participant, on the other hand, emphasized the effect of her half-sibling’s temperament and relatively less age difference on establishing these roles. Despite some differences in terms of their experiences as building sibling relationships, the participants had consensus towards the assigned roles of being the older or younger sibling.

“During those times, I was more like a mother than a sibling to my older sister to protect her, to clear that atmosphere, to establish a balance within the family.” (P10)

“Being an older sister was more like... We were not exactly like older-younger siblings, because Batu was far too mature. For example, he was calling me by my name Meltem, not as older sister. I got very used to it. In fact, when he called me as big sister, I found it weird and asked him whether he wants something from me. So, he was more like a friend to me with the help of age difference of ours, not like younger sibling who needs to be taken care of.” (P2)

The participants who are older half-siblings stated their maternal feelings towards their half-siblings, how they took responsibilities of them and how such positioning made them feel compassionate to their half-siblings. Regardless of which factors were influencing, they described their willingness and motivation to maintain older half-sibling positions.

“Maybe I dwell on it this much since the concepts of motherhood and being an older sister are closely related with each other in my mind. It may be due to the fact that motherhood is more related with my wounded part. But my siblings are really special to me...” (P5)

“You know, mothers always tell that common phrase ‘you will always be a baby in my eyes’. My brother is always a baby in our eyes as well and we like everything he did as if he is still a baby- we feel surprised, happy.” (P6)

In a similar vein, on the basis of these established and internalized roles and positions in the family, the participants described their attitudes towards half-siblings. Those who were positioned as older siblings stated that they met their siblings’ physiological and/or emotional needs such as reassurance and comforting whenever they need. They indicated that they supported the development of their siblings, felt protective and responsible towards them, and offered guidance to them. These, in turn, consolidated their positions as siblings who are giving care to other ones. They described being an older sibling as being ready to help and embrace the younger sibling even in the presence of sibling rivalry or their personal difficulties.

“I was jealous of him for a period of time. But this jealousy was more like, I mean I was the only child of the house, I had all the attention. When Batu was born, I was asking for a feeding bottle from my parents and drinking from it. By

the way, I was a baby who never used a feeding bottle. But I made them buy me one when I was 6. Or for example I was biting his pacifiers and my mom would be upset. But whenever Batu cried, I was instantly standing up and going to nearby him by asking ‘what happened?!’” (P2)

“I was old enough to take responsibilities and look after a child. So, I have always been stating that I had done everything for my siblings besides giving birth to and breastfeeding them...I mean, I still don’t have a clear idea about how to be an older sister. Being the older sister always equals to be the mother, constantly being protective towards them...My support towards them was more likely to meet their physiological needs...Then her need of support has started to be different, as expected, she started to expect more emotional support...Sinem was more like a person who experienced her feeling inwardly. You know I was in a constant state of talking with her to disclose her emotions, you know, I was always knocking her door. You know, my fingers were always on that door, knocking it, and waking the person inside up and making her open that door all the time. I did the same thing for Esma, too... Esma was expressing her feelings through anger when she was embarrassed, got mad or was resented, you know. So, I tried to support and soften her under the title of ‘look, how do you express your emotions.’” (P1)

On the other side, the participants who are younger half-siblings stated that how parental approach of their older half-siblings increased closeness and positively influenced to internalize them as safe and important figures of their lives. They described the preciousness of caretaking of their older half-siblings with them and the sense of warmth which comes up with these memories. A majority of these participants stated how their older half-siblings supported their development and took care of them while they were growing up. They described their older half-siblings’ ongoing presence and protective attitude towards them, even following their leave of family home. They asked for their help, guidance and advices whenever they need. These, in turn, made their ties stronger and younger siblings feel supported.

“As I said previously, I was confusing words of mother and sibling back then. I was already calling my babysitter as mom since my mother was absent most of the time. I mean, I was confused by this concept. This duty was mostly handled by my older sister. She was actually my primary caregiver. She was feeding me, taking me to the toilet, etc. ... For example, I could not tell my mother I had to potty, instead, I was telling it to my older sister. I mean I could tell my mother, too- but as long as she was around. So, my older sister was in charge. If I told my mother to do so, she would have told me to ask my older sister.” (P7)

“We have very interesting connection with my older brother. Very weird emotional connection. He had always stood by me. He was the one who taught me how to read and write in the past. He helped me to do my homework. He was just like a very maternal father figure.” (P3)

“He was the backbone of our family. He was so uniting and like a father to me. Age difference among us was too large anyway. He was looking after with me a lot. I mean, I used to spend my every vacation with him. His wife was loving me very much, too, I mean my aunt-in-law. They were just married, I remember, I was 9. They were picking me up and took me to their home, we were watching films. They did not have kids back then. But when he had a child, he kept carrying me along with him. I used to be with them in every vacation. In mid-term breaks, in summer holidays.” (P9)

The participants also described how such connection with their half-siblings developed initially. Some participants stated that they already wanted to have siblings or their siblings had been awaiting for them. Likewise, some older half-siblings stated that they had established pre-birth bonding with their half-siblings and defined that sibling connection as default. Some participants felt the joy and happiness with the introduction of their younger half-sibling. In turn, this enthusiasm and positive expectations contributed to the formation of siblingship.

“when Sencer was born, it made me very happy. Because, there was a baby at home [smiles] and that baby was my own sibling.” (P8)

“I guess my older sister was a lonely kid and so wanting to have sibling. After I was born, it was already a relationship with full of love from the

beginning. Jealousy was not a part of this relationship at those times, it has sprang afterwards.” (P10)

“I was already desiring to have sibling at those times. For example, when my mother was pregnant, their biggest problem was me asking constantly ‘when is he gonna born? when I’m gonna have a sibling? when are you gonna give birth?’. I mean I was always talking about this. By the way, I was doing the same thing at school to my friends as well. I was like ‘I’m gonna have a sibling! My sibling is coming!’”. Batu was a huge excitement for me.” (P2)

Additionally, all participants who were both older half-siblings and had more than one younger half-sibling described the differences of their feelings and expectations towards having siblings. Their views to be the older sibling seemed to be influenced by the addition of second half-siblings by making them inquiring and evaluating this position on the basis of their changed reflection capacity then.

One of these participants highlighted the effect of clearly remembering the pre-birth, birth and development processes of her second half-sibling on their increased sense of connection.

“I was in the 5th grade when my youngest brother was born in 2012. I was very happy for this too, since I was going to have a new sibling. We were curious about the sex of our sibling. I wanted a girl, but he was a boy, too. I remembered that we welcomed him very happily...but since we grew up together, I don’t remember much about how our relationship developed in the early period of his birth.” (P6)

Two of these participants described that they were able to compare their treatment to their second born half-siblings with first born half-siblings. They stated that they tended to behave more rudely to older ones. Such comparison led to questioning as well as internalizing more their roles as an older sister and softened their approach. In addition, notably, two of these participants emphasized the possible differentiating effect of their ongoing adjustment difficulties when their first younger half-siblings were born in the earlier phases of family reformation. One of them was going through puberty, while the other participant was in preschool age. They both declared that they were having struggles to adapt

following the divorce of their parents. The participant who was in preschool age mentioned that the birth of her first half-sibling made adaptation easier at some degree. Other participant described that although these difficulties were continuing, she was able to establish older sibling position and made a connection with her half-sibling.

“And then new sibling came. Another pregnancy news. I couldn’t stay neutral this time. But my feeling was not positive, it was negative. I was upset. Because there was one, and now two. This meant increased responsibility for me. It wasn’t something for me to be happy. But my sibling was so sweet, I was adoring her after she was born, she was a very cute baby. At that point, the second very sweet sister had become more precious to me. I realized that Sinem, the older one, had become a sibling whom I had been bullying” (P1)

“Kaan’s birth was a big deal for me which I wanted too much. I was unbelievably wanting him. Let me put it this way, I didn’t acknowledge very much the fact that I was the older sister with Görkem. I mean all of those physical attacks, toy crises. There was more problem with him. Even though my mother said that you were never jealous of Görkem, maybe as a result of deep down jealousy, I was despising and ostracizing Görkem. But with Kaan, I had become an older sister willingly, I was praying for him to be born. I was 10.... Following the birth of Kaan, I searched my conscience regarding Görkem. I mean, I clearly remember that I thought ‘I didn’t treat Görkem in the same way...I was dealing with too much stuff back then.” (P5)

In addition, three of participants expressed the positive effect of these older-younger half-sibling positions on their perceived sense of closeness. One of these participants described her idealization of her older sibling. She explained that she was filled with admiration towards the power of her older brother when she was a little girl and how vivid her memory was while referring to their emotional bond.

“I was in the sea and the pier was far too long. When I looked at the landing part of the pier, there was a red motorcycle of my older brother’s. I remember the moment that I was telling this to my friends as ‘My older brother

came, how was he able to pass through the watchers, wow I cannot believe this, how cool he is!'. I always remember that particular moment.” (P4)

Two of these participants described their ‘first time’ experiences with their half-siblings both as an older and younger one. From the perspective of older half-sibling, she introduced the beauties of life as her younger half-sibling was growing up as a part of her responsibility which satisfied her. Those invitations were welcomed by her half-brother and leveled their older-younger sibling relations up. On the other hand, younger half-sibling described these experiences as her older brother’s guidance through external world. Seeing older half-siblings as strong and capable figures as well as a connection to the outer world contributed to the support of siblings by positioning older half-siblings as a leader and younger half-siblings as a follower of the lifelong journey.

“We have always experienced the firsts with Kaan. You know, his first sushi experience was with me, I took him out to Starbucks for the first time, first frappuccino experience which was very important for him since he was like what kind of chocolatey thing it is...He told me that it was very blissful to experience the firsts with me. Then I realized how delighting to offer these experiences.” (P5)

“I went to Bodrum with him, I went to a pub with him for the first time [smiles]. I went to cinema with him for the first time, I drank my first pickle juice with him...I mean, he supported me on everything. Everything. He was really a father to me.” (P9)

In terms of the conflictual dynamics, all of the participants stated that they had less amount of conflict and that severity of these conflicts was fundamentally mild and harmless in earlier years of the dyadic half-sibling relationship. The participants considered these conflicts as a normal part of being older and younger siblings by stating the effect of age differences on the subject and the way of conflict.

The subjects of conflicts were mainly sibling jealousy, not being able to share goods, foods, etc. with younger half-siblings, interfering to their lives and not wanting younger ones in their own plays with others (i.e. friends, cousins etc.)

for older half-siblings. For younger siblings these were being bullied by older half-siblings, older half-siblings' interfering their lives, wanting the attention of older half-siblings and throwing tantrums for their unmet demands.

“My older sister had always been jealous of me...I mean, you know, usual older-younger sibling hustles took place. I mean, what can be said for it, a little bullying [laughs]? Things that are usually performed by older ones to younger ones. There were things like these.” (P10)

“Since Görkem was little, we (referring herself and her cousin) used to not want him to tie us down and tell him to shoo. We were more of a gang with Ali. You know, Görkem was constantly coming to me and kissing me, don't do that, Görkem was trying to hug me, uff leave. This was the situation until I was 7-8, then things have changed of course.” (P5)

In terms of conflict, some of the both older and younger half-siblings defined these conflicts as solely internal conflicts of theirs since they made an effort to stay silent with regard to their individual coping strategies and/or age differences. They described their patience to not say a word to their siblings due to not wanting to break their hearts and/or as a part of their personality.

“I'm intrinsically a person who holds things inside. I sustain my silence during those times. And then, I burst into meaningless things, you know...For instance I get mad at my brother, but I remain silent at that point.” (P6)

“It was more like this with my youngest older brother whom I co-resided for the longest period of time: he used to love discipline, I clearly remember. Back then, when I was in middle and high school, he used to interfere with my sleep schedule and me watching TV. He was controlling me whether I brushed my teeth. Besides these, our conflicts generally ended up by my tears. I couldn't conflict with him very much. I mean, I couldn't answer him back. There is too much age difference, what could I have said to them? They are 15-20 years older than me. In what extent I could've argued with them? Of course it wasn't like normal sibling conflicts.” (P9)

On the other hand, some of the older half-siblings described that they yelled at or physically attacked to their siblings, since they felt they were entitled

even though there is no reason to while younger half-siblings described these intense reactions as a response to older ones. In addition, some of the participants mentioned the effect of learned patterns of interaction from their parents which shaped the reasons and ways of conflict between siblings.

“My mom used to suddenly yell at us... We used to argue with mom loudly. After some point, she was shouting me as ‘enough!’. So yelling of my mother was normalized. As a result, I could’ve done the exact same thing to Batu. I was aloud to yell at him and I did. It was normal for him, too.” (P2)

“I guess it’s a little about my equation of mother-child. My mom used to get mad at me or beat me up even she was angry with someone else. I retained that system with Sinem and Esma.” (P1)

Moreover, the participants who had more than one older or younger half-sibling highlighted the different quality of conflict with regard to their connection or age differences. Generally, the participants described that higher sense of closeness and larger age differences lessened the conflictual dynamics. For instance, one participant indicated extreme tension with her older half-sister, while no such dynamic was reported with her older half-brothers in childhood. Another participant reported lowered level of conflict with the youngest half-sibling compared to middle half-sibling. Additionally, one of the participants stated the higher level of conflict with her full-sibling compared to half-brother.

“I moved to Izmir for college, until that year Sencer was with me. I mean he was much younger than me. So, I didn’t have conflict with him like I did with Emel (referring full-sibling) I’ve been to an older sister to him.” (P8)

“With my oldest brother, it’s a little due to generation differences... With my other older brother, we didn’t share much things so we didn’t conflict... My conflicts with my older sister were... very interesting, which one I can tell?” (P3)

One participant expressed that her younger half-sibling’s tendency to imitate her and take her as a role model sometimes led to conflict between them, specifically due to parental interference to this dynamic.

“Because he was imitating me so much. Like, for instance, when I didn’t eat meat, neither did Batu. Then my mom used to tell me ‘look, why don’t you eat,

Batu doesn't eat it because of you'. This time I used to turn to Batu and tell 'She is getting mad at me because of you. Why don't you eat? Eat it!'. (P2)

In addition to above, developmentally, four of the participants highlighted the escalating effect of either their own or that of their half-siblings' puberty phase on these conflicts. Older half-siblings described how their or their half-siblings' adolescence phase escalated the tension and led them being vigilant and/or increased the tendency to act out towards their half-siblings. Younger half-siblings expressed how they were intolerant of reactions and any interference of their older ones. All of these participants described this phase as a temporary transition.

"I think my brother was influenced by his age. He wasn't aware of what he was doing. He wasn't aware how his age induced this ill-temper." (P6)

"I mean, I had a little aggressive and short-tempered puberty. I mean, my conflicts with her highly increased as well. ...But it was really phase-specific stuff. It wasn't because she did something to hurt or resent me. We were having problems due to my instability." (P7)

3.1.2. Team Spirit

A majority of the participants indicated that as they and their siblings grew up, their siblingship strengthened and consolidated. They established a more dyadic relationship and perceived each other as teammates. Eight of the participants indicated the resilient and strong half-sibling relationship that is not influenced by external factors.

"Nothing was capable of effecting us, really. Nothing from the outside could have impacted us. I think it's very interesting, it's a very strong bond, you know? I believe it's a crucial thing." (P3)

"Emotionally speaking, nothing could weaken us. I don't think it will." (P8)

“My commitment to my brother does not depend on any other things, including my mother and father. There is a dyadic relationship here with Batu.”
(P2)

In particular, a majority of the participants indicated that this dynamic manifested itself when any third parties interfered into their relationship. They explained that when they perceived any threats against any of them, they became mutually protective towards each other. They stated that such teamwork proceeded in the conditions of external threats such as perceived potential physiological and psychological harm to their half-siblings or interference of either their common or uncommon parents. They expressed watching each other's back when one of the half-siblings encountered an obstacle and facing shared difficulties together.

“Whenever any external factor, any outer chaos is involved, the intra-sibling conflicts stop. And you temporarily hang out the white flag [smiles]. By supporting each other, you make an effort to survive from that outer chaos.”
(P10)

“My favorite support mechanism of ours was this: we would team up against our mother –being allies was a steady thing for us. When my mother got mad at us, we'd tell lies for each other to prevent the anger of my mother. I don't remember such a thing that one of us would go and snitch the other to mom.” (P7)

Most of the participants indicated that their increased sense of trust in their half-siblings contributed to the development of such team spirit. This sense of trust was influenced by the increased amount of dyadic experiences of sibling pairs such as witnessing secrecy and loyalty of each one, and receiving support through difficult times. These experiences in turn seemed to encourage each half-sibling to share more with each other, including difficulties and secrets that cannot be told to their parents. Notably, all of the participants who had more than one half-sibling highlighted the differences in their sense of trust towards their half-siblings due to factors such as their sibling's temperament, age differences, degree of character similarity and perceived closeness.

“I can offer support to Sinem more comfortably. Sinem is different than Esma in this way. I can talk with Sinem more easily.... Because Sinem is a very discreet child, as she doesn’t disclose easily, she also doesn’t share what she was told by you. Sinem’s ability to keep secrets turned her into a potential confidant for me. For instance, I once had a boyfriend and my heart was broken and I told that to Sinem. As gradually I discovered, seen, and become sure that Sinem is not going to tell anyone, I started to share more of my personal stuff with her.” (P1)

“He (youngest older brother) was a little breezy, still is. You cannot share things with him due to his character. ...Yes, I didn’t share things with him, never. And he is more like a naughty boy of the house. He is 50 now, but he still is like this. You’d tell him something, and then hear it from everywhere so he is unreliable to me. ...My middle older brother Remzi, he is literally my confidant. Because every time, always, in every period of my life, in elementary, secondary and high school, he was the first person whom I shared my private stuff. He is calmer, more reasonable and does not share with anyone...” (P9)

In a parallel way, one of these participants described her half-sibling’s positive reaction and his increased reliance on her older sister’s defending and supporting him, when he got into a scrape in front of their parent. She expressed that this was a turning point in their sibling relationship which depended on interactions with parents and evolved into a more dyadic and intimate one.

“We were younger and playing with ball inside of the house. Batu was 6 and I was 12-13. My mother went to the market. She said ‘I’m gonna come back and don’t do anything’. When my mom left, we started to play with ball in the living room. There were trinkets of my mother on the dresser that were expensive and needed to be protected. Batu hit the ball smitely and toppled the entire dresser. All of my mom’s trinkets were on the floor, broken. Batu was like ‘what I’m gonna do, my mom is gonna kill me!’. ...Normally, I’d go and snitch Batu to my mom since we were bickering back then. But at that moment, I said it’s okay and Batu and I tried to put the pieces together with a glue. All of them were looking ridiculous. Then my mother came, she realized what happened and was going to become angry. I said ‘mom, he was really sorry’... I think this was a

transforming moment for Batu from ‘mama’s gonna kill me’ to ‘Meltem saved me’. It’s a tiny thing, but I think in that moment Batu recognized me as a sister, no longer a snitcher.” (P2)

A majority of the participants described how physical touch and/or being playmates contributed to form a more dyadic relationship with their half-siblings and how it provided a sharing space for these dyads. One of these participants also added perceived advantages of being same-sex siblings, since it facilitated being playmates and increased the pleasure of playing together. Physical closeness of siblings was expressed as a prominent aspect of developing a warmer relationship.

“Afterwards our connection developed physically. By touching and loving each other, cuddling each other, their laughs when I tickled, or playing together. Especially playing. Because we were playing together a lot... Because our sharing with Mustafa (full-sibling) has always been different. I mean, even what we did understand from playing was different with him. ...we had mutual plays, but also fought with each other very much at the same time. ...But with Sinem and Esma, we could’ve been playmates [softens her voice] because we were at that place where we could understand each other” (P1)

“How could I not get attached to them under these circumstances? They used to stroll me around, play with me. They were the ones who always played with me, I always played with them at home. They were playing, chasing me.” (P9)

“She could get to my age and watch things that I’d watch, I was trying to listen to her favorite singers. By mutual experience- I mean she was also like a playmate of mine, really.” (P7)

Eight participants also indicated that in addition to contributing effect of strengthened trust, some other factors such as mutual familial difficulties while residing together, intimate relationship among parents as a couple, perceived similarities, perceived emotional and experiential commonality with half-siblings led to the sense of partnership among the pairs of siblings. This sense of partnership in turn seemingly consolidated the relationship and improved both

verbal and non-verbal communication of half-siblings towards each other and created mutuality.

