Under the Gaze of Patriarchy: Turkish Women Academics’ Narratives of Subjectification and Resistance

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Thesis submitted to the University of Ottawa in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Faculty of Education

University of Ottawa

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Abstract

Patriarchy is a system deeply embedded in cultural, familial, economic, and state structures worldwide, creating power imbalances and inequality (Abalkhail, 2017, 2019; Arat, Z., 2022; Johnson, 2014; Kabeer, 2016; Rezai-Rashti, 2015; Walby, 1989). In Türkiye, the convergence of neoliberal policies, Islamist conservative ideologies, and populist authoritarianism has intensified patriarchal structures (Arat, Z.,2022; Gokay & Aybak, 2023; Kandiyoti, 2016; Uysal, 2019). Despite achieving the highest representation in academia among OECD countries at 45% (World Bank, 2024), women academics continue to encounter patriarchy in various spheres of their lives (Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018; Bülbül, 2021; Tombal, 2023). Within this context, this narrative inquiry strove to capture and reflect the lived experiences of nine women academics with patriarchy across macro, meso, and micro levels.

Informed by (feminist) poststructuralism and drawing upon Foucault's understanding of power, Allen's concept of "power-with, Crenshaw's intersectionality, Marková's intersubjectivity, Arendt's spaces of appearance, and Karam and Afiouni's career success framework, this study addressed three research questions: 1) How does patriarchy manifest within the micro, meso, and macro domains of Turkish women academics' lives? 2) How do Turkish women academics navigate patriarchal power technologies? and 3) How do women academics conceptualise and navigate career success within Türkiye's patriarchal climate? The analysis of participant narratives revealed that at the macro level, patriarchy operated through state-endorsed biopower and patriarchal disciplinary power technologies, which produced gendered regimes of truth. At the meso level, women encountered gendered institutional practices such as motherly expectations, limited mentorship opportunities, exclusionary networks, the imposter phenomenon, and homosocial networking. At the micro level, the family emerged as a primary site of disciplinary power technologies. Additionally, the findings of this study revealed the emergence of various subject positions that women occupied while navigating patriarchal power technologies and discourses.

This study made four key contributions: first, by integrating Allen's power-with, Marková's intersubjectivity, and Arendt's spaces of appearance, it proposed a feminist resistance ecosystem that enables women to resist and subvert patriarchy; second, it extended Karam and Afiouni's career success framework through a values-structure tension model; third, it revealed the mutually constitutive relationship between imposter phenomenon and patriarchy, and fourth, it introduced novel concepts, namely "patriarchtopus", "spatiotemporal resistarity", and "spatiotemporal feminist

bridges". These contributions offer theoretical and practical implications for feminist scholarship and institutional practices in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts.

Keywords: patriarchy, women academics, Turkish higher education, (feminist) poststructuralism, narrative inquiry, power, resistance, intersectionality, intersubjectivity, spaces of appearance, career success.

Dedication

To women who paid the ultimate price in the pursuit of justice and freedom.

And

To those whose stories I may never have the privilege to tell.

You are not forgotten. Your fight is my fight.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation would not exist without the support of so many people who believed in me, challenged me, and carried me through.

To my supervisor, Dr. Richard Maclure:

Thank you for taking a chance on this project, and on me. You pushed me to think more critically, write more clearly, and dig deeper when I thought I had already hit bottom. Your support and trust made this journey bearable.

To my committee members, Dr. Linda Radford, Dr. Luise Von Flotow, and Dr. Diane Patricia Watt:

Thank you for your expertise and your unwavering support. Your feedback has greatly strengthened this work.

To my lovely mother:

Everything I am, I owe to you. You sacrificed so much to give me opportunities you never had. You worked tirelessly and stood up to familial and societal patriarchy to protect our family. You often put your own dreams on hold so that my sisters and I could pursue ours. You were the one who showed me that education was not just a path to a career but a road to liberation. Your wisdom, your strength, and your love are woven into every page of this dissertation. I hope I have made you proud.

To my beautiful sister, Marita:

You have shaped who I am in ways I am still discovering. Thank you for being a source of growth, for being my best friend, and for being the pillar of our family. I owe you for showing me what it means to be strong, brave, generous, and unrelenting. Having you as a sister is one of the greatest gifts of my life.

To Yannick:

My partner, my love, and my home. This dissertation has demanded more of me than I could have imagined, and by extension, it has demanded more of you. You have listened to me talk through ideas, even though the subject was far from your own expertise. I know that loving someone through a

dissertation is not easy. Thank you for your patience, your kindness, and your love. I could not have done this without you, and I would not have wanted to.

To my inner child, to myself:

To the girl who learned what patriarchy meant before she even knew what it was called. Patriarchy tried to make you small, to silence you, and to convince you that you were the second sex. But you refused to break. You grew stronger and more uncompromising where they hoped you would bend. This dissertation is proof that they were wrong. Even when they said that you could not do it, you did. This dissertation is for you, and for the woman she became.

And finally, to Cookie, my faithful furry friend and companion through countless hours of reading, writing, and revision:

Your unconditional love, your insistence on walks when I needed them most, and your warm presence on my lap have been a comfort beyond measure. You reminded me that there is joy and simplicity to be found even in the midst of academic rigour! Good girl! You deserve all the belly rubs and all the beef treats.

This dissertation belongs to all of you!

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Chapter One: Introduction

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf (1929) famously asserted that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write" (p. 4). Nearly a century later, women in Turkish academia appear to have secured both, achieving a remarkable 45% representation in academia, the highest among OECD countries (World Bank, 2024). Yet this numerical parity masks a deeper paradox. Despite their formal inclusion, women[1] academics, regardless of discipline or location, still encounter patriarchy that permeates various spheres of their lives (Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018; Bülbül, 2021; Tombal, 2023).

At the meso level, patriarchy operates through various mechanisms that produce and sustain gendered discourses and knowledge. These include: limited mentorship opportunities within male-centered academic climates (Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018; Sağlamer et al., 2018; Taşkın & Çetin, 2012), the prevalence of "boys' clubs" that exclude women from informal networks (Ustun & Gümüseli, 2017; Öztürk & Şimşek, 2019; White & Özkanlı, 2011), harassment and mobbing that often go unreported due to cultural and institutional stigma (Aksatan, Gunlu & Kozak, 2020; Ecevit & Beşpınar, 2020), and intra-gender dynamics such as the "queen bee" phenomenon within Turkish academia (Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018).

These meso-level mechanisms and their resultant discourses and practices are compounded by micro- and macro-level patriarchal forces. Türkiye has a long history of misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia (Arat, Z., 2022; Yilmaz & Göçmen, 2016), with gendered norms and values embedded in its societal, economic, and political structures (Dönmez & Özmen, 2013). In contemporary Türkiye, the convergence of neoliberal economic policies, Islamic conservative ideologies, and populist agendas has intensified the patriarchal structures in academia through what Abbas and Zalta (2017) describe as "a particular form of authoritarianism combined with repression of freedoms" (p. 9). This authoritarian shift became particularly visible following the 2016 coup attempt, when Turkish academia witnessed a widespread academic purge targeting the Academics

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[1] Given that this study investigates participants' lived experiences with patriarchy at the macro, meso, and micro levels, I regard gender-based terminology as more conceptually appropriate than sex-based terminology. Therefore, throughout this dissertation, I employ the terms "women academics" rather than "female academics" and "men academics" rather than "male academics".

for Peace petition signatories (Abbas & Zalta, 2017; Baser, Akgönül & Öztürk, 2018; Redlawsk, 2021).

The state's patriarchal disciplinary and biopower apparatuses operate through positioning women's bodies as national reproduction sites. President Erdoğan's characterization of birth control as treason, his portrayal of childless women as deficient, his withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021, his repeated exhortations for women to bear at least three children, and the symbolic removal of "women" from the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs collectively indicate the escalation of patriarchal power technologies of surveillance and biopower in the AKP era (Arat, Z., 2022; Coşar & Özkan-Kerestecioğlu, 2017; Kandiyoti, 2016; Naz, 2016; Cindoglu & Unal, 2017). Within this sociopolitical landscape, women in Turkish academia encounter micro-level gendered discourses while simultaneously navigating political repression and economic precarity.

1. Problem Statement and Research Objectives

Despite extensive scholarship on gender inequality in academic settings worldwide, limited research has examined how women in Turkish academia simultaneously challenge and (re)produce patriarchal discourses and practices. Informed by (feminist) poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity as discursively constituted and inherently fluid (Foucault, 1982; Butler, 1992; Davies & Gannon, 2004), this study addresses this gap by documenting stories of constraint, resistance, and transformation. The narratives of nine women academics demonstrate how they interact with patriarchal power technologies and mechanisms across macro, meso, and micro levels, as well as the multiple subject positions they occupy in doing so.

Given that the concept of power underpins the study of any given system of oppression, this dissertation examines the technologies and mechanisms through which patriarchal and counter-patriarchal discourses and practices are (re)produced, and subject positions are formed. Drawing upon (feminist) poststructuralist principles, it explores: 1) how women in Turkish academia navigate, resist, and (re)produce patriarchal discourses and regimes of truth, and 2) how their interaction with patriarchy informs their perceptions of academic career success.

2. Theoretical Framework and Research Paradigm

I approach this study with beliefs and values rooted in (feminist) poststructuralism. Epistemologically, I hold that knowledge is discursively articulated, situated, and inseparable from

power dynamics. Ontologically, I subscribe to the belief that social positionings such as gender, race, and class shape multiple, fragmented, and at times contradictory realities and truths. Axiologically, I respect the diversity of my participants' values and perspectives. Acknowledging the value-laden nature of this study and the impossibility of eliminating assumptions informed by my own lived experiences with patriarchy, I positioned myself within the study and remained attentive to how my values and biases might surface throughout this research journey.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine Turkish women academics' interaction with patriarchal technologies, mechanisms and the discourses, practices, and subjectivities produced in the process. To explore these dynamics, I weave together Michel Foucault (1977, 1982), Amy Allen (1999), and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) conceptualization of *power* alongside Ivana Marková's (2003) understanding *of intersubjectivity*, Hannah Arendt's (1958) *spaces of appearance,* and Fida Afiouni and Charlotte Karam's notion of *career success*.

Foucault's (1977) understanding of power as productive rather than merely repressive enables the examination of how patriarchal structures create particular subjectivities while simultaneously producing possibilities for resistance. Nonetheless, despite Foucault's contribution to our understanding of power as relational and productive, his analytical framework requires supplementation to address its gender-blind limitations and inadequate tools for exploring collective resistance. Allen's (1999) concept of "power-with" as "the ability of a collectivity to act together for the agreed-upon end of challenging, subverting, and, ultimately, overturning systems of domination" compensates for this gap in Foucault's analytic toolbox (p. 127). Building upon Allen's "power-with", Marková's (2003) intersubjectivity and Arendt's (1958) spaces of appearance help examine *how* such solidarity is exercised and *within what spaces* it appears. Complementing these theoretical tools, Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality allows for the analysis of how multiple identity markers interact in the current sociopolitical and economic climate in Türkiye. Finally, Karam and Afiouni's (2013) career success framework offers insight into how women navigate tensions between academic and gendered expectations in Türkiye's higher education settings.

3. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following interconnected research questions:

1. How does patriarchy manifest at the micro, meso, and macro domains of Turkish women academics' lives?

2. How do Turkish women academics navigate patriarchal power technologies?
    a. What counter-patriarchal strategies, individual and/or collective, do they develop and employ in their professional and personal lives?
    b. How do these strategies challenge gendered discourses and practices in patriarchal Türkiye in general, and in its higher educational settings in particular?
    c. In what ways do Turkish women academics perpetuate patriarchy?

3. How do Turkish women academics conceptualise and navigate career success within Türkiye's patriarchal climate?

4. Methodology

To better understand Turkish women academics' lived experiences with patriarchy, this study adopts narrative inquiry. According to Clandinin (2007), narrative inquiry is founded on the assumption that stories are the "fundamental units accounting for human experience" (p. 4). Likewise, Creswell (2013) invites us to regard stories as portals that allow individuals to organise and communicate the experiences they have lived. In the same vein, Riessman (2008) defines narrative inquiry as a method that enables researchers to collate and recount individuals' stories. Narrative inquiry in this study allows me to sketch the lived experiences of women academics with patriarchy from early childhood through higher education and beyond. Additionally, it enables a nuanced understanding of how women academics conceptualise career success within Türkiye's higher education settings.

One of the defining features of narrative inquiry is the relationship formed between the researcher and the researched, "in which both parties learn and change in the encounter" (Creswell, 2013, p. 75). This interaction can lead to co-constructed stories, as both parties navigate the meaning of their lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly 2004; Riessman, 2008). It is precisely this particular feature of narrative inquiry that holds a powerful appeal for me personally, as it enables me "to find the interwoven stories of my own within my participants' stories" and "to gain insight into my own life" while living and working in patriarchal settings (Creswell, 2013, p. 75).

5. Thesis Overview

This dissertation is organised as follows: Chapter Two reviews the broader scholarly literature on patriarchy, both in Türkiye and globally. It also traces the educational progress of Turkish women since the foundation of the Republic of Türkiye and examines the evolution of the women's movement in Türkiye over the past century. Chapter Three presents the research paradigm and theoretical framework guiding this study. Chapters Two and Three required extensive development, as exploring the concept of patriarchy and constructing an analytical framework to examine it resembled an archaeological excavation, with each conceptual layer unearthed demanding deeper exploration. Beginning with the concept of patriarchy, I came to recognise the necessity of exploring its intersections with other social identities and the broader political and economic context of Türkiye. Similarly, the theoretical framework, which initially centered on Foucault's understanding of power, expanded to encompass intersectionality, intersubjectivity, and spaces of appearance, all of which proved essential for capturing the nuanced lived experiences of participants. Chapter Four details the methodological approach employed to collect and analyze data, along with the ethical considerations undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Chapter Five retells participants' narratives, preserving the uniqueness of each woman's story. Chapter Six presents the findings of the study, synthesizing them in relation to existing scholarly literature and the proposed theoretical framework. In Chapter Seven, I invite readers into my transformative journey, from my reluctance to explore patriarchy in Iran to my resolve to confront the internalised surveillance of my own panopticon. The concluding chapter of this dissertation explores implications for theory, practice, and future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter is organised into three main sections, each of which is further divided into several sub-sections. Section one provides a summary of the various conceptualizations of patriarchy as delineated by different feminist schools of thought in the past couple of decades. It also explores the interplay between patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and homosocial behaviours. Section two offers an overview of the patriarchal modes, attitudes, and practices in Türkiye over the past century, along with an examination of how patriarchy intersects with various social identities such as ethnicity, class, and Islam within relevant historical, political, economic, and cultural frameworks. The concluding section reviews the most cited concepts that demonstrate the barriers women face worldwide in advancing their careers in academia and beyond, as well as the factors contributing to Turkish women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership roles within Türkiye' academic settings.

1. Patriarchy Unmasked: What Is This Thing Called Patriarchy?

There is a considerable corpus of scholarship on patriarchy, its origin, its emergence in gender studies, and its transformation over the past four decades. In its literal sense, patriarchy denotes "the rule of father" (Fergusen, 1999, p.1048) with its original prominence attributed to the 'le testament' account in the Bible whereby the heads of twelve tribes of Israel were referred to as "*patriarchs"* (Aboribo & Oguoe, 2007, p. 33).

Patriarchy is not a single or simple concept. Instead, it has a history of usage among social scientists (Beechey, 1979). For instance, Weber (1947) defines patriarchy as the most generic form of traditional domination in which men dominate women and other men. In Weber's usage, not only does patriarchy run inside the household, but it also permeates interactions among men. This dynamic contributes to the dominance of older, more powerful men over younger men with less power. Weber considers the latter form of patriarchy as equally important as the former one, if not more so.

Unlike Weber's broader conceptualization of patriarchy that focuses both on men and women as objects of a patriarchal system, liberal, radical, Marxist, and socialist feminist schools of thought tend to be more concerned with the element of men dominating women, often paying less attention to men's dominance over one other (Walby, 1989). For instance, there is a general agreement

among liberal feminists that the deeply ingrained gendered traditions and institutions in patriarchal systems deny women their personal and political autonomy (Baehr, 2007; MacKenzie & Stoljar, 2000; Okin, 1994). In a patriarchy, liberal feminists hold, women are perceived to be ideal for certain occupations associated with “ego-effacement and other-directedness”, and, as such, they are discouraged from and are even deprived of taking on tasks that require traits mostly attributed to masculinity such as “self-confidence and self-aggrandizement” (Tong, 2013, p.28). Insisting on freedom for women in both private and public arenas, liberal feminists argue that for a woman to enjoy living a life as she desires, both de facto and de jure modes of discrimination should be eliminated (Baehr, 2007; Tong, 2013).

Radical feminism posits that patriarchy is the first oppressive system, asserting that it has served as the basis for subsequent forms of control and oppression throughout history (Johnson, 2014). From the radical feminists’ viewpoint, patriarchy is a “trans-historical, universal and trans-cultural phenomenon,” a system within which nearly all women, regardless of their social locations, experience subordination by men in almost every aspect of their lives and in nearly the same way (Acker, 1989, p. 235). In *Sexual Politics,* Kate Millett (1977), views patriarchy as unchanging through history, maintaining that there is an innate desire in all men to control all women. In Millett’s perspective, it is the biological differences between men and women that set them at odds with one another and serve to oppress women in a patriarchy. However, the problem with Millett’s perception of patriarchy is that it falls apart in the face of the widespread variations in women’s situations. Put another way, radical feminists’ notion of patriarchy is essentialist in that it fails to encompass the enormous variability among women belonging to diverse ethnic, religious, and racial identities with dissimilar socio-economic status (Acker, 1989; Johnson, 2014; Walby, 1989).

Unlike radical feminists who display a tendency towards biological essentialism in gender relations, Marxist feminism views patriarchy as a system of oppression with a material base in the domestic mode of production (Acker, 1989; Barrett, 2014; Fox, 1988; Hamilton, 2012). To Marxist feminists, the gender relations that organise the production in the household are relations of social class, and “male privilege is a variation of social class privilege” (Johnson, 2014, p. 116). One of the adverse consequences of men owning such a privilege, as understood by Marxist feminists, is the “inferiorized status of women” and other kin members in a patriarchy (Mitchell 1974, p. 402).

Socialist feminism broadens Marxist feminists’ view of a patriarchal system by conceptualizing capitalism and patriarchy as two analytically different systems inter-acting at household and wage

labour levels (Walby, 1989). In this regard, Hartmann (1996) considers both wage labour and housework as essential sites for the exploitation of women and contends that paid work and in-house labour reinforce each other's impact on women's subordination. Women's disadvantaged positions in wage labour, as Hartmann avers, leave them vulnerable in the household, and likewise, their subordinate position within the household serves towards their oppression in paid work.

Post-modernist and post-structuralist feminists critique the one-dimensional, over-arching characteristics of patriarchy, as proposed by most feminist schools of thought preceding them, asserting that patriarchy is a complex concept and thereby ought to be "conceptualised at different levels of abstraction" (Walby, 1989, p. 214). To address such shortcomings, Walby (1989) proposes a model comprising six structures that constitute the patriarchy system. These structures are: 1) a patriarchal mode of production in which women's labour is exploited in domestic settings, 2) patriarchal relations within waged labour, 3) the patriarchal state, 4) male violence, 5) patriarchal relations in sexuality, and 6) patriarchal culture.

According to Walby (1989), within the household, patriarchy operates via the gender division of labour. She argues that in the domestic sphere of a patriarchal system, women are often exploited, being deemed as the primary caregivers, and expected to assume the household responsibilities. In the working world, Walby posits, women face horizontal and vertical discrimination, occupying fewer demanding positions. In patriarchal states, Walby suggests that norms and values are established in such a manner that male privilege is endorsed and thus is effortlessly sustained. Concerning male violence, Walby asserts that violence against women in a patriarchy is not random as it occurs under patterned and systemic criteria in which, instead of men, women are usually condemned when an act of violence occurs. Finally, Walby blames various cultural elements such as media, education, and religion in shaping and perpetuating gendered subjectivity in a patriarchy. Patriarchal culture, as Walby holds, can be best analyzed as "a set of discourses which are institutionally rooted, rather than as an ideology that is either free-floating or economically-determined" (p. 227).

In *The Gender Knot: Unravelling our Patriarchal Legacy*, Johnson (2014) highlights the enduring and systemic nature of patriarchy, asserting that patriarchy is not a historical relic and that within such a system, everybody, wittingly or unwittingly, contributes to its maintenance and continuity. As such, Johnson argues, patriarchy does not refer to a collection of men manipulating

all women; rather, it denotes a systemic structure in which "both men and women contribute to its perpetuation" (p. 5). Johnson likens patriarchal gender order to a tree with four deep roots, namely male-domination, male- identification, male-centeredness, and obsession with control, asserting that these four features of a patriarchal system are vital to the sustainability of the privileged status of men in a patriarchy.

According to Johnson, a patriarchy is male-dominated in that it reserves the positions of authority and leadership for men. Johnson (2014) argues that such a system creates power differences between men and women, leading to men almost always holding pre-eminent positions while most women are forced to accept lowly positions. Patriarchal societies are also male-identified in that most of their culturally favored concepts are associated with "men, manhood, and masculinity"[2] (p. 7). In a patriarchal system, Johnson adds, power is identified with men, and even if a man is not himself occupying high positions, he can always resonate with the "idea of male dominance and with those men who display patriarchal and masculine toughness" (p. 9). Another fundamental tenet of a patriarchy, according to Johnson, is that it is male-centered, meaning that a patriarchal system revolves around men and what they do and even what they fail to do. Lastly, Johnson views obsession with control and power as another prominent characteristic of a patriarchal system. Much like other systems of oppression that attach a superior status to one group while denying 'the others' equal status, control is a crucial aspect of a patriarchy that serves to maintain the privileged status of oppressors. Under patriarchy, as Johnson maintains, control is more than a way to get things done. Instead, "it is valued and pursued to a degree that gives social life an oppressive form by taking a natural human capacity to obsessive extremes" (p. 14). As such, he adds, controllers perceive themselves as the subjects who have every right to observe and manipulate 'the others,' the objects. Patriarchy, however, in Johnson's view, is not simply structured around an obsession with control. Rather, as he holds, it is "a male-identified obsession with control," meaning that the more a man gets involved in a patriarchal system, the more imperious he becomes and thus more obsessed with seeing himself as the one qualified to give orders and exert control over those whom he perceives as the subordinate.

In *Masculinities,* Connell (2020) defines *hegemonic masculinity* as" the configuration of gender practice, "a *strategy* which *legitimises* patriarchy" [emphasis added] and guarantees its

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[2] For instance, by referring to a group of men and women as 'guys,' and human beings as 'man,' men's omnipresence in the foreground of the society is somewhat guaranteed, Johnson (2014) contends.

continuation (p.77). One term that best describes how hegemonic masculinity is established and reinforced is *homosocial behaviour*. The concept of homosocial behaviour refers to "the seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex" (Lipman-Blumen, 1976, p. 16); it is specifically utilized to demonstrate how, through friendships and social bonds, men become vehicles of hegemonic masculinity, thereby (re)constituting patriarchal power structures and the gender (*dis)*order [emphasis added] that such structures advocate and produce (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014; Holgersson, 2013; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; O'Connor, 2011). Collinson and Hearn (1994) identify several forms of hegemonic masculinity discourses and practices that contribute to the circulation and maintenance of homosocial behaviours and gender (*dis*)order in the workplace. Among these, "Informalism," which refers to informal networking between men based on shared masculine interests and values, stands out as one of the main contributors to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in the workplace (p. 12). Informalism is an informal male network loaded with homosociality and institutionalized men's dominance over women, a type of social interaction that is well encapsulated in the metaphor of *the boys' club*[3] (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Bird, 1996). Such shared masculine interests marginalize women, with their negative consequences being particularly felt in their career advancement (Ahuja & Weatherall, 2023; Carter et al., 2024; Nettleton, 2016; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Suresh et al., 2023).

The presence and circulation of hegemonic masculinity discourses through male bonding and camaraderie in higher education settings have long been acknowledged in both scholarly and fictional literature. For instance, in the novels *Small World: An Academic Romance* (Lodge, 1985) and *The History Man* (Bradbury, 1976), the role of male bonding in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity within British Universities is well-illustrated (as cited in Fisher & Kinsey, 2014). In *Theorizing Backlash: Philosophical Reflections on the Resistance to Feminism*, Superson and Cudd (2002) explore the manifestations of the boys' club in academic settings and their impacts on women academics' career advancement. Their findings suggest that women's exclusion from the academic boys' club is partly due to the prevalent hegemonic masculinity discourses that posit teaching as a "feminized" occupation, in contrast to more stereotypically "macho" positions such as those in the armed forces. Such gendered perception, Superson and Cudd add, might intensify

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[3] The term "the boys club" was originally coined to describe the British elite boys who attended certain prestigious schools together. In current popular culture, the meaning of the term has evolved and expanded to denote the preservation of social elites in general (Cullen & Perez-Truglia, 2023).

men academics' desire to keep women out of academia to make it appear more "masculine" (p. 100).

2. Understanding Patriarchy in Türkiye: Modes, Attitudes, and Practices

Türkiye has witnessed a long history of misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia[4] (Arat, Z., 2022; Yilmaz & Göçmen, 2016), with gendered norms and values embedded in its societal, economic, and political structures (Dönmez & Özmen, 2013). In the literature examining patriarchy in the MENA region[5], Türkiye is considered to be a part of the "patriarchal belt"[6] (Caldwell, 1978, p. 554), or what Kandiyoti (1988) refers to as the "classic patriarchy" (p. 278). The patriarchal belt is mainly characterized by its deeply rooted discriminatory practices toward women and girls, which associate family honour with female virtue and entrust men with upholding this honour through authority and control (Kabeer, 1988; Littrell & Bertsch, 2013).

In the modern era, despite Türkiye's ratification of several international declarations and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[7], C111-Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), and the Beijing Declaration[8], and despite the country's political aspirations for modernization initiated in the Republic era, along with its successful bid for EU candidacy in 1999[9], patriarchal values and norms

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[4] I acknowledge that, much like other patriarchal countries, patriarchy in Türkiye targets a wide range of individuals on the gender spectrum, and, as such, manifests itself through misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic attitudes and practices. The focus of this literature review, nonetheless, will be on how patriarchal modes, attitudes, and practices have impacted Turkish women in general, and women academics in particular.

[5] MENA stands for the Middle East and North Africa region. It includes Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Palestine, and Yemen. Sudan and Türkiye are sometimes included in MENA. Adapted from: https://istizada.com/mena-region/#:~:text=MENA%20Counties,are%20sometimes%20included%20in%20MENA.

[6] The term "patriarchal belt" is not an official geographical term, yet it is used to highlight regions where patriarchal norms and practices are deeply ingrained. The belt of classic patriarchy stretches from Northern Africa across the Middle East to the Northern plains of the Indian sub-continent (Kandiyoti, 1988).

[7] Adapted from https://treaties.un.org

[8] Adapted from https:// The International Labour Organisation

[9] Türkiye applied to join the EU in 1987 and was officially granted its candidacy in the Helsinki meeting in December 1999. The accession negotiations commenced in December 2024. In 2008, the Council set out

have endured and continued to impact various facets of Turkish women's lives (Arat, Z., 2022; Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011; Dildar, 2015; Ilkkaracan, 2012; Kandiyoti, 1988, 2016; Özdemir-Sarigil & Sarigil, 2021; Öztürk, 2023). Similar findings have been reported by non-Turkish researchers and global forums. For instance, according to Haerpfer and his colleagues' 2021 "heatmap"[10], patriarchal values are upheld and supported by over half of the population in Türkiye (as cited in Öztürk, 2023, p. 190). The Global Gender Gap Reports (2022, 2023) indicate that amongst 146 countries, the overall ranking of Türkiye was 125th in 2022 and then plummeted to 129th in 2023[11]. Also, the OECD data on violence against women in 2024 revealed that Türkiye has the highest number of intimate-partner violence incidents among the OECD countries[12].

In light of these facts and arguments, and to gain a better understanding of the modes, attitudes, and practices of patriarchy in Türkiye, this section of the literature review offers an overview of how religious, social, political, and economic factors, along with their intersections, have shaped and perpetuated patriarchal discourses and practices in the context of contemporary Türkiye. Additionally, as, much like other oppressive systems, patriarchy is in an intimate and continual interaction with counter-acts exercised by those it oppresses, this section also provides an overview of various phases of women's movement in Türkiye, and the strategies Turkish women have developed to engage with and resist patriarchal discourses and practices across various spheres of their lives.

2.1. Intersectional Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a nuanced and complex system (Acker, 1989; hooks, 1984; Johnson, 2014). Hence, to better comprehend how a patriarchy operates within any given context, one needs to examine its intersection with various social identities such as religious affiliation, class, race, and

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priority areas, including gender equality, serving as preparation bases for Türkiye's eventual EU membership, as well as the benchmark for measuring its reform progress. Adapted from: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/turkey/

[10] Based on the data obtained from the World Values Survey, Haerpfer et al., (2021) created a 'heatmap'. This heatmap illustrates the intensity of support for patriarchal values and norms worldwide.

[11] Adapted from: https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/

[12] Adapted from: https://www.oecd.org/fr/themes/violence-fondee-sur-le-sexe.html

ethnicity (Aboulhassan & Brumley, 2019; Carrington & Williams, 2013; Chávez, 2009; Hill Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Mohanty, 2020; Özdemir-Sarigil & Sarigil, 2021; Walby, 1989). Equally essential, as patriarchal norms and values are (re)generated by the discourses which are (re)produced and disseminated by political and economic frameworks (Arat, Z., 2022; Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011; Moghadam, 2004), the interplay between patriarchy and these frameworks ought to be explored. To achieve this end, this section aims to provide an overview of the impacts of the religion of Islam, class, and ethnicity, on the one hand, and the economic and political factors, on the other, on the establishment and perpetuation of patriarchal norms and values within the context of Türkiye in the last one hundred years.

2.1.1. The nexus between Islam and patriarchy: An overview

To deepen our understanding of Islam's potential impacts on the establishment and continuation of patriarchal norms and practices in Türkiye, it is essential first to explore the historical ties between Islam and patriarchy. Thus, this section first provides a review of the existing literature examining the nexus between patriarchy and Islamic percepts in the early years of Islam and the pre-modern era in Türkiye. Next, it delves into the economic factors and Islamic political ideologies in sustaining patriarchy in the MENA region, followed by the implications of Islam, in general, and political Islam, in particular, along with the relevant political and economic frameworks in the establishment and sustenance of patriarchy in the context of modern Türkiye.

2.1.1.1. Patriarchy in the early years of Islam: Is Islam inherently patriarchal?

There is no point of consensus among scholars concerning the (non)patriarchal nature of Islam and its role in either women's oppression, or their liberation. While some argue that there is an affinity between Islam and patriarchy (Alexander & Welzel, 2011; Baffoun, 1982; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Moghissi, 1999; Tabari, 1982), others attribute the patriarchal norms and values that are prevalent in certain Muslim-majority societies to factors originating from economic, political, ideological, and gendered power relations, rather than being an inherent tenet of Islam itself (Ahmed,1992; Barlas, 2019; Chaudhry, 2016; Mogaddam, 2004; Ross, 2008; Wadud, 2009).

Among those who deem Islam patriarchal is Baffoun (1982). Comparing women's social status before and after the emergence of Islam, Baffoun posits that, compared to what they enjoyed before the inception of Islam, women were granted less freedom afterwards. This decline in

women's freedom status, as Baffoun contends, resulted in their sexual oppression and the erosion of their societal status. Similarly, Tabari (1982) regards Islam as a political system, maintaining that the capacity for reform within Islam is limited. She contends that even the most progressive understandings of Islam still pose challenges to the emancipation and empowerment of women in Muslim-majority countries. In *Feminism and Fundamentalism,* Moghissi (1999) contends that Islamic discourses in the modern era have degraded women's status in certain Muslim-majority countries such as Afghanistan, Algeria, Sudan, Iran, and Pakistan. Moghissi understands the Islamic discourses as being political and fundamentalist, arguing that such discourses promote control over women's sexuality and heighten their dependence on men. Moghissi further posits that Islamic fundamentalist attitudes towards women are infused in policies, customs, and practices, limiting women's sense of agency and their community engagement[13].

One of the most notable scholars who has provided a counter-narrative to the authoritarian and misogynist portrayal of Islam is Leila Ahmed (1992). Ahmed attributes patriarchal norms and values to factors beyond Islam, maintaining that not only does Islam possess an antipatriarchal epistemology, but it also advocates gender equality. In *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate,* Ahmed (1992) contends that when Islam emerged in the Mesopotamian and Mediterranean Middle-Eastern region, it inherited the deeply ingrained patriarchal structures that were already established in those regions. Islam, as Ahmed asserts, did not introduce patriarchy, but rather preserved "a continuity of the lifestyles already in place" (p.33). Drawing upon the Quran, Hadiths[14], and other Islamic texts produced by individuals from the initial years of Islam, Ahmed maintains that early Muslims recognised and observed a broad spectrum of women's rights. Further, she argues that the sacred texts produced over this period embodied ethical perspectives and were "stubbornly egalitarian" (p.63). Ahmed posits that it was in the Abbasid era[15] that the misogynistic texts and gendered interpretation of the Quran were widely

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[13] It is, however, worth noting that, besides Islam, Moghissi regards all other religions as gender-biased and patriarchal.

[14] Hadith refers to a category of Islamic texts attributed to Prophet Mohammed and are narrated by his companions. Adapted from: https://www.islam.org.uk/hadith/types-of-hadith/

[15] The Abbasids were an Arab dynasty that first took control of the majority of the Islamic empire, except for certain western regions, when they assumed the caliphate in 750 CE. Over time, their empire fragmented, but they maintained their spiritual authority as caliphs until 1258 CE. They gained the title of caliph by overthrowing the ruling Umayyad Dynasty, making them the second dynasty to hold the caliphate position

produced and gained more acceptance over the primary texts of Islam. This shift, Ahmed asserts, overshadowed the egalitarian perspectives within Islamic precepts, which in turn, gave rise to a series of gendered ideologies and misogynistic practices. Consequently, as Ahmed contends, the combination of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures along with an interpretation of Islam that was highly unfavorable towards women resulted in substantial degradation of women's status in the Abbasid era and subsequent eras. Ahmed further argues that "had the ethical voice of Islam been heard, it would have significantly tempered the extreme androcentric bias of the law, and we might today have a far more humane and egalitarian law regarding women" (p. 88). Likewise, Moghadam (2004) attributes "endogamy" as what established the framework for women's oppression in patrilineal societies in the MENA region, arguing that certain practices such as unequal inheritance rights, polygamy, and men's dominance over the female family members were already established practices within tribal communities long before the rise of Islam in the region (p.107).

2.1.1.2. Patriarchy and the religion of Islam in Ottoman Türkiye

In the case of Türkiye, the presence of Islam dates back to the eighth century. Since then, Islam has been the principal religion in the country, where up to 99% of its population are Muslims[16]. While some scholars regard Islam as the most determining factor in women's low status and their confinement to harems[17] in the Ottoman era (Croutier, 2013), some offer counter-arguments, highlighting the complexity and variation of women's experiences with patriarchy in the Ottoman era. These scholars suggest that besides religion, various other factors were instrumental in the manifestation and intensity of patriarchy in this era. These factors include women's

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intermittently from 632 to 1924 CE. In 1258 CE, their rule ended after the Mongols destroyed Baghdad. Adapted form: https://www.worldhistory.org/Abbasid_Dynasty/)

[16] Turkish Muslims are largely Sunnis. Alvi Muslims represent roughly 15-20% of the population and Shi'a Muslims make up a small percentage of Muslim Turks. Adapted from: https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/turkey/#content

[17] The word harem is originated from the Arabic word 'haram' which means unlawful or forbidden. It is a term that implies respect for religious purity. The sacred areas around Mecca and Medina are haram which are closed to all but 'the faithful.' In its other implication, harem refers to the separate, protected part of a household where women, children, widowed relatives, and female servants reside in seclusion and privacy, with only the immediate male members of the family having access to it (Pierce, 1993).

circumstances, their geographical locations, the period they lived in, the agrarian lifestyles common in the Ottoman era, and the patriarchal norms and practices deeply embedded within the tribal and familial cultures across the country (Kandiyoti, 1996; Kaser, 2008; Moghadam, 2004; Pierce,1993; Zilfi, 2010). For instance, Kandiyoti (1996) disputes the correlation between women's low social status in the pre-modern Türkiye and Islam, attributing the degrading status of women to the pre-existing patriarchal family structures that were prevalent in the MENA region countries before the introduction of Islam to the region. Pierce (1993) challenges the essentialist portrayal of Ottoman women, as offered by some scholars, arguing that not all women living in the Ottoman era were uniformly subjugated. In fact, as Pierce asserts, some women enjoyed a superior status not only compared to other women in the household but also over the younger male family members. Similarly, Jenning (1975) argues that the status of women in the Ottoman era was not monolithic, and not all women were excluded from public life. He presents some historical evidence indicating that women could freely participate in outside home activities, including attending court proceedings and operating their businesses (As cited in Gerber,1980).

2.1.1.3. The dynamics between patriarchy, (political) Islam, and economic factors in the contemporary Muslim-majority countries and Türkiye

The role of political Islam[18] in upholding patriarchal norms and values in Muslim-majority countries is a widely explored topic (Badran, 2013; Coleman, 2006; Doğan, 2016; Moghadam, 2004; Öztürk, 2023). For instance, Moghadam (2004) maintains that when examining women's status in Muslim-majority countries, it is essential to consider the broader political contexts within which Islam is practiced in these countries. These political frameworks, coupled with government goals and orientations, Moghadam adds, are amongst the most crucial factors "in the equation that determines the legal and political status of women" and the intensity of patriarchal norms and values imposed on them (p. 147).

[18] The first scholar to introduce the term 'political Islam' was Martin Kramer in 1980. The term political Islam refers to any interpretation of Islam that "serves as a foundation of political identity and action." Specifically, it denotes the movements that represent modern political systems in the name of Islam and strive to return to the "sovereignty of Islam law" (Sonn, 2006, p. 182). Some scholars use the term Islamism for the same set of phenomena or use the two terms interchangeably. There are some descriptive terms such as conservative, progressive, militant, radical, or jihadist to distinguish among the various ideological strains of political Islam (Voll & Tamara, 2016).

Badran (2013a) examines the impacts of political Islam on women and other gender-marginalized groups in the modern era, arguing that "patriarchal ideology is at the core of political Islam" and that political Islam has contributed to the emergence of religio-conservative ideologies (p. 112). Badran (2013a) argues that under the name of *'true Islam'* [emphasis added], political Islam has strived to revitalize patriarchal institutions, ideologies, and practices which have been gradually losing their power and dominance since the beginning of the twentieth century. Badran (2013b) asserts that while political Islamic practices vary, they all share three commonalities which are fundamentally conservative: they advocate for women's withdrawal from the public space and their retreat to the home as their proper place; they reassert gender roles and the biological differences between men and women, and they promote Hijab as a religious 'obligation'.

Islamic fundamentalism is another factor contributing to patriarchy and its maintenance in Muslim-majority countries[19]. In examining the role of (political) Islam in upholding patriarchy in Muslim-majority countries, Öztürk (2023) argues that Islamic fundamentalism offers a more valid explanation rather than referring to Islam as a misogynist religion. Drawing upon the 2022 Gender Gap Report, which underscores the degrading status of women in most Muslim-majority countries, Öztürk argues that the rise of political Islam in the MENA region, which began with the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, has been a catalyst in the surge of Islamic fundamentalism.