“On the contrary, my mother’s (referring her stepmother) egocentric being have brought us together as siblings. My mother’s very dependent to my father. For example, there was a TV series named Aliye yeeears and yeeears ago. Their slogan was ‘noways without my children’, whenever its trailer used to come up on the screen, eeeevery time, my mother used to correct it as ‘no, noways without my husband’. So, we always knew that my mother needs my father and she lives that way. Thus, we, as 3 siblings, have lived by ourselves. So Görkem comes and tells me more, Kaan shares with me more...” (P5)

“To me, being a sibling is supporting each other, because after a certain point, when you have seen adults’ bullshit, it has become supporting each other as children. All in all, we went through such hard times with the whole family.” (P10)

Some of these participants expressed how they experience emotional mutuality as a dyad and how they understand the feelings of each other and act accordingly. These, in turn, strengthened the dyadic bond and contributed to perceive each other as partners.

“I remember that when she was happy, it made me happy too. For instance, my mom bought a guitar for her and she cried for joy for this guitar that she has never played for even once. But I simultaneously felt happy with her. We had become miserable due to joyfully screaming together. We have this, such emotional mutualness. When she was happy, I was happy. When she was sad, I was sad.” (P7)

“I recognize my older brother’s feeling from what he is doing, his way of standing and his glance which is such a strong connection.” (P3)

One of these participants described this sense of partnership as a result of her attributed meanings to her half-sibling. She described how sharing the same faith with her developed the sense of partnership.

“I’m the oldest child. When my first sibling Mustafa was born, in colloquial language, I was the one who had ended up in the knacker’s yard. When

Sinem was born, same thing had happened to me again. But when Esma was born, this time I wasn't only one who suffered from this. Same thing happened to Sinem this time since she was an only child of her mother's. Even though in my own system Sinem was the third born, in her maternal side she was the first born. It automatically made me feel that she is going through the destiny of mine. And the quiet and introvert being of Sinem was very much alike with my own childhood. My father used to liken us as well by saying Sinem is similar to Zeynep, both of them are quiet. When Esma was born, her concrete presence made me expect that all of those emotional storms and jealousy that I felt when Mustafa was born are gonna be felt by Sinem from now on. She is now my fellow sufferer, the one that understands me whereas she was only 3-year-old child [laughs]. But the meaning that I attributed to her has being started to turn into this. I felt pity for her by telling 'aww she ended up in the knacker's yard, too' and then cuddled and supported her, have become even closer to her." (P1)

A majority of the participants indicated that these kind of dyadic dynamics manifested by sibling solidarity and mediating the siblings' relational problems with their parents. They described the developed feeling of staying beside of each other by any means with the spirit of being a team.

"In any circumstances, all the time. Whenever they'd (referring her older half-siblings) call me up, they'd be angry, I'd go nearby them if necessary." (P3)

"I've always been like this: don't be mad at him, never mind etc. My support for him has always been me as a buffer zone. ...My parents are more rigid, they'd say no and leave it that way. I'd say to them the possibilities, show a different perspective about the situation and him. Sometimes I even argued with them. I also support Görkem and tell my parents to leave him alone." (P5)

"He is a little like a deputy of mine, how can I describe this in other words. I don't know, when I was in high school, if I was going to ask permission from my dad and he wasn't allowing me to go to cinema, I'd tell my older brother. He'd arrange everything. I don't know, when my dad got angry with me, he'd go and argue with my father." (P9)

Some of the older half-siblings expressed the changes in their one-sided support towards their younger half-siblings in cases of their needs and difficulties. They described their younger sibling's willingness to offer support and collaborate with them as they were growing. This mutuality helped to create a more dyadic and solid relationship among them.

"She wrote me that 'I know you're sad, I'm sad too but don't be sad. There is sadness in life and we're strong enough to deal with it'. I mean she was trying to support me with a letter that was beyond her actual age." (P1)

"For instance, when he argued with my mother or I did, we immediately asked like 'Meltem are you okay?' 'Batu are you okay?' 'Mom, why were you mad at Batu?'" (P2)

In sum, the participants indicated how they took over the roles of being older and younger half-siblings from the beginning until growing up. They expressed the influence of individual and familial dynamics on these adopted roles. The content of half-siblingship dynamics were influenced by these assigned and internalized roles, as well. The participants expressed how these positions were effective on their emotional bonds as well as how these roles were determinant on their support dynamics. Similarly, they underlined how these roles influenced the amount and way of conflictual dynamics. As half-sibling dyads grew up, they described their teamwork against any external interference or difficulties. Such partnership consolidated their sibling relations.

3.2. INCREASING BELONGINGNESS

Within this main theme, how half-siblings developed the increased sense of belongingness towards each other as they were building a sibling relation that was presented in first theme was described. This main theme consisted of two subthemes which are namely "Half siblings as similar to full siblings" and "Parents' uniting attitude". In "half siblings as similar to full siblings", how half-siblings did not differentiate each other and what factors contributed such non-discrimination were indicated. Moreover, in "parents' uniting attitude", the

parents' role on developing and increasing the sense of belongingness among half-siblings was described.

3.2.1. Half Siblings As Similar To Full Siblings

Nine of the participants stated that they did not consider their half-siblings as half. On the basis of their experiences, they perceived the structure of their family as normal. These participants highlighted the independence of sense of belongingness from the degree of blood relation and declared having no biological-step distinction when they thought about their families and half-siblings.

“I mean it does not make any difference whether you share your mother and/or father. If you are raised with the sense that they are your siblings, you embrace them as siblings.” (P4)

“We have this genuineness and warmth, everyone is unique in their own terms in our family. Everyone has their own characteristic features. I've never felt the sense of discrimination in terms of my siblings' love for their older sister, my love for my siblings. We've always had a conflictual relationship with my mother (referring to her stepmother), but, you know it was like the usual tussles of mother-daughter who have different personalities, it wasn't relevant to biological or step distinction.” (P5)

“Since everything has always been normal to me, I didn't perceive any different effect of having half-siblings.” (P6)

Moreover, a majority of the participants mentioned that individuals from their outer social circle had a tendency to approach their relationship judgmentally. They indicated that some people in their circles had stereotypical thoughts regarding having half-siblings as well as being raised in blended families. Although these participants did not feel any different, they indicated that other individuals expected them to have a problematic relationship with their blended family members by categorizing them as step. Such experiences initially

made participants realize that there is a difference between their sense of normalcy and what is considered as normal in the society.

“I stumbled upon to this at second grade for the first time. I was in the class, and my friends found it strange that I had two fathers. They were like ‘How so? You have two fathers?’. This was one of the first moments which made me realize it. Cause I was like ‘how could they find it strange? Isn’t it supposed to be like this? Isn’t it normal to have two fathers?’” (P2)

“I remember this story: I was going to the library to study, my friend’s family who were our neighbors picked me up by their cars. They asked me who are my parents and I told them the whole story of how they get married, were divorced blah blah blah, I don’t know why I told them, anyways, that woman said things like ‘awww don’t be upset, we know such families too, don’t let it get you down’. I mean I don’t let it get me down [smiles], why would I? And then I realized that it’s a thing that can be condemned sometimes. ” (P7)

Additionally, two of the participants noted that they were surrounded by a social circle which perceived remarriage and having half-siblings as a natural part of life cycle. They stated that these circumstances consolidated their sense of belongingness and normality. However, all of the participants agreed on the existence of stereotypes regarding step and blended family relations in Turkey.

“Honestly, I wasn’t exposed to over-reaction of others. ...They weren’t giving us a black look- condemning us. ...Probably it’s due to the strong effect of the environment where I was raised in. ...but in the society of Turkey, exposure to such things is very likely.” (P10)

“I mean, everyone is prejudiced. When they ask me and I tell them that our mother is different, their expression goes immediately like ‘huu’. Everybody’s got different expectations, I’m aware of this. But, as I said, people from outside of our family don’t understand the connection of ours. ...Whenever I share it with somebody from outside, they say ‘haaa, you’re step!’” (P9)

In response to such reactions, some of the participants indicated that they had a tendency to be defensive and possessive of their half-siblingship and family structure both in the presence and absence of their siblings. They stated that they

found themselves in a position to make an effort in order to cover parental difference and explain the genuineness of their relationship. In general, the participants described developing increased sense of belongingness towards each other. They were willing to show their perceived biological in difference to others in the same way they already feel.

“One of the things that I often encounter is, they ask my brother ‘aa, how are things between the two of you?’, when I reply them as very good, they ask about my father (referring to stepfather) and then about my mother. I mean these questions imply problem seeking. For example, if I told them we have a very bad relationship with my brother, we fall apart, I don’t like him at all, they would stop asking further questions. ...I always do that explanation thing: ‘one moment, it’s very normal, we grew up in a good family, we were not separated and we don’t see each other differently as well. We don’t have any biological-step distinction....For instance, the same thing is happening now, too. You ask me questions, but before I respond, I’m feeling that need of explanation to you by saying ‘wait, but my family is like this...’. ” (P2)

“When they told me ‘aa, then she’s your step sister’, I got mad at them. And then I’d sit down and explain them the etiology of Turkish word for sibling, kardeş, is originally come from ‘karındaş’ which literally means sharing the same belly. Since my sister and I shared it, we are siblings. I mean I never have seen my older sister as a step sister. It wouldn’t matter if my sibling was my paternal half-sibling, I believe I’d see this in the same way.” (P10)

Notably, all of the participants agreed on the significance of growing up, sharing the same household, and building memories together with half-siblings for developing a close sibling relationship. They underlined that co-written stories and having a common past considerably contributed to the sense of belongingness among half-sibling pairs. Moreover, some of these participants who had non-resident half-siblings and/or full-siblings highlighted these factors by comparing the perceived degree of sibling relations. Although some of them stated that they did not perceive non-resident half-siblings as step siblings due to either personal ethical concerns or developed a sense of closeness with them, all of these

participants had a consensus on the idea that half-siblings whom they co-resided were closer to them. To be noted, two of the four participants with full-siblings associated warmer feelings with their full-siblings and explained that experiencing and going through the same difficulties together contributed to this sense of warmth as their ages were closer to each other.

“She (referring to non-resident half-sibling) was already a child whom I saw rarely. I used to visit my mother face-to-face once or twice a year. It wasn’t very easy to accept the child whom I saw once in a year as a sibling.” (P1)

“Like I said, when you both were raised within the same household, you don’t develop a sense of being step siblings. All in all, I have grown up with her within the same house by sharing the same mother. I mean I had always been with her. So, experiencing the same things, witnessing them within the same family make two of you more connected. So, you end up getting closer.” (P10)

“Arda (referring to non-resident half- sibling) is not someone whom I very often call via phone. I mean, I feel more connected to Sencer (referring to resident half- sibling) as a result of more shared experiences, more shared memories. I’d like to be even closer with him. I call him as my sibling by meaning it from my heart, not just because I believe siblings should be closer to each other. But I feel emotionally closer to Sencer because of all the things that we’ve experienced and gone through. Like I said, I took care of him until he was 9.” (P8)

Moreover, some of the participants indicated the cultural influence and messages that they heard regarding having either maternal or paternal half-siblings. A majority of these participants agreed on the patriarchal effect on the general view that paternal half-siblings are not differentiated as step siblings in the context of Turkey. These participants declared that such cultural messages did not impact or change their individual feelings towards their half-siblings. However, some of them argued that society’s perception regarding paternal half-siblings as not step may have subtly facilitated the acceptance and belongingness among half-siblings.

“Since we live in a patriarchal society, I bet it’s easier to have paternal than maternal half-siblings. I think very much easier, when you have your father

in common. For instance, I'd hear that a lot, I believe it can be useful for you, 'haa you're not step then, you have the same father'. What's the connection, then you'd be step anyway. But due to the fact that we are living in a patriarchal society, you aren't actually step, you are full siblings. Why? Because you have the father in common." (P3)

"When Sencer was born, people were like 'Never think of him like he's your step-brother. You have the same father. If you were maternal half-siblings, then you'd be step. But it's full-sibling'. I mean, I was questioning it when I was little as well. Does it matter whether we have the same father or mother? They both will be my siblings. Why would I like one them more, one of them less?" (P8)

"You know, in Turkey people would say if you share the same last name, then you are not step, but the other one is step. My two parents, both of my father and mother have been asserting the opposite. My dad says linkage and blood relation matters, if you share the same linkage, then you are fully-related, the other one would be step, but of course we don't say it for differentiation. My mom says you are born from the same belly, you are the children of the same mother, you are full-siblings, the others are a little... they're from a different mother. It's always like this. But I don't have different feelings for any of them." (P5)

Although not overtly relevant to the influence of culture, one participant stated that having their mother in common contributed to and increased sense of belongingness with her half-brother in terms of her experience. She argued about the importance of motherhood while individuals are establishing a close relationship with their siblings regardless of their degree of biological connection.

" If we were paternal but not maternal half-siblings with Batu, we'd have been more disconnected. At this point, my mom is very effective, since you receive the same amount of love from your mother, maybe it's because the role of motherhood or it's just my thought. But, since you are being loved equally by your mother, you establish such a connection with each other. Actually, there was an influence of my mother [laughs]! I mean, on the basis of such love from the mother, you're given equal love, and then you feel love for each other. But if it

was the father, I mean, to me stepmother is a little... she'd discriminate you at some point. When the mother treats you differently, then so the father does.” (P2)

Additionally, one of the participants highlighted the positive effect of the differences among fully-related members within blended families. The fact that these differences are irrelevant to blood relation contributed to her perceiving herself as not differentiated as well. In turn, that sense of similarity increased the sense of belongingness. In similar terms, two of the participants indicated that they perceived themselves as closer to their half-siblings than their closeness with their full-siblings, since they had more conflictual relationships.

“Görkem was very different than my mother (referring to stepmother). It was like, I had been receiving this message: look, they're not the same, too. You may not be, too. Sometimes it happens. ... Like I said, I have this luck that my two brothers are different from each other as black and white. They have the same mother and father, but they are as different as black and white. Compared to them, I'm in the middle actually. ... So, it doesn't make me feel like we're separate. We're together. My siblings belong to me, you know.” (P5)

“Once I thought that is it possible they do not really love me? You know, I'm very committed to them, I grew up with them. I'm the one who got into their lives afterwards. ...At that period of time, I felt distant and withdrawn myself. But then I realized that my older brothers, three men, they didn't have that much connection with each other as they had a strong connection with me.” (P9)

In addition, two of the participants indicated that the culture and pattern of the extended family were effective on their sense of belongingness as half-sibling pairs. They stated that collectivistic understanding regarding siblingship as well as the prevalence of having half-siblings in familial lineage positively influenced them to embrace their half-siblings as siblings.

“Like I said, since we were the children who have been raised in our grandmother's home, it doesn't matter that whose children we are [smiles]. I'm talking about a huge crowd, we were 3 cousins back then and over time 3 more cousins were added. In total we're 7 cousins now, but like I said we were the children of the same house and there was not any difference.” (P5)

“I’m gonna tell something funny: in my maternal side, even her grandmother remarried. It’s unbelievably prevalent. Hers is not maternal, but paternal half-siblings. ...When we look at our family tree, everybody remarried, one from their first marriage, one from their second marriage so and so, there are scenarios like these. But you know, everyone who was not too old accepted each other. They were very much siblings, you know.” (P4)

3.2.2. Parents’ Uniting Attitude

A majority of the participants highlighted the importance of positive and non-invasive attitude and approach of their uncommon and common parents for both developing a closer sibling relationship as well as increasing the sense of belongingness with their half-siblings. Such attitudes and approaches were manifested by endeavoring to unite family members, respecting half-siblings’ dyadic relations and not discriminating non-biological children from biological ones, and prioritizing family.

“...Leyla abla wouldn’t interfere our relationship with my siblings. When I got mad at them, she used to tell them ‘your older sister is angry, I can’t be involved’. She wouldn’t approach the situation like ‘how dare you to be angry with my children?’. ...Sometimes, she’d ask Sinem and Esma that ‘why did you make your older sister angry?’ and scold them.” (P1)

“I think my non-biological mother is influential on this. I mean, this non-differentiation may stem from non-discriminative attitude that is not presented and allowed by her. For instance, if I’d give an example to this, let’s say my sibling was given two things while I was given one thing, it didn’t make me feel like there was a discrimination over here. Likewise, that child didn’t realize any difference. This is due to the realization of if he’s the child of this family, I’m the child of this family as well. So, I think my mother played a part at this point. My non-biological mother. Since she didn’t make my sibling feel there is a difference.” (P6)

Other prominent roles of parents which were perceived as positive influence on half-sibling relations were being positive role-models to half-siblings, demonstrating that there is no difference among them and encouraging good manners and responsibility of siblings for each other. In addition, some parents at times helped with the mediation of conflicts among half-siblings.

“My mom used to tell this to us a lot, this was a thing of my mom: we won’t always be with you in the future, but you’ll always be together. When you’re gonna get older, it’s good to have a sibling. Maybe when your parents get older, you may have to look after them. It’s great to have sibling to share such responsibilities. Since I was taught by these, I developed a feeling of ‘we’re together’ towards my siblings. ...Of course they did influenced us by providing a family environment which was close-knit and unifying.” (P2)

“On the side of family, they have always been a connective power. ...Like I said, ‘you’re older sister, tolerate them’ was a thing of us, but there was also ‘but she is your older sister’ very much. Especially in terms of respecting each other. ...They’d tell ‘apparently Görkem is upset nowadays, you know normally Görkem’d think like this’ to me to understand and empathise with him. Same thing is applied on Görkem, too ‘when you said that, your older sister thought about it that way so and so’ to soften him.” (P5)

Further, two of the participants highlighted the effect of their uncommon parent’s respectful attitude towards their half-siblings’ familial history before remarriage. In both cases, their half-siblings had lost their biological mothers. Thus, the uncommon parent’s way of handling these difficult life events in an accepting and positive manner increased the sense of unity among half-sibling pairs.

“For instance, my dad was able to tell the accident which led to the loss of his first wife to someone else in our home. Because it was our thing. We accepted it and respected it. I have always commemorated that poor woman’s soul. My mother always respects this.” (P3)

“Following my birth, my eldest brother told my mom that ‘Mom, let’s name her after my mother. So there won’t be any differentiation in the future, they

don't call us step siblings'. So, I was named after their mother. My mom did not say no, she wanted to make them happy...Maybe me bearing their mother's name saved us a lot." (P9)

Moreover, the participants indicated the significance of parents' positive attitude regardless of whether they experienced such positive treatment. However, although the participants acknowledged the importance of both common and uncommon parents on developing increased intimacy and belongingness with their half-siblings, they put more emphasis on the role of uncommon parents compared to common parents.

"I mean, especially Hakan babam has contributed very much. Because no one made me feel that there is a difference among us. I think Hakan babam has made it this way to a large extent. I realize this when I evaluate things now. If you'd ask me 5 years ago, I'd say mom. But now, Hakan babam was very effective, too. But my mother's contribution is the largest... I said it wrong. Mom's contributed the most, but since she is the mother and both of us are her children, we already are not different for her. No difference of love. But in the same way, there wasn't any difference on the part of Hakan babam, too." (P2)

"If Sencer's mother was a good person, my relationship would have been better both with Emel (referring her full-sibling) and Sencer. Our communication would have been much better. ...My father's positive influence was not differentiating us from each other. Consequently, neither did we. But Hanife (referring her stepmother) used to treat us unequally." (P8)

In the participants' accounts, while there were some exceptions, they mostly emphasized the role of the uncommon parent as a mother. A majority of the participants stated their father's tendency to be uninvolved with their sibling relations. Two of these participants had indicated that they call their stepmother as mother since they co-resided in younger ages and had better relations with her than their birth mother. Moreover, a majority of the younger half-siblings whose biological mothers were stepmother to their half-siblings emphasized their half-siblings' closer relationship with their stepmothers compared to their fathers and how they considered her as a mother.