Chaudhry (2016) examines the strategies, influenced mainly by political Islam, that certain patriarchal states in the MENA region employ to preserve misogyny. She argues that while these states aim to maintain misogyny within their borders, they also strive to avoid being branded as misogynistic by the international community. To achieve this end, as Chaudhry posits, these states often invoke Sharia[20] to legitimise their misogyny and silence the dissenting voices within their

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[19] Although the two terms of Islamic fundamentalism and political Islam are often used interchangeably, the former refers to the "emotional, spiritual, and political responses of Muslims" to the ongoing social, economic, and political crises affecting the Middle East region, while political Islam refers to "the goal and related political program designed to establish a worldwide Islamic order" (White, Smith & Ehteshami, 1997, p. 180). Despite the widespread use of the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' in both academic literature and popular media, Edward Said (1993) contested its use, arguing that the term 'fundamentalism' is the creation of European and American hegemonic discourses about Muslim-majority countries. Such discourses, Said maintains, are created to subordinate and control Islamic societies. For this reason, in my analysis, I will use 'political Islam' instead of 'Islamic fundamentalism' to refer to the interplay between Islam and politics in the contemporary Muslim-majority countries including Türkiye.

[20] Mir-Hossieni (2011) distinguishes between Sharia and Islamic law, also known as 'Fiqh' or jurisprudence, stating that while some might use the two interchangeably, they are, in fact, distinct concepts. She maintains

borders. On the international front, she adds, they appeal to values like tolerance and pluralism to defend their gendered discourses, laws, and practices, framing them as inherent in their cultural and religious heritage. In doing so, Chaudhry adds, these states position the international critiques as orientalist, imperialist, and Islamophobic, demanding the global community's respect for the gendered laws and practices prevalent in their legal, political, and social frameworks.

Some studies have centred on the role of economic factors in upholding patriarchal norms and attitudes in contemporary Muslim-majority countries (Moghadam 2004; Ross, 2008). For instance, in *Oil, Islam and Women,* Ross (2008) adopts an economic lens to examine the prevalence of patriarchy in oil-rich Muslim-majority countries in the MENA region. He contends that the discovery of oil and gas in the MENA region and the ascending global demand for oil products have created a high demand for jobs in the mining, extraction, and refining sectors. Ross notes that with the oil and gas industry claiming to be the economic powerhouse of these countries, along with the high demand for men's workforce in the industry, and the prevalent understanding towards women's roles and responsibilities as the principal domestic care providers, women's participation in the workforce has been low in oil-rich Muslim-majority countries. Women's marginal role in the economy, Ross asserts, has degraded women's political leverage, and led to a strong embodiment of patriarchal discourses and practices in the legal and political institutions in these countries.

In *The Rise of Political Islam in Türkiye*: *Urban Poverty, Grassroots Activism and Islamic Fundamentalism,* Delibaş (2015) examines the root causes of political Islam and religio-conservatism in Türkiye. He notes that this phenomenon ensued after the electoral success of the Islamist parties in the late 1990s and early 2000s[21], asserting that the success of the political Islamists was mainly because of the voters' frustration with the then government's inability to stabilize the country's economic situation. Delibaş posits that while the rise of the Islamists to power and the subsequent emergence of political Islam with its religio-conservative discourses in Türkiye in the past thirty years might be, in part, caused by religion-based, anti-West, and anti-

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that Islamic law is our understanding of Sharia which is associated with "the sacred, denoting the totality of God's Will as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad" (p.69). Put another way, while Sharia is God's word, Islamic law is the interpretation of Sharia which is "human and mundane, temporal and local" (p. 69).

[21] For political developments in Türkiye since the late 1990s, see Delibaş (2015, pp. XIII-XVI).

modernity ideology, the socioeconomic factors such as rapid urbanization, high inflation, and chronic poverty all played a significant role in this regard.

A large body of scholarly work has examined the impacts of religio-conservatism, as being reinforced by political Islam, on the maintenance of the patriarchal norms and values in Türkiye since the AKP rose to power in 2002 (Arat, Z.,2022; Delibaş, 2015; Coşar & Yeğenoğlu 2011; Engin & Pals 2018; Erdem, 2013; Güneş-Ayata & Doğangün 2017). However, since religio-conservatism in Türkiye has intersected with other frameworks to reinforce patriarchy, it will be explored in the section reviewing the AKP's neoliberal, religio-conservatism, and populist modes of patriarchy.

2.1.2. Patriarchy and ethnicity

Ethnicity is another social identity that intersects with patriarchy (Acker, 1989; Carrington & Williams, 2013; Chávez, 2009; Walby, 1990). As the largest and oldest ethnic group residing in Türkiye, with a long history of state-imposed 'identity suppression' [22], the attitudes of the Kurds towards gender (in)equality have been the subject of several studies. Western observers and Kurdish nationalists have often contended that Kurdish women enjoy more freedom compared to their Iranian, Turkish, and Arab counterparts (Bengio, 2016; Hassan, 2013; Galletti, 2001). However, some scholars have highlighted the prevalence of male dominance in Kurdish communities, arguing that compared to non-Kurdish women, Kurdish women experience the same, and at times, even more, patriarchal pressures (Beşpınar, 2010; Cinar & Kose, 2018; Suzuki Him & Hoşgör, 2011; Grabolle-Çeliker, 2019; Mojab, 2001).

Cinar and Kose (2018) argue that Kurdish women encounter dual marginalization because of their intersectional identity as women and as members of an ethnic minority. Their analysis of women's empowerment status in Türkiye has revealed that the "ethnic cleavage" between the Turks and Kurds, the escalation of military confrontation between the *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan – PKK* [Kurdish Workers' Party] and the Turkish military forces, and insufficient economic aids provided by the Turkish state have collectively led to Kurdish women having limited access to

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[22] The Kurds constitute the largest, non-state nation in the world. They were forcibly divided among Türkiye, Iran, Iraq, and Syria in the aftermath of the First World War (Mojab, 2000). Nowadays, they are residing in the mountains of southern Türkiye, The Zagros mountains of western Iran, portions of northern Iraq, and northeastern Syria (Britannica, 2023). For decades, the Kurds have been subjected to linguistic and cultural restrictions, and political tyranny by Turkish governments which attempt to assimilate the Kurds into Turkish culture and suppress their Kurdish identity (Orhan, 2020)

education, experiencing social exclusion, and feeling less empowered compared to non-Kurdish women in the country (Cinar & Kose, 2018, p. 376). Likewise, Mojab (2001) highlights the dual structure of patriarchy to which Kurdish women are subjected. She challenges the claim that Kurdish women have more freedom than other women, maintaining that Kurdish women residing in Türkiye are subjected to two forms of patriarchy, namely the "external patriarchy," as imposed by the Turkish state, and the "internal patriarchy," as imposed by Kurdish men on their female family members. Mojab maintains that the ongoing conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state has created a sense of urgency among Kurdish communities to dedicate their collective endeavour and commitment to confronting the challenges and pressures inflicted on them by the Turkish government. Consequently, Mojab adds, in this context, other issues, including patriarchy and Kurdish women's struggle for gender equality, have been overlooked. Similarly, Bruinessen (2000), contends that the conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state might create the misperception that as Kurdish women fight alongside men in the armed branch of the PKK, they have achieved an equal social, economic, and political status within their communities. However, as Bruinessen asserts, in reality, very few women, if any, are in commanding positions, and women mostly join the armed branch of the PKK to evade the forced marriages and the traditional gendered roles they are subjected to within their communities.

2.2. Patriarchy, Gender Politics, and the Status of Women's Rights in Contemporary Türkiye

Since the inception of the Republic of Türkiye, the country's political arena has witnessed four predominant modes of patriarchy understood as republican, liberal, early-neoliberal, and the more recent religio-conservative, neoliberal, populist patriarchy. These modes of patriarchy, which have been mainly informed by the political changes in the country over the past century, are not mutually exclusive, and have, in fact, demonstrated overlaps in complex ways, leading to the persistence of patriarchy in various spheres of women and other gender-marginalized groups' lives in the country (Arat, Z., 2022; Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011; Özdemir-Sarigil & Sarigil, 2021).

2.2.1. Republican, secular patriarchy: Gendered politics in the one-party era (1923-1945)

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Türkiye underwent a wide range of extensive reforms led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk[23], who established *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* [the Republican People's Party]. In his pursuit to secularize and modernize the newly established nation-state and improve women's socio-economic and political status, Atatürk initiated a series of pro-women reforms in Türkiye's national policy. He abolished the Sharia law and replaced it with Swiss Civil Law, which is the legal foundation of modern Türkiye. These reforms ensured women's rights to inheritance, granted them the right to vote in local and national elections, and recognised their right to divorce, child custody, and formal education[24] (Arat, Z.,2022; Coşar & Özkan-Kerestecioğlu, 2017; Kandiyoti, 1988).

While Atatürk's pro-women equality reforms were emancipatory, they fell short of liberating Turkish women for three primary reasons. First, as these reforms were mainly tailored to the needs and aspirations of the elite and middle-class women, they did not acknowledge the broader spectrum of Turkish women's values and/or needs (Arat, Z., 2022; Arat. Y, 2005; Kandiyoti, 1987; White, 2003). In this regard, Arat (2005) contends that despite their diverse social, religious, and economic identities, the "homogenizing mission" of the Kemalists disregarded women's distinct needs, placing them under the singular term of "the Turkish woman" (p.18). Similarly, White (2003) maintains that regardless of their various social identities, Turkish women's welfare and duties were almost exclusively framed under the category of "the citizen woman" (p. 146). In creating an ideal Turkish woman who was modern and educated and was committed to upholding Western manners, these reforms failed to recognise the values and perceptions of a sizable portion of Turkish women, especially those living in rural areas. These women, White adds, were often labelled as "uncivilized primitives," which excluded them from partaking in the construction of modern Türkiye (p. 146).

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[23] Due to his prominent achievements in military, social, and political arenas, the Turkish Grand National Assembly named Mustafa Kemal as Atatürk, the ancestor or father of Turks.

[24] Atatürk is often cited for saying "Everything we see in the world is a creation of women" and "A nation that does not educate its women is a nation that does not progress." Adapted from: https://www.universalfreemasonry.org/en/freemason-quotes/mustafa-ataturk

An additional reason these reforms were unsuccessful in liberating Turkish women was that, for a long time, the Kemalists did not actively pursue the implementation of pro-women initiatives in most rural areas, especially in the regions that were minimally incorporated into modern Türkiye's national economy (Kandiyoti, 1987). The Kemalists' failure to reach Turkish women from across diverse socio-economic and geographical spectrums, Kandiyoti maintains, caused these reforms to remain a "dead issue" in rural areas (p. 322). For instance, the preference for religious marriage over civil marriage, with the related possibility of polygamy, repudiation, and illegitimacy, the practice of marrying off minor girls and the demand for *baslik* [bride price] in marriage contracts, and the emphasis on women's fertility in the vast majority of rural areas were some of the many indicators of the failure of Kemalists' pro-women reforms in these areas.

Another factor contributing Kemalists' failures in liberating Turkish women was their neglect of women's rights status in the private domain (Arat, Y. 2005; Çavdar & Yaşar, 2019). Even though the 1926 Civil Code granted Turkish women an equal status as men in certain economic, educational, and legal areas, it still demonstrated patriarchal biases, particularly in the private sphere. Under this code, the husband was regarded as the head of the family with the right to decide the family's residence. Also, this code obliged the wife to use her husband's last name and obtain his permission to work outside the home (Ilkkaracan, 2010; Çarkoğlu & Kafescioğlu, 2014). As a result, although women were encouraged to pursue formal education and engage in paid employment, "patriarchal norms continued to be practiced, perpetuated, and legitimised" in private spheres in the republic era (Arat. Y, 2005, p.18). Examining the impacts of the Kemalists' pro-women reforms on the private sphere of Turkish women's lives, Sirman (2005) posits that the Kemalists' reforms mainly aligned with their nationalist perspectives and overlooked the private sphere, with the Kemalists considering "the correct femininity to be the merciful and virtuous mother of the nation" (p. 163).

Arat (2005) further argues that all initiatives undertaken by the Kemalists to advance women's status were, in reality, extensions of the broader modernity projects. As such, Arat adds, any other initiatives to improve women's status were only permitted to the extent that they were aligned with the best interests of the newly established nation. Consequently, women's activism was restricted by the dictates of "the autocratic, westernizing state," as such, independent women's movements were not allowed to develop (p.17). The emergence and persistence of these unequally distributed and non-liberating equality reforms, coupled with the Kemalists' indifference towards women's private lives and the silencing of the feminist voices led to the Republican state

often being referred to as ‘state feminism’ (Diner & Toktaş, 2010; Dogangün, 2020; Kandiyoti, 1987; White, 2003).

2.2.2. Liberal patriarchy: Gendered politics and women’s movements in the multi-party era (1946-1980)

In the mid-1940s**,** Türkiye experienced a shift from the one-party system of the Republican People’s Party to multi-party politics. In 1950, *Democrat Partisi* [the Democratic Party]**,** which was more liberal towards economic policies, yet held a less stringent approach to secularism, was formed by a faction split from the Republican People’s Party. Following the military coup in 1961, a new constitution emphasizing the protection and realization of human rights was established. This new constitution fostered liberalism in political and economic arenas within which various labour unions, and political and civic organisations, including pro-women organisations and associations, emerged. However, Arat posits, despite its more liberal stances towards the economy and human rights, the Democratic Party demonstrated similar patterns of gender inequality and women’s lack of involvement in policymaking and legislation, identical to those prevalent in the Republican era. For instance, although this era witnessed women’s participation in various women’s organisations and associations, mainly focusing on philanthropic activities, women were still restricted from assuming leadership positions within these organisations and beyond. Also, similar to the Kemalists, the Democratic Party idealised women primarily as mothers and wives and encouraged them to regard the domestic sphere as their primary domain. In this era, women’s participation in the job market was perceived as either a necessity for economic development, or a tool to boost the financial situation of their low-income, working-class families (Arat, Z., 2022).

2.2.3. The ebb and flow of patriarchy: The rise of Islamist policies, the expansion of women’s movement, and the emergence of neoliberalism (1981-2001)

The thirty years between the1981 military junta and the AKP’s rise to power in 2001 mark a political era with mixed implications for gender equality issues (Arat, Z., 2022). On the one hand, the junta restricted human rights and freedoms and expanded military control and veto power which set the stage for the AKP’s conservative policies. Concurrently, it was in this era that the Islamists increased their share of votes in both national and local elections, made Sunni Islam education mandatory in primary and secondary schools, and increased the number of *Imam Hatip*

Okullari[25] [Imam Hatip Schools] across the country. During this period, neoliberal economic policies emerged and were implemented in specific sectors in Türkiye. Privatization, cutting off subsidies in transportation and agriculture, and reduction in government services were some of these policies which increased women's unemployment rate, specifically in agriculture and textile industries (Çavdar & Yaşar 2019; Gokay & Aybak, 2023).

On a positive note, this era was also marked by a rise in feminist activism and Kurdish women's mobilisation. Progressive legal changes included the 1983 *Law on Family Planning* which allowed women to terminate unwanted pregnancies during the first ten weeks upon demand (Arat, Z., 2022). This era also witnessed the proliferation of women's organisations, publications of women's journals, and shelters for women subjected to domestic violence (Arat. Y, 1998, 2016; O'Neil & Komut, 2019). During this period, Turkish women joined transnational feminist movements, collaborated with various international and national organisations, and participated in major UN conferences on gender equality (Diner & Toktaş, 2010).

2.2.4. Patriarchy in full swing: The convergence of neoliberal, religio- conservative, and populist modes of patriarchy in the AKP Türkiye (2002-present)

The *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* [the Justice and Development Party], commonly known as the AKP, was founded in 2001. Since then, the party has risen in six consecutive parliamentary elections[26] held in 2002, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023. These successive victories led to the most right-wing parliament in Türkiye's modern history which enabled the political dominance of the AKP and its authoritarian tendencies (Gokay & Aybak, 2023). The AKP leveraged this dominance to implement some political transformations. In August 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the former prime minister and the party chairman, was elected president. Kaya, Robert and Tecmen (2020) regard this transition as a notable change in Türkiye's political landscape, maintaining that while the president's role had previously been largely ceremonial, under Erdoğan's presidency, the

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[25] *Imam Hatip Okullari* [Imam Hatip Schools] were initially established as vocational schools to train Muslim clerics in 1924. Over time, they have experienced periods of expansion and restriction depending on the political climate in the country. Today, these schools are popular with conservative families and those from lower socio-economic status and offer standard curricula and religious education (Arat. Z, 2022).

[26] Although the AKP has had the majority of votes since they took power in 2002, they lost some local elections in Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir in 2019. Adapted from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/turkey-erdogan-ankara-istanbul-vote-1.5079221

position began to become more highlighted and obtained more power. Erdoğan was reelected as the president in 2023. This was a significant political incident that undermined the country's best chance in a decade to restore its democracy (The Economist, 2023)[27]. Another event that expanded and consolidated Erdoğan's authority was the constitutional referendum in April 2017. This referendum resulted in a series of changes to the country's political system, with one of the most significant being the transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system of governance (Çavdar & Yaşar, 2019).

A large body of literature has examined AKP's gendered politics and discourses. For instance, Güneş-Ayata and Doğangün (2017) maintain that despite having an official gender policy that complies with international institutions, the AKP's religio-conservative stance towards gender equality, especially since the party's second term, has "trivialized legal advances and unleashed traditional forces", which in turn, has given rise to a "gender climate" in the country (p. 611). By gender climate, Güneş-Ayata and Doğangün refer to prevailing gendered discourses and practices that are widely accepted and upheld in both private and public spheres. Such a climate, Güneş-Ayata & Doğangün argue, "determines the modes of thinking, acting, and morality regarding gender relations" (p. 611). With its strong orientation towards Islamism,[28] and its prevalent reactionary and anti-feminist political ideology, the AKP has portrayed Turkish families as heteronormative and the natural locus of women. In the party's political discourse, women are considered "God's deposits given to men"[29], the domesticated subjects whose primary functions are to be subservient to male heads of household and to bear and raise children as an indication of their dedication to the nation (Coşar & Özkan-Kerestecioğlu, 2017; Kandiyoti, 2016; Naz, 2016; Cindoglu & Unal, 2017). In 2016, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan went further by describing birth control as treason and childless women as deficient[30]. Another sign of the AKP's official relegation of women

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[27]Adapted from: https://www.economist.com/europe/2023/05/28/recep-tayyip-erdogan-is-re-elected-as-turkeys-president

[28] Islamism refers to the belief that Islam should guide social and political as well as personal life should be guided by Islamic principles, a form of "religionized politics" and an instance of religious fundamentalism (El-Din Shahin, 2015).

[29] Adapted from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/06/turkish-president-erdogan-childless-women-deficient-incomplete

[30] Adapted from: https://bianet.org/english/women/130607-women-policies-erased-from-political-agenda/

to the family sphere was the dissolution of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs and having it replaced by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. By removing “Women” from the ministry’s title, the government signified a reduction in the status of women and their visibility in public and political affairs (Nas, 2016). According to Webb, such conservative actions marked a notable decline in gender equality progress in Türkiye, making any commitment to addressing gender inequality “a risky step to take in a country where violence against women is common” (as cited in Belge, 2013)[31].

However, the AKP’s religio-conservative gender ideology does not operate in isolation. One defining feature of this era is the compounding impacts of neoliberalism, religio-conservatism, and populism on women’s social, political, and economic conditions (Çavdar & Yaşar 2019; Kandiyoti, 2016; Uysal, 2019; Yarar, 2018). For instance, Kandiyoti (2016) argues that the combination of religio-conservative governmentality and neoliberalism under the AKP has led to the consolidation, institutionalization, and validation of traditional gender roles, while simultaneously reinforcing women’s underrepresentation in power positions. Examining the impacts of the AKP’s welfare and employment policies along with the party’s religio-conservative perceptions towards women’s roles within the family, Ilkkaracan (2013) highlights that while women are expected to play an active role within the country’s economic arena in the AKP era, they are also urged to attend to their traditional roles as mothers and wives. This paradox, Ilkkaracan (2013) notes, has confined women to low-wage, low-status jobs, typically within the informal sector.