“My father is kind of unable to communicate. My mother has become very connecting among me and my older brothers. There is a huge advantage of it. How my father’s inability to communicate is an advantage [laughs]... I mean he was able to talk with his children via my mother. ...In short, my older brother was very much respecting to my mother, since she took care of them and unified them so much. You know, he used to come home for lunch, while he was living there [smiles]. He used to drink my mother’s soup. He used to tell my mother that I’d even drink poison if they told me your mother made this. ...My mother is very uniting, she is unbelievable.” (P9)

“I mean my father was very... he was more of neutral. He didn’t have an influence neither in a strengthening nor in a negative way on us.” (P1)

In terms of the positive effect of uncommon mothers on half-siblingship, the participants who experienced the positive effect of the mother stated their nurturing and soft approach, roles and responsibilities regarding family order, self-devotion, their effort to hold the family together, and their understanding and compassionate attitude. Altogether, receiving and witnessing these attitudes from the uncommon mother increased the sense of belongingness among half-sibling pairs.

“We didn’t see my father very often [smiles]. So, he is neither the one who gets involved with our conflicts nor the one that impacts them. Usually, my mother (referring her uncommon parent) gets involved with these conflicts. If there is something to be said, it is said by my mother. ...My mother positively influences our communication with my brothers. She tries to find a common ground among us just as every mother does.” (P6)

“By the way, my mother’s a very positive person. She’s very funny and hilarious. If you see her, you won’t tell she went through all these things. But what she went through was... unbelievable. ...I mean no way, what she has done is not something that anyone would do. I can tell you. No ways. No one can do this. My dad did very well, too. But my mother was the one who balanced all. My mother’s patience did this. You think was that much patience necessary, but when you look at everything now, you know it’s worth it.” (P3)

Taken together, the participants underlined that they see half-siblingship as siblingship and blended family as family. Their sense of normalcy developed increasing belongingness towards each other. As half-sibling pairs grew up, they expressed that they realized and encountered the stereotypical thoughts of the society in Turkey with regard to having half-siblings and step relations. They described showing their connection to others by protecting and defending each other and the value of their relationship. Moreover, the participants also expressed that family members', in particular uncommon parents', positive and connective attitude on their sense of belongingness. By highlighting the role of uncommon parents, the participants also highlighted the significance of motherhood for developing and sustaining closer half-sibling relations.

3.3.EXPERIENCING RUPTURES

Within this main theme, how familial, individual and developmental experiences interrupt the perceived quality of half-siblingship was described. This main theme included three sub-themes which are "Lack of support from parents and family", "Dyadic issues", and "Sense of distance". In "Lack of support from parents and family" and "Dyadic issues", how negative attitudes of family members and half-siblings' negativities and incompatibilities with each other decrease their quality of relationship was described. In "Sense of distance", how becoming adults rupture half-sibling relations was presented.

3.3.1. Lack of Support From Parents and Family

Some of the participants stated that either themselves or their half-siblings experienced difficulties with their uncommon parent. These difficulties were described as unequal treatment and discriminative attitude of uncommon parents, having a poor or hostile relationship with uncommon parents and being maltreated by uncommon parents. The participants indicated that such negative experiences directly or indirectly had a detrimental influence on half-sibling pairs in terms of

both individual well-being and the quality of sibling relations. These detrimental effects manifested themselves on half-sibling relations via sibling jealousy, conflictual family environment, increased tension and resentment towards half-siblings and hesitation about getting closer with half-siblings. With regard to individual well-being, these participants experienced personal withdrawal or lowered psychological health. These participants highlighted the interrelation among these factors as well.

Two of these participants were older half-siblings and co-resided with their common parent, stepmother and full and half-siblings. Moreover, they both were relatively older than other participants when their biological parents remarried and they both reported re-adjustment difficulties with their stepmothers during family reformation. They also described feeling somewhat closer to their full-siblings due to the lack of step-parental interference in their dyadic relationship.

“My older sister called my father as father for the first time. However, following my birth, my dad made a mistake. Because, you know, after my birth, he wasn’t a father to my older sister like he used to be. Honestly, his love was reserved for me. You know, he was more like, let’s say we had a conflict with my older sister, he was always taking my side, never my older sister’s. She told me that he physically hit her for a couple times. I had no idea about these things happening back then, I’ve found out later. He never treated me in that way. Of course, these tremendously influenced my older sister and eventually she started to be extremely jealous of me, she told it to me herself. So, you know, she started to take on me constantly for a period of time. These resulted in life-time jealousy that came from our childhood.” (P10)

“The problem between me and Sencer was led by Hanife (referring her stepmother) in childhood, whenever she argued with us or I mean it’s not an argument since I wasn’t telling any single word to Hanife. Like I said, I suppressed my anger way too much inside of me. I mean, she would beat us, or get mad at us, so and so. Then, Sencer wouldn’t talk with us. I don’t know what she was telling to him to make him not speak with us, I’ve never asked.” (P8)

“For instance Sinem used to constantly ask her mother questions such as ‘don’t you love my older sister? doesn’t she love us?’. You know, while I was washing dishes, she could ask her mother that why you always make my older sister wash the dishes. You know, Mustafa (referring to full-sibling) wouldn’t ask my mother such a question of why are you making my older sister wash the dishes. At that point, ups and downs between me and Leyla (referring to stepmother) tremendously influenced my relations with my siblings. ...when I didn’t do the things that they wanted me to, you know, her attitude of “you made children sad” was wearing. Because this time the person who is tired of the children mode was being turned on for me. You know, I felt like I’m the bad one because of them. Then I started to sense of distance towards them. You know, if they wouldn’t have insisted that much, I wouldn’t be in the middle of such situation, I wouldn’t get involved with their mother.” (P1)

Some of the participants indicated that differential treatment, distant attitude, favoritism and negative relationship of common parents towards either themselves or their half-siblings adversely impacted the relationship of siblings and led to feeling of left out by siblings who were exposed to discriminative attitude of their parents. In addition, some of the participants added that common parents’ involvement with half-siblings’ dyadic relations in terms of prematurely pressuring them to reconcile in the cases of conflicts and estrangements among siblings interrupted their relations.

“We’re two daughters. My father used to not take me to bazaar, not even once a year, but he did take my older sister every month, every week so and so. There was an unbelievable discrimination there. ... Extreme level of discomfort and very serious crises were experienced. ...But I think, like I said, I mean when I offended my older brother, my father would call me and tell ‘call your older brother and talk with him’. Why would I talk with him? Stay out of this! If you interfere with our relationship, we will fall apart. I tell him not to get involved with these relations. He’s 72 now, and still does this, at least its degree has decreased since he feels unwell.” (P3)

“I mean, ‘Get along with each other. Look, you’re the older one, try to make do. You’re younger, just apologize. Swallow your words’. My father was like this. ...You should try to make do. He raised us in that way. ...You know, ‘don’t fight. Why are you raising your voices? Shut up. Why are you doing this?’. It was not an attempt to resolve the problems you know, he just wanted to shush us.” (P5)

Moreover, one of the participants highlighted that unequal and negative attitude of their common parent stemmed from the unprocessed traumatic and negative experiences from his previous first and second marriage and led him to overly protect his children from first marriage. Such over-protection also manifested by common parent to unsuccessfully weld stepparent-stepchild dyads by making them fall apart and led to decreased adaptation of all family members, and in particular, siblings who were favored by the common parent. Another participant indicated that their common parent’s poor management of family transition as well as his inability to make a distinction between his relationship with each children and relationships of siblings led sibling dyads to fall apart. Both of these participants emphasized that although their common parents realized their mistakes at those points, they perceived it as a late attempt for unifying.

“He (referring to common parent) has a very traumatic past. All in all, think about this, your wife dies in a car which you were driving and you leave your children motherless- sort of. ...Then he married again. His wife was okay but his wife’s mother wanted to send children away...He ended this marriage for his children. He got married with my mother with the influence of these traumas. ...He drove a wedge between my mother and my older sister by thinking her as stepmother... For instance, my mom tells Derin (referring her older half-sister) ‘let’s do something’ and my father interferes ‘no, no don’t do this, Derin doesn’t do this, so and so’. Gradually and eventually, he has come between them. ...And actually he was constantly trying to fix things in his way, but he pushed this side and my mother far away. For example, my mother used to always sit on the

backseat of the car while Derin used to sit on the front seat. There were these kind of interesting, weird things all the time.” (P3)

“Normally we are okay and get along with my older brother, and then they have some sort of trouble, and my father was telling it in the most uptight and blaming way possible –he was telling it to my mother, not to me, but while I was around them...I used to listen to him while he was telling these things. Then I’ve put this information somewhere in my brain as ‘my older brother is supposed to be not loved, I shouldn’t love him’ due to the fact that they had these kinds of troubles...Okay, people promise that they’re going to love and stay married with each other. But nobody has to do this. Everything can change for people. It’s not inappropriate for me. So it’s not some sort of feeling of why he’d marry with my mother after and then I was born. It’s just, if you get into such a thing, you better know how to manage this... You could have taken on the responsibility of being a parent and you could have made it separate from your personal issues and managed it.” (P4)

Additionally, although one of the participants declared that he was not exposed to unequal parental treatment, he indicated that he witnessed their parents’ differential treatment towards his half-siblings which made him feel uncomfortable and unfair. He also described his half-sibling’s resentment towards such treatment.

“When I look at their relationships, I mean the relationship between my half-siblings (referring to both resident and non-resident half-siblings) and my parents, it makes me shocked. I mean, they treat them in that way ...I swear it’s very different. ...My older sister already tells me that ‘my mom has an only child who is you, I’m not her child, so and so’... I’m very aware of that they’re completely imposing double standards... While they’re treating me unbelievably well, they treat them badly. Sometimes I feel very bad and pity for them. And I warn them to not behave in that way.” (P7)

Also, with respect to parental favoring, two of the older half-siblings indicated that they were favored by their parents, stepparents and/or extended family members because they were considered as the survivors of family

dissolution. These participants perceived these experiences positively and/or neutrally. However, two other participants indicated that either themselves or their younger half-siblings described and experienced such favoring as unfairness. One of these participants declared that having a mother beside her felt like a punishment, since her family members positively discriminated her older sister for losing her mother. Altogether, at some points half-siblings described different perceptions of differential treatment by their family members with regard to their half-sibling positions.

“He thinks that, you know, tells my parents to ‘whatever girls (referring herself and her full-siblings) say, you’ll see me as wrong’. I mean, he is being influenced like this, telling things like these: ‘Whatever happens, I’ll be the one who is wrong, eventually I’ll in the position of the wrong one’. He believes my parents discriminate us, but I don’t think they do.” (P6)

“I can give you a simple example to describe my life: my older brother was gonna marry, they told us let’s go and get dressed girls and we got dressed. My aunts, my uncles were all like ‘oooo Derin got dressed, how pretty Derin is, how great she is’. I entered the room, I don’t remember how old I was but I was little, I entered and nobody looked at me. I left and cried. Then my aunt came in, you know, she told me that ‘but she doesn’t have a mother’. When I told her that ‘so my fault is having a mother’, she couldn’t say anything.” (P3)

Moreover, three of the participants stated that they lost their shared father, while one of the participants lost one of her half-siblings. All of these participants declared that they had experienced a rupture in their relationship with half-siblings following the death of these family members. Notably, while those participants whose shared father was deceased described more disconnected relationships following such loss, the participant who lost her half-sibling stated a bidirectional effect that led both to increased distance and increased union among siblings. Those participants who experienced the death of their common fathers indicated that either theirs or their half-siblings’ expectancy of connecting and supporting each other was unmet and they went through personal difficulties regarding this loss. These unmet expectations had a diminishing effect on the

perceived quality of sibling relationship. Likewise, one of the participants suggested the perceived connective impact of the presence of their shared father on maintaining relationships with her half-siblings.

“Following the loss of my father, me not staying with them and coming back here...Because, deep down, they may have expected and wanted me to be with them, stay with them. But I didn’t stay and you know, got back here. I guess it made them feel left alone. I think it has weakened our connection a bit.” (P1)

“After my father died, I came to İzmir. ...Maybe the reason of treating ourselves and each other was this: being unable to speak while knowing it would hurt. Maybe we couldn’t contact frequently since we’d remind each other these things which were hurtful.” (P8)

Moreover, some of the participants indicated that when they learned about the parental difference between them or their half-siblings without being properly supported by parents and family led to some ruptures in their relationships. They explained that this rupture was partly caused by their sense of confusion about the familial roles, such as older half-sibling’s having a non-resident parent and going to see that parent regularly, and the lack of clear explanations of parents in their childhood. Although these participants indicated that they were able to adapt later on, they expressed that it ruptured their relationship at least for a brief of time.

“One day I was playing outside and one old lady from the street told me. ‘They’re not your older brothers, don’t keep calling them as older brother’. I suddenly got a sense that as if I was found in the mosque. And they were already making jokes about me [laughs],telling me that ‘we found you in the mosque’. I went to home, I told them ‘they’re not my older brothers, that old lady told me, you found me in the mosque for sure. Tell me the essence of this thing’ [smiles]. Then, when my mother told me, I felt sad at first. For a week, I felt very alienated from them as they aren’t mine, not my older brothers. Then, my sister-in-law made a speech, I don’t remember its content, but everything got back to normal afterwards.” (P9)

“I mean no one explained anything to me. I remember I was very confused when I was little. I mean she has two fathers, but that second father was kind of

being dissembled, but also his presence wasn't being rejected, but it wasn't told openly. I mean I think they underestimated my cognitive capacity, their attitudes were like 'he wouldn't understand anyways'. But you can understand some things. In the end, she calls another person as dad on the phone, but my dad is beside me. I remember that I was confused a lot.” (P7)

Furthermore, some of the participants indicated that the relations with their resident and/or non-resident half-siblings were also adversely influenced by their non-resident parents to some extent. These participants described that negative attributions to resident half-siblings of non-resident parents disconnected their relationship with them. According to the participants, when the non-resident parents did not attempt to strengthen the relations of half-siblings and/or had a demanding attitude towards the participants to take care of their half-siblings, these attitudes detrimentally impacted all of these sibling relations. In addition, one of the participants described that her non-resident mother's tendency to hide her identity as a mother having a child from her first marriage and a younger child from a second marriage led to struggling of her non-resident half-sibling as well as negatively influenced their contact.

“I don't feel that I miss him (referring non-resident sibling). Because, like I said, we don't share such moments. Just like I didn't miss my mother, I don't have a feeling of longing towards him...My mother doesn't accept the fact that things are going normal here (referring to resident family)...I remember that she used to tell us 'maternal half-siblings are the real siblings, not the paternal ones' ...I don't know it might be difficult for her to tell such a thing, but all in all a little child would be influenced by these words. Okay, now maybe I don't care what she's telling me because I know what's what. I know what's important is the communication itself. But I believe that reflecting such discrimination to a little child is wrong. My mother negatively influenced us in this way.” (P6)

“My birth mother usually tells other people that she has two children, I mean many people that is around her don't know about the presence of the third child who is me. ...So, Nazım (referring to non-resident half-sibling) was charged to not talk about his older sister by my mother.” (P5)

In addition, some of the participants stated that some of the extended family members such as in-laws (i.e. spouses of siblings) negatively affected the relations of half-siblings by naming the participants as 'step', creating a rift among half-sibling pairs, and favoring one of the half-siblings. They indicated that such attitudes of extended family members led to a feeling of resentment, weakened their sense of closeness, and decreased perceived quality and quantity of sibling support. Moreover, one of the participants stated that her half-siblings had a tendency to favor and respect more the extended family members of their shared parents' side. This, in turn, lessened perceived sense of commitment among half-sibling pairs.

"You know, in every family there is a one who is a 'mixer', who tries to set one person against another. My aunt tried to do this kind of thing to me. I remember that I was a teenage girl and she told me 'your older brothers don't want and love you actually. They're jealous of you since your father bought you a computer. ...Also, after he (referring her older brother) got married, we have a very isolated relationship now. His wife [laughs], you know the bridal stuff is a little problematic when it comes to these things. ...His wife sees me as step....I feel that way, she sees my mother as step, too. I feel like she doesn't want him to get in touch with us too much...She never wanted to leave her children with us. I don't know she may have thought that we couldn't look after them, we would treat them badly." (P9)

"Indeed, our relationship is still good. But you know that sister-in-law crises that everyone has [laughs], we have this thing as well. ...My sister-in-law have been drifting us apart very much for years. I mean she's such a troubled woman, I've decided to tell her 'it's been 25 years, don't you feel tired?', you know." (P3)

Lastly, two participants indicated that the interrelated effect of cultural barriers and perceived unsupportiveness from the family members led them to withdraw to themselves from their half-siblings. These kinds of struggles became obstacles for them to contact and connect with their half-siblings. They described that such relational rupture occurred since they believe their whole family would

not accept and support their current life-styles and personal choice. This perceived familial unacceptance, in turn, led to distance by proxy among half-sibling pairs as well.

“I’m an LGBTI. Thus, I immediately withdrew myself from my family and other things about which I thought I can’t ask for support. I mean I haven’t been exposed to any kind of overt threat or phobia but I cannot be understood in the context of Turkey. To be understood, I really have to make an effort for a long period of time. You know, I’m going to tell them and we’re going to get through lots of drama. You know that there are specific phases of coming out. I mean I didn’t have any time to handle them. Honestly, I haven’t yet seen anyone worthy of all of these. I thought ‘would it be worth it to make an effort? Probably it wouldn’t’. As a result, I have withdrawn myself from them, from all of my family members, including extended family members.” (P7)

“It’s a little bit about me stopping to wear hijab, because they don’t know this. I mean, so to speak, noone in my family knows about it. Since I know the fact that it won’t be welcomed, I haven’t shared it with anyone. Only my mother supports me on this. For instance, I’m pretty much predicting the reaction of Leyla abla (referring her stepmother) to me about stopping to wear hijab. ...while I was wearing hijab, I was the exemplary one. In particular for Sinem, since she is older (compared to her youngest half-sibling).” (P1)

3.3.2. Dyadic Issues

All of the participants described the different characteristics of half-sibling dyads with regard to either personality or gender. In terms of personality differences, some participants indicated that these differences influenced perceived closeness and support as well as the frequency and severity of conflicts to some extent. Some of these participants indicated that the different temperaments of either theirs or their half-siblings somewhat created a sense of incompatibility, increased the possibility of conflicting with each other, and made

it difficult to support each other and to maintain contact. In turn, these led to ruptures in half-sibling relations in different extents.

“Like I said, Batu is a little- our disagreement starts at that point, his character is more introverted. I’m more- for example, let’s say someone got mad at me or made me upset. I’m a person who asks them ‘why are you making me sad, why are you doing such a thing?’. He is more likely to sink into it and experience it inwardly.” (P2)

“Her personality needs to change to make things better [laughs]. ...There are no underlying reasons of our conflicts. It’s not due to something we can’t share or a negative feeling towards each other. So indeed our personalities conflict with each other.” (P7)

In terms of gender differences, some of these participants who were females and had male half-siblings described their attributions towards being same-sex sibling dyads. They expressed their thoughts regarding this as their half-sibling relationship would have been closer, more open to sharing and support, and less conflictual. One participant indicated that the concept of gender became an obstacle between him and his half-siblings, since he defined himself as an individual who belongs to LGBTIQ+ community and was questioning the gender norms. He stated that these in turn created some sort of hostile feelings and emotional distance towards individuals who do not reflect upon the heteronormativity, including his half-siblings.