In *Women in Türkiye: The Silent Consensus in the Age of Neoliberalism and Islamic Conservatism*, Çavdar and Yaşar (2019) have examined the impacts of Islamic conservatism and neoliberalism on Turkish women’s status in contemporary Türkiye. They characterise neoliberalism and religio-conservatism as “mutually-reinforcing” forces, arguing that “Islamic conservatism is mainly fed by the destructive impacts of neoliberalism” (p. 24). Çavdar and Yaşar contend that women in the AKP era “suffer disproportionately from job insecurity than men even if they are considered employed” (p. 90). The double burden caused by the congruence between the AKP’s neoliberal policies, which encouraged women’s contribution to the country’s economy, and its conservative stance towards women’s roles and responsibilities in the private sphere, as Çavdar

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[31] Adapted from: https://bianet.org/haber/women-policies-erased-from-political-agenda-130607

and Yaşar (2019) maintain, has resulted in a substantial proportion of women being dominantly offered low-paid jobs with little to no job security.

Populism represents another layer of patriarchy in the AKP era. The term populism originated from the Russian Narodnik movement[32] and the left-wing agrarian populist political parties in the United States during the late nineteenth century. However, it remained largely marginal in other parts of the world until a range of extreme right-wing ideologies emerged in Europe and Latin America in the mid-to-late twentieth century (Mudde, 2017; Rosanvallon, 2021). Following the spike in online searches for the word 'populism' right after Donald Trump's election in 2016 and Pope Francis' caution against a rising tide of populism in 2017[33], 'populism' was announced as the Cambridge Dictionary 2017 word of the year.[34] Today, we are living in a "populist Zeitgeist" (Mudde, 2004, p. 542), with the term populism being perceived as "one of the main political buzzwords of the 21st century" (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, pp. 1-2).

According to Mudde (2004) and Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017), populism is an ideology with a few core beliefs. First, populism presents a Manichean worldview[35] ,and, as such, it regards any given society to have "an antagonistic divide" between 'the people,' who are fundamentally virtuous, and 'the elite,' who are fundamentally corrupt (Mudde, 2004, p. 562). In creating a Manichean world between good and evil, populist leaders typically invoke myths, traditions, religion, and heritage to win their followers' support and convince them that they are the ones who will protect 'the people' from 'the others (Kaya, Robert & Tecman, 2020). Similarly, Howarth (2005)

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[32] The Narodniks, driven from the Russian word 'populists,' refer to members of a 19th-century social movement in Russia. They believed that spreading political propaganda among the peasantry would trigger a mass awakening, prepare the ground for socialist Russia, and liberate people from the tsarist regime. Given that Russia was a predominantly agricultural country, and peasants formed the majority of the people, the movement was termed 'nardonichestvo,' or 'populism' (Pedler, 1927)

[33] The Pope warned against the global rise of populism in two high-level interviews he gave to the French El Paris newspaper and the German newspaper Die Zeit in January and March 2017.

[34]Adapted from: https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/populism-revealed-as-2017-word-of-the-year-by-cambridge-university-press

[35] In the Manichean outlook, there are only friends and foes. Opponents are not merely people with different priorities and values. Rather, they are considered evil. Such perception makes any compromise between 'the people' and 'the elite' impossible, as it would corrupt the purity of 'the people' (Mudde, 2004).

understands populism as an ideology that is anti-establishment and "grounded on the construction of an underdog/establishment frontier" (p. 204).

Another core belief of populism is that politics ought to reflect the "*volonté générale*" [the general will], the desires of ordinary people that undermine the self-interested agendas of the elites. A further important feature of populism is that it is a "thin ideology"[36], incapable of offering "complex or comprehensive answers to political questions", thereby failing to satisfy the criteria of "a fully-formed, thick-centered political ideology". To compensate for such a shortcoming, populism should be "attached and sometimes even assimilated into other ideologies" such as socialism or liberalism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, pp. 5-6). Likewise, McDonnell (2017) maintains that "populist movements are never just populist" (p. 27). In fact, populism, as understood by McDonnell, could manifest as either left-wing or right-wing, and, depending on the context within which it operates, it may include elements from a range of various ideologies such as nationalism, neoliberalism, or socialism. Despite these overlaps, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) distinguish between populism, nationalism, and socialism, asserting that while all three are based on fundamental opposition between 'the people' and 'the elite', socialism is rooted in the concept of class, nationalism is based on the concept of nations, and populism is grounded in the concept of morality.

In Türkiye, the history of *Halkçılık* [populism] dates back to the Democrat Party era in the 1950s, with its most recent incarnation appearing under the AKP and Erdoğan's[37] leadership (Taşkın, 2020). Several studies have examined the right-wing populism of the AKP era, focusing on its core features and how it interacts with gender equality issues and feminism (Balta, 2023; Çelik & Balta, 2018; Kaya, Robert & Tesman, 2020; Kandiyoti, 2016; Moghadam, 2018; Taşkın, 2020; Yilmaz Sener, 2021). For instance, regarding the fundamental features of populism in the AKP era, Kaya, Robert, and Tesman (2020) posit that despite its initial manifestation as a "pro-European party" in its early years, the AKP gradually shifted to becoming "Eurosceptic with its populist, Manichean, neo-Ottomanism, Islamist, and authoritarian undertones which considered Islam and

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[36] In Freeden's conceptualization (1998), a thin ideology refers to an ideology that lacks a high level of conceptual complexity and as such can be attached to other thin or more developed and substantive thick ideologies such as liberalism, neoliberalism, conservatism, or socialism to gain complexity and structure (as cited in Nestore & Robertson, 2021).

[37] In the list of populist leaders, Erdoğan is put in the fourth place, with his populist score standing at 1.5 (Yilmaz Sener, 2021).

the West as incompatible (p. 367). Similarly, Balta (2023) highlights the Manichean nature of populism under the AKP, viewing it as a conservative, right-wing, populist party that leverages heritage, religion, and myths to rally support and protect the Islamic values and Ottomanism against the assault from the secular groups and the Kemalists. Çelik & Balta (2018) highlight other core features of AKP populism such as a charismatic leader and a political framework that adopts a "revivalist and alarmist mode" and strives to revive Ottomanism (p.3). A parallel argument is made by Taşkın (2020), who posits that Erdoğan's populism promotes "continuity with the past" to provide "historical legitimacy to the new economic, political, and cultural elites" (p. 9).

While Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) maintain that populism does not relate to gender and that gender differences, are, in fact, secondary or irrelevant to populist politics, some scholars offer different perspectives. Among the notable scholars investigating populist attitudes towards feminism is Moghadam (2018). Moghadam contends that populist leaders are mostly men who often display a "problematical form of hyper-masculinity" and employ gendered discourses. These leaders' perceptions of femininity and women's role in public and private spheres are conservative, and, as such, are "downright dangerous" for gender equality and women's rights (pp. 295-98). Paradoxically, despite their gendered nature, such conservative notions always find supporters among women. For instance, according to Bostan (2011), 54% of Turkish women who voted for Erdoğan in 2011 might have either aligned with the narratives of culture and/or religion being under threat, or they might have been housewives who find security in the traditional sexual division of labour (as cited in Moghadam, 2018, p. 298).

According to Kandiyoti (2016), gender is a "key pillar of populist discourses" under the AKP. She argues that gender norms, and more specifically, the propriety of women's conduct, are a crucial element in defining the boundaries between 'us', the God-fearing, Sunni, and the AKP supporters, and 'them', the AKP's critics, labour activists, feminists, secular middle and upper-classes, and ethnic and religious minorities. It is the individuals in the latter group who, as Kandiyoti adds, are potentially portrayed as "treasonous and immoral" with behaviours such as mixed-sex socialization, loss of virginity before marriage, and the consumption of alcohol, which is deemed as corruptive by the AKP officials (p.105).

Yilmaz Sener (2021) has examined the gendered implications of the AKP leaders' populist rhetoric, positing them as "essentialist" towards women and what engendering a "religio-conservative gender climate" in the country (p.10). Examples of Erdoğan's populist rhetorics

abound. For instance, in a speech on International Women's Day in 2016, Erdoğan promoted the notion of "gender complementarity" and "gender justice", stating that women and men are not equals, but are created to complement one another (Daily Sabah, 2016[38]). In another occasion, at a summit in Istanbul on justice for women, Erdoğan dismissed the notion of equality between men and women, asserting that the concept of gender equality is in conflict with women's kind and elegant *fitrat* [nature]. In the same speech, Erdoğan targeted feminists, characterizing them as individuals who do not accept the concept of motherhood and, as such, are outsiders to those women who represent pious, true Turkish women[39].

Another strategy employed by the AKP to advance its gendered populist agenda was the establishment of new women's organisations, such as the *Kadın ve Demokrasi Derneği, KADEM,* [Association for Women and Democracy]. These organisations, which promote the AKP's conception of gendered justice and its conservative agenda, claim that they embody piety and are the true representatives of Turkish women and feminism. They oppose feminist groups, particularly the Kemalist secular feminist groups, labeling them as "elite" feminists (Yilmaz Sener, 2021, p. 10). These organisations also accuse feminists of "masculinizing women," arguing that they undervalue Turkish women's roles as mothers and wives and prioritize their personal needs and aspirations ahead of those of the family (Yabanci, 2016, p. 15).

2.3. Women's Movement in Contemporary Türkiye

2.3.1. Women's movement in the pre-AKP era

The first wave of the women's movement in Türkiye following the demise of the Ottoman Empire dates back to the early years of the Republic's foundation when Nezihe Muhittin, one of the most prominent figures among the first-wave Republican feminists, founded "*Kadınlar Halk Fırkası*" [Women's People's Party]. The Women's People's Party was forcibly dissolved by the Kemalists. This was mainly because any political parties other than the Republican Party were considered divisive and a threat to the unity of the newly established nation during the Republic's early years (Coşar & Onbaşi, 2008; Zorlu & Doğangün, 2024). In the same vein, Kandiyoti (1987) maintains

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[38] Adapted from: https://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2016/03/09/president-erdogan-hosts-women-from-all-walks-of-life-lauds-their-efforts

[39] Adapted from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/24/turkeys-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-women-not-equal-men

that although the pro-women reforms in the early years of the Republican era laid the groundwork for women's emancipation, the Republicans' strict control over the public sphere and their monopolistic mentality did not allow any independent women's organisations to flourish. This left women "confined by communal norms and customs" (Arat. Y, 2000, p.107), which, in turn, resulted in Turkish women being "emancipated but unliberated" (Kandiyoti,1987, p. 324).

Following the closure of the Women's People's Party, the *Türk Kadınlar Birliği* [the Turkish Women's Union] was founded in 1924, aiming to ameliorate rural women's conditions and secure women's suffrage. Owing to women's advocacy efforts and the state's concerns about the success of its democratization and modernization agenda, this organisation was allowed to operate for almost a decade. Voting rights were granted to women first in municipal elections in 1930, and subsequently in general elections in 1934. However, in 1935, the Turkish Women's Union was dissolved by the Republican leaders as they deemed it as sectarian, individualistic, and a potential threat to national interest. This dissolution marked the end of the first wave of feminism in Türkiye (Zorlu & Doğangün, 2024).

Compared to other European countries, the second wave of women's rights in Türkiye occurred with delay. While the 1960s marked the emergence of the second-wave feminism in Western countries, it was during the 1980s that independent feminist platforms were established and "the defiant daughters of the older generation demanded liberation" (Arat. Y, 2000, p. 107). Much like their European sisters, the second-wave feminists in Türkiye brought up topics such as violence against women in public spaces, the oppression to which women were subjected within the family, the misrepresentation of women in the media, and state-enforced virginity tests[40] (Arat. Y, 2000; Diner & Toktaş, 2010; Parla, 2001; Tekeli, 1986). It was during the 1990s that, following Western feminists' acknowledgment of plurality in understanding the 'woman question', Kurdish and Islamist feminists joined the movement each demanding their rights and "criticizing Turkish mainstream feminists for being ethnocentric and exclusionary of other identities" (Diner & Toktaş, 2010, p. 47).

[40] For the state-enforced virginity tests on women in Türkiye in the years prior to the 1990s when they were abolished by the state due to persistent campaigns by feminists and human rights activists, see Parla (2001).

2.3.2. Women's movements and their resistance platforms in the AKP era

Europeanisation and Islamisation were the AKP's two projects that shaped Türkiye's political landscape in the early 2000s (Çağatay, 2018). The requirements for European Union (EU) membership candidacy mandated the Turkish government to introduce reforms in the cultural and economic rights of women and other gender-marginalized groups as well as the rights of ethnic and religious minorities. To meet the EU criteria, the state's official gender agenda was modified, with the notion of 'gender equality' being incorporated into specific legal texts such as the Constitution, Civil Law, Penal Law, and Labour Law. Also, the pre-accession reforms enabled feminists, adhering to various schools of thought, to strengthen their ground and articulate their demands. For instance, socialist feminists demanded that the state provide free and qualified childcare services for women, so that women could be more active in the job market. Kurdish feminists advocated for the recognition of the Kurds' cultural rights; and Islamic feminists, in their pursuit to participate in public life while wearing headscarf, altered their focus from "freedom of thought and faith to individual rights and freedoms" (Çağatay, 2018, pp. 66-67).

Despite the state's initiatives towards gender equality and feminist groups' intensified activism towards women's economic and cultural rights in the early 2000s, the AKP's advocacy for women and other marginalized groups' rights has considerably declined since 2010, causing these reforms in the country's legal system to appear more symbolic than as actual tools for change. Examples abound in this regard. For instance, Erdoğan's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021, and his repeated statements urging women to have three children, labelling abortion as 'murder', and asserting that men and women "are not equal", illustrate the rhetoric that marked the end of gender reform era in the AKP era (Arat, Z., 2022).

In response to the AKP's gendered discourses and initiatives, Turkish feminist groups have organised numerous movements and established various platforms and NGOs to voice their disapproval of the AKP's indifference towards and biases about Turkish women's struggles. Three of the most notable platforms established since 2010 are the *EŞİK* [Women's Platform for

Equality][41], the *Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu*[42] [We Will Stop Femicide Platform], and women's collective resistance in the *Gezi Park Movement*[43].

3. Women's Presence in Turkish Academia: Progress and Challenges

The concluding section of this literature review comprises three sub-sections. The first sub-section offers a historical account of the transformation of educational opportunities for Turkish women and girls before and after the inception of the Republic of Türkiye. The second sub-section summarizes the existing literature on the progress and challenges experienced by women in Türkiye's higher educational settings and academia. The concluding sub-section explores the atmosphere of fear in Turkish academia in the AKP era.

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[41] To prevent the reversal of pro-women policies in a more collective and systematic way, women from diverse backgrounds and affiliations and LGBT organisations established the platform of EŞİK. More specifically, this platform was established to counter the government's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention, as well as to confront its tendency to pass a bill that would restrict divorced women's rights to alimony, and the possible amnesty for those convicted of sexual assault against children, which would facilitate child marriages if the age difference between the man and the child did not exceed 15 years (Arat. Z, 2022).

[42] The Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu (KCDP) was established in 2020 following the tragic murder of Münevver Karabulut. Since then, the KCDP has been active in Türkiye's women's movement. It produces monthly reports on femicide data, follows up on lawsuits related to women and LGBTI+ communities, and organises street gatherings. In December 2021, the platform was sued by some Islamist groups and conservative members of the AKP on the basis of "conducting illegal and immoral activities". The first hearing was done in June 2022. The attempt to close down the platform was rejected by the court in September 2023.

[43] In May 2013, environmental advocates initiated the Gezi Movement to voice their concerns over the government's plan to demolish Gezi Park, a historical landmark in the heart of Istanbul, and replace it with a giant mosque (see Navaro-Yashin, 2013). The Gezi Park Movement, which began as a peaceful sit-in but evolved into nationwide anti-government protests, is considered the largest civilian uprising in Türkiye in the last decade, with over 3.5 million protesters, which constituted nearly 5% of Türkiye 's population of 77 million in 2013, partaking in demonstrations in 79 cities across Türkiye (Gürcan & Peker, 2015). Despite its adherence to nonviolent direct action, the Gezi Park Movement was subjected to police violence, with security forces responding to non-institutional dissent with brute force. This response resulted in seven deaths, over 7,500 injuries, and the arrest of thousands (Gürcan & Peker, 2015; NBC News, 2013). With women's significant participation rate of 50.9 percent, the Gezi Movement stands out as a turning point in the ongoing resistance of Turkish women against the misogynistic actions of the AKP (Anisin, 2016; Baydar, 2015; Gürcan & Peker, 2015). In one incident, when the governor of Istanbul appealed to mothers to call their children away from the 'unsafe' Gezi Park, a large group of mothers entered the park and formed a human shield around Gezi protesters to protect them against anti-riot police violence while chanting "mothers are everywhere, resistance is everywhere."

3.1. From Exclusion from Madrasa to Prominence in Academia: The Historical Educational Progress of Women in Türkiye

Women's and girls' education was largely neglected throughout the Ottoman era. Before the nineteenth century, women's and girls' education was mainly reserved for upper-class, elite families. It was either provided by private tutors at home or offered in foreign missionary schools (Gelişli, 2004). Another group of women who had access to educational opportunities in this period were those living within the confines of the imperial harems (Peirce, 1993). In the nineteenth century, while formal education became available for the general female population in Türkiye, only a small number of madrasas[44] admitted girls. The subjects girls were taught were mainly limited to religious disciplines, proper manners, and sewing to prepare girls for their anticipated domestic roles[45]. Women and girls' limited access to educational opportunities in the Ottoman era was primarily due to patriarchal socio-cultural norms, along with the limited educational funding that gave priority to boys' education over that of girls. With the reform movements during the Tanzimat period in 1839[46], formal education for girls was established, albeit mostly in urban areas, with merely a small fraction of the population having access to it (Durakbaşa & Karapehlivan, 2018; Gelişli, 2004).

Following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, Atatürk established the Republic of Türkiye in 1923 and mandated the secularisation and modernisation of the country's legal system, language, religion, and education. Women and girls' access to formal education was one of the many reform projects that Atatürk implemented. He opened the doors of formal education to

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[44] Madrasa refers to an educational setting that instructed Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), along with various other disciplines related to the study of Islamic law (Walbridge, 2010).

[45] It is, however, important to note that although women's access to educational opportunities was restricted in the Ottoman era, they were not excluded from participating in economic activities, with some women even having been engaged in running silk production sites in the Anatolia region (Karta, 2016).

[46] Tanzimat reforms were a period of edicts in the Ottoman Empire initiated in 1839 and lasted for almost thirty years. Among these reforms, which aimed at modernizing and strengthening the Empire, was the1839 *Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane* [Noble Edict of the Rose Chamber] which asserted property rights, established new taxation law, and prohibited execution without trial. During the Tanzimat period, other reforms recalling the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the Citizen were also introduced and implemented. Adapted from: https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/faq/tanzimat-reforms

women and girls and established modern, unified, secular, and co-educational institutions nationwide (Toktas & Cindoglu, 2006).

The entry of women into Turkish academia mirrored the women's equality reforms and the newly founded state's desire to reflect the image of a modern Türkiye (Acar, 1993). According to Köker (1988), in 1932, the first cohort of women started teaching at three newly established higher education institutions in Istanbul and Ankara, marking a historic milestone in women's presence in Turkish academia (as cited in Yenilmaz, 2016). Since then, Türkiye has witnessed a stable growth rate in the university sector, which facilitated women's access to academic positions (Acar, 1993; Özbilgin & Healy, 2004), with women constituting 45% of the academic workforce in 2023 (World Bank, 2024). As of 2024, Türkiye had a total of 208 universities and higher technology institutes, of which 75 are private universities, four are private vocational education schools, and the rest are public, state-run universities. All higher education institutions in Türkiye are accredited and supervised by *Yükseköğretim Kurulu* (YÖK) [Council of Higher Education] ("YÖK," 2024).