“If my middle brother was a girl, I believe our communication would have been different. I mean, it would be more likely to be a relationship where we can share secrets, tell our problems...I mean more, you know such stuff would be more among girls, they are more open both to share and to be shared. I mean if I had a sister instead of him, we may have gotten along better with each other as an older sister-sibling.” (P6)

...But at that time, I was really hating all of those cis-heteros. It was a little loaded with grudge and envy... Afterwards, when I take on the intersectional lens, I started to realize the fact of being a member of different advantageous and disadvantageous groups such as being a woman and acknowledge its complexity.

But initially, I honestly wasn't thinking in this way, when I discovered my identity at first. And I was angry with them for making me feel that way. So, you know, this influenced my relationship a little.” (P7)

Some of the participants indicated the importance of how past difficulties are processed and currently perceived by half-sibling pairs. They expressed that accumulation of conflicts, conflicts that have been become a vicious cycle, past resentments towards each other which remained unspoken, lack of healthy communication, raking over the ashes over and over became unresolved issues among half-sibling dyads. As a result, the half-siblings in the present study became reluctant and/or hesitated to share their feelings with each other, to offer and receive support to different extents. The participants explained that individually experienced emotional bursts such as desperation, distance and urge to avoid them created an emotional distance among half-siblings. Sense of emotional distance led relational ruptures. One of these participants highlighted the crucial influence of having unprocessed traumatic childhood experiences with her half-sibling on such dyadic interactions, while one of them emphasized the effect of witnessing previous alcohol abuse of her older half-sibling.

“When she gets to that point, I get bored. Because she constantly repeats the same things. You know, I try to proceed, she gets stuck in the past, past problems. She is a person who lives in the past. You know, when she comes up with those issues, I sometimes become angry by telling her in a manner of ‘haven't we talked about these?’. Maybe those feelings of her still come into surface when she's under the influence of alcohol. We sometimes have arguments on these sort of things. And like I said, I don't want to be around her when she drinks too much. Because after some point, she totally gets lost and I kind of conflict with her. I feel uncomfortable since I suffered from drunk version of her when I was little. You know, I already feel angry when those times come up to my mind.” (P10)

“You know, siblings see each other, siblings love each other. Maybe we maintain our relationship by thinking like that. But like I said, we have never spoken about the past and neither about what we've gone through nor what did

make us sad. We never can share things like these. I mean, even though we attempt to talk about them, I'd say unwanted things would happen, but no, we probably can't talk about these because of crying. So, we've never spoken about these issues. If we didn't suppress our anger, pain, happiness, I mean these kind of things that much, maybe we would have supported each other more when my father passed away. We may have been with each other more. I don't know, we could have shared more things. It might have been better, I don't know. But –I'm keeping Arda (referring non-resident half-sibling) out of this- for Emel (referring full-sibling), Sencer and me, I mean for three of us, it's really difficult to talk about these.” (P8)

Some of the participants declared that rigidly established positions of half-siblings in the earlier phases of their relationship led older half-siblings or those half-siblings who took the role of being a caretaker to experience difficulties due to increased burden of responsibilities, and dependency of siblings on them and/or demands of siblings. For instance, two participants stated that they experienced discomfort and self-blame when they did not do their duties, including towards their non-resident half-siblings. On the other side, they also indicated that such position of theirs created a tendency to intervene and over-guide the lives of half-siblings which resulted in accelerated conflict and resentment of their siblings. In terms of younger half-siblings, it was reported that their older half-siblings tend to underestimate their capacity to support them and get over-involved with their decisions through the life course. One of these participants stated that she still blames her older brother for interfering with her career path.

“On the one hand I love them, on the other hand they stay away from me, not that much beside of me, you know... I love them very much, but I wish they'd stay there, I wouldn't take that much responsibility. What I mean is maybe a little the heaviness of that responsibility.” (P1)

“I guess I can't do something for them. Because they already don't listen to me too much- for instance, my youngest older brother recently got divorced, he is now struggling with issues related to his daughter. I told him my opinions about this. He interrupted me by telling things like 'fine, alright, I already know these,

what can you do, what can you say'. I'm some sort of little child in their eyes, I'm 36 years old [laughs], but this is who I'm for them I guess. ...Also, my choice of profession belongs to my older brother, not me. On the one side I'm grateful for this and on the other hand you know I could have done different things. So, I tremendously judge my older brother about this." (P9)

"I'm checking his workbooks with an attitude of controller older sister. None of the pages of workbook is studied. He did not even look at it... He's like 'why are you interfering? Mind your own business. What is your benefit from me getting into university, why do you care so much?'. I'm trying to give him advices about studying on a regular basis, 'look, if you study that much on a day, you'd proceed'. I'm trying to share my experiences with him... This was our last conflict, but we had much more conflicts regarding this subject. He generally raises his voice and not want me to interfere." (P6)

Lastly, some of the participants declared that sometimes it was experienced that either themselves or their half-siblings perceived each other as step-siblings and that perception disrupted their relations. One participant indicated her intense reaction to hear her younger half-sibling's using the word step as a description of their relationship. Another participant similarly talked about her older half-sister's negative reaction to him using the word step. These two participants described these moments as one-time and brief.

"We went somewhere together, I had friends over there and took him with me. He was bored at home and told him let's go together. And he was gonna meet some of those people for the first time. 'You're not alike at all' thing came up. Because he is more brunette, looks more different, we don't look alike. At that point, Batu said 'we're step-siblings' for the first time. Then I was like 'how?', you know... I was older, but was like how did Batu notice this? How step? It was the first time I've heard the word of step." (P2)

"Once I had referred to my older sister as 'she is my step-sibling'. She became very sad and cried a lot. But what can you do, it's called as step, it's how people call it. She felt unbelievably sad about this by telling me 'how so? I'm not your step-sibling'." (P7)

In addition to influencing factors that are given above, two participants indicated the ongoing sense of distance over the years between them and their half-siblings. One of these participants indicated that she had co-resided with her half-siblings only for 3 years during her infancy. She described that lack of shared time over the years led them falling apart with her half-siblings and diminished the sense of being siblings.

“Huge gap. We have no connection. We lost our fathers but we didn’t give each other condolences with my older sister. We were in touch with my older brother at that period of time, but you know, these things don’t happen belatedly. ...I used to tell that I have an older brother when I was child, but over time...”
(P4)

3.3.3. Sense of Distance

A majority of the participants stated that as they grew older, they experienced a sense of distance and difficulty in maintaining contact because of the effect of increased physical (geographical) distance. The participants stated that the reasons of this physical distance mainly stemmed from pursuing different life directions such as marriage of one of the half-siblings, leaving for college and moving to another city to build up personal life. With these changes, half-sibling pairs also experienced differences in their life paths.

“When I’ve come here, during the first year, we couldn’t call each other very much since I was studying for my master’s degree and I was busy. I mean, I was making new friends, came into a new city, that’s why I was busy. Therefore, there was a disconnection at that time, since we couldn’t contact with each other very much.” (P10)

“Honestly, physically falling apart also weakened our connection. Because when it happened, we were calling each other, but its frequency gradually has declined. She started to do utterly different things in an utterly different world. Things that I will never be able to understand. Quite different things. I mean our preferences and interests, they all have changed. The way we

express ourselves, things we eat, things we drink, our understanding of having fun. So, when we are physically distant, we weren't able to follow each other. I think these have led to our current disconnection.” (P7)

As a result, as a part of life course, the participants described that each half-sibling could change individually, specifically in terms of their interests, world view and beliefs towards life. Some of the participants indicated that by leaving family home and no longer co-residing, both the amount and the content of sharing became more prone to decline in their half-sibling relations. Moreover, for some of the participants, age differences among half-sibling pairs became negatively prominent, since as each one grew older, they entered into different cycles of life. These, in turn, decreased the perceived quality of support and sense of connection at least for a brief period of time, according to the participants' accounts. Duration and lasting effect of these experiences among half-siblings differed by the participants. Some of them highlighted that their sense of siblingship diminished and they predicted ongoing disconnected half-sibling relations in the future.

“Then, due to external factors, him growing up, my father, so and so... we got disconnected. ...Following these events, my older brother has suddenly dedicated himself to religion. Now his wife and child not like that, but he's written a hadith in his whatsapp bio. Things that totally irrelevant to us, my father. He's a congregant, going to mosque, so and so. These kinds of nonsense things. He has prayer beads. Even though we were closer, when he did pursue such direction, we'd already fall apart.” (P4)

“Since Esma is a little younger yet, she interprets things only from her perspective. It's like 'I missed you, then you should come'. Everything is so simple for her, life is too easy. ...By physically falling apart from each other gradually, it has become supporting each other time to time. Seems like that continuity has declined a little, even started to tear apart.” (P1)

While such life transitions occurred, a majority of the participants declared that themselves and their half-siblings experienced personal struggles and became a member of different support networks as a result of establishing different close

connections with their partners and friends. Some of the participants indicated that such alterations within their life as well as their web of close relations led to changes in their priorities and aid to reach alternative sources of support.

“You are moved to another dimension by marriage. Now your priorities... I don’t know, maybe back then, when I was single, not married and childless, it’d take longer to take care of my older brother. I mean I used to go to their homes, look after their children more. Their children were little back then. But after I have established another life of mine, I can obviously tell we have drifted apart. It’s a part of human life... I think that this is already the case for every family. I now have another focus, so they do of course.” (P9)

“I mean I’m living through everything with my roommate now. My friends here know what I’m going through or my relationships with people or who come into my life. So, you cannot contact very much with people who are far away. Or you cannot tell and share your stuff very much....I didn’t have much contact with Sencer when I came to university. I don’t remember even though we did. Because coming here was also very bad for me. Being alone here since there was nobody around at first.” (P8)

However, while new mechanisms of support were added, some of the participants expressed their disappointment due to the lack of either the presence or expected support of their half-siblings when they needed them during those personally major life events. Altogether, all of these led to a decrease in perceived level of sibling connection according to the participants. While some of these participants experienced it as a brief rupture, some of them defined their experiences as a diminished sense of siblingship.

“For instance, I’m telling you a very classic thing. We had a henna night- we prepared a meal so and so. One of my older brothers were supposed to pick us up. My older sister did, my older brothers disappeared. I mean why they weren’t around? I was always questioning this. I was getting mad at them. In very big and important events, they weren’t there for me.” (P3)

“I can add this too at this point: I expected more support from Görkem at that period of time (during her wedding preparations)...Because there used to be

one source, now sources have been divided. Of course, new and different qualities are gained to be siblings, different qualities are gained to be spouses. Such a change has occurred. During that period of time I struggled, pre-marriage period, I may have turned my face a little more to my husband since I realized his support was more dominant and certain.” (P5)

Nevertheless, one of the participants indicated that although she experienced the same ruptures that led by geographical distance with her half-sibling, she perceived her full-sibling as closer to her. Their similarities, duration of shared experiences and getting through difficulties together counteracted the effect of physical distance in the participant’s account.

“Emel and I are more alike. Maybe it’s because we share the same mother and father. We’re alike genetically. You know, although we don’t see each other for years, for example even our way of smiling is the same. Or our reactions. You know, the sentences we make. Because, we were together with her all time, but not with others.” (P8)

To sum up, the participants specifically indicated the diminishing effect of family members’ discriminative and unequal treatment towards half-siblings on the connection of them. Both of the uncommon and common parents were expressed as crucial figures to develop good quality of half-siblingship. However, the participants underlined the negative effect of common parents especially on sustaining close sibling relations and familial adjustment. It was also indicated that dyadic differences, incompatibilities as well as past resentments among half-sibling pairs interrupted their connection with each other. All of these factors usually experienced during childhood and adolescence planted the seeds of sibling problems. In turn, it was indicated that they created the asymmetric relationship among half-siblings which induces individual feelings of obligation, tiredness, hostility and/or distance. Then, the participants described how entering into adulthood shaped half-sibling dynamics and added to the previously unresolved issues. They experienced negativity in their relations mostly by the interference of physical distance and following different life paths. The participants described

the effect and severity of these ruptures as depending upon the perceived closeness, ongoing contact and accumulation of difficulties.

3.4. MAINTAINING THE SIBLING RELATIONSHIP

Within this theme, how half-siblings experience their relationship as they became more mature was described. It is indicated how half-siblings' connection, support and conflicts evolved over time. In addition to the present status of the half-siblingship, the meaning of the half-siblingship, wishes, hopes and intentions towards the future of this relationship were described.

A majority of the participants stated that as they and their half-siblings matured, they perceived the quality of their relationship in a more positive way. Some of these participants indicated that as they grew older, the content of their sharing evolved into subjects of love, marriage, career paths and being a parent. They reported that they started to give or receive advice on these subjects and to help each other such as taking care of children of each other when needed. In turn, half-sibling pairs experienced an increased sense of supportiveness. Additionally, some of these participants positively experienced that maturation of their non-resident half-siblings increased the contact and sharing among them as well.

“My relationship with them... I mean, it's good actually. Now it's very good. I mean, think of this way: you're at a party, you encounter with each other and everyone behaves towards each other very well. But there is no hypocrisy behind this. Indeed, we are very committed to each other, we love each other so much, really. Also, you understand its value as you grow older. ...The thing that I trust most to my older sister is child care. Because my older sister is a very good mother. Very good mother, I follow her lead. You know, when she falls, I'll call her and ask what she would do. Because my older sibling raised two great kids, she was very successful on it. I love asking her advice.” (P3)

“But as I grow older, Görkem has become a very interesting kind of best friend of mine, I can tell. I mean, we’re very different characters from each other but the things we share, our sincerity...” (P5)

“For instance, we haven’t talked about it, but he has given me the vibe that, you know, when something happens between me and my boyfriend, when I feel unhappy, I can share it with Batu. You know, he is now mature enough, I can share these kind of things with him as well. It’s kinda, I can share my romantic relations with him.” (P2)

Moreover, a majority of the participants indicated that they experienced at least one of the following changes as both they and their half-siblings grew older: they started to empathize with their half-siblings more, improved communication with their half-siblings and improved coping strategies with conflict as half-sibling pairs. Some of these participants stated that they started to understand the past difficulties more from the perspective of their half-siblings in terms of how they might have struggled to adapt throughout the process of family reformation, how they might have perceived things while they were experiencing dyadic issues as well as the influence of their own personal difficulties. Moreover, some of these participants highlighted the importance of realizing the parents’ responsibility, incompetency and problematic love expression on the problems they had with half-siblings. These, in turn, contribute participants’ feeling warmth towards their half-siblings as well as motivate them to stay in touch and connected.

“We all were born into the same burdens. The only difference was our positions. I don’t know which one of us suffered more. Honestly, I cannot compare the pain of my older brother to anyone else’s. He remembers everything. Is there anything more painful than this? Two stepmothers, one loss of birth mother. I cannot even compare. Maybe that’s why I have very strong bonds of love with them. Because they aren’t the ones to blame for many things. Even Derin is not guilty. I mean, Derin has nothing to blame actually. She was raised in that way. ...For instance, I wouldn’t become upset to my sibling because my mother loves her more, I’d become peeved to my mother. Do I make myself clear?

This is the reason actually. I only feel sad for Derin. You know, very sad. Because the loser of it had become her since she got through a lot.” (P3)

“I can empathize with them after many years. When I was born, they were in that stage of life when adolescence ends and adulthood begins and lots of internal conflicts arise. And their mother was not the constructive one about this thing (referring to half-siblingship). I don’t know, that’s what I heard, I don’t want to accuse her. At that time, they may have not wanted to deal with all of these issues. Even though my mother wasn’t guilty, they may have thought that my mother was the reason for their parents’ divorce.” (P4)

Furthermore, some of the participants emphasized the positive effect of mutual effort to communicate with their half-siblings. Such communication was enhanced by increased awareness of each pair regarding sibling problems, reflecting upon themselves, and attempting to process and leave shared problems behind. Although physical distance had a detrimental effect on half-sibling relations to different extents, these participants indicated that mutual effort to contact regularly and be a part of siblings’ lives, such as going to events together and making video calls, improved the communication among siblings.

“Now, you know, since I’m away here, I had a chance to sit down and think about what I can do. I had a chance to analyze both myself and my older sister. So, I have learned how to approach and how to behave towards some things. Likewise, she has learned how to approach and how to treat me better. When it happened, our relationship has evolved positively. There is never such things like I care about her less or our relations aren’t as strong as in the past. I think it’s stronger now. It’s just, like I said, we’ve learned how to communicate. ...You know, I was getting mad at my older sister for this (referring to alcohol problem) when I was younger, but it’s not a thing that makes me angry at all now. I already have spoken with her about it, she knows it and is aware of it, she already apologized for this. To me, awareness is important. If you are aware of it, you can change things. So, she has changed things by becoming aware of them and I have changed things about me like I said. ” (P10)

“I mean, growing up already changes things. Realizing things more. It leaves all nonsensical problems behind you. ...As I increase my attention towards him, I feel him to be closer to me... Once we left things behind and forgot them, we got a bit closer... When I share things with him, I of course feel closer to him. Okay, he’s my brother, I love him so much, he is my Sencer. But when either I or he share more, get to know each other more, we become more connected.” (P8)

With regards to reconciliation, although the amount of conflicts dramatically declined due to physical distance among siblings as a result of life cycle, some of the participants described a progress in their sibling relations in terms of conflict resolution skill. These participants indicated that in the cases of conflict, they learned to manage them more, give breaks before tension gets escalated, give space to each other for expressing themselves, talk out the problems instead of avoiding them, share their feelings and motivations that led to arguments, apologize properly, respect each other and/or their boundaries over time. Moreover, some participants highlighted the benefits of sibling conflict by stating their positive effect on getting to know soft spots of each other as well as strengthening their relationships following ruptures.

“After they calm down, I ask them ‘can we talk?’ and then we sit and talk through things mutually, make an effort to listen and understand our own reasons, and I apologize to them if necessary. You know, now I’m trying to resolve things by leaving behind the ‘I’m the only one who is right!’ attitude of mine. I tell them ‘okay, you’re right. You misunderstood me over there, I apologize to you. I didn’t want to make you feel that way’. Afterwards, we hug each other, tell ‘okay, we solved this thing out’, and then continue with our lives” (P1)

“But, for instance now, when I yell at Batu at this age, what I mean by yelling is things like ‘hey, I said give it to me!’- these are included. Now I go nearby him and, you know, ‘Batu, I raised my voice to you, I’m sorry’. Like I said, normally you apologize to your friends when you raise your voice towards them, but you don’t treat your sibling in this way. But now, I sincerely apologize to him. I tell him that ‘it was a very stressful moment, when you suddenly interfered, I

pitched my voice up.’. As I started to treat him like this, he started to do the same. Previously, he didn’t do this either.” (P2)

Although some of the participants described an ongoing sense of distance among them and their half-siblings, all of the participants indicated the crucial meanings of their half-siblings at least during one period of their lives, their expectancies from their siblings, their needs to them and/or their future dreams about them. Some of the participants described that their half-siblings became a safe haven specifically in case of need, are perceived as a life-long companions, remedy of loneliness. They also expressed their half-siblings’ effect on teaching them how to connect and how to share things with someone, how to be more mature, how to progress in life and/or how they influenced their selection of mate.

“He taught me how to share things. By sharing my parents, I learned how to share someone. He taught me how to share when I have problems. ...Afterwards, you know, I realized that he is now my lifetime company. You know, when things happen, I have my brother. For instance, I never would want to be an only child. Because I think being an only child in this life is scary.” (P2)

“I wanted to have a sibling so bad because of them, I guess. Their absence plays a role on my future anxiety. My older brother and older sister have always been in my subconscious... I’ve realized that later. I had grown up in a very crowded family, and they all died one by one. I always have that thing, I’ll be lonely in the future.” (P4)

Moreover, some of the participants described their dreams and wishes for the future in terms of maintaining contact, not wanting to fall apart as pair of half-siblings, perceiving improved relations in the future, and being a part of each other’s lives and/or togetherness of the family. Some of these participants declared that they were longing for their siblings and wanting to be closer with them. They also expressed their need for their siblings in the cases of individual and familial difficulties that would be encountered throughout the life course. In addition, preciousness, importance and necessity of the presence of their siblings as well as the sense of unconditional love towards them were highlighted by some of these participants. According to the participants’ accounts, as they grew older,

they also reflected upon roles and places of their siblings as well as the concept of siblingship itself in their individual lives.

“I miss them more now. I miss them very much. I mean, after I had children, I need to spend time with them more. You know, back in time when I haven’t become a mother yet, I wouldn’t die to meet with them. They were just family gatherings, you know. But now I want to, I miss them. I’m missing the old days, too. I really enjoy to see when my children spend time with them and when they care for and value my children.” (P9)

“You know those large, family dinner tables in festivities on commercials. I dream about that dinner table. I dream about all the memories we will share, vacations, or making surprises to our parents together.” (P6)

Additionally, some of the participants highlighted their willingness to sustain and/or improve their older sister role in their half-siblings’ life. These participants also indicated the significance of balancing such roles based on their previous experience, such as confusion of the roles of being a mother and being an older sister. Thus, they described their effort to establish a balance among these roles.

“I’m still trying to learn how to be an older sister. ...I’m making an effort to be an older sister whom I’d rather have but I couldn’t. So, I guess seeing them being nourished from this relationship has been strengthening the connection.” (P1)

“I want them to have a place in my life. When we don’t see each other, they don’t have such a place. You know, a place of where I’m sharing things when I want to or they are able to share and tell things to me... Because these, in turn, make me feel worthy as well. Make me feel I’m their older sister.” (P8)

Lastly, some of the participants indicated that they maintained the positive aspects of their established half-sibling dynamics in childhood and adolescence. They described the continuing protection towards each other, solidarity, guidance and spirit of being a team in adulthood by transforming them according to current needs of each other. From the participants’ perspectives, sustaining these

dynamics positively consolidated the places of siblings and meanings of them in their lives, and increased their sense of connection and support.

“In recent past, about 2-3 years ago, we were about to dine. My mom did something like pushing my older sister... I mean, in a horrendous manner she (referring his mother) did something which would make my older sister feel very bad. And my older sister felt very bad, I saw her about to cry and she couldn't say anything. And I told my mom you have to apologize for what you did. My mother initially ignored it, and then I said I'm leaving the table since there's violence over here and I can't be a witness to this... Then my mother was like 'okay, I apologize, I'm sorry...'. You know, that teaming up thing against our parent is still continuing.” (P7)

“I mean, sometimes my husband gets angry with my mother and father since we got through that difficult process (referring marriage preparations). And I sometimes get angry with his parents as well. We both are allowed to do this. But when he says something about my siblings I'm like 'sssh, this is my redline'. ...It is indeed my redline. I feel that they are under my protection. ...My siblings are special to me.” (P5)

In sum, half-siblings indicated that in spite of the past and present difficulties, they described the continuity of their relations. They described that their relationships became more mature as they matured. Half-siblings expressed the significance of each other's presence, support and connection through life. By keeping each other in their lives, they also made an effort to improve this relationship and solve dyadic problems. They highlighted the sense of togetherness as life goes on.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

In the current study, it was aimed to explore the development of half-sibling relations from childhood to early adulthood in the context of Turkey. Based on this purpose, the experiences of half-siblings with regard to family reformation story, half-siblingship throughout different life cycles, the development of the connection, support and conflict dynamics as well as the effect of familial and contextual dynamics were investigated. According to the experiences of the participants of the present study, four main themes were defined as following: a) building a sibling relationship, b) increasing belongingness, c) experiencing ruptures, and d) maintaining the sibling relationship.

Under the theme of building a sibling relationship, there were two sub-themes which were being the older or younger sibling and team spirit. This theme described establishing half-sibling relations from internalizing older and younger sibling positions which were mostly similar to parent-child relations to transforming these dynamics into more dyadic interactions to a large extent through childhood and adolescence. The second theme of increasing belongingness included two sub-themes which were named as half-siblings as similar to full-siblings and parents' uniting attitudes. This theme contained the descriptions of the participants regarding how they developed their siblingship without sensing the presence of biological differences. In addition, the contributing effect of uncommon and common parents on growing both an individual and dyadic sense of siblingship via their supportive and connective approach was highlighted. The third theme consisted of three sub-themes which were lack of support from parents and family, sense of distance and dyadic issues. The participants indicated how unequal treatment and lack of uniting attitude of uncommon and common parents as well as extended family members interrupted developing more solid sibling relations to different extents. Moreover, specific and different dyadic characteristics of half-siblings as well as unresolved issues from the earlier stages of the development of siblingship were described as

obstacles for an ongoing warmth among siblings. As half-sibling pairs grew up into adulthood, the participants pointed out the ruptured sibling relations that were mainly initiated by no longer co-residing and in turn made it difficult to sustain connection and be supportive to each other. The last theme described how half-sibling pairs matured by time and made an effort to stay connected and solve existing and/or new problems. The participants also highlighted their wishes towards sibling relations in the future.

In the next section, these four themes will be discussed with regard to presented former work on them. Following, in the light of existing literature and results of the present study, clinical implications will be suggested. Then, the limitations of the current study will be presented and future research suggestions will be made.

4.1. DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

4.1.1. Building a sibling relationship

In building a sibling relationship, the participants fundamentally described how their hierarchical relationship was transformed into a more egalitarian one to some extent. About being older or younger siblings, all of the participants expressed the effect of their birth order on the way of establishing siblingship in childhood and through puberty. Such positioning among half-siblings was described as shaping the development, consolidation and sustainment of half-sibling relations. This is similar to the suggestion of Sirman (2014) that highlighted the hierarchical nature of sibling relations and indicated that hierarchical positions are determined by the order of birth, especially in collectivistic societies like Turkey.

Most of the participants likened their sibling relations to parent-child relationships in terms of their hierarchical positions. Older siblings' tendency to take responsibility, be protective and caregiving attitude were mentioned while younger ones described their positions as the caretaking ones and expectancies

from their older siblings to provide their needs. It was suggested that although caregiving attitude of older siblings was a well-known and usual case in the past, being sibling caregiver is highly prevalent within families (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2005; Wikle et al., 2017). Indeed, Wikle and colleagues (2017) found that 30 % of the elder sibling pairs took care of their younger siblings on a regular basis. In her qualitative work among older and younger siblings, Aytac Bakkaloğlu (2021) highlighted that some of these older siblings had taken the role of caregiver and approached the younger ones parentally.

Most of the participants of this study who described their relationship as parent-child pairs defined caregiver roles of either themselves or their siblings who were older female half-siblings in line with Wikle and colleagues (2017) who found female siblings who had much younger siblings were more likely to practice sibling caretaking role and suggested that this might be due to norms related to gender-roles and maturity of females as they grow up. Indeed, the current study's participants who had second younger half-siblings described increased internalization of older sibling role as they have become more mature. However, other participants who identified themselves or their half-siblings in parental role had older brothers or were younger than their siblings. At this point, it was argued that characteristic attitudes towards caregiving role, parental expectancies regarding taking responsibility of siblings (Kline & Killoren, 2022; Wikle et al., 2017), residing in larger families (Jensen et al., 2017) and non-individualistic cultural values of families may play role on sibling caretaking behavior (Wikle et al., 2017). At this point, it might also be noteworthy to indicate that one of the participants defined the reversed hierarchical roles with her older half-sibling. She described her caring role as younger one since her older half-sister had psychological difficulties. This seems consistent with the previous suggestion of Sanders and colleagues (2014) that found individuals who have siblings with psychological difficulties were more likely to look after them and become "Hero" (p. 258) or "Lost Child" (p. 258) of the family. Thus, it may be suggested that in addition to above, half-siblings' psychological well-beings seemingly influence these hierarchical positions.

Moreover, Aytaç Bakkaloğlu (2021) indicated older brothers' parentally protective attitudes towards younger siblings especially as a precaution for dangers outside. These are parallel with the experiences that the current participants addressed and highlighted the role of being a nurturing individual, given responsibilities by parents to take care of one's siblings, older half-brothers involvement with caregiving, increased number of siblings within the household and beliefs regarding how to be an older sibling in Turkey. At this point, it might be reasonable to point out that although it was indicated that older siblings were apt to give care to their siblings, these were defined as less intensified caregiving (Aytaç Bakkaloğlu, 2021; Kline & Killoren, 2022; Wikle et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the participants of the present study described a more intensified parenting-like approach towards their siblings. Thus, with consideration of general tendency to sibling caretaking of paternal half-siblings who were older and female, it might be argued that such parental role taking could be due to either temporarily or long-lasting interruption of homeostasis regarding remarriage process as well as increased confusion regarding boundaries among parent and child subsystems (Dupuis, 2010; Minuchin & Fishman, 1981). Following the leave of their birth mother, older female half-siblings may undertake more of a mothering role to establish a balance and compensate for their absence. This might be in line with the expressions of one participant who is older, female and maternal half-sibling. She described a protective, but friendly sibling relations rather than parenting her half-brother, since her mother was present and already was in charge of caretaking duties.

Larger age differences of half-sibling pairs were pronounced as another dimension that influenced those older and younger sibling roles by the participants. They reported that during the building process of siblingship, larger age differences among them consolidated their positions and supported their increasing closeness and warmth. These findings are parallel with the findings of Khan and colleagues (2020) and Ahrons (2007) in that these studies also reported the association between larger age differences and emotional closeness among half-sibling pairs. However, the present findings contradict previous reports

regarding the association between larger age differences and increased sense of distance and escalated rivalry among half-siblings (Anderson, 1999; Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015). Voorpostel and colleagues (2007) argued that increased age difference might be related with the higher level of support, since older siblings would be more experienced in life and more willing to bolster the younger ones. Supportively, some of the participants highlighted they were directive and provided guidance towards their younger half-siblings as well as the pleasure of having guidance and experiencing the first moments in life with the company of their older half-siblings. These are in line with Anderson (1999) findings regarding older half-siblings' tendency to direct their younger ones in a positive manner.

The participants generally reported less intensified and amount of conflict with their half-siblings over time. This is supportive of the majority of the former research that indicated the decreased level of conflictual interactions among half-siblings (Gyuris et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Salmon & Hehman, 2021; Steinbach & Hank, 2018). Positions of half-siblings reported above seems to characterize the conflictual interaction among sibling dyads, since in spite of the description of less severe conflicts, some of the participants indicated the difficulty to negotiate verbally regarding these conflicts. Such difficulty could be a result of different mentalities, learned patterns and beliefs regarding reconciliation, since larger age differences can also mean generational differences. At this point, it might be suggested that larger age differences have bidirectional effects which mean that while they may work to de-escalate half-siblings' tension, they might also inhibit mutual conflict resolution.

Moreover, some of the participants also indicated that how their parents' conflict influenced their way of conflict with siblings. This seems parallel to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggestions on complex sibling relations (Baham et al., 2008, McHale et al., 2009) which indicated that siblings tend to role-model their parents, and in turn, due to their closer age and more similar positions, younger siblings can imitate the older ones. Indeed, these participants described the transmission of conflictual patterns, such that observing and

learning to yell from parents during conflicts and applying it to younger half-siblings by older half-siblings. In addition, it might be argued that older half-siblings positioning themselves as a parent in this relation may have facilitated such transmission. Lastly, escalation of conflicts among half-siblings was similar with the findings of Anderson (1999) that suggested decreased hostility over time among adolescent half-siblings.

In the sub-theme of team spirit, half-siblings underlined the transformation of their relationship into more reciprocal one. A majority of the participants described unshakable and strong bonding with their siblings which cannot be easily diminished by anyone or anything. They highlighted the ongoing protective attitudes towards siblings, but this time, it was more likely to be described as a two-way process. Consistent with this, Aytaç Bakkaloğlu (2021) found that older and younger siblings tend to develop more dyadic relationship with each other by age. These reports of the participants, on the other hand, contradict with the finding of half-siblings' decreased tendency to involve reciprocal, supportive and helping behavior with each other (Salmon & Hehman, 2021).

Leach and colleagues (2019) revealed that over time sibling pairs showed greater quality in their plays and these plays were more cooperative in nature and as a whole playing together increased the quality of siblingship. Similarly, the participants indicated that physically being in touch and becoming the playmates of each other elevated the dyadic warmth. Further, the significance of developing more reliable relationships especially with the help of half-siblings' ability and willingness to keep secrets made them each other's safe haven as described by the participants. Increased mutual sense of trust helped half-siblings to act as a team against others and including parents in cases of need as well as enhanced the content of sharing among them. This seems to be in line with what Myers (1998) found, reporting that the higher quality of communication between sibling pairs were significantly interrelated with solidarity, trusting siblings and disclosing personal experiences and feelings.

Additionally, some of the participants also indicated the increased tendency to mediate their half-siblings' relational problems with others,

specifically conflicts with their common parents, and younger half-siblings reported the relational difficulties among their parent and older half-siblings. This might be parallel with the previous suggestions regarding the introduction of younger half-siblings may increase the tension between biological parent and older half-siblings (Harcourt et al., 2015; Schlomer et al., 2010; Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2021). However, it might be argued that experiencing difficulties in the relationships with parents may have provided a space for half-siblings to develop team relations rather than escalating rivalry among them. Moreover, some of the participants who had more than one younger half-sibling highlighted the positively changed dynamics with their first born younger siblings due to relatively less age differences and increased perceived similarities. In a supportive vein, previous research suggested that higher similarity of sibling dyads may predict the increased closeness and solidarity among them (Myers, 1998; Voorpostel et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the increased sense of partnership, which was influenced by difficulties within family and become prominent via emotional mutuality, was highlighted by the participants. It might be related with former finding that suggested the presence of half-siblings buffered in particular the well-being of stepchildren against the difficulties with stepparents (Evenhouse & Reilly, 2004). Getting through the family difficulties together and familial chaos and instability caused by adaptation to remarriage might aid half-siblings to become closer to each other, elevate the feeling of sympathy and be teammates. In addition, one of the participants underlined the remarkable influence of close relationship between her shared parent and stepmother on developing stronger and supportive relationship with her half-siblings. It looks consistent with the emphasis on the quality of remarried couple relationship as a determinant of the positive relations between other subsystems (Adler-Baeder & Higginbotham, 2004; Jensen & Howard, 2015). Thus, it might be suggested that closeness among remarried partners provides a space for half-siblings to develop more dyadic relations.

Some of the discussed previous research above were the results of full-sibling studies, since there is a scarcity of research regarding the quality of half-

siblingship. Taken together, on the basis of the participants' experiences, the present study may reflect that half-siblings establish and develop their relationship in a similar way with full-siblings during childhood and adolescence. Seemingly, this is consistent with the findings which showed that full-sibling and half-sibling relationship dynamics were highly alike (Anderson, 1999; Ganong & Coleman, 1994; Khan et al., 2020). Having said that, it is also important to recognize that half-siblingship can involve different dynamics as well, such as the prevalence of larger age differences and the influence of family transitions. While age differences might be related with the positioning as parent and child rather than siblings at earlier stages, the context of Turkey seems to considerably contribute to that kind of hierarchical relations as in full-siblings (Aytaç Bakkaloğlu, 2021; Sirman, 2014). This might be highly important when being the older or younger sibling connotes being mutual or step child of the blended family. Although prior work suggested the presence of default disadvantages both of being a stepchild (Halpern-Meehin & Tach, 2008; Sweeney, 2010) and a shared child (Harcourt et al., 2015; Strow & Strow, 2008) of blended families that may impair the siblingship quality among those dyads, it seems that half-sibling pairs in the present study succeed to establish solid relations and evolve them into a relationship where mutuality can grow.

4.1.2. Increasing belongingness

Within the theme of increasing belongingness, regarding half-siblings as similar to full-siblings, the participants declared they did not have any sense of distinction whether their half-siblings are biological or step. It is contrary to previous studies which especially focused on genetic relatedness among half-siblings, suggested the lowered investment among those dyads (Pollet, 2007; Steinbach & Hank, 2018), and decreased sense of belongingness in the presence of half-siblings (Aslantürk & Kaya Kılıç, 2020). Many of the former theories and research pointed out the vital role of co-residence of half-siblings to establish closer and more sibling-like relations (Bressan et al., 2009; Gyuris et al., 2020).

Consistent with this, the participants mainly highlighted the importance of growing up together, and shared experiences and difficulties in developing siblingship where there is no place for discrimination. They also made prominent the effect of increased sharing by comparing their less close feelings towards their non-resident half-siblings. Moreover, some of the participants mentioned the positive effect of perceived differences among stepparent and half-siblings or full-sibling pairs. This might be consistent with prior finding which indicated the importance of sharing and sense of closeness when the cues regarding genetic similarity were not present (Bressan et al., 2009). Notably, although biosocial perspective offered the significance of co-residence especially regarding to maternal-perinatal association (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015), a majority of the present study's participants were paternal half-siblings. Thus, it might be suggested that regardless of whether the shared parent is either mother or father, apparently increased shared time and experiences outweigh the degree of biological relation for the relationship of half-siblings. Supportively, two of the participants who indicated increased closeness with their full-siblings over time compared to half-siblings addressed this situation to the effect of their higher amount of shared experiences with full-siblings.

The participants described a higher sense of normalcy with regard to perceiving their family structure and half-siblings as siblings. However, they indicated that they realized their differences through the lens of others and many of the people from their social circle had prejudices and held stereotypes. Thus, they were expected to be hostile and/or distant to not only their half-siblings, but also every member of their families. In these situations, most of the participants expressed increased protection towards their siblings and described how they defend their strong ties. It seems that being protective is a prominent aspect through the development of half-sibling relations. At this point, when building a sibling relation and increasing belongingness among half-siblings are considered together, one might argue that such protection could resemble the processes of Minority Identity Development Model (Atkinson et al., 1979). Since half-sibling pairs perceived their families and sibling constellation as normal until they start to

receive comments regarding their differences, such awareness may lead them to think of themselves as a kind of minority within the society of Turkey, as in the second stage that named as Encounter within the model (Atkinson et al., 1979). As a result, similar to the third stage of Immersion, half-siblings may have internalized and defended their own familial values and protected their half-siblings rather than conform to the expectations of the majority. Over time, individuals of minority are expected to internalize their positions, values and be willing to present and express them freely (Atkinson et al., 1979; Spiegler et al., 2019). Consistent with this, the participants reported how they needed to explain their closeness with their half-siblings as well as the intact blended family relations they have.

Moreover, some of the participants indicated how often they heard the arguments regarding whether maternal or paternal half-siblings are step on the basis of cultural effect. It might be suggested that each of them serves for the purposes of each parties to enhance the sense of belongingness between sibling pairs. The participants in the present study agreed on the prevalent saying that validates paternal half-siblings as ‘real’ siblings mainly due to the effect of patriarchy. However, the participants rejected this one-sided and conservative approach by embracing their siblings regardless of the parental differences to a large extent. Arpacı and Tokyürek (2012) indicated that male participants presented significantly softer attitudes towards remarriage and having a child from remarriage, and indicated that it would be welcomed in Turkey compared to female participants. Thus, it might be suggested that men in Turkey are indeed under less pressure regarding these subjects as a reflection of society’s readily accepting attitude towards them. Although the participants did not agree with such distinction regarding maternal or paternal half-siblingship, since the participants of the current study were generally paternal half-siblings it might be argued that they may have internalized the normalcy of being paternal half-sibling and were more willing to share their experiences. Nonetheless, the dominance of such cultural effect might also be due to the fact that most of the participants in the present study were paternal half-siblings. In any case, it seems that contextual

influence of Turkey may contribute to feelings of belongingness depending on the gender of the common parent.

Furthermore, some of the participants indicated the considerable effect of their extended family's attitude and the prevalence of half-siblings on perceiving them readily as siblings. They described the normalcy of close sibling relations that are independent from the degree of biological ties. This seems in line with the accepting approach towards siblingship within collectivistic cultures and how these attitudes can facilitate one's acceptance of their half and/or step siblings (Kumar et al., 2015).