3.2. The Paradox of Women's Progress in Turkish Academia: Gender Parity in Faculty Positions, Underrepresentation in Academic Leadership

The available literature on the status of women in tertiary education, the labour market, and academia in the Arab MENA countries reveals a striking paradox. While women have achieved education above the secondary level at the same rate as men (Arab Barometer, 2024)[47], their participation in the labour market stands at 19%, far below the global average of 47% (The World Bank, 2024). In academia, women's representation in senior academic positions reflects a similar disparity. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, where women constitute over 50% of university students, only 3% of overall managerial positions are held by women in the country's academic settings (Ministry of Education Saudi Arabia, 2020)[48]. Similarly, in Jordan, despite women's strong participation in tertiary education, only 7% of professors are women, and as of 2020, there were no female presidents, deans, or vice-deans in Jordanian public unvirilities (Ministry of Higher

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[47] Adapted from: https://www.arabbarometer.org/

[48] Adapted from: https://www.moe.gov.sa/en/knowledgecenter/dataandstats/womenprofessors

Education Jordan, 2020)[49]. Kuwait and Morocco present an equally stark pictures, with women's representation in leadership positions standing at 4% and 5 %, respectively (Al-Fanar Media, 2018)[50]. The gender gap in the MENA region's academia extends to research output as well. For instance, among the 1.7 million papers published in the MENA region between 2008 and 2020, male researchers published between 11% and 51% more than their female counterparts (Mazawi et al., 2023) Factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership positions in the Arab MENA academia mainly stem from the tension between micro-level gender-based societal expectations and academic mandates (Abuhussein, Koburtay & Staniszewska, 2025; Alshdiefat et al., 2024; Karam & Afiouni, 2014), lack of mentoring and networking opportunities (Johnson et al., 2022), discriminatory recruitment and appraisal practices (Abalkhail, 2017; Sidani et al., 2015), and lack of comprehensive reforms, including legislative, political, and regulatory changes to alleviate gender disparity in academic leadership in the Arab MENA countries (Blaique et al., 2023).

Similar patterns of gender disparity in academic leadership can be observed in Türkiye. While Türkiye maintains the lowest female labour force participation rate among the 38 OECD members, standing at 35.5% in 2023, and ranks 129th of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index in 2023, this is not the case in academia where gender parity has almost been achieved in nearly all fields of study. According to the World Bank (2024), women's participation in Turkish academia has considerably increased in the last sixty years, rising from 19% in 1960, to 34.6% in 1998, and 45% in 2023[51]. However, despite women's strong presence in professoriate positions in Türkiye, only one in five senior and middle management positions in Türkiye was held by women[52]. Women's representation in academic leadership depicts an even more concerning picture, with women occupying only 9.1% of rectorships and 10.3% of vice-rectorships (EU Horizon, 2023).

Legal, socio-economic, and historical factors have facilitated women's significant representation in professoriate positions in Turkish academia. As previously discussed, the main factor behind this phenomenon is women's equality laws inspired by the modernization ideologies

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[49] Adapted from: https://mohe.gov.jo/EN/List/Statistics

[50] Adapted from: https://al-fanarmedia.org/2018/12/arab-women-are-left-out-of-university-leadership/

[51] Adapted from: https://data.worldbank.org

[52] Adapted from: https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/employment/#

of ‘state feminism’ in the Republican era (Kandiyoti, 1987; Öztan & Doğan, 2015). Additionally, Turkish men are more inclined towards the private sector, which, unlike academia, offers them better financial prospects (Özbilgin & Healy, 2004). Another line of argument stresses the transparent academic appointment regulations in the country which have enabled a better understanding of the requirements for academic positions (Özbilgin & Healy, 2004; White & Özkanli, 2011). Lastly, women’s strong presence in Turkish academia is attributed to the fact that teaching careers have historically been perceived as ‘safe’ and ‘proper’ for women in broader Turkish society (Healy, Özbilgin & Aliefendioğlu, 2005; Sağlamer et al., 2018). Despite these facilitators that strengthened women’s presence in Turkish academia and positioned Türkiye as having a higher proportion of academic women than most OECD countries, recent studies have revealed that, regardless of academic discipline or geographical location, gender-based biases and male-centeredness persist in Turkish academia (Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018; Bülbül, 2021; Tombal, 2023). These gendered biases and attitudes, which are primarily informed by deeply ingrained socio-cultural patriarchal discourses, impact women’s career success and progression in academia. They manifest themselves in various forms of discriminatory attitudes among men and women in academia. Key examples include the scarcity of systemic and formal mentorship opportunities (Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018; Sağlamer et al., 2018; Taşkın & Çetin, 2012), the prevalence of the “boys’ clubs” (Ustun & Gümüseli, 2017; Öztürk & Şimşek, 2019; White & Özkanlı, 2011), harassment and mobbing (Aksatan, Gunlu & Kozak, 2020; Ecevit & Beşpınar, 2020), and the “queen bee” syndrome [53](Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018).

For instance, Bakioğlu and Ülker (2018) studied the challenges and career barriers that women academics across various disciplines encountered in several state universities in Türkiye. Their findings revealed that male-dominant institutional climate and the queen bee syndrome limited mentorship opportunities for women in Turkish academia. Similarly, Sağlamer et al. (2018) examined gendered practices and obstacles, both overt and covert, that women in Turkish academia faced. They identified inadequate mentorship opportunities and failure to develop networks as the two main obstacles hindering women’s advancement in Turkish academia. The impact of the “boys’ clubs” on Turkish women academics’ careers has also been widely documented. For instance, in their study of men and women’s perceptions of women leaders in

[53] The “queen bee” syndrome refers to the tendency of women in positions of power to avoid supporting other women in the workplace and even to undermine their advancement.

Turkish academia, White and Özkanlı (2011) found that, despite holding senior positions, many men senior managers were reluctant to use their authority to support women's entry into and success in academic leadership positions in Türkiye.

Several studies have examined Turkish academics' perceptions of sexual harassment in Türkiye's higher education settings. For instance, Aksatan, Gunlu and Kozak (2020) identified sexual harassment and workplace mobbing as areas of concern for women in tourism academia. A similar situation is reported by Bakioğlu and Ülker (2018) who noted that sexual harassment is a challenge for women in Turkish academia. Ecevit and Beşpınar (2020) expanded this discussion by arguing that, except for a few higher education institutions, a large number of sexual harassment cases either go unreported or are disregarded when reported. Ecevit and Beşpınar attribute this silence to the social and institutional dominance of men in Turkish academia, which fails to validate women's experiences and reinforces the stigma that is typically attached to harassment survivors.

Beyond these meso-level discriminatory factors, a substantial body of literature point to the impeding impacts of conservative family ideology and it resultant gender-based challenges on women's career advancement in Turkish academia (Aksatan, Gunlu & Kozak, 2020; Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018; Healy, Özbilgin & Aliefendioğlu, 2005; Sağlamer et al., 2018; Tombal, 2023; Yenilmaz, 2016; Yildirim & Eslen-Ziya, 2021). For instance, Ustun and Gümüseli (2017) examined the underrepresentation of women rectors in Türkiye's higher educational settings. Their findings suggest that domestic responsibilities and traditional gender roles are the main barriers to women's representation in leadership positions. Taşkın and Çetin (2012) shared similar findings, noting that gendered roles, which expect women to be the principal care providers for their children and the elderly, were the principal reason behind women's underrepresentation in leadership and managerial positions in Turkish academia. It is crucial to acknowledge that while women from across diverse cultural, social, and geographical backgrounds might experience common structural barriers to academic advancement, every woman's experience is context-specific, shaped by individual circumstances, and thus is inherently unique.

3.3. The Climate of Fear and Intellectual Repression in the AKP Era

In modern Türkiye, the history of academic censorship and repression dates back to the early years of the Republic, when anti-revolutionary discourses and political dissidence were prohibited

in academic practices (Fındıklı, 2022; Weiker, 1962). Since then, Türkiye's higher education has witnessed several phases of human rights violations and breaches of freedom of speech and expression in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1980s, albeit with varied severity and scope (Fındıklı, 2022).

Turkish academia experienced relative democratisation from the mid-1990s through the 2000s. During this period, historically sensitive topics such as the Armenian genocide[54], Kurdish issues and issues related to gender equality appeared in research and publications (Hünler, 2023). Nonetheless, under the AKP, and especially in the years following the 2013 Gezi Park Movement, Türkiye has witnessed an unprecedented rise in authoritarianism and an increase in the frequency and severity of freedom of speech and expression violations. The AKP's repressive actions have impacted individuals across various professions. The academic community has been amongst those who were impacted the most, especially following two major 2016 incidents: the crack down on the *Academics for Peace* initiative and the widespread purge of academic personnel after the 2016 attempted coup (Doğan, 2023).

- **Academics for Peace**

On 11 January 2016, over 1,200 academics, from 89 universities in Türkiye and abroad, signed the *Barış İçin Akademisyenler* [Academics for Peace] Petition[55] to express concern regarding escalating state violence and extensive curfews in Kurdish-populated areas. The signatories criticized the Turkish government for violating its own laws and international human rights treaties, demanding an end to the curfews and violence and a return to peace negotiations (Baser, Akgönül & Öztürk, 2018). However, this petition caused severe repercussions for the signatories. According to Barış İçin Akademisyenler (2019), right after the petition was released, Erdoğan denounced the signatories, calling them "traitors", "pseudo-intellectuals", "ignorant", "cruel

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[54] The Armenian genocide is regarded as the first non-colonial genocide of the twentieth-century which was done in the Ottoman Empire during World War first.
Adapted from: https://gsp.yale.edu/case-studies/armenian-genocide

[55] *Academics for Peace* was initially established in 2012 to support the Kurdish prisoners' demands for peace in Türkiye. In the 2012 statement, which was signed by 264 academics from 50 universities across Türkiye, the signatories stated their dedication to a peace process in Türkiye and their contribution to it through research and producing knowledge on topics such as processes of peace and conflict, peace negotiations, and the role of women in peace processes. The 2016 petition also came to be known as *We Will Not Be a Party to This Crime.* Adapted from: https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/node/1

people", and "representatives of darkness" (as cited in Redlawsk, 2021, p. 904). Shortly after, Erdoğan demanded the judiciary to act harshly, declaring, "I call upon our institutions: everyone who benefits from this state, but is now an enemy of the state must be punished without further delay" (Shiermeier, 2016). Following Erdoğan's order, criminal prosecutions were initiated against the signatories, accusing them of terrorist propaganda. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) mandated all universities across the country to conduct disciplinary proceedings against those involved. Subsequently, many signatories faced legal proceedings, job dismissals, or suspensions. In an act of solidarity, 1,000 additional academics added their names to the petition, bringing the total to more than 2,000 signatories. Scholars at Risk (SAR) documented 1,035 instances of detention or arrest warrants issued against university personnel, with 776 personnel and students physically detained[56]. This unprecedented reaction to a peace-seeking petition "reflected a particular form of authoritarianism combined with repression of freedoms" (Abbas & Zalta, 2017, p.632).

A few months later, the academic purge gained traction. In the aftermath of the June 15, 2016, coup attempt[57], Erdoğan declared a two-year State of Emergency and introduced "substantial modifications to the legal and administrative structures of the State "(OHCHR 2018, as cited in Erdem & Akin, 2019, p. 145). Shortly thereafter, all 1,577 university deans across the country were forced to resign and 15 universities were closed. This led to the displacement of roughly 56,000 students and left 2,808 personnel unemployed. Additionally, three emergency decrees were issued, mandating the cancellation of the scholarships of 285 students studying abroad and denying recognition of any degrees or certificates they would acquire[58]. By July 2019, more than 750 Peace

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[56] Adapted from: https://www.universityworldnews.com/Turkish academics under attack

[57] On July 15, 2016, a faction within Türkiye's Armed Forces launched a coup attempt to topple Erdoğan's government. The coup was suppressed after several hours. In the following days, weeks, and months, the government undertook a massive crackdown on those who were involved, accusing them of being connected to Fethullah Gülen, who is a Turkish Islamic preacher residing in exile in the US, an accusation that Gülen denied. In the aftermath, more than 100,000 people were arrested and detained, many of whom were subjected to torture, beatings, rape, and sexual abuse. During two years of martial law in the aftermath of the coup, 150,000 public servants including journalists, judges, and academics were dismissed from their posts. Adapted from: https://www.amnesty.org.uk/turkey-coup-crackdown-human-rights & https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/03/government-response-turkeys-coup-affront-democracy

[58] Adapted from: https://www.universityworldnews.com/Turkish academics under attack & https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20160827072957454

Petition signatories had been charged with ‘spreading propaganda for a terrorist organisation’ and/or insulting ‘Turkishness’, with 203 of them convicted (Redlawsk, 2021).

In total, more than 5,800 academics faced administrative, civil, and criminal repercussions, including investigations, dismissals without due process, arrest, detention, loss of pensions and healthcare, prohibition from public employment, and passport confiscation (Agmon, 2019[59]). Additionally, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) directed deans to discourage academics from researching or participating in international conferences on controversial topics such as those related to the Kurds and religious minorities. The repercussions academics underwent through the two years of the State of Emergency created a climate of fear, leading to self-censorship and the erosion of academic freedom (Human Rights Watch, 2018[60]; Taştan, Ördek & Öz, 2020).

While the State of Emergency was lifted in 2018, Türkiye has since experienced a surge in authoritarian practices. As mentioned earlier, the transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system, which was finalized after the June 2018 election, has exacerbated authoritarianism in Türkiye and diminished the independence of the judiciary. According to Hünler (2023), one of the dire repercussions of this transition and the weakening of the court system has been the weaponization of national security and terrorism charges to silence academics, intellectuals, human rights activists, journalists, and other voices of dissent across the country.

Chapter Summary

This study’s literature review comprised various sections and multiple sub-sections, through which I aimed to illustrate the complexity and multi-faceted nature of patriarchy, both globally and in the context of Türkiye. It examined the definitions of patriarchy proposed by feminists from various schools of thought and demonstrated how the interplay between patriarchy and diverse social identities, such as religion, ethnicity, and class, alongside various ‘isms’, including populism and neoliberalism, has rendered patriarchy a dynamic and adaptive system capable of not only surviving but also reinforcing itself. The literature review on patriarchy evoked in me the image of a

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[59] Adapted from: https://hcommons.org/deposits/item/hc:25363/

[60] Adapted from: https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/14/turkey-government-targeting-academics

'chameleon,' adeptly adapting to and finding refuge within social, economic, and religious forces to ensure its survival and continuity.

Additionally, this review highlighted the complexity of women's presence in Turkish academia. Despite the low participation of women in Türkiye's job market and the country's near-bottom ranking in the World Economic Forum's 2023 Gender Gap Report, almost 40% of faculty positions in Turkish academia are held by women. The concluding section of this literature review examined the declining state of academic freedom in the AKP era, particularly in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt and the Academics for Peace petition.

Nonetheless, having reviewed the literature on Turkish women academics' experiences of gender inequality and career progression in patriarchal Türkiye, several gaps emerged. First, no research to date has explored Turkish women academics' lived experiences of patriarchy at macro, meso, and micro levels within the scope of a single study. As such, there is a lack of research on academic women's various subject positions while they are exploring patriarchy at different stages of their lives. Second, the literature has yet to capture the insights and recommendations of Turkish women academics concerning tools and strategies for dismantling gendered conventions and principles within Türkiye's academic settings and beyond. Finally, existing literature lacks research on how Turkish women academics perceive academic career success and its interplay with the structure of gender in patriarchal Türkiye.

Chapter 3: The Research Paradigm and Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines my philosophical assumptions, positionality, and the theoretical framework that scaffold and guide this study. It first delineates the epistemological, ontological, and axiological foundations directing this study, then details my positionality. The chapter further articulates a multi-faceted theoretical framework which is employed to analyze participants' narratives.

1. The Research Paradigm

The term paradigm, first introduced by Thomas Kuhn (1962) as a belief system that informs any research, describes the researcher's philosophical ways of thinking. These philosophical pathways dictate the entire research process, from the formulation of research questions to data collection and analysis (as cited in Broido & Manning, 2002; Morgan, 2007). Guba (1990) posits that a paradigm is "a set of beliefs and values that guide action, whether of the everyday garden variety or an action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry" (p. 17). Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) conceive a paradigm as patterns guiding researchers in their philosophical assumptions and their selection of tools, instruments, participants, and methods. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a research paradigm consists of four elements: epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology. This section will outline the first three elements of this study's paradigm. The methodology component of this study's paradigm will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, stems from the Greek words *epistēmē,* meaning knowledge, and *epistanai*, meaning to understand how (Killam, 2013). Epistemology is" the discussion of questions of knowing and knowledge" (Davis, 2010, p. 195). Or, as Johnson and Duberley (2000) posit, epistemology consists of assumptions about how we know what we know. The next element, ontology, derived from the ancient Greek word *ων/on/,* concerns itself with what constitutes reality. Simply put, ontology refers to our understanding of the world (Guba,1990). Lastly, axiology, which addresses the nature of ethical behaviour, originates from two Greek words: *axios* meaning worth, and *logos* meaning reason. In research, axiology refers to what the researcher believes is valuable and ethical; it forms a set of value doctrines that guide the research process (Creswell, 2013; Hart, 1971; Killam, 2013).

I approached this study with my beliefs and values rooted in (feminist) poststructuralism. Epistemologically, I hold that knowledge is discursively articulated, situated, and cannot be

separated from power dynamics. Also, my epistemological assumption examines how participants of this study exercised and experienced different notions of power, as well as how they reproduce or disrupt dominant patriarchal knowledge that circulates within their academic settings and beyond. Ontologically, I ascribe to the belief that various social positionings, such as gender, race, and class shape the multiple, fragmented, and, at times, contradictory realities and truths that simultaneously exist. Accordingly, my ontological stance for this study grounds itself in the diverse realities of power relations manifested in patriarchal structures and the deconstruction of these structures. Axiologically, I respect the diversity of my participants' values, beliefs, and perspectives. Acknowledging the value-laden nature of my research and admitting that it would be impossible to eliminate assumptions informed by my own lived experiences with patriarchy, I positioned myself in the study and actively monitored how my values and biases might present themselves throughout my research journey.

- **(Feminist) Poststructuralism**

Having its roots in both feminist and poststructuralist theories, feminist poststructuralism is a philosophical perspective and a methodology that is concerned with "disrupting and displacing" dominant, oppressive, and androcentric knowledge (Gavey, 1997, p. 185). Broadly speaking, feminism is concerned with dynamics of power and the role that one's gender plays in such dynamics. Originating from the late 1960s Women's Liberation Movement, contemporary feminism aims to challenge the oppression of women, and the power relations produced and exercised in patriarchal societies. Contemporary feminism is also concerned with how other oppressive structures, such as class and race, have intensified women's experiences of patriarchy. Also, as a mode of knowledge production, "feminist poststructuralism uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes, and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change" (Weedon, 1997, pp. 40-41).

With its emphasis on the fluidity of language, discourse, and subjectivity, poststructuralism emerged as a critical response to structuralism in the 1960s and 1970s. Challenging structuralists' reliance on scientificity, synchronicity, ahistoricism, and universalism to understand human existence and relations within and between structures, poststructuralism asserts the multiplicity, and historical and cultural situatedness of knowledge (Lundy, 2013). Put another way, "poststructuralism is a philosophical framework [that] shifts attention from individualism to subjectivity, from text to discursive practices, and from signifier to signifying practices. It focuses on

how language works, in whose and what interests, and on what cultural sites and why" (Kelly, 1997, p. 19). Similarly, borrowing its guiding principles from poststructuralism, feminist poststructuralism emphasized the concepts of subjectivity, discourse, power relations, and agency to analyze and understand the dynamics of gender and power relations and the role of discourse in (re)producing and disrupting gendered knowledge in various spheres of life.

- **Subjectivity**

Both poststructuralism and feminist poststructuralism maintain that there is no essential self. Within this framework, shifting discourses within power networks constantly (re)construct us, the subjects, and our understanding of the world (Gavey, 2011; St. Pierre, 2000). The fluid nature of discourse, as Butler posits, enables "the permanent possibility of resignifying processes," thereby allowing subjects to be continuously (re)constituted (Butler, 1992, p. 13). By examining how cultural and historical norms and practices (re)constitute subjects, both philosophical perspectives maintain that "not only do power relations force us into particular ways of being, but they also make those ways desirable such that we actively take them up as our own" (Davies & Gannon, 2004, p. 37).