The participants expressed the importance of both of the shared parents and stepparents' uniting attitude on increased sense of belongingness towards their half-siblings as well. Such attitudes seemingly facilitated the reformation process of the blended family as a whole as well as establishing a basis for half-siblings to develop connection. Consistent with this, previous studies indicated the unifying attitude of remarried partners towards half-siblings as one of the most prioritized tasks in family transitions (Cartwright, 2008) and the positive effect of effort by remarried couples to support the adaptation of family and half-sibling relations (Demirci, 2015). Furthermore, the participants highlighted the key role of uncommon parent's warm and non-discriminative attitude towards developing positive half-siblingship. Some of the older half-siblings indicated the vitality of stepparents' such treatment, even though they have not experienced it. This seems parallel with the previous findings which indicated stepparents' effort to not discriminate the mutual children and stepchildren from each other in Turkey (Demirci, 2015). Apparently, this is consistent with the former findings regarding the utmost importance of intact and positive relations between stepparent and stepchild pairs in order to sustain functional blended family relations as well as sibling relations (Adler-Baeder & Higgenbotham, 2004; Dupuis, 2010; Jensen & Howard, 2015).

Moreover, in addition to the role of the uncommon parent, the participants indicated the effective role of motherhood in general. These participants described the positive influence of uncommon parent's mother-like approach, responsibility

regarding household organization and supportive attitude towards sibling relations. This contradicts with the former finding regarding distant and problematic relations among stepmother-stepchild pairs, when half-siblings are present (Santrock & Sitterle, 1987). Some of the older half-siblings highlighted the boosting effect of close relationships with stepmothers, even closer than with their birth mothers, on half-sibling relations. Similarly, younger half-siblings described more warmth towards their half-siblings when they established close a relationship with their mothers. While prominence of motherhood might be due to the fact that most of the participants were paternal half-siblings and the mother was uncommon parent, either way it seemed that the mothering role contributed to adaptation of half-siblings as well as perceiving higher quality of relationship among siblings.

Gosselin and Gosselin (2016) reported that stepmothers of blended families showed well-adjustment to family structure and high quality and satisfaction of mothering towards both of their biological and stepchildren. Moreover, they indicated that the presence of stepchildren enhanced these aspects. Thus, findings of the present study might be consistent with reflections of these uncommon parents as well. It may also be suggested that stepmothers of blended families might have maternal characteristics which in turn facilitate their decision to marry men with children. Furthermore, Ataca and Sunar (1999) indicated that although such roles are evolving with the effect of modernization, women are more likely to take responsibility of childcare. Hançer (2018) highlighted that full-time motherhood, expectancy from women to form their identity based on being a mother, and pressure to be the perfect caregiver are still being promoted by society and to some extent politically both throughout the world and in Turkey. Consistent with these, the participants generally reported less involvement of their fathers with childcare support, and in turn, less influence on sibling relations. Some of the participants expressed that their fathers' motivation to remarry was finding a mother to their children and confided them to their stepmothers. Thus, one might argue that societal norms regarding motherhood in Turkey could have

shaped both the stepmother's understanding of mothering and half-siblings' expectancies from the mother as a caregiver.

To sum up, half-siblings mainly developed and sustained their relationship without experiencing no sense of difference of biological relatedness and described their relations as similar to having full-siblings. Indeed, they established their relations on the ground of shared history together. Their experiences look consistent with the indication of Sirman (2014), arguing that kinship anthropologically means having something in common as a group rather than solely sharing genes. Arguably, such effect might be the result of a majority of the participants having no full-sibling at all. However, it could be suggested that despite perceived differences, half-siblings described a sibling relation in which they belong with each other. As a unique and different aspect of their sibling relations, half-siblings indicated the prominent feature of uncommon parents' connective attitude to establish stronger sibling ties. Perceived non-discrimination of uncommon parent may boost the sense of normalcy and belongingness. Nonetheless, younger half-siblings referred to their birth mothers by emphasizing the importance of non-biological parent. Moreover, cultural beliefs, societal and gender-related norms regarding remarriage, having half-siblings and motherhood are highly shaping the relationship quality and dynamics among half-siblings in Turkey, which is parallel with the former emphasis on the possible cross-cultural effect on these relations (McGuire & Shanahan, 2010).

4.1.3. Experiencing ruptures

Within experiencing ruptures theme, some of the participants described how they or their half-siblings had problems with their uncommon parent in terms of maltreatment, conflicts and differential treatment. Stepparents' differential approach to older half-siblings had a detrimental effect on half-sibling relations. These findings are parallel with previous findings on increased negativity within stepparent-stepchild relations following the birth of half-siblings (Ganong & Coleman, 1993; Santrock & Sitterle, 1987) and increased possibility of unequal

treatment within blended families (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015; Mekos et al., 1996), which damaged the quality of half-siblingship (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015; O'Connor et al., 2006). On the other hand, some of the older half-siblings described that favoring by uncommon parent was perceived as a positive and/or neutral attitude of stepparent rather than a negative one. However, one of them indicated that although she did not experience such treatment, her half-brother protested it by sensing the discrimination. These reports may underline the subjectivity of perceiving differential treatment depending on being biological or step child of the uncommon parent. Such perception differences might stem from the unique characteristics of blended families as Cherlin (1978) described as “incomplete institutionalization” (p. 636) in his prior work. As a result of being an incomplete institution, expected roles and attitudes among stepparent-stepchild might lead to more complex relations. In turn, stepchildren may expect more warmth and less interference from their stepparents, whereas stepparents feel less entitled to interfere (Robertson, 2008) and need more effort to show they do not discriminate. However, it seems that such incompleteness might lead younger half-siblings to perceive increased inequality and resentment which deteriorates the quality of half-siblingship.

Moreover, two of the participants underlined the devastating effect of the stepmother on their psychological health. For one of them, it was directly a result of stepmother's abusive behavior towards her and her full-sibling, whereas the other participant described more complex relations with her stepmother. This seems consistent with prior work that suggested increased vulnerability of stepchildren of blended families in terms of different aspects of well-being (Evenhouse & Reilly, 2004; Sweeney, 2010). These participants' ages were relatively older during family transition process and their half-siblings were introduced relatively at earlier stages of that transition. In a supporting vein, prior research suggested that family transitions were experienced at more negative intensity during puberty (Hill et al., 2001), re-adjustment of the blended families need time to establish balance (Booth, 1992; Dupuis, 2007; Dupuis 2010), and having younger half-siblings in initial phases of remarriage was related with

decreased quality of half-siblingship (Bernstein, 1997). Therefore, it might be suggested that all of these mechanisms may have interrelatedly diminished the sense of both individual well-being and closeness with half-siblings. Furthermore, these participants also added that since their full-siblings relations are exempt from the interruption of stepparent, they indicated higher closeness with them compared to their half-siblings. Former findings highlighted that higher relationship quality with biological and stepparents was related with stronger blended family ties for adolescent half-siblings and having full-siblings within the household had a positive effect on it (King et al., 2015). Putting this together, it might be argued that positive relations with parental subsystem outweigh the presence of and relations with full-siblings in developing warmer half-sibling relations.

Furthermore, some of the participants highlighted that their shared parents' unequal treatment, favoritism, conflictual relationship with one of the half-siblings and unsupportive approach towards sibling relations interrupted the half-sibling relations and created conflicts, inner hostility and/or distance to half-siblings as well as feeling of resentment to their parents. This supports the previous suggestions of having warm relationships with both common and uncommon parent as being positively effective on perceiving good familial relationships (King et al., 2015) and the high influence of one's and half-sibling's relationship quality with common parent (Baham et al., 2008) even through adult half-sibling relations (Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2021). Two of the participants who were younger half-siblings emphasized the key role of shared parent during family transition process and on strengthening half-sibling ties. One of them underlined the negative reflection of common parent on family as a whole from the beginning and in particular half-sibling relations by having overly close relationship with her older half-sister, not establishing a ground for stepmother and stepchildren to develop closer relationships and making an overt distinction between the first and the second families. This seems compatible with the previous suggestions of pre-existing relationship dynamics within common parent and older half-sibling dyads (Dupuis, 2007; Visher & Visher, 2003) could make

coalitions and this, in turn, may impair the boundaries between subsystems and create chaos within subsystems (Coleman et al., 2000; Dupuis, 2007; Dupuis, 2010).

These findings put forward the key role of cementing the blended family members together initially as well as their function as a bridge between closeness of stepparent-stepchild dyad which was previously indicated as an important aspect of enhancing the quality of half-siblingship. Additionally, one of those participants described the relational ups and downs between her older half-brother and common parent which was negatively perceived by her. This could imply the consideration of predictable and balanced relationship among parents and children of the blended families as well as not spilling over the dyadic problems to other family members. Together, these findings present the possible risks of being shared children (i.e. younger half-siblings) of blended families for sustaining positive sibling relations as some of the former studies emphasized (Dupuis, 2010; Halpern-Meekin & Tach, 2008) and supported the previous work regarding differential parental treatment which is engraved on one's mind (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015).

Moreover, three of the participants indicated ruptures in half-sibling relations following the death of their common parent. They expressed decreased contact and connection between half-siblings to different extents. This finding contradicts with the prior studies among full-siblings which presented increased amount of contact and support between siblings after losing one of their parents as well as collaborative attitude towards the other parent who lost their spouses (Kalmijn & Leopold, 2018). These findings may be argued by different terms. Firstly, it might suggest that not only the support and equal approach of the shared parents is connective for half-sibling relations, but also their presence itself is important. Since the surviving parent is uncommon parent for half-siblings, their different level of closeness with uncommon parent could decrease the possibility of solidarity among half-siblings to help and support that parent. Supportively, two of these participants reported negative relationships with their uncommon parents, whereas one of them expressed that her older half-brother and their

uncommon parent co-resided for only three years which might be inadequate to form a solid relationship. Secondly, Kalmijn and Leopold (2018) excluded full-siblings who experienced the loss of their parents before age 30 from their study, so it remained unknown that support of the siblings would be different whether they experienced grief at those ages. In the present study, all of these participants' common parents passed away before they were 30. Thus, losing a parent at relatively younger ages might deteriorate individuals' own mental well-being more negatively and lead to isolation from social networks, including with half-siblings.

Furthermore, some of the participants declared experiencing ruptures of all kinds in their half-sibling (i.e. resident and non-resident half-siblings) relations due to their non-resident parents' discriminative attitude towards their resident half-siblings as well as distant and unsupportive approach towards themselves and their non-resident half-siblings. This might be due to problematic and tense relationships between resident and non-resident parents following divorce, and decreased willingness and sources of non-resident parents to support children from their first marriage as previous work highlighted (Blackwell & Dawe, 2003; Pryor, 2008). At this point, gender of the non-resident parent might also have considerable place to interpret these dynamics. In the present study, the participants indicated that their non-resident parents who were their biological mothers remarried. One could argue that non-resident mothers may demonstrate difficulties to accept their children co-residing within stepmother families due to the prevalence of stereotypes and myths regarding how evil stepmothers are (Ganong & Coleman, 1997; Kale, 2021; Salwen, 1990) and as a result they might show negative attitudes. In addition, the distant attitude of non-resident mothers towards these relations could stem from perceived negative view of society towards women who get divorced and remarry in the context of Turkey (Arpacı & Tokyürek, 2012; Demirci, 2015). This might increase the burden of non-resident mothers which may result in poorer management of familial transition and reduced involvement with their children from their previous marriage. However, all of these participants indicated that although such attitudes of their non-resident

mothers ruptured their half-sibling relations at some level, it did not change their connection with their resident half-siblings in the long run. This could imply that lack of non-resident parent support might increase the participants' feeling of belongingness with their blended families and consolidated their relations with their resident half-siblings.

Moreover, some of the participants indicated the interruptive effect of different external family members on half-siblingship. These attitudes of extended family members resented the participants and created a distance with their half-siblings. One of these participants described that her older half-brother's wife categorizing her and her mother as stepfamily created a distance within their half-sibling relations. As previously discussed, such tendency of other family members might be the result of existing prejudices towards having step-relations which are expected to be negative and hostile (Claxton-Oldfield, 2008; Claxton-Oldfield & Voyer, 2001; Ganong & Coleman, 1983). This is in line with Adler-Baeder and Higgenbotham's (2004) previous suggestion regarding increased familial difficulties within blended and/or stepfamilies as a result of judgmental approach of others. Furthermore, one of the participants expressed the family members of common parents' tendency to favor half-siblings from previous marriage with the intention to compensate, since these children are living without the presence of one of their biological parents. It seems that this over-sensitive approach of family members regarding family reformation and the absence of one parent were perceived negatively by younger half-siblings and diminished the strong sense of half-siblingship.

Additionally, two of the participants described their concerns about how their family members would respond to them stopping to wear hijab and being a member of LGBTIQ+ community. They expressed that they are perceiving unsupportive attitude from their parents and families, and in turn, they have withdrawn themselves from their half-siblings as well. Previously, Muedini (2018) indicated that the movement of LGBTI in Turkey encountered a wide-range of difficulties including how religious values and middle-eastern culture shaped the view to LGBTI individuals and marginalized them within the society.

Doğan (2016) found that conservatism influences the views towards family structure and family members. The study indicated that individuals who defined themselves as conservative put an emphasis on preserving religious values within their families. Thus, these might present how the societal level influences the familial values and perception of individuals' towards their families when the experienced issues are prone to cultural influence. These, in turn, seem to impact blended family members and eventually half-sibling relations as previously suggested (Dupuis, 2010; McGuire & Shanahan, 2010).

In terms of the dyadic issues, some of the participants highlighted experiencing ruptures with their half-siblings due to perceived differences between their personal characteristics which may lead more rivalry and a sense of distance. They also highlighted that it depends on the number of half-siblings and whether they have more than one half-sibling. It seems that these findings support the previous idea regarding the importance of the characteristic similarity of half-sibling dyads on determining the perceived quality of their relationship (Baham et al., 2008) as well as expected higher closeness among siblings who are more similar to each other (Vogt-Yuan, 2009; Voorpostel et al., 2007). In addition, as Tanskanen and Danielsbacka (2021) offered, higher numbers of half-siblings differ the perceived relationship quality among them. Regarding the findings of the present study, it seems that higher number of siblings may refer to more differences of characteristic features which lead to interruption of higher quality half-siblingship. Moreover, former research revealed that female-female half-siblings establish strong and more supportive relationships (Danielsbacka & Tanskanen, 2015; Pollet, 2007; White & Riedmann, 1992). Consistent with these reports, some of the participants indicated that they would experience an increased sense of connection and perceive overall higher quality of half-sibling relationship if their half-siblings were girls rather than boys. It might be suggested that individuals may need more sense of similarity in terms of gender in order to develop warmer half-siblingships.

Furthermore, some of the participants underlined the interfering effect of past resentments and unresolved issues with their half-siblings. These experienced

ruptures were described as unsolvable conflicts, adverse childhood experiences and half-siblings' personal and psychological difficulties. Although these experiences seemingly did not diminish the sense of sibling connection to a large extent, half-siblings expressed dyadic problems regarding these issues. Previous findings suggested that being stuck in past difficulties and blaming attitude during reconciliation process lead unfinished negotiations among siblings (Ross et al., 2006). Moreover, Bouchard and colleagues (2018) found that parents' reconciliatory attitude rather than overbearing approach or uninvolvement towards sibling conflicts in childhood determined the positive conflict resolution among siblings through adulthood. To put together, although the participants described these as ongoing dyadic issues, unresolved conflicts might be the result of lack of proper mediation of parents through sibling problems in childhood. In turn, half-siblings may not be able to negotiate some sort of dyadic difficulties. Further, it was found that traumatic childhood experiences may create a distance in sibling relations as well as leading to escalation of conflicts (Wolfe, 2016). Thus, half-siblings may experience the difficulties to communicate with each other in a healthy way in the aftermath of a traumatic childhood.

Moreover, some of the participants reported that previously established positions of being older or younger half-siblings may sometimes lead to distance and conflict with their half-siblings due to either burden of the responsibilities or perceived hierarchy by younger half-siblings. In line with the previous studies that revealed the deteriorating effect of sibling caretaking on individual well-being (Namkung et al., 2015), half-siblings seemingly tend to struggle due to their established roles from time to time. Additionally, some of the older half-siblings experienced relational rupture at least for a short period of time, since younger half-siblings have used the step word to define half-sibling relationships or sensing they have such distinction in their minds. Coleman and Ganong (1987) indicated that "the word stepchild usually brings to mind a youngster who is unwanted, unloved, neglected, or mistreated" (p.30) (as cited in Claxton-Oldfield, 2008). Thus, older half-siblings might be more sensitive and vigilant towards the

word of step and being perceived as step, and sense of such discrimination may negatively impact their sense of connection with half-siblings.

By describing a sense of distance, a majority of the participants reported that by being physically apart from each other, they also experienced emotional distance and their contact with each other decreased. This is in line with previous findings of Danielsbacka and Tanskanen (2015). However, although the participants mainly experienced ruptures in their relations with half-siblings, based on the accounts of the participants, it seemed that these interruptions' intensities and durations were shaped by the pre-existing unresolved issues and sense of connection. Thus, for some participants it was just a transitional process for them to get through, while for some of them it initiated the overall decrease in their contact and closeness. Moreover, these participants also reported that either themselves or their half-siblings' having an alternative support network via marriage or close friendship also interrupted their relations and created somewhat emotional distance among them. Joseph (2021) indicated that marriage of one of the siblings might rupture siblingship and fall each sibling apart. He also added that patriarchy may increase such effect especially when male siblings got married by increasing tension between in-laws and sisters by presenting a case study from an Arab family. This may be similar with the findings of the current study. Some of the female participants expressed their problematic relationships with in-laws by indicating their older half-brothers' changed attitudes following marriage. Therefore, cultural expectations and attributed roles from wives and husbands may change their relational dynamics with the origin families.

In sum, half-siblings described how lack of family members' support and unresolved issues in childhood and adolescence shaped their dynamics negatively. They mainly expressed the adverse effect of unequal treatment and poorly-managed family transition processes. Apparently, while uncommon parent's positive attitude was more prominent on positively influencing half-sibling relations and sense of family belongingness, both of the common parent and uncommon parent were drawn attention to by the participants with regard to their rupturing effect. Common parent seemingly had a more critical role on supporting

family adjustment which in turn impact the perceived quality of half-siblingship. On the other side, both of the common and uncommon parents' perceived differential treatments and negative attitudes were detrimental for half-siblingship experience. Negative familial and dyadic experiences in younger ages may have a potential diminishing effect on half-sibling relations in adulthood. In addition, physical distance and changes in social network interfere with the quality of half-sibling relationship to different extents which might depend upon the way of perceiving and processing both previous and current negative experiences among half-sibling pairs.

4.1.4. Maintaining the sibling relationship

In terms of the maintaining the sibling relationship, a majority of the participants indicated the positive effect of maturation in their half-siblingship experience. They expressed the deep and positive meaning of siblingship and highlighted that they need their half-siblings through changing individual roles such as becoming a wife and parent. In turn, they shifted their support type with regard to these roles. Previous research highlighted the sibling relations' evolution as a life-long companionship and how siblings support each other through important life transitions such as giving birth and raising kids (Connidis, 1992, as cited in Cicirelli, 1995). It seems that half-siblings are pleased to accompany each other through new experiences and continuing their relationship through adulthood phase, and report that sustaining such interactions make them feel supported and increase the sense of connection among them. This also supports the previous emphasis on the vitality of sibling relations in adulthood and siblings' tendency to stay as an important source of support for each other, increased need for siblings through the difficulties of life and perceiving siblings as a cure for loneliness (Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2021; Milevsky, 2005; Steinbach & Hank, 2018).

Moreover, half-siblings expressed their effort to sustain communication and being a part of each other's lives. Some of them made an effort to contact

with each other on a regular basis, some of them worked on their past issues to leave the problems behind, and some of them enjoyed carrying their positively established and experienced dynamics from childhood to adulthood. It appears that although half-siblings experienced ruptures in their relations, they demonstrated willingness to catch up and develop fondness to each other. This supports the former suggestions regarding the effect of geographical distance which showed that half-siblings developed a higher sense of connection when they had physical distance (Steinbach & Hank, 2018; White & Riedmann, 1992) and siblings have an overall tendency to contact with each other (Buchanan, 2021). Cicirelli (1995) indicated that activities and sharing which remind sibling pairs their childhood and old times are a positive aspect of adult siblingship. Similarly, half-siblings may also remember the positive aspects of their identities and relations by maintaining their contact and supporting each other.

Further, half-siblings also indicated the contributing effect of empathizing with each other, improvement of their communication, enhanced reconciliation skills when encountered with problems and perceiving the strengthening effect of past conflicts on sustaining positive half-sibling relations. As previous findings showed, female half-siblings had increasing empathy towards their siblings over time which was positively perceived by their siblings (Anderson, 1999). Since a majority of the participants were females in the present study, the prominence of empathy might be related with this. Empathizing with siblings' feelings and experiences especially regarding difficulties might alleviate feelings of past resentment and motivate half-sibling pairs to keep in touch with each other. Moreover, Cicirelli (1995) indicated that siblings' constructing a language in common while they were living together positively impacted the communication of sibling pairs when they have grown up. Thus, it might be suggested that half-siblings may be more willing to share things, especially their difficulties with their half-siblings in adulthood, since they have common language and an increased sense of familiarity with them. In turn, half-siblings may become a safe space for one to ask for support and mutual sharing. In addition, the findings regarding increased conflict resolution seems consistent with the previous work which

suggested that adult siblings attempt to repair ruptures and conflictual dynamics in adulthood (Ross & Milgram, 1982) and recognize positive influence of childhood sibling conflicts on individuals and sibling relations in the adulthood phase (Bedford et al., 2000).

Taken together, in spite of the experienced difficulties and past wounds, half-siblings generally attribute important meaning and value to their siblingship. They make an effort to not only to maintain contact with each other, but also to improve their quality of relationship over time.

4.2. CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

One of the main goals of the present study was to offer clinical implications regarding the area of blended families with specifically considering half-sibling relations in Turkey. The development and meaning of half-siblingship was deeply explored by examining the establishment of dyadic relations, the effect of blended family members and context on these relations as well as how half-siblingship changed by time. The current study presented both the similarity and uniqueness of half-sibling relations with regard to overall sibling relationships, strengthening and deteriorating influence of family transition and the effect of negative perception in the Turkey context regarding having step relations and half-siblings.

With consideration of these in mind, firstly it might be suggested that clinicians and family therapists are in need to be informed about unique features of half-siblings and blended families. Papernow (2008) highlighted the importance of knowledge, soft and empathizing approach of clinicians as well as acknowledging cultural effect (Bray, 2005) when working with complex family structures. Therefore, clinical psychologists, family therapists, family counselors who work in Ministry of Family and Social Policies in Turkey could be educated and informed in order to increase their clinical assessment and intervention skills and establish a rapport with family members when working with these clients. On the basis of the findings of the present study, this education may involve the

following: learning the nature of half-siblingship and its positive and negative aspects on sibling relationships as well as individual well-being; the influence of the roles and attitudes of common and uncommon parents on increasing family belongingness and enhancing positive sibling relations; cultural views on being step and paternal/maternal half-siblings; different disadvantages of being step and mutual children of blended families.

Secondly, Bray (2005) put an emphasis on the consideration of psychoeducation for stepfamilies. He suggested that although psychoeducation would be more preventive when it is delivered to couples who decide to remarry, stepfamilies can considerably benefit from psychoeducation in any stage since family transitions are difficult to experience. Psychoeducation can also be helpful in blended families who are making an effort to re-adjust and experiencing problems among sibling dyads, partners (parent-stepparent) and (step) parent-children. According to results of the present study, it may be comforting for these members to know that stepchildren and mutual children (i.e. half-siblings) of these families are able to weld very well together and develop long-lasting relationships. Therefore, parents and stepparents' balanced and supportive approach (Cartwright, 2008) towards the relationship of half-siblings rather than over-protective or dismissing attitude can be taught.

Moreover, blended family members may feel pressure about establishing close and strong ties as soon as possible which may result in disappointment and tiredness (Coleman & Ganong, 2017). Thus, in addition to this information, experiencing problems and requirement of time to process and adjust to a new beginning can be normalized. Since the importance of maintaining the balance across boundaries of the families is revealed as an important aspect especially in terms of providing a ground for developing stronger intrafamilial relations, remarried partners may be informed and encouraged towards establishing and maintaining a solid and close partnership (Cartwright, 2008; Dupuis, 2010; Hetherington, 1999).

In terms of the therapeutic support, intervening strategies and further prevention work, the current study presented different disadvantages and

vulnerabilities of being older and younger half-siblings. Older half-siblings might be more prone to suffer through family adaptation since they witness divorce, remarriage, and the introduction of half-siblings which are important transitions in one's life (Coleman & Ganong, 2017). Consistent with previous findings, older half-siblings demonstrated familial re-adjustment difficulties especially when they were adolescents when their parents remarried (Hill et al., 2001) and/or younger half-sibling was introduced through earlier stages of remarriage (Bernstein, 1997). For those children and adolescents, preventive work could be prepared and presented by clinicians in this field. Since stepparental maltreatment could be a subject of issue, family therapists might tentatively assess the stepparent-stepchild dynamics to prevent familial ruptures and intervene if necessary. In addition, in some cases, non-resident biological parents of older half-siblings interfered by presenting a negative attitude and an unsupportive approach towards the presence of their half-siblings and other blended family members. This is another difficulty faced by older half-siblings. Thus, relations with non-resident parents should not be disregarded and their quality needs to be assessed properly as well as setting clear and healthy boundaries between those households (Papernow, 2008). If there is a chance, non-resident parent could be a support network (Hetherington, 1999) and a part of this transition. These would alleviate the difficulties of familial adaptation.

Moreover, older half-siblings showed greater aversion and sensitivity to hear the step word. These can inform clinicians in advance to understand and support the difficulties of older half-siblings and they may approach these clients by using proper language which could facilitate the joining to the family. For example, some older half-siblings call their stepparent as mother, while some of them call them by their name. In sum, providing a space for them to understand these complex relations in their mind, hearing their experiences by avoiding discriminative language and approaching accordingly could aid their difficulties through family transition.

On the other side, younger half-siblings reported struggles about recognizing and learning about the parental difference with their half-siblings,

expressed confusion, and experienced difficulties regarding their older half-siblings having a different parent and a different family life outside the house. Therefore, parents of blended families need to be informed with regard to how to disclose and communicate this difference properly and not avoiding and postponing this topic to prevent future adversity for younger ones. Further, psychological support may be needed to help individual well-being of younger half-siblings as well as to maintain higher quality of half-siblingship. Younger half-siblings described somewhat a sense of loss and alienation or unacceptance, so it would be beneficial for accompanying them and talking about this difficult feeling as a whole family. Moreover, younger half-siblings may experience feelings of left out and lack of belongingness due to pre-existing closeness among common parents and their older children. In contrast, they could suffer from the ongoing tension among those dyads which may increase their burdens while they are growing up. Such asymmetrical relations might be intervened to establish a balance within inter-systems boundaries.

Moreover, hierarchically established roles through developing half-sibling relations might sometimes be experienced as increased burden and difficulties among half-sibling dyads. Family therapists may need to consider these roles, while especially working with (half) sibling subsystems. Establishing a balance between sibling caretaking and caregiving roles might prevent the excessive burdens to be shouldered and aid them to sustain more nourishing relationships. Another alternative for this might be play therapy with half-siblings since the findings of the present study demonstrated that playing together with half-siblings helped them to establish a more dyadic connection. Therefore, regardless of their larger age differences, half-siblings may benefit from play therapy together.

It was underlined that developing and working on interpersonal skills are important in blended families (Papernow, 2008), in particular, enhancing skills of communication, problem solving and parenting (Bray, 2005). The present study showed that common parents, who were mostly fathers in the present study, have a critical role in family adjustment. They were mostly described as either uninvolved with the children's relations or over-involved. Therefore, while

working with blended families within a clinical context, it might be important to support common parents to take more responsibility and get involved with sibling relations in a positive and more balanced manner. In addition, half-siblings reported the lack of well-managed reconciliation skills of the parents. Teaching common parents conflict resolution skills as well as encouraging fathers to take an active role during and following family re-formation process might considerably increase the quality of the relationship among half-siblings and blended family members which positively impact overall well-being of these families. Moreover, providing an open environment for every member of the family to express their difficulties, concerns, feelings and experiences would be crucial as well by increasing their communication skills. This, in turn, may decrease the likelihood of unresolved issues which were carried through one's life and impact not only sibling relations, but also a wide range of social relations. In addition to these, blended families may benefit from interventions and tools of narrative therapy. These interventions and tools might aim to deeply understand the perspectives of parents particularly in terms of how they narrate their previous marriages to their children from first and second marriages, how they explain and make a sense of previous difficulties would have utmost importance since divorce and separation might include unpleasant experiences which could be difficult to tell children. In turn, members of the blended families can re-build their own family stories and construct more coherent narratives regarding their past, present and future (Freedman, 2014).

Furthermore, the unifying role uncommon parent, who were mostly (step)mothers in the present study, was revealed as a prominent aspect of half-sibling relations. Uniting and positive attitude and approach of the uncommon parent seemingly was a protective factor against difficulties regarding family belongingness, adaptation and problems of half-siblingship. Clinicians may benefit from this information and work to enhance it. However, at this point, stepparents, especially stepmothers, possibly encounter difficulties due to increased stigma (Claxton-Oldfield, 2008; Kale, 2021), which may lead them to experience incompetency and additional stress as caregivers. Thus, being careful

about their individual well-being and opening them a space to hear stepparental burdens in clinical work could be important as well. Additionally, as previously suggested by Cherlin (1978), all of these roles may lead to confusion and complexity. At this point, the clinical work may need to evolve through embracing the differences which make familial ties even stronger rather than insisting on to sustain traditional family roles.

Lastly, it would be noteworthy to highlight the capacity of half-siblings to develop and sustain higher quality of relations. The findings of the present study demonstrated how meaningful half-siblingship can be and these sibling relations have considerable place in one's life. Half-siblings, in general, described strongly positive and committed relationships. Therefore, one can argue that half-siblings might be each other's safe haven and such strong ties might be protective against individual well-being and the adverse effect of familial experience. Family therapists may benefit from the strength of half-sibling relations while working with blended families by considering this.

4.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

With consideration of scarcity of research regarding the half-sibling relations, specifically in Turkey, the present study contributed to this area of literature and related clinical field by presenting how half-siblings experience the development of their relationship within the context of Turkey and which factors contributed to or diminished the half-sibling relations. However, there were limitations of this study which requires further attention and future work towards this topic.

First of all, a majority of the participants of the current study were paternal half-siblings. In one regard, this might be viewed as a considerable contribution in terms of paternal half-siblings' relational experiences, since studies of half-sibling relationship fundamentally focus on maternal half-siblings due to increased chance of co-residence among them (Schlomer et al., 2010; Tanskanen & Danielsbacka, 2021). Nevertheless, experiences of maternal half-siblings are

crucial as well and ought to be examined in order to deeply understand half-siblingship. Therefore, further research could be conducted by either focusing solely on the experiences of maternal half-siblings or equally weighting the number of maternal and paternal half-siblings.

One of the advantages of the current study was having the same number of older and younger half-siblings (i.e. stepchildren and mutual children of blended families) which allowed exploring the experiences of each side equally. However, these experiences were one-sided. Previous work highlighted half-sibling relations' proneness to be biased depending upon the perceptions of older and younger half-siblings (Anderson, 1999). Thus, future work could examine the perceived quality of half-sibling relationship through exploring the experiences of half-siblings as a dyad. This may allow to grasp the development of half-siblingship dynamics as well as the effect of family members and outer systems as a whole.

In the present study, a majority of the participants did not have any full-siblings, while some of them who had full-siblings compared and contrasted their relations as siblings. Having a chance to compare sibling relations might considerably influence the sense of half-siblingship and connection among them. In addition, in the present study, half of the participants had multiple resident half-siblings while half of them only had one resident half-sibling. Having multiple half-siblings were related with different sibling dynamics and a sense of half-siblingship. Taken together, future work might explore the relationship of half-siblings by taken into consideration the number and constellation of siblings who co-reside within blended families in order to understand the inter-dynamics of siblings and its implications.

Furthermore, the present study showed the importance of the adolescence in terms of its influence on the relational dynamics of half-siblings, family transitions and family re-adjustment. The participants of this study were young adults. However, these findings may imply adolescence as a critical period for the development and maintenance of half-sibling and blended family relations. Therefore, future work could investigate the adolescent half-siblings and their

relational dynamics which may particularly provide enhanced contribution to the clinical implications for understanding the effect of developmental stages within this population and developing advanced prevention programs for the benefit of these children and their families.

Additionally, the participants of the current study mentioned the significance of uniting attitude and unequal treatment both of their biological and step parents. However, these attitudes solely reflected the experiences of each half-sibling pairs. At this point, it could be suggested that parents' previous partnership experiences might have positively and/or negatively shaped their view and way of treatment to their older children, stepchildren and/or mutual children. Thus, it would be reasonable to investigate the experiences of parents of blended families regarding how they perceive and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses on raising their children to provide further understanding on this subject.

Moreover, Turkey's social norms and culture seemingly influence half-siblings and step members both at individual and relational levels in positive and negative ways. It would be beneficial to focus on the perceptions and effect of culture and society as they shape the concept of being step and half, and how blended families are coping with these in the future. Such work may also inform the clinical field to develop further cultural sensitivity and recognition of diversity when working with half-siblings and blended families as well as coping strategies. Additionally, it was also shown that contextual norms regarding gender roles could be effective on perceiving the quality of half-siblingship. A majority of the participants in the current study were females and had male half-siblings. Further studies may give attention to how half-siblingship is developed and maintained across same or different gender constellations.

In addition, co-residence duration of the participants differed from 3 to 22 years ($M = 12,2$) in the present study. The participant who co-resided with her half-sibling for 3 years and very early period described different relational dynamics compared to other participants. Thus, future studies might set their inclusion criteria by extending the duration of co-residence in order to acquire a deeper relational understanding. Lastly, although the advisor and the primary

investigator of this study worked collaboratively to increase trustworthiness, the present data was coded by a single researcher. An additional researcher would enhance the reliability of the current study. Therefore, future work could replicate the results by considering this factor in order to increase reliability and contribute to enhanced understanding of this subject.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to deeply explore how half-siblingship is established and developed, how the family members and context influenced this process and how their relationship is being evolved in the context of Turkey. With this aim, the present study intended to contribute to the research gap within this area as well as aid further clinical implications for this subject, specifically within family therapy field.

Findings showed that half-siblings established sibling relationships which were not generally experienced as different in any sense. However, findings also indicated the unique features of half-siblingship. While half-sibling relations are being developed, half-siblings are influenced by the differences of blended family dynamics and their ages. Half-siblings tend to establish a hierarchical relationship on the basis of these factors and evolve their relations as more equal and mutual relations to some extent over time. These hierarchical half-siblingship relations are mainly defined as a parent-child relationship. Generally, these positions increase the sense of connection and supportiveness among them.

Establishing and developing half-sibling relations are fundamentally and positively influenced by shared history among them rather than biological ties. Half-siblings commonly do not experience any sense of distinction for each other regarding being biological or step and express increased sense of family belongingness. Indeed, such discrimination is perceived by other individuals' reaction which seems to be mainly shaped by stigmas and stereotypes regarding remarriage and step relations as well as patriarchal culture of Turkey. Broadly, half-siblings present increased sense of protection and responsibility towards each other in response to this and demonstrate possessiveness towards each other. Moreover, this higher sense of belongingness is supported by the parents' unifying approach, in particular, by the uncommon parent's non-discriminative and positive attitude.

On the other hand, half-siblingship may be more prone to experience some difficulties due to being either stepchildren or mutual children of blended families.

Half-siblings suffer from the lack of adequate familial support, mismanagement of family transitions, differential parental treatment by common and uncommon parents as well as having to deal with the external world's judgmental approach to them. In addition to this, different dyadic characteristics among them create sibling conflicts and problems. These factors interrelatedly influence the perceived quality of half-siblingship especially by leading to unresolved issues among half-sibling pairs.

Throughout adulthood, half-siblings pursue different life directions as a part of natural life cycle. On the basis of these past issues in addition to increased geographical distance, half-siblings encounter with the choices of maintaining distant relations or sustaining their communication. It seems that previously established emotional connection, the degree of ruptures and unresolved issues and mutual effort influence these choices. In general, in spite of the experienced interruptions within their relations, half-siblings value their sibling's place within their lives and show greater effort to work on past and current issues to maintain their relations as they become more mature.

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Bilgilendirilmiş Onam Formu

Araştırmayı Destekleyen Kurum:	İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi
Araştırmanın Adı:	Annesi ya da Babası Bir Olan Kardeşlerin İlişki Gelişimini Keşfetmek: Türkiye’de Nitel Bir Araştırma
Araştırmacının Adı:	Hande Kırhan
Araştırmacının E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:
Araştırmanın Danışmanı:	Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anıl Özge Üstünel Balcı
Danışmanın E-mail Adresi ve Telefonu:

Bu araştırma, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans Programı öğrencisi Hande Kırhan tarafından Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Anıl Özge Üstünel Balcı danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, annesi ya da babası bir olan kardeşlerin birbirleriyle olan ilişkilerini ve bu ilişkiyi nasıl deneyimlediklerini anlayabilmektir. Araştırmanın annesi ya da babası bir olan kardeş ilişkilerini ve bu ilişkileri içeren aileleri desteklemeye yönelik uygulama ve ruh sağlığı çalışmalarına katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Bu araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde, yaklaşık 60-90 dakika sürecek bir görüşmeye katılmanız beklenecektir. Bu görüşmede, kardeşinizle/kardeşlerinizle aynı anneye-farklı babaya ya da aynı babaya-farklı anneye sahip olmaya dair duygu ve düşüncelerinizi, bu kardeşinizle/kardeşlerinizle olan ilişkinizdeki deneyimlerinizi öğrenmek için sizden bazı sorulara yanıt vermeniz istenecektir. Yanıtlarınız, sonraki analizlerde kullanılmak üzere ses kaydına alınacaktır.

Bu araştırma bilimsel bir amaçla yapılmakta ve katılımcıların kişisel bilgilerinin gizliliği esas alınmaktadır. Ses kayıtları araştırma süresince yalnızca araştırmacının ve danışmanın erişimi olan bir harici bellekte muhafaza edilecek, araştırma sona erdiğinde silinecektir. Araştırma bulgularının sunumu ve raporlamasında kişi isimleri kullanılmayacak, bulgular görüşmelerde ifade edilen ortak konuları özetleyecektir. Görüşmede paylaştığınız görüş ve deneyimlerinize ilişkin örnek cümlelere bulguların raporlanmasında yer verilecek, bu cümleler isminizle ilişkilendirilmeden anonim şekilde 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 kaydın durdurulmasını isteyebilirsiniz. Görüşme başlamadan önce, görüşme sırasında veya sonrasında dilediğiniz zaman soru sorabilirsiniz. Katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında herhangi bir sebep göstermeden araştırmadan çekilme hakkına sahipsiniz. Araştırmadan çekildiğiniz durumda verdiğiniz bilgiler değerlendirmeye alınmayacaktır.

Görüşmenizin sonuçları, araştırma sonlandırılmadan önce gözden geçirmeniz için sizinle e-posta yoluyla paylaşılacak ve geri bildiriminiz doğrultusunda gerekli değişiklikler yapılacaktır. Burada amaç, sizin görüşlerinizin ve deneyimlerinizin en doğru şekilde anlaşılmasını sağlamaktır.