- **Discourse**

Discourse is another significant principle introduced by poststructuralists, primarily by Michel Foucault, and subsequently adopted by feminist poststructuralists. Concerned with the ways in which knowledge is created and sustained in various cultures, Foucault perceives discourse as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak […] Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them" (1972, p. 49). Discourses, as understood by Foucault, are spoken or written practices or visual representations that, once established, are dispersed throughout society, shape our knowledge, dictate meaning, and inform the cultural norms and practices we engage in (Foucault, 1972). To represent how discourses circulate within any given society, Foucault likened society to a body and discourses to substances. In this metaphor, much like how blood flows through the arterial and venous systems and capillaries, discourses circulate in the populace. As Foucault asserts, this cyclical process of discourse enables the maintenance and reinforcement of discourses throughout the body of society (As cited in Grbich, 2004, p. 40). In response, poststructuralism aims to destabilize the discourses (re)produced by normalising techniques designed to reinforce dominant norms and practices. In doing so, both poststructuralists and feminist poststructuralists advocate for the recognition of

narratives often pushed to the periphery or silenced because they do not conform to dominant discourses (Foucault, 1978; Weedon, 1997).

- **Power relations and agency**

Power relations and agency form two other dominant principles of poststructuralism. Poststructuralism rejects power as a static entity and instead perceives it as diffuse. In this vein, power is “operationalized in interactions between individuals and institutions” (Gannon & Davies, 2012, p. 89). This perception towards power is heavily influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, among others, who maintains that power is omnipresent, exists in relations, proceeds in every direction, and is “mobile, reversible, and unstable” (Foucault, 1997, p. 292). Power, as understood by Foucault, is not merely oppressive, but also productive; it generates knowledge, dictates what counts as truth, and constitutes subjects. Hence, within poststructuralist writing, the notion of agency is not conceived as a separate entity external to power relations; instead, it is understood as the subject’s involvement in the constitution of and reliance on power relations and the discourses these power relations constitute and are constituted by. Additionally, poststructuralists conceptualise agency as the subject’s ability to generate new subjectivities that can disrupt, or even potentially alter power relations and discourses (Davies & Gannon, 2004). Similarly, while Foucault (1997) argues that power relations constitute subjectivity, he does not negate individual agency. Instead, he maintains the necessity of free subjects in power relations, for the free subject can resist and alter such relations. He states,

> Power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are free. If one of them were completely at the other’s disposal and became his thing, an object on which he could wreak boundless and limitless violence, there would not be any relations of power. Thus, for power relations to come into play, there must be at least a certain degree of freedom on both sides […] In power relations, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all (p. 292).

Similarly, feminist poststructuralism maintains power as relational and understands patriarchal power relations as constructed and perpetuated through the premises of “normality, rationality, and naturalness” which are often granted to the dominant side of binaries typically occupied by men (Davies & Gannon, 2004, P. 318). In feminist poststructuralist writing, agency does not seek

freedom from “the discursive constitution and regulation of self,” nor does it undermine the multiplicities of subjectivities. Instead, it acknowledges the fluidity and socio-historical contingency of gendered discourse and the subjectivities they constitute, thereby opening up the possibility for the critique and change of significations created by such discourses (Davies & Gannon, 2004, p. 318). Such potential for critique and change allows women to shift along the continuum: on the one end, they identify with and adhere to the discursively constructed traditional femininity scripts, and on the other, they resist and subvert them (Gavey, 2011).

2. The Landscape of My Positionality: Navigating Patriarchy and Resistance

“Don’t you dare touch the cookies; they are for your cousins,” my grandfather growled at a 3-year-old girl straining on her tiptoes to reach the cookie jar. That girl was me. I knew precisely which cousins he meant: my male cousins, his male heirs. They would, in my grandfather’s words, carry on his ‘precious’ lineage, and were therefore entitled to every privilege-from the forbidden chocolate cookies to my grandfather’s properties. This was my first encounter with being treated as *the second sex,* a bitter experience that lingered for almost three decades.

I was born and raised in a patriarchal family in which my grandfather was the ultimate authority, the unquestioned patriarch. As a little girl, I often asked my mother what I had done wrong that made my grandfather withhold his love from me. Why was I never allowed near him except on special occasions, such as Nowruz[61], when he would briefly extend his right hand for me to kiss? My mom looked at me and said, “you did nothing wrong; this is the norm.” Soon enough, I realized that my only fault was simply being a girl, a girl who was only allowed to stand, albeit uncomfortably, in the shadow of her male cousins’ primacy. Nonetheless, while my grandfather barred me from those chocolate cookies and exposed me to the extent of his restrictions, my determination to challenge and defy him drove me to create small acts of resistance: from crumbling cookies in that forbidden jar, to adding pepper and salt to his afternoon tea. I did not realize then that rather than feeling like acts of rebellion, these subtle acts of defiance formed for me new ways of being. Each crumbled cookie and every pinch of pepper and salt I added to my grandfather’s tea forged new subject positions for me. These subject positions not only enabled me

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[61] Nowruz, meaning “new day” in Persian, marks the new year for Parsis and other people of Persian decent.

to defy the docility and obedience expected of me but solidified my determination to combat patriarchy beyond household walls.

Like many other Iranian girls and women, I lived within the harsh confines of a patriarchal society where invisibility and obedience to the male members of our families formed our gendered social environment. The norms of society dictated that we were *not to be heard,* were *not to voice our concerns, and* were *not to lead, but be led*. From primary school through my tertiary education, I experienced the painful stings of discrimination and marginalization. As Johnson (2014) maintains, patriarchy is not merely a system of male dominance over women and other men; it is an oppressive system upheld by both men and women, with patriarchal norms and values circulating in the air we breathe. I remember the day I challenged a female teacher during our ethics and religious studies class, a required course where we sat in rows, heads covered, getting bombarded with what she deemed appropriate for young girls the learn. The teacher praised the virtue of absolute obedience of women to their husbands, fathers, and brothers. Her voice filled with conviction as though she had just read the Ten Commandments. She paused after her declaration and scanned the classroom to see if anyone dared to question her authority. I raised my hand and asked: "But doesn't the Quran say that men and women are equal?" The teacher's face turned red with fury and before I could register what was happening, she slapped me across my face. "How dare you question God's order?", she hissed. She sent me home immediately with a letter of reprimand asking my *father* to sign it and guarantee that such rebelliousness would not happen again. This was my very first encounter with the hideous reality of gender inequality and discrimination as imposed by *women* against *women*. This harrowing experience lingered with me for over three decades and made me realize that in any given patriarchy, individuals, regardless of their gender identity, could contribute to reinforcing patriarchal values and norms.

Johnson (2014) regards control as one of the four branches of the patriarchy tree. He posits that control in and of itself is not bad as a hallmark of being human, it allows us to rise out of chaos. However, as he contends, "under patriarchy, control is more than a human expression. Rather, it is valued and pursued to a degree that gives the social life an oppressive form by taking a natural human capacity to obsessive extremes" (p.14). Within a patriarchal mindset, control becomes a desired end in and of itself, instead of a means to achieve a greater goal. This gives rise to an obsession with commanding women and other marginalized groups by restricting their autonomy and advancement. My personal experience pursuing my academic career illuminated the ways in which men professors express their desire for dominance and control through the

academic environment. I began my bachelor's degree with the hope that the academic settings in my country would harbor fewer patriarchal tendencies and that men in academia would exhibit egalitarian qualities rather than an obsession with exerting patriarchal dominance and control. However, I was proven wrong. In the second year of my bachelor's degree, I learned of an internal math competition between biology and chemistry students. Despite my strong math skills, my math professor, a renowned faculty member, overlooked me and handpicked those whose math skills either matched mine, or fell below my abilities. Later, through conversation with a friend, I learned that the professor excluded me because I was the only female student who always challenged his insights on various topics, from math problems to social issues.

The pervasiveness of patriarchy and the value attributed to it, as I experienced across the micro and meso levels of my life, confronted me with one of the biggest challenges of my life, a profound sense of *belonging nowhere*. I connect this sense to what Anzaldúa (1987) called "living in the borderlands" with all its positive and negative features. Belonging nowhere, or residing in the borderland, prohibited me from feeling completely *at home*, yet it also enabled me to create my own space, a space in which I could safely question patriarchy and seek resistance strategies to subvert it. Similar to how Anzaldúa (1987) perceives *in-betweenness* as an empowering experience, this sense of belonging nowhere, albeit painful and at times paralyzing, granted me some socially situated perspectives and the subject position of a *situated knower*. In *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,* Haraway (1988) posits that one's positional perspectives, the lens through which one perceives the world, shapes all knowledge, and therefore shapes forms of truth. Thus, as she continues, objectivity is not universal; it is situated within specific contexts and environments, historically, societally, culturally, and bodily. My embodied experiences as a woman interacting with patriarchal discourses and practices on a daily basis, along with my emotions, beliefs, values, and this sense of belonging nowhere continually afforded me novel subject positions. These subject positions not only informed my *claims to know* but fuelled an evolving praxis of resistance against the gender inequality I experienced across various spheres of my life. Put another way, those experiences of belonging nowhere were not merely a state of loss or lack; in fact, they enabled me to develop subject positions through which "I live[d] in it in a critical, reflexive relation to my own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions" (Haraway, 1988, p. 579).

Seeking to escape the familial and social patriarchy I was navigating for more than three decades, I immigrated to Canada in 2013. Here, I am not treated as the second sex and am able to verbalize my thoughts without fear of interrogation. Nonetheless, at times, the sense of belonging nowhere and alienation resurface. The feeling of in-betweenness and inhabiting liminal spaces, along with the challenges they produce, have offered me the opportunity to reflect on my pre-immigration experiences with patriarchy. In turn, this enabled me to develop new subject positions and expand my knowledge about myself and my surroundings. In this space, I decided to embark on my PhD journey.

Initially, I decided to conduct my PhD research on Iranian women academics and their interactions with patriarchy. Later, I changed the context of my study from Iran to Türkiye, switching from one patriarchy to another. A few key motivations inspired this shift. First, I lived and worked in Türkiye for almost two years. During this time, I witnessed the ongoing struggle of Turkish women against patriarchy. This first-hand exposure to patriarchal Türkiye combined with my reading the fiction and non-fiction works of Turkish feminist writers, Elif Shafak and Erendiz Atasü, shed light on the embeddedness of the disciplinary, normalising, and biopolitical mechanisms of patriarchal power in various spheres of Turkish women's lives. Additionally, while on the surface Türkiye might project Ataturk's egalitarian model with its co-educational schooling system and its laws granting women custody and divorce rights, its high rates of femicide, low rates of women's participation in the workplace, and the misogynist discourses of the ruling government deeply undermine such progressivism and display how existing social structures weave patriarchy into the very fabric of Turkish society.

Yet most importantly, my reticence to explore patriarchy in the context of Iran can be understood using Foucault's (1977) *panopticon,* an invisible disciplinary power mechanism that generates visible and self-monitoring subjects. Since birth, I intimately interacted with the oppressive dynamics of patriarchy. As the third daughter born into a family who wished for a son, I consider myself, in retrospect, a girl *born with a patriarchal knife in her mouth*. Such close encounters with patriarchy sharpened my yearning to explore my lived experiences with patriarchy as well as those of other women. However, when it came to choosing the context for my PhD study, an *(in)visible internal shackle* prevented me from exploring patriarchy within the context of my homeland. Although I now lived miles away from my country, the freedom from surveillance that I thought I had earned by leaving Iran proved itself to be a mere illusion. Long years of interacting with patriarchy in my home country seemingly trapped me within a patriarchal panopticon. This

panopticon's confining walls ingrained in me the ceaseless sense that I was under constant scrutiny, an internalised mechanism of control whose relentless gaze persists to this day. By remaining confined within the figurative cells of this panopticon, staring at its guard tower, I have, albeit unwittingly, contributed to the maintenance of its oppressive surveillance system.

3. The Theoretical Framework

According to Eisenhart (1991), a theoretical framework is "a structure that provides research guidance through the utilization of an established, coherent explanation of particular phenomena and relationships" (p. 205). Türkiye's expanding populist, neoliberal, and patriarchal climate emphasises the importance of my interest in the complex academic environments within which women in Turkish academia function. Because the concept of power underpins the premise of this study, it is worthwhile examining the dynamics between various technologies of patriarchal power operating at micro, meso, and macro levels in the country. More specifically, I explore the ways in which Turkish women academics employ strategies to navigate and subvert the discourses created by such technologies. It is also important to examine *how* and *to what extent* these technologies of power and their resultant discourses have affected women academics' perceived academic success criteria in the current context of Turkish higher education. To this end, I weave together Michel Foucault, Amy Allen, and Kimberlé Crenshaw's perceptions of the concept of power, alongside Ivana Marková's understanding of intersubjectivity, and Fida Afiouni and Charlotte Karam's notion of *career success* to scaffold and guide this study.

3.1. The Nexus among Power Relations, Knowledge, and Subjectivity: A Foucauldian Approach

Judith Butler (1992) maintains that Foucault's genealogy of power is a unique perspective on the concept that allows us to understand power as both constraining and productive. In the context of this study, this dual nature of power is essential for grasping the simultaneous (re)production of patriarchal and counter-patriarchal knowledge along with their induced *compliant* and *resistant* subject positions. Hence, this section first provides an overview of Foucault's genealogy of power before delving into the interplay of power relations, knowledge, and subjectivity.

3.1.1. Sovereign, disciplinary, and biopolitical modes of power: Foucault's tripartite genealogy of power

The question of power *(pouvoir)* occupies a prominent place in Foucault's philosophy and works most notably in *The History of Sexuality, Volume One* (1978, hereinafter HS1), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977, hereinafter DP), and *Society Must be Defended* (2003, hereinafter SD). Foucault (2003) criticizes the Marxist and Liberal "economistic" approaches to power, which conceptualise power as "a right to own, and a commodity," that "can therefore be transferred or alienated" (SD, pp. 13-16). Instead, he invites us to perceive power as a "strategy" that is "exercised rather than possessed, […] a network of relations that cannot be localised in a particular institution or state, but is diffuse" (DP, p. 26). To develop his account of power as a localised network of relations, Foucault (1977) utilizes, albeit metaphorically, Bachelard's "micro-physics" (DP, p. 26). Just as Bachelard rejects the atomic-level reality and instead suggests the term micro-physics to describe the subatomic relationships in physical phenomena and the nuances of such relationships in the history and philosophy of science, Foucault similarly rejects the surface-level understanding of power. Instead, he proposes a more intricate, web-like, and dynamic conceptualization of power in terms of *power relations*, with all its subtleties and nuances, operating at interpersonal, cultural, societal, and institutional levels. The micro-physics of power, as Foucault (1975) asserts, allows us to acknowledge the presence of power "in every grain of individuals" and "to see how power touches individuals' bodies, and inserts itself into their actions, attitudes, discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (as cited in O'Farrell, 2005, p. 98). Additionally, Foucault's understanding of micro-level power relations allows us to see that "everything that *is* exists due to *multiple relationships of forces* [emphasis added by the author] under the surface, forces like statements whose arrangements create physical bodies and various bodies of knowledge" (Stone, 2017, p. 246).

To better illustrate the micro and macro dynamics of power, Foucault elaborates on three distinct types of power: *sovereign power*, *disciplinary power*, and *biopolitics*. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1977) contrasts the technologies of power exercised in the pre-modern and modern eras, namely sovereign power technology versus disciplinary power technology. The opening passage of the book depicts the torture and execution of Robert-François Damiens in 1757, an instance of a pre-modern technology of power that manifested through extraordinary violence and public displays of punishment. Such top-down power technologies, which Foucault termed sovereign power, operate as "macro-physics," and serve as a warning to

the public, deter potential offenders, and demonstrate the absolute power of the sovereign (DP, p. 160). The effectiveness of sovereign power, as Foucault (1977) argues, began to decline in Europe toward the end of the eighteenth century, thereby paving the way for the emergence of modern power technologies for regulating individuals' conduct. In the modern era, as Foucault asserts, sovereign power has been supplemented, though not entirely substituted, by the disciplinary mode of power.

Foucault understands discipline as a micro-political technology of power that encompasses techniques and mechanisms of individual surveillance. Unlike sovereign power, which relies on public displays of violence for control, disciplinary power, exercised in prisons, factories, and schools, aims to produce "docile bodies" whose conduct can be easily surveilled, assessed, and controlled (DP, p. 135). He states,

> Discipline creates an analytical space which aims to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct, of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits (DP, p.143).

This understanding of the disciplinary mode of power demonstrates the pervasive nature of modern power in contrast to sovereign power. It clearly illustrates that while sovereign power might fail to control individuals, the disciplinary mode of power proves effective because it can transform individuals into subjects in both meanings of the term: subject to their own actions and as subject to someone else. It is through the disciplinary mode of power that an analytical disciplinary space can operate, making the supervision of the individual's conduct, whether they are present or absent at the scene of punishment, possible.

Foucault utilizes Jeremy Bentham's *panopticon* to articulate how disciplinary power operates and how it differs from the sovereign technology of power. The panopticon is an architectural design of a prison where the guards are placed in a central tower from which they can maintain surveillance over the inmates residing at the periphery of the institution. Foucault argues that in the modern era, disciplinary power functions through the panopticon mechanism, a mechanism of control that is "faceless and invisible," yet it produces "visible, self-disciplined subjects" who are the guardians of their own conduct and subjection (DP, p. 187). As Foucault explains, the creation of self-disciplined subjects significantly impacts the panopticon's surveillance mechanism by making

surveillance *permanent* [emphasis added] in its effects, even if discontinuous in action. Hence, to indoctrinate a state of permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power, the inmates of such a panopticon become entangled in *a power web* [emphasis added] of which they are themselves “the bearers” (DP, p. 201).

In *The History of Sexuality*, *Volume One,* we witness “a major reconfiguration” of Foucault’s analysis of modern power. Foucault (1978) acknowledges that the micro-level disciplinary mode of power, which he elaborated on in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, did not fully capture the complexities of modern power dynamics (Lynch, 2013, p. 159). To address this limitation and to underscore the shift from the sovereign power’s *right of death to power over life,* Foucault (1978) introduces another modern technology of power, the technology of *biopolitics* [emphasis added]. In contrast to sovereign power which could “take life or let live,” biopolitics “fosters life or disallows it to the point of death” (p. 138). Through employing techniques of mass surveillance over topics such as the rate of fertility and birth control, the concept of biopolitics, Foucault contends, enables the macro-analysis of power that targets populations, biology, and life. Foucault (1978) captures the essence of biopower and the fundamental shift from the sovereign power’s focus on death to modern power’s control over life:

> Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself: it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, which gave power its access even to the body (pp.142–3).

3.1.2. The symphony of power, knowledge, and subjectification

Technologies of power, Foucault posits, generate particular types of knowledge and various subjectivities. In Foucault’s account, “power and knowledge directly imply one another […] There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (DP, p. 27). The knowledge produced by various modes of power, particularly by modern technologies of power, in turn, creates a regime of truth to which individuals voluntarily conform through self-surveillance and self- regulation (Mills, 2003; Rabinow & Rose, 2006). According to Mills (2003), such a perception toward the concept of power/knowledge indicates that knowledge is an integral part of power

relations and forms their basis. Hence, where there exist imbalances of power relations among individuals and groups, knowledge production will occur.

Despite his reputation as one of the most prominent scholars of power, Foucault (1982) does not identify the main objective of his analysis as the concept of power, but rather as investigating the concepts of *the subject* and *subjectification*. By subjectification, Foucault refers to the process of subject formation within power relations. As he explains:

> The goal of my work during the last twenty years has not been to analyze the phenomena of power, nor to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects (p. 777).

By stating his objective as creating a history of different modes of subjectification, Foucault invites us to perceive subjects as neither neutral nor universal, but as historically and contextually contingent. To better grasp Foucault's subjectification, it is essential to understand his conceptualizations of the subject. Foucault (1982) states, "There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (p. 781). The first definition of the term subject refers to *subjection*, indicating constraints and limitations which create *subjugated* individuals. This perception of the subject emphasises the repressive function of power and domination which "holds back the capacities of those individuals against whom power acts". The latter conceptualization refers to the self-constitution of the subject. This is the process whereby individuals are active participants in molding their own subjectivity. Rather than possessing an unalterable ontological essence, subjects are beings who "are not ontologically prior" to power relations. They are, instead, products of these relations, individuals capable of occupying various subject positions in relation to power structures (Heyes, 2007 p. 160).

This perception of the subject enables us to see another facet of power's productivity, one that intertwines with knowledge, regimes of truth, and power itself. It allows for our understanding of the subject as a being "recreated constantly in different configurations along with various forms of knowledge" (O'Farrell, 2005, p. 110). May (2014) perceives Foucault's double reference to subjectification as what allows us to see how we are made subjects to political orders through control and self-knowledge. However, May (2014) asserts that subjectification does not prevent us

from being what we otherwise might be. Instead, it is through our practices and in the knowledge that these practices generate that we are constituted as certain kinds of *knowers* and *doers* [emphasis added], both as "the subjects to that which govern us" and as the subjects capable of challenging the discourses and the knowledge they produce (p. 498).

3.1.3. Resistance/power: An inseparable pair in Foucauldian analytic toolbox

As noted above, Foucault did not regard power as deterministic, but as a complex and dynamic web that is productive rather than restrictive. His understanding of the intimate and inevitable nexus between power/knowledge and subjectification, except in extreme situations such as torture and the death penalty, allows us to see the very possibilities of questioning, challenging, and resisting the regimes of truth as established by the state and its institutions. Foucault states, "Aside from torture and execution, which preclude any resistance, no matter how terrifying a situation may be, there always remain the possibilities of resistance, disobedience, and opposition" (as cited in Rabinow, 1984, p. 245). In *The History of Sexuality: Volume One*, Foucault (1978) elaborates on the reciprocity between power and resistance and maintains that resistance as the condition for power's omnipresence; he states that "where there is power, there is resistance" (p. 95). In Foucault's conception, no person or institution can possess power; it exists only in relations. Hence, power can only subsist when there is a potential for refusal or revolt. Foucault further proposes resistance as the key term in power dynamics, contending that power relations are bound to change in the face of resistance. For an activity to be considered resistance, it ought to intentionally reject given forms of conduct. In other words, resistance is a "counter-conduct," as it requires a conduct to interact with and act upon (Foucault, 2007, p. 201). This perception of the intricate relationship between power and resistance establishes Foucault not merely as a theorist of power, but as a theorist of resistance (Oksala, 2014).

In Foucault's (1997) understanding, saying 'no' is a bare minimum form of resistance. Resistance, for Foucault, does not simply a negation, but as a *creative process* through which *free* subjects [emphasis added], who are capable of reshaping their subjectivities, can challenge, influence, and (re)shape power relations. Indeed, for Foucault (2000), "there is no power without potential refusal or revolt" (p. 324). Such an understanding of the possibilities of refusal does not imply that resistance follows power relations. Rather, as Foucault maintains, it indicates that resistance is *embedded* [emphasis added] in power relations. Foucault (2000) goes further asserting that resistance is the very condition for power's omnipresence:

> If there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would just be a matter of obedience not relations […] Resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with resistance. So, resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic [emphasis added by the author] (p.167).

While in his earlier works, Foucault conceives of resistance as an effort to break free from domination, in his later thinking, he reconceptualises resistance as a creative act enabling the subject to instigate shifts in power relations, and thereby navigate various subject positions (Kelly, 2013; Oksala, 2014). One of these creative acts is *critique*, an essential form of problematization and resistance. As he explains, "Critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to interrogate truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourse of truth" (as cited in Heyes, 2007, p. 117). Foucault (2005, 2010, 2011) elaborates on one technique of critique called *parrhesia*. Parrhesia is a discursive resistance technique that depicts how ethical practices of truth-telling can *problematize the prevailing regimes of truth* [emphasis added]; it is "an irruptive event" that holds significant subversive potential, with its original political function being "precisely capable of limiting the power of the masters" (Foucault, 2010, p. 161). In *The Courage of Truth*, Foucault (2011) explains:

> Parrhesia is the courage of truth in the person who speaks and who, regardless of everything, takes the risk of telling the whole truth that he thinks, but it is also the interlocutor's courage in agreeing to accept the hurtful truth that he hears (p. 13).

Also, for Foucault, a *parrhesiastes,* or truth-teller, ought to have a credible connection to the truth as they understand it. This connection is affirmed through acting as a critic, whether of oneself or of social norms and values. Foucault (2005) identifies several criteria that a discursive act ought to meet to be considered *parrhesiastic*. First, it has to reveal the truth, as the interlocutor perceives it, without any reservation. In Foucault's account, parrhesia is characterized by a demand "to say what has to be said, what we want to say, what we think ought to be said because it is necessary, useful, and true." Second, it should also present itself as a perilous act (p. 366). In fact, Foucault highlights two intertwined elements of courage and risk in parrhesia. He invites us to recognise not just the risk the parrhesiastes encounters in their truth-telling, but the courage and persistence they must display, particularly in light of the risk of penalization they face for their revelations. He states, "A parrhesiastic act does not produce a codified effect; it opens up an unspecified risk" (Foucault, 2010, p. 62). Third, a parrhesiastic act ought to clearly demonstrate the interlocutor's perspectives

on the issue they critique. Taking this further, Foucault argues that parrhesia ought to be driven by a profound sense of moral, social, and political duty. It is a verbal activity through which the speaker demonstrates their commitment to truth-telling and prioritizes “moral duty over self-interest and moral apathy” (Foucault, 2011, p. 20).

3.1.4. Why Foucault’s analytic tools?

While not directly exploring the interplay between technologies of power and the emergence of various subject positions in women, I concur with Amy Allen (2022) and Nancy Fraser (1989) that Foucault’s emphasis on the local and capillary nature of power aligns with the second-wave feminist redefinition of the term ‘political’, a redefinition well-captured in the phrase “the personal is political”, which has broadened the breadth and scope of political and private spheres.

Additionally, Foucault’s understanding of power as both repressive and productive allows for examining the impacts of patriarchy on Turkish men and women in the country’s academic settings and beyond. Foucault’s notions of power/knowledge, subjectification, critique, and parrhesia provides a rich foundation from which to analyze patriarchy as navigated, challenged, and subverted by women in Turkish academia. These concepts help demonstrate the intricate ways in which power relations produce knowledge and various subject positions within the context of this study. To be more precise, the Foucauldian tools of power, knowledge, and subjectification enable me to demonstrate: 1) how various spheres of Turkish women’s lives are affected by patriarchy, and 2) how the dynamism among patriarchal power technologies and mechanisms, and the discourses and knowledge they constitute and are constituted by enabled the emergence of an array of subject positions. The concept of parrhesia allows me to explore how Turkish women challenged the gendered regimes of truth, despite the potential dangers and risks involved in speaking such truth.

3.2. Resistance Co-Authorship: Solidarity and Intersubjectivity in Spaces of Appearance

Foucault is widely recognised as one of the most prominent theorists of power and subjectification (Allen, 2008; Graham, 2011; Gutting & Oksala, 2022; Smart, 2014). His concepts of critique and parrhesia provide valuable tools for me to explicate how power relations, primarily exercised at the *intrasubjective* level, constitute subjects capable of individual acts of resistance. However, as Schoonheim (2021) argues, “*the neglect of the other is conspicuous*” [emphasis

added] in Foucault's appraisal of resistance (p. 2). Likewise, Allen (2002) posits that Foucault *fails* [emphasis added] to demonstrate "the power that binds together social movements" which makes it "impossible to have a strictly Foucauldian approach to resistance" (p. 143). Acknowledging these critiques, I noted that Foucault's critical analytic toolbox lacked the tools necessary to explore the role of *intersubjectivity* in *collectively* [emphasis added] challenging and subverting patriarchal discourses as experienced and/or witnessed by participants of this study. Given this gap and recognizing participants' emphasis on the importance of *coalition-building* and *collective action* in dismantling patriarchal discourses and practices, I employ two theoretical concepts to examine the collective aspects of resistance strategies suggested by participants: Amy Allen's conceptualization of solidarity as a form of *power-with*[62] and Ivana Marková's (2003) understanding of intersubjectivity as *a dynamic, tensional, and dialogical* [emphasis added] phenomenon emerging from interpersonal communications. Marková's conceptualization of intersubjectivity served as a *complementary lens* [emphasis added], enabling me to examine the mechanism of power-with through which participants produced counter-patriarchal discourses and knowledge.

As a complex notion, intersubjectivity has been conceptualised in myriad ways such as sympathy, communicative interaction, co-experience and/or co-being (Bessant, 2018). However, the core element associated with intersubjectivity is the interchange of thoughts, ideas, and feelings between two or more subjects, alongside relations formed and meanings co-constituted through this interchange (Bessant, 2018; Cooper-White, 2020; Marková, 2003). Expanding on this core element of intersubjectivity and drawing upon Bakhtin's understanding of intersubjectivity as "co-authorship," Marková (2003) maintains that two distinct ontologies inform intersubjectivity: 1) "existentially separated beings", with its emphasis on the individuality and autonomy of subjects, and 2) "irreducible dyads", which highlights the connectivity and interdependence of subjects. Marková (2003) contends that the fundamental aspect of intersubjectivity is the narrowing of the distance between these two positions, and as such, between the *I* and the *others* [emphasis added] (pp. 250-256). Put another way, for Marková, intersubjectivity is a dynamic process within

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[62] In *The Power of Feminist Theory*, Amy Allen (2000) asserts that feminists need to apply the prism of the three modalities of power, namely *power-over, power-to, and power-with,* in order to demonstrate a more holistic picture of power, not only as domination, power-over, and individual resistance, power-to, but as collective resistance and solidarity, power-with. Since Foucault's analytic tools of power relations/ knowledge, subjectivity and parrhesia were utilized to analyze participants' lived experiences with patriarchy, their individual modes of resistance, and their various subject positions as constituted by living and working in Türkiye, I only included the concept of power-with in the theoretical framework of this study.

which individuals do not seek to "fuse with the other," but rather, by bridging the gap between their individuality and interconnectedness, they create common goals and produce shared meanings (p.257). Here, I argue that Marková's intersubjectivity, with its emphasis on both individuality and interconnectedness, provides me with a tool to explore and acknowledge: 1) the *shared conditions*[63] of oppression as experienced by women, and 2) the "development of their unique self-concept" when encountering such conditions (Marková, 2003, p. 257). Hence, Marková's understanding of the concept of intersubjectivity, with its focus on the dynamic, tensional, and dialogical nature of social interactions and the co-construction of meaning, can be utilized as a precondition for Amy Allen's solidarity as a form of power-with, which highlights the collective capacity of individuals to co-produce and co-perform counter-patriarchal discourses.

In *On Violence*, Arendt (1970) highlights the intersubjective nature of power, stating, "Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act, but to act in concert" (p. 49). Taking her argument a step further, Arendt maintains that power's "legitimacy" lies in individuals "getting together in the manner of speech and action […] in a *space of appearance* [emphasis added] (p. 52). This dialogical understanding of power laid the foundation for Amy Allen's (2000) theory of feminist solidarity, in which she regards solidarity as "a collective power that grows out of action in concert". For Allen, power-with, which relies on collective ability or is utilized to attain (a) mutually agreed-upon objective(s), is an essential *motor of social change* [emphasis added] (pp. 112-13).

However, Allen (2000) distinguishes between power-with and solidarity. She does not regard the two concepts as synonymous, arguing that solidarity is" a particular way of exercising power-with." Allen defines solidarity not merely as joint actions, but as "the ability of a collectivity to act together for the agreed-upon end of challenging, subverting, and, ultimately, overturning a system of domination" (p. 127). Hence, while power-with refers to the general capacity to act together, solidarity specifically involves challenging and deconstructing oppressive systems. To illustrate the difference between power-with and solidarity, Allen provides an example of a military group that

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[63] One of the critiques leveled against Western feminist thought in the 1980s was their essentialist view, assuming that all women share the same experiences of oppression, regardless of their distinct social identities. Such a perspective primarily reflect the cisgender experiences of white, middle-class women, while marginalizing women whose experiences did not fit on the list (hooks, 2000; Hill Collins, 2000; Spelman, 1988). In response to this flawed view, Young (1994) offered the concept of *shared conditions* instead of *shared experiences*, arguing that while women may not share the same experiences of oppression because of their unique intersecting identities, they often navigate the same conditions of oppression, which shape their unique lived experiences.

'acts in concert' to impose martial law on a population. She explains that, while the members of the military group exercise power-with, this modality of power is, in fact, a form of collective domination. Thus, as Allen asserts, the concept of power-with alone proves insufficient for feminists to highlight the collective aspect of resistance against oppression, the very mode of power upon which feminists focus their concern and effort.

3.3. Intersectionality: The Genealogy

3.3.1. Intersectionality and feminism: Before Crenshaw

Intersectionality is "the most important contribution that women's studies has made so far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). As an essential analytic tool in feminist studies that *de-essentializes women* [emphasis added] as a universal category (Mohanty, 1988), intersectionality explores the complex dynamics among various forms of social identities such as gender, race, class, ability, and age, to name a few, in the context of anti-discrimination and social movement politics (Allen, 2022; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Corus & Saatcioglu, 2015). Put another way, intersectionality deals with "the interaction [among] categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis, 2008, p. 68).

Intersectional feminism has a long history and can be found in the writings and activism of late 19th and early 20th-century Black women activists such as Sojourner Truth, Maria Stewart, Ida Wells, and Anna Julia Cooper[64] (Cooper, 2016; Nash, 2019; Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). However, these activists' works are considered "proto-intersectional" because, despite underscoring the interconnection between racism and sexism in creating distinct experiences and identities, they do not specifically use the term 'intersectionality' in their works (Gines, 2014, p. 14). Other feminists whose works similarly underline the importance of exploring the interplay among various social identities to better understand women's experiences of living and interacting with these identities, include late 20th-century Black and Latina feminists such as bell hooks (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), among others.

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[64] It is, however, noteworthy that the use of intersectionality as an analytic tool is neither confined to nor originated from the Global North. In fact, people in Global South countries, such as India, have utilized this tool to address a range of issues and social problems, without even naming it (See Collins and Bilge, 2020, p.12).

In *Ain't I a Woman,* bell hooks (1981) challenges the notion of a universal womanhood, underscoring the importance of advocating for a more inclusive feminism that acknowledges the varied and multiple experiences and identities of women with diverse backgrounds, particularly the experiences of poor women and women of colour. Audre Lorde is another Black feminist whose works offer an intersectional perspective. In *Sister Outsider* (1984), Lorde articulates her lived experiences as a Black, a lesbian, a mother, a warrior, and a poet, within multiple, interlocking, and complex systems of oppression, including sexism, racism, homophobia, and ageism. Much like hooks, Lorde advocates for a feminist approach that validates various axes of social identities and lived experiences of women, particularly those of marginalized women in the context of the white, supremacist, patriarchal, racist, and capitalist America of the 1960s and 1970s. Anzaldúa, a Latina lesbian feminist, navigates intersectionality in her 1987 book called *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* She shares her experiences navigating various intersecting forms of oppression, where, as a boarder-dweller, she finds herself caught at the borderlands geographically, culturally and metaphorically.

3.3.2. From implicit to explicit: Crenshaw's multi-axis framework of intersectionality

> Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction or another. If an accident happens at an intersection, it can be caused by cars travelling in any number of directions and, sometimes, from all. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149).

In Crenshaw's (1989) book, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Anti-racist Politics,* Crenshaw explains Black women's experiences of discrimination by using the analogy of a traffic intersection. She demonstrates the limitations of independent "single-axis" frameworks of race and sex in enabling us to fully understand the unique experiences of discrimination that those with intersecting identities experience (p. 139). Regarding various systems of discrimination as overlapping and intersecting, Crenshaw's analogy suggests that, just as a traffic accident at an intersection can be caused by vehicles from any direction or a combination thereof, Black women's experiences of discrimination can arise from sex, race, or a combination of both.

Crenshaw further contends that “by erasing Black women in the conceptualization, identification, and remediation of race and sex discrimination,” the single-axis frameworks of race and sex not only obscure our understanding of Black women’s unique experiences of subjection to domination but also prioritize the experiences of more privileged members within the same group. For instance, “in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-privileged Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privileged women.” This focus on otherwise privileged group members, Crenshaw argues, leads to “a distorted” analysis of sexism and racism as they merely represent a fraction of a much broader and complex phenomenon (p. 140).

In her foundational work, *Mapping the Margins*, *Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,* Crenshaw (1991b) highlights the shortcomings of single-axis frameworks in analyzing discrimination experienced by Black women and women of colour. She explores how intersecting social identities of sex and gender shape the structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities. She states,

> [M]any of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood …[T]he intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women’s lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately” (1991b, p. 1244).

Crenshaw’s critique of single-axis frameworks for analyzing the discrimination imposed on Black women and women of color, along with her intersectionality analytic tool have sought to: 1) dismantle the instantiations of marginalization embedded within institutionalized discourses, such as law, that uphold existing power relations, and 2) reveal how discourses of resistance created by feminism and antiracism could themselves create and perpetuate marginalization (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013).

3.3.3. Intersectionality today: An analytic tool for both critical inquiry and praxis

Originally developed to examine discrimination experienced by Black women and women of colour, the scope of intersectionality as an analytic tool, has since widened to benefit

multidisciplinary fields of inquiry such as queer, postcolonial, critical race studies, geography, media studies, public health, and organisational studies, among others (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Hill Collins & Bilge, 2020; Winker & Degele, 2011). Over the intervening decades, intersectionality transcended the confines of North America, establishing itself as a "universally applicable" analytic tool (Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019, p. 413). This tool enables us to examine "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Put another way, intersectionality now serves as an analytic framework that not only explores how the interplay among various social constructs has shaped power relations but also examines how broader historical and global forces such as colonialism, neoliberalism, and geopolitics interconnect with and shape such constructs (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). Additionally, while intersectionality has advanced our scholarly understanding of social inequalities and injustices, it also offers the potential to transform power relations by directly challenging the status quo and its (re)produced discourses. As such, contemporary scholars and practitioners have extended their focus beyond simply understanding *what* intersectionality is and *what* it critiques; they also explore *how* intersectionality can contribute to structural transformation and empowerment, as well as praxis (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2020).

3.3.4. Why intersectionality?

The theory of intersectionality enables me to develop a holistic understanding of the multi-faceted and distinct lived experiences of women academics with various, yet intersecting, social constructs in the country's academic settings and beyond. In particular, it allows me to explore how women's lived experiences of discrimination, privilege, transformation, and empowerment are shaped by their situatedness at the intersection of gender and other social constructs (re)produced and maintained by the prevailing patriarchal discourses circulating in the current neoliberal and populist political context of Türkiye. For instance, by utilizing intersectionality, I expose how, in the current neoliberal and populist political climate in Türkiye, a middle-aged woman with full professorship status might be subjected to patriarchal norms and behaviours because of her gender, yet she may also feel privileged and empowered due to her age and prevalent cultural norms that respect seniority and hold women in teaching positions in high regard.

3.4. Career Success

Traditionally, career success is articulated as “the real or perceived achievements that individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences” (Judge et al.,1999, p. 621). *Rea*l or *objective* career success refers to measurable career attainments such as positions and promotions, the number of published works, and the amount of salary individuals have secured over the course of their careers. *Subjective* career success criteria, on the other hand, are not easily discernable from personnel records; they mainly involve the extent to which individuals feel satisfied with their careers. Subjective career success can also be defined by personal values such as family relationships, sense of meaning and purpose, as well as the level of congruence or conflicts that might occur between an individual’s career roles and the roles they are required to play in their households and communities (Heslin, 2003, 2005).