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

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum. Bana anlatıları ve yukarıdaki açıklamaları anladım. Çalışmaya katılmayı ve verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.

Katılımcı Adı-Soyadı:	
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Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, yukarıda belirtilen metni ("*Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum. Bana anlatıları ve yukarıdaki açıklamaları anladım. Çalışmaya katılmayı ve verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.*")

e-mail yoluyla araştırmacı Hande Kırhan'a ulaştırabilirsiniz.

Online grşmeler iin:

Arařtırmaya katılmayı kabul ederseniz, yukarıda belirtilen metni (“*Bu alıřmaya tamamen gnll olarak katılıyorum. Bana anlatıları ve yukarıdaki aıklamaları anladım. alıřmaya katılmayı ve verdiđim bilgilerin bilimsel amalı yayınlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum.*”)

e-mail yoluyla arařtırmacı Hande Kırhan’a ulařtırabilirsiniz.

APPENDIX B: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

1. Yaşınız: _____

2. Cinsiyetiniz: _____

3. Eğitim Durumunuz:

İlkokul Ortaokul Lise Lisans Yüksek Lisans

Doktora

4. Çalışıyor musunuz: _____

5. Mesleğiniz: _____

6. Gelir Düzeyiniz:

Düşük Orta-alt Orta Orta-Üst Yüksek

7. Kaç kardeşiniz var: _____

Her bir kardeşiniz için lütfen aşağıdaki bilgileri belirtiniz:

Kardeşinizin yaşı? _____

Kardeşinizin cinsiyeti? _____

Kardeşinizle kan bağıınız?

Aynı anne ve baba Aynı anne Aynı baba Üvey

Kardeşinizle kaç yıl aynı evi paylaştınız? _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Görüşme Soruları

1) Tanışma

-Sizi biraz tanıyabilir miyim? Günlerinizi nasıl geçiriyorsunuz?

-Neleri yapmaktan hoşlanırsınız, neler size iyi gelir?

-Sosyal hayatınız nasıldır, en çok kimlerle vakit geçirirsiniz?

2) Aile hikayesi ve ilişkileri

-Büyüdüğünüz aileyi üç kelimeyle tanımlasanız, nasıl tanımlardınız? (Her kelimeyi tanımlaması ve örnekleme istenir)

-X yıl boyunca anne/baba bir olan kardeşlerinizle aynı evde yaşadığınızı belirtmişsiniz.

- Aileniz kaç kişilikti, kimlerden oluşurdu? Aileniz nasıl oluşmuştu? Ailenizin hikayesini kısaca anlatır mısınız?

3) Anne/baba bir kardeşlik

-Sizin için kardeşlik ne anlama geliyor, üç kelimeyle anlatır mısınız? (Her kelimeyi tanımlaması ve örnekleme istenir)

-Anne/baba bir olan kardeş(ler)inizle olan ilişkinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)e sahip olmak nasıl bir duygu?
- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle ne sıklıkta görüşüp, iletişim kurarsınız?
- Türkiye’de , yaşadığınız çevrede, anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)e sahip olmak sizin için ne anlama geliyor? Nasıl bir deneyim?

4) Destek

-Kardeşlerinizle ilişkide destek almak-vermek deyince aklınıza neler gelir?

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle birbirinize nasıl destek olursunuz?
- Birbirinize destek olduğunuzu hissettiğiniz bir anınızı paylaşabilir misiniz?
- Birbirinize verdiğiniz destek zaman içerisinde nasıl değişti?

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle birbirinize verdiğiniz desteği arttıran/güçlendiren deneyimleriniz oldu mu? Nasıl?

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle birbirinize destek vermede zorlandığınız bir deneyiminiz oldu mu?

- Paylaştığınız tüm bu deneyimlerde, diğer aile üyelerinizin etkisi oldu mu? Nasıl?
- Yaşadığınız çevrenin etkisi oldu mu? Nasıl?

5) Çatışma/Anlaşmazlık

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle nasıl çatışmalarınız olur, nasıl anlaşmazlıklar yaşarsınız?

- Hangi konularda?
- Nasıl çatışırsınız?
- Birbirinizle çatışma/anlaşmazlık yaşadığınız bir anınızı paylaşabilir misiniz?
- Yaşadığınız çatışmalar zaman içerisinde nasıl değişti?

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle yaşadığınız çatışmaların/anlaşmazlıkların arttığı bir dönem oldu mu? Nasıldı?

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle yaşadığınız çatışmaları/anlaşmazlıkları nasıl çözersiniz?

- Paylaştığınız tüm bu deneyimlerde, diğer aile üyelerinizin etkisi oldu mu? Nasıl?
- Yaşadığınız çevrenin etkisi oldu mu? Nasıl?

-Sizce aranızdaki çatışmalar/anlaşmazlıklar, anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle olan ilişkinizi nasıl etkiledi?

6) Duygusal bağ

- Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle aranızdaki duygusal bağı nasıl tanımlarsınız?

- Aranızdaki duygusal bağ nasıl gelişti?
- Aranızdaki duygusal bağı hissettiğiniz bir anınızı paylaşabilir misiniz?
- Aranızdaki duygusal bağ zaman içerisinde nasıl değişti?

-Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle aranızdaki duygusal bağı arttıran/güçlendiren deneyimleriniz oldu mu?

-Anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeş(ler)inizle aranızdaki duygusal bağı zayıflatan deneyimleriniz oldu mu?

- Paylaştığınız tüm bu deneyimlerde, diğer aile üyelerinizin etkisi oldu mu? Nasıl?

➤ Yaşadığımız çevrenin etkisi oldu mu? Nasıl?

7) Sonlandırma

-Genel olarak değerlendirdiğinizde, anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeşlerinizin hayatınıza nasıl etkileri oldu, nasıl rolleri var?

-Gelecekte aranızdaki ilişkiyle ilgili nasıl istekleriniz, umutlarınız var?

-Sizce anne/babanızın bir olduğu kardeşinizle olan ilişkinizin güçlü yanları neler?

-Sizce yarı-kardeş olma deneyiminizi burada paylaşmak nasıldı?

-Sizin eklemek istediğiniz herhangi bir şey var mı?

-Benim sormadığım; ancak sizin söylemenizin önemli olacağını düşündüğünüz bir şey var mı?

APPENDIX D: MEMBER CHECKING E- MAIL CONTENT

Anne ya da baba bir kardeşlerin ilişki deneyimlerine dair yaptığımız çalışmanın bulgularının özeti:

Merhabalar,

Öncelikle, anne ya da baba bir kardeş olma ve bu bağlamda kardeşlik ilişkileri kurma deneyimlerini anlamayı hedefleyen bu çalışmanın bir parçası olduğunuz için tekrar çok teşekkür ederim.

10 katılımcı ile gerçekleştirmiş olduğumuz görüşmelerin sonunda, sizlerin geçmişten bugüne kardeşlik ilişkilerinize dair bireysel deneyimlerinizi, bu ilişkiye etki eden ailevi ve çevresel faktörleri, kardeşlik ilişkilerinizin zaman içerisindeki değişim sürecine yönelik deneyimlerinizi anlamlandırmaya; Türkiye’de bu deneyimleri paylaşan bireyler ve ailelerine katkı sağlayıp, desteklemesine yönelik ulaştığım bilgileri aşağıda özetleyip, sundum. Sizler kendi deneyimlerinizin uzmanı olduğunuz için aşağıda belirtilen bulguların sizlerin deneyimlerini yansıtıp yansıtmadığına dair değerli geri bildirimlerinizi almak üzere sizlerle paylaşmak istiyorum.

Araştırma sürecinin doğası gereği, sonuçları deneyimlerinizi tamamıyla kapsayacak şekilde raporlamam mümkün olmamıştır. Ancak memnuniyetle söyleyebilirim ki, sıklıkla paylaşmış olduğunuz deneyimlerinizden belirli ana başlıklar oluşturabildim. Görüşmelerimiz sonucunda anne ya da baba bir kardeşlik deneyimlerinizi, üçü alt başlıklardan oluşan 4 ana başlık altında şu şekilde topladım:

- Kardeşlik İlişkisi Kurmak
 - Büyük ya da küçük kardeş olmak
 - Takım ruhu
- Artan Aidiyet Hissi
 - “Tüm Kardeşler Gibiyiz”
 - Ebeveynlerin birleştirici tutumu
- İlişkideki Aksamalar
 - Ebeveynlerin ve aile üyelerinin desteğinin eksikliği
 - Uzaklık hissi
 - İkili ilişkideki problemler
- Kardeşlik İlişisini Sürdürmek

Kardeşlik İlişkisi Kurmak

Yaşça büyük ya da küçük kardeş olmakla birlikte kardeşlik ilişkisi kurmaya dair deneyimler farklılıklar gösterebiliyor. Üstlenilen büyük kardeş ve küçük kardeş olma rolleri bazı durumlarda yaştan bağımsız olmakla birlikte, yaş farkları, ebeveynlerin etkisi, ailede yaşanan zorluklar ya da ailenin sunduğu atmosfer, abla-kardeş olmaya dair kişisel inanç ve atıflar gibi faktörler ile birlikte ebeveyn-çocuk, abla-kardeş ya da arkadaş gibi gelişebiliyor. Böylece, bakım veren ve bakım verilen gibi kardeşlik rollerinin benimsenmesini ve ilişkinin bu şekilde gelişip evrilmesine katkı sağlayabiliyor. Büyük kardeşlerin, kardeş sahibi olmaya dair istek ve tutumlarının yanı sıra, ailelerindeki adaptasyon süreçleri de kardeşliğin gelişmesine etki edebiliyor. Birden fazla kardeşe sahip olmak da, bu rolleri etkileyip, her bir kardeşe farklı bağlar kurup geliştirmeyi sağlayabiliyor.

Büyük kardeşler, ya da bu rolü üstlenen kardeşler, çeşitli sorumluluklar alma, rehberlik etme, kardeşlerinin ihtiyaçlarını karşılama eğilimlerinden ve kardeşlik ilişkilerinin ilk gelişiminde bunların etkililiğinden söz etmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte, küçük kardeşlerin de büyümesi, karşılıklı iletişim kurma ve fiziksel yakınlık kurmakla birlikte gelişip artan bir bağdan söz edilmiştir. Çocukluktan ergenliğe, kardeş kıskançlığı ve bir şeyleri paylaşamama gibi anlaşmazlıklardan ve kardeşlerden herhangi birinin ergenlik döneminde olmasının farklı sebepler dolayısıyla kardeşler arasında yaşanan problemleri arttırdığından söz edilmiştir. Ancak genel manada, bu tartışma ve çatışmaların ciddiyet derecesinin azlığına ve zamanla azalma eğilimi gösterdiğine işaret edilmiştir. Bu çatışmaların başlama sebepleri ve çözülme şekillerinin, kardeşlerin büyük-küçük kardeş rolleri, ailenin tutumu ve kişisel özelliklerle alakalı olduğu söylenmiştir. Ayrıca, evde birden fazla kardeş olması durumunda, kardeşler arasında kurulan ilişkilerin farklı olabileceğine ve dolayısıyla aralarındaki çatışmaların ve kurulan yakın bağların derecesinin yaş farkı, aile tutumu vb. sebeplerle farklı olabileceğinin altı çizilmiştir.

Kardeşler yaşla birlikte, biraz daha ikili, bire bir ilişki kurma eğilimlerinden ve bilhassa çeşitli zorluklar ve dışarıdan gelen müdahaleler karşısında bir takım gibi hareket ettiklerinden söz etmişlerdir. Bu birlik/takım gibi hareket etme haline, kardeşlerin birbirlerine olan güvenlerinin artması, birbirinin oyun arkadaşı olma, bağlarının artması, ebeveynlere karşı birlikte hareket etmek için motive olma gibi sebepler katkı sağlamıştır. Tüm bunlarla beraber kardeşlerin

çoğu, aralarında gelişen ortaklık hissini çizmişlerdir. Bu takım/ortak olma halinde, kardeşler birbirlerini dışarıya karşı koruduklarını, ilişkilerinin dış faktörlerden fazla etkilenmediğini, gerektiğinde dayanışma içerisinde olduklarını, ebeveynlerle yaşanan problemlerde arabuluculuk gibi konular üstlendiklerini ifade etmişlerdir.

Artan Aidiyet Hissi

Kardeşler, çoğunlukla, birbirleri arasında özlük-üveylük gibi ayrımlar olmadığını, aile yapılarının ve yalnızca anne ya da yalnızca baba bir kardeşe sahip olmanın doğallığını vurgulamışlardır. Genel anlamda, Türkiye toplumunda boşanmaya, ikinci evliliğe, üvey ebeveynliğe ve yalnızca anne ya da baba bir kardeşe sahip olmaya dair kalıplaşmış yargıların ve negatif tutumların varlığından söz edilmiştir. Bu gibi tepkiler, ailelerinde ya da kendilerinde bir farklılık olduğunun düşünülmesine yol açmakla birlikte, kardeşlerin ve aile hikayelerinin sahiplenilmesini ve birbirlerine karşı korumacı ve destekleyici tutumlarını arttırıcı da bir görev de görmüştür. Kardeşler genel olarak özlük-üveylük ayrımlarının olmaması ve birbirlerine ait hissetme durumunun paylaşılan geçmişle, birlikte büyümekle, ortak yaşantı ve paylaşımlara sahip olmakla oldukça ilişkili olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Bazı durumlarda, anne bir ya da baba bir kardeşe sahip olmaya dair belirli kültürel söylemlerin (örn: baba bir özdür ya da anne bir özdür) etkilerinden de söz edilmekle birlikte, kardeşliğin kan bağının ötesinde bir duygu ve anlamı olduğu vurgulanmıştır.

Ayrıca, birbirini kardeş olarak benimsemeye, hem ortak hem de ortak olmayan ebeveynin birleştirici, ayrımdan uzak ve pozitif tutumlarının olumlu katkılar sağladığı ve ailevi aidiyet hissini geliştirdiği belirtilmiştir. Kardeşler, deneyimleri bu yönde olmadığı durumlarda da bunun anne ya da baba bir kardeşlik ilişkisinin gelişimi açısından önemini vurgulamışlardır. Ek olarak kardeşlerin çoğu, ortak ya da ortak olmayan ebeveyn olması fark etmeksizin, anne rolündeki ebeveyn tutumlarının bu aidiyeti güçlendirmede elzem olduğuna işaret etmişlerdir.

İlişkideki Aksamalar

Kardeşler tarafından, geçmişten bugüne gelen hem ikili dinamikteki zorluklar hem de ebeveyn ve ailenin geçmiş negatif tutumları da kardeşlerin ilişkilerinde uzaklık hissedip, zorluklar yaşamasına sebep olduğu ifade edilmiştir.

Ortak ve/veya ortak olmayan ebeveynlerin geçmişteki ve/veya süregelen kardeşler arasında ayırım yapma, eşit davranmama ve birleştiricilikten uzak tutumlarının, kardeşlerin hem bireysel olarak çeşitli zorluklar yaşamalarına sebep olduğu hem de kardeşlik ilişkilerinin kurulması ve sürdürülmesini zorlaştırdığı belirtilmiştir. Özellikle kardeşlik ilişkilerinin ilk zamanlarının bu bağın ve ilişkinin gelişmesi ve sürdürülmesi açısından kritik olduğu ve ebeveynlerin bu gibi tutumlarının yıkıcı olabildiğinden söz edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda, ebeveynlerin ailenin kurulduğu ve olduğu zamanlardaki bağlayıcı tutumu ve kardeşler arasındaki ebeveyn farklılığının ele alınma ve ifade edilme şeklinde ebeveyn yaklaşımının öneminin altı çizilmiştir.

Ayrıca kardeşler, yaşın artması; üniversiteye gitme, şehir dışına yerleşme, evlilik gibi farklı hayat yollarında ilerleme ile birlikte aralarındaki fiziksel mesafenin de arttığından, bu mesafenin iletişim sıklığını, verilen desteği ve hissedilen bağı da olumsuz yönde etkilediğinden söz etmişlerdir. Ayrıca bu noktada kendilerinin ve/veya kardeşlerinin yaşadıkları çeşitli bireysel zorlukların da etkili olduğunu ve ilişkiyi kopuklaştırdığını ifade etmişlerdir. Büyümek ve farklı hayatlar kurmayla birlikte, kardeşler her birinin hayatında arkadaş ve eş gibi farklı, yeni ve yakın destek mekanizmaları oluşturduğunu, dolayısıyla da hem alınan hem de verilen desteğin ve süregelen ilişkiyle birlikte önceki destek sıklığı ve miktarının bölündüğünü belirtmişlerdir. Bazı kardeşler, büyüme ve geçiş dönemlerinde kardeşlerinden ve/veya kardeşlerinin kendilerinden ihtiyaç duydukları desteğin karşılanmaması gibi durumların da ilişkilerinde aksamalara sebebiyet verdiğini eklemişlerdir. İlişkilerdeki kopukluğun ilerleme şekli ve derecesi, süregelen kardeşlik ilişkileri ve kardeşlerin ikili dinamiklerine göre değişkenlik göstermiştir.

İkili dinamikler açısından, kardeşler arasındaki mizaç/kişilik farklılıklarının anlaşmazlıkları ve kopukları arttırdığı belirtilmiştir. Bazı kardeşler, cinsiyet kimliklerine dair farklılıkların olası ve/veya süregelen bazı negatif etkilerini dile getirmişlerdir. Ayrıca, geçmişte yaşanan zorluk ve problemlerin nasıl ele alınmış ve alınmakta olduğunun etkisinden, bu konulardaki iletişimsizliğin ve/veya bu zorlukların ilişkilerde işlenmemiş olmasının kardeş ilişkilerine olumsuz etkilerinden söz edilmiştir.

Kardeşlik İlişisini Sürdürmek

Kardeşler, yetişkinliğe geçişin ve olgunlaşmanın aynı zamanda pozitif etkilerin olabildiğinden de söz etmişlerdir. Her bir kardeşin hayatlarındaki değişimlerle birlikte, kardeşlik ilişkilerinin, kardeşlerin birbirlerinin hayatlarındaki anlam ve yerinin tekrar düşünülüp, gözden geçirilmesinden ve bu değişimlere adapte olmaya çalışmaktan bahsedilmiştir. Kardeşler büyüyüp değiştikçe, verilen desteklerin çeşit ve şeklinin, paylaşımların içeriğinin de evrildiği; küçüklükte kurulmuş olan ve ilişkilerde memnun olunan bazı dinamiklerin (örneğin, takım olma ve ihtiyaç halinde hemen destek olma) sürdürülebilirliğinden söz edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda, bazı kardeşler olgunlaştıkça daha iyi iletişim kurmaya, yaşanan anlaşmazlıkları daha sağlıklı bir şekilde ele alıp çözmeye, daha çok empati kurmaya başlayabildiklerini de ifade etmişlerdir.

Bu çalışmaya katılımınız ve paylaşımlarınız anne ya da baba bir kardeşe sahip olma deneyimlerini anlamaya destek olacak yeni bilgilerin üretimine ve hem kardeşlerin hem de kardeşlerin birlikte büyüdüğü ailelerin karşılaştığı/karşılaşılabileceği zorluklarda bu anlamda önleyici müdahale uygulamalarının geliştirilmesine katkıda bulunması açısından çok kıymetli. Yorumlarınızı, sorularınızı veya aktaramadığımı ya da kapsayamadığımı düşündüğünüz sizin için önemli olan noktalar var ise bunları duymaktan memnuniyet duyarım.

Her birinize bu çalışmanın gerçekleştirilmesine dair istekliliğiniz, paylaşmış olduğunuz deneyimler ve bu çalışmada bana eşlik ettiğiniz için teşekkür ederim. Sizlerin değerli katılımı, samimi ve içten paylaşımları olmasa bu çalışma gerçekleşemezdi.

Hande Kırhan

ETHICS BOARD APPROVAL

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