3.4.1. Applying a gender lens to notions of career success: Afiouni and Karam’s framework

The concept of career success and its relationship with agency, gender, and academic structures is another component of the theoretical framework utilized for this study. Drawing from the work of institutional and structuration theorists such as Giddens (1984) and Scott (2004), Karam and Afiouni (2014) propose that the interplay among the mandated structures of academia, the mandated structures of gender, and women’s agentic processes in the context of the Arab Middle East, shape career success. Karam and Afiouni (2014) define mandated academic structures as the expected roles and responsibilities of an academic, including attending to administrative and teaching duties along with publishing research on a regular basis. By mandated gender-based structures, they refer to socially constructed and differential roles, expectations, and perceived abilities of men and women which lead to certain gendered roles and responsibilities expected of women. The findings of their study reveal that women academics need to deal with conflicts between the mandated structures existing in academia and the mandated structures of patriarchal ideology at the macro, meso, and micro levels. The misalignments between mandated structures at the macro, meso, and micro levels, as they argue, generate tension. In response to these misalignments and the resulting tension, Afiouni and Karam propose that through agentic processes, women can either 1) conform to mandated roles and responsibilities, 2) reject mandated roles and responsibilities, or 3) modify mandated structures by creating alternative or idiosyncratic roles and responsibilities. These interactions and the agentic processes that women undergo, will in turn, affect how they define career success.

3.4.2. Why Afiouni and Karam's conceptualization of career success?

The rationale behind the incorporation of Afiouni and Karam's conceptualization of career success into the theoretical framework of this study is multifaceted. Traditionally, career success has been defined and measured using objective/subjective dimensions (Heslin, 2003, 2005). More recently, multidimensional models highlighting the impacts of occupational self-efficacy on objective and subjective career success have been developed (Abele & Spurk, 2009). However, while the other suggested frameworks for examining the career success of individuals focus on subjective and/or objective dimensions, Afiouni and Karam's (2014) suggested framework offers "an interconnected and complex understanding of how the notion of career success is constructed through the interaction of an individual's agency with their sociocultural context" (p. 562). To be more precise, Afiouni and Karam's understanding of career success through the lens of gender is particularly valuable for this study, as it is the only framework that highlights the intricate, contingent, and fluid nature of career success and explicitly examines the role of gender and academic expectations, as constructed by macro-level mandates. It also considers the interplay of these mandates with women's agency in shaping women's perceptions of their career success in academia.

Also, Afiouni and Karam's (2014) understanding of career success as "a subjectively malleable and localised concept that is continually (re)interpreted and (re)shaped" (pp. 548-49) aligns with the principles of (feminist) poststructuralist epistemological stances. Similar to (feminist)poststructuralism that rejects universal truths and grand narratives, and instead acknowledges the multiplicity and contingency of meanings, Karam and Afiouni's understanding of career success highlights that the way individuals perceive career success is constituted through their interactions with the macro-level structures, namely academic mandates as well as gender norms and expectations prevalent in the context of the Arab Middle East.

Finally, the incorporation of Karam and Afiouni's career success framework into this study's theoretical framework was also partly inspired by Crenshaw's intersectionality, which recognises the experiences of multiple, overlapping forms of marginalization and discrimination. By challenging the dominance of Western male-centric theories and highlighting the contributions of women scholars from the Global South women scholars to knowledge production, the inclusion of Karam and Afiouni's career success framework represents my intentional effort to *decolonize* [emphasis added] academic research on the topic of career success.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Two outlined the theoretical framework that anchors this study. I draw upon Michel Foucault's power/knowledge/subjectivity and parrhesia, Ivana Marková's intersubjectivity, Amy Allen's solidarity as power-with, Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality, and Fida Afiouni and Charlotte Karam's career success to capture the lived experiences of patriarchy by Turkish women academics at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

Foucault's conceptualization of power/knowledge and subjectivity forms the foundation of this study's theoretical framework. Foucault's understanding of power, as not merely oppressive but productive as is, shapes knowledge and enables various subject positions, allows for an examination of how women navigate, resist, and subvert the patriarchal discourses prevalent in Türkiye. As a form of problematization, the concept of parrhesia, or fearless speech, is utilized to explore how women engage in individual acts of truth-telling and resistance in the face of inequality and oppression. As I alluded to above, since Foucault's account of problematization and parrhesia falls short of addressing collective resistance, and given the emphasis feminists place on solidarity as a means to confront male domination, I incorporate Amy Allen's understanding of solidarity as a form of power-with into this study's framework to bridge this gap. Additionally, recognizing that solidarity is shaped by a common purpose among individuals, I include Marková's concept of intersubjectivity, a dynamic, tensional, and dialogical phenomenon, as a relevant aspect of my theoretical framework.

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality enables me to analyze how multiple and intersecting systems of oppression and social identities, such as gender, class, and ethnicity, interact to create women's unique experiences of marginalization and privilege. Finally, Karam and Afiouni's framework of career success provides me with a lens through which I can explore the role of mandated structures and their misalignments in shaping the perceptions of women academics towards their academic career success.

Chapter Four: Methodology

We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative.

-Barabara Hardy, Towards a Poetic Fiction, 1968

Chapter Four attends to the methodological approach employed to capture and understand Turkish women academics' lived experiences with patriarchy within Türkiye's higher education institutions and beyond. It begins with the study's research questions, followed by an overview of the research design and the rationale for selecting narrative inquiry as the methodology. Next, it describes the sample selection process, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. It then discusses my role as researcher and the challenges encountered during data collection. The chapter concludes with a thorough consideration of trustworthiness and ethics.

1. Research Questions

Guided by the theoretical framework outlines in Chapter Three, this study pursued two primary objectives: a) to examine the interaction between patriarchal and counter-patriarchal forces and their impacts on discourse, knowledge, and subjectivities, and b) to explore how the notion of career success is conceptualised within these power dynamics. These objectives were delved into through the following interconnected research questions and sub-questions:

1. How does patriarchy manifest at the micro, meso, and macro domains of Turkish women academics' lives?
2. How do Turkish women academics navigate patriarchal power technologies?
    a. What counter-patriarchal strategies, individual and/or collective, do they develop and employ in their professional and personal lives?
    b. How do these strategies challenge gendered discourses and practices in patriarchal Türkiye in general, and in its higher educational settings in particular?
    c. In what ways do Turkish women academics perpetuate patriarchy?
3. How do Turkish women academics conceptualise and navigate career success within Türkiye's patriarchal climate?

2. Choice of Narrative Inquiry

From the 1960s through the 1980s, social science research underwent significant changes, notably what Pinnegar (2007) describes as "the disenchantment of social scientists with behaviourism" (p. 8). This disenchantment, as Pinnegar posits, grew out of concerns about the limitations of quantitative research in "recognise[ing] the value of the particular and the role of culture and history "in shaping individuals' experiences (p. 9). Drawing upon Dewey's (1938) conception of experience as knowledge and life as education, Clandinin and Connelly (2004) conceptualise narrative both as a phenomenon to be studied and as a methodology particularly adept at exploring" the ways humans experience the world" (p. 2). Narrative inquiry is grounded in the premise that stories are the "fundamental units accounting for human experience" (Clandinin, 2007, p.4). Within the narrative inquiry, stories function as portals that enable individuals to organise and communicate their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). These tenets make narrative inquiry a suitable research methodology for collating and recounting individuals' subjective, multidimensional experiences (Riessman, 2005).

Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) identify "the *why(s)* of the study" as "a central element" in narrative inquiry, emphasizing the importance of engaging with three forms of justification: "personal, practical, and social" (p. 24). The personal justification stems from the inquirer's *interest in* and *connection to* the topic under inquiry, the practical justification concerns "*how* the inquiry will be insightful to changing or thinking differently about the researcher's own and others' practices". The social justification attends to the *what* [emphasis added]*,* allowing the inquirer to explore "the larger social and educational issues" the study might address (p. 25). Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) acknowledge that while some narrative inquirers provide only a personal justification, attending to all three situates the inquiry within broader systemic and theoretical frameworks.

As noted in Chapter Three, my interest in examining patriarchal power relations originated from my own lived experiences navigating state, cultural, and familial patriarchal power structures in Iran. This firsthand experience motivated me to better understand patriarchal power technologies and mechanisms that seek to discipline and regulate bodies and minds, the counter-patriarchal discourses and practices women employ to resist and dismantle these technologies and mechanisms, and participants' conceptualisation of the notion of career success as they navigate patriarchal and counter-patriarchal power relations. My personal lived experiences with patriarchy informed the practical justification this research, as they enabled me to connect Foucault's (1977)

theory of power to the patriarchal disciplinary and biopower power mechanisms operating within Iran's patriarchal institutions. Additionally, this inquiry established a dialogic space where women academics could share their stories of patriarchy and resistance. The social justification for narrative inquiry addresses the questions *"so what"* and *"who cares"* (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, p. 25). While acknowledging Butler's (1990) critique that "the very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms", the narratives collected in this study revealed that, despite differences arising from our intersectional experiences, sharing lived experiences of patriarchy can foster global solidarity and contribute to collective social transformation (p. 2).

These justifications align with and are enriched by the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry— "temporality, sociality, and place"—which, as Connelly and Clandinin (2006) posit, "specify the dimensions of an inquiry space" (pp. 478-79). Temporality involves exploring the past, present, and future of the components of the study, including people, places, and events. Attending to the sociality commonplace requires careful attention to both personal and social conditions. With respect to personal conditions, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) invite narrative inquirers to be cognisant of" the feelings, hopes, desires, and moral dispositions" of the inquirer and study participants. For social conditions, they emphasise the need to explore the cultural milieu shaping personal conditions. A further important dimension of sociality, as Connelly and Clandinin (2006) assert, is the relationship between the inquirer and the participant, which requires the researcher to remain "always in an inquiry relationship with participants' lives" (p. 480). Finally, the place commonplace involves exploring "the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480).

According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), "people, places, and events are in process, always in temporal transition" (p. 479). Within the scope of this study, the commonplace of temporality aligned with Foucault's (1982) conceptualisation of subjectivity as historically constituted and constantly in flux, enabling me to examine how subject positions evolved across time, through events, and via power relations. Additionally, by retelling each participant's narrative separately, I utilized Haraway's (1988) notion of situated knowledge, acknowledging that each and every experience is unique, and therefore merits attention. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) contend that sociality involves a dual focus on personal and social conditions. The sociality dimension of this study examined:1) participants' emotional responses to patriarchy across macro, meso, and micro levels, and their aspirations for transformation, 2) my own feelings and desires for change as

a woman who has lived and worked in patriarchal contexts, 3) societal values and beliefs about gender, and 4) historical developments in contemporary Türkiye.

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) assert that in narrative inquiry "the specificity of location is crucial […] and all events take place some place ", influencing how lived experiences are told, relived, and interpreted by storytellers (pp. 480-81). In this study, the "someplace" existed across multiple communication technologies, with each medium establishing distinct topological boundaries that shaped how narratives were exchanged between participants and me. These topological boundaries included: 1) technological limitations—such as poor connection quality, time delays, and the inability to observe visual cues during phone interviews 2) linguistic topologies as interviews were conducted in either English, Turkish, or through code-switching, and 3) political topologies that affected participants' comfort in sharing stories related to the current political climate in Türkiye.

3. Data Collection

Narratives are typically oral or written. Researchers commonly collect narratives through interviews, informal chatting, and fieldwork. Additional sources include documents, archival materials, personal journals, and material items such as artifacts, photographs, or videos (Creswell, 2013; Josselson, 2010). Narratives vary in scope: they may be short accounts of particular events with particular characters, such as a teacher, a doctor, a colleague, or a friend. Alternatively, they might be extended accounts of significant life incidents such as marriage, divorce, graduation, or trauma. Some narratives encompass an individual's entire life story from birth to the present (Chase, 2008).

Informal chatting and semi-structured interviews are among the most commonly used non-visual data-collection instruments in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 2015). In this study, the narratives were oral. I utilized informal chatting and semi-structured interviews as primary data-collection instruments to capture participants' lived experiences with patriarchy from their early childhood to the present. Beyond establishing rapport, informal chatting enabled the shift from "'me' and 'you' to 'we' and add[ed] context and authenticity to data" (Swain & Spire, 2020, p.5). Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to speak freely and in depth about their experiences (Creswell, 2013). A researcher journal was another tool I utilized to record

reflections, collect data, document emerging data, and explore my own subjectivities (Creswell, 2013).

3.5. Participant Sample, Recruitment, and Interviews

To obtain rich and detailed descriptions of women academics' lived experiences with patriarchy, a target sample of seven to nine participants was sought. Following approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, I proceeded with identifying, contacting, and recruiting participants. This study employed purposive sampling and took three inclusion criteria into account: 1) self-identification as a woman, 2) born and raised in Türkiye, and 3) at least five years' experience working in Turkish academia. Snowball sampling was avoided to better safeguard participants' confidentiality.

After reviewing the official websites of eight public and twelve private universities across various regions in Türkiye, I compiled the email addresses and CVs of 120 women academics representing different disciplines and academic positions. Next, I sent invitation emails which included a summary of the aims of the research and its different stages, and my background. The invitation emails were prepared in both English and Turkish and sent to prospective participants in two phases. In the first phase, I sent the invitation email to 60 prospective participants from STEM and social sciences with various tenured and non-tenured positions. Within one week of sending the first set of emails, five invitees responded agreeing to participate in the study. As the number of participants did not reach the target after two weeks of sending the first set of emails, the remainder of prospective participants were sent the invitation emails. Within ten days of sending the second set of emails, six additional invitees responded expressing interest. Overall, 11 out of 120 invitees agreed to participate, though two later withdrew. Twenty declined due to tight schedules, and three indicated that they found the topic of the study interesting, yet they did not feel safe discussing women's status in the current political atmosphere of Türkiye. The remaining invitees did not respond to the invitation email. From those who agreed to participate, four were from STEM and five were from social science fields.

Participants who agreed to participate in the study were sent a thank-you email which included the consent form, in both English and Turkish, and a Zoom link for a 30-minute informal meeting. These informal Zoom meetings served both to build rapport and to determine the interview schedule and participants' preferred platforms for the semi-structured interviews. These informal

meetings were not recorded but I took notes. After confirming dates and platforms, each participant completed three semi-structured interviews and one wrap-up meeting. Semi-structured interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes each. The wrap-up meetings lasted about 30 minutes. The guiding interview questions were designed to explore participants' early encounters with patriarchy, gendered challenges they faced on the path to academia, and their resistance stories. In addition, to prompt more in-depth responses, I used probing questions as needed. The interview protocol acted as a guide rather than a strict structure, enabling a free flow of conversations between participants and me. Of the 27 interviews, 16 were carried out via Zoom and recorded. The rest were conducted via phone for which I took detailed notes. Some interviews were done in English, some in Turkish, and some in both. I translated the interviews conducted in Turkish into English and transcribed them verbatim. Notes from telephone interviews were expanded into narrative paragraphs immediately after each interview. Wrap-up meetings with participants were scheduled approximately two weeks after the third semi-structured interview. These meetings served two purposes: 1) to follow up and fill any gaps in participants' narratives, and 2) to perform member-check during which tentative findings were shared for their review and feedback (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 256)

3.6. Researcher Journal

I am an Iranian-Canadian woman exploring the lived experiences of Turkish women academics with patriarchy. As someone who has interacted with patriarchy throughout my life, I reject the notion of the researcher-as-neutral-vessel. I am aware that my role is not merely to collect data and that I carry particular concerns and insights about patriarchal structures and how they work at macro, meso, and micro levels. My insights about patriarchy originate from my own lived experiences in a patriarchal country where I spent almost three decades of my life. I recognise that I enter the space of this narrative inquiry with wounds and scars inflicted by patriarchal discourses and practices, some of which have healed, some have not. So, I will function both as a researcher and as a research instrument. Indeed, I will be a part of my participants' narratives, just as they will be part of mine; we are going to relive each other's stories. And new stories will emerge from our interpretations and perceptions of the stories that we will relive together. In other words, we will co-construct meaning as our narratives intersect and we relive each other's narratives. I also acknowledge that I might be struggling with when to share my stories and when to leave the stage for my participants to share theirs. This is something I will need

to continually reflect on in the narrative space I will be sharing with my participants (My pre-data-collection journal, 2022/10/24[65]).

This excerpt is the first page of my research journal, which I established in February 2021 prior to stepping into the relational space of this narrative inquiry with participants. This research journal functioned as both a reflective and a reflexive tool, providing a space for me to document shifts in my theoretical framework, track my internal thought processes, and record contextual details and emerging patterns within the narrative space my participants and I shared. For the purpose of this dissertation, I acknowledge Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater's (1996) understanding of reflexivity and reflection within qualitative research methodology. She states, "*to be reflective does not demand an 'other,'* while *to be reflexive demands both another* and *some self-conscious awareness* [emphasis added] of the process of self-scrutiny" (Chiseri-Strater's, 1996, p. 130). My reflective thinking permeated the entirety of my research process, while reflexivity emerged more prominently when my participants and I entered the narrative space, or what Clandinin and Connelly (2004) describe as the "midst" of shared experiences (p. 63). The excerpt above depicts my self-situating, acknowledging my awareness of my subjectivity and the presence of what Scheurich (1997) calls "the researcher baggage" (as cited in Ortlipp, 2008, p. 698). Journaling equipped me with "wakefulness", an attentive state that allowed me to trace and reflect on my assumptions, hopes, desires, biases, and beliefs as they evolved within the space of this study (Clandinin, Pushor & Orr, 2007, p. 21).

Reflection also allowed me to revisit my intellectual journey. It enabled me to scrutinize my original theoretical framework, which consisted of Gramsci's hegemony, Giddens' (1984) structuration, and Karam and Afiouni's (2014) career success framework. The following excerpt from my journal demonstrates this critical re-examination:

> Today, I listened to a speech by Erdoğan about gender (in)equality, took notes on his words, and reflected on similar discourses I encountered in Iran. This prompted me to reflect on my theoretical framework. As I was listening to his discourses, I started to question whether my original framework could adequately capture the concept of power, which is central to examining patriarchy. While Gramsci's hegemony offers valuable insight into how dominant forces maintain

[65] I utilized underlining as a visual technique to highlight the words and phrases that reveal my evolving conceptual framework along with my positionality as both an inquirer and a knowledge co-constructor.

> control, his works do not explore the role of gender in power dynamics and as such it does not fully capture the power dynamics in patriarchal systems. Similarly, I found Giddens' structuration theory too abstract; it lacks an account of the specific techniques of patriarchal power control. I need to invite Foucault into this narrative space (My pre-data collection reflective journal, 2023/01/07).

Indeed, documenting my thoughts and insights about patriarchal systems in both countries revealed the limitations of Gramsci's Marxist hegemony, with its primary focus on class struggle. Journaling enabled me to move beyond Gramsci and towards a framework more attuned to relational power. Accordingly, my theoretical framework expanded to include Foucault's (1977, 1978) various modes of power, Allen's (2000) power-with, Arendt's (1958) space of appearance, and Markova's (2003) theory of intersubjectivity. These theoretical perspectives, combined with Karam and Afiouni's (2013, 2014) career success framework, shaped the power-centered conceptual framework presented in Chapter Three.

Beyond dedicating a chapter to my reflective journey, I devoted several pages to each participant, creating a space for our unfolding narrative relationships. I recorded my thoughts, ideas, and concerns before, during, and after our meetings, from the initial casual meeting through the semi-structured interviews and continuing through the transcription and coding process. These participant-specific reflexive sections documented a space within which I was able "to recognise an otherness of self and the self of others" (Pillow, 2003, p. 181). This reflexive recognition is evident in an excerpt from my initial meeting with Inci:

> It is 5 a.m. in Ottawa. I am waiting for Inci to join the Zoom meeting. She expressed a preference for having our interviews from her home rather than her university office. That is why we agreed to meet after her working hours […] She joined the meeting at 5:05… She was wearing a beautiful sweater which she later mentioned was made by her mother. I greeted her in Turkish: Merhaba, Hocam. Nasilsiniz? [Hello, Professor. How are you?] She was pleasantly surprised, Türkçe konuşabiliyorsunuz. Ne güzel! [You can speak Turkish! How nice]. We talked about the Turkish language and Turkish cuisine. I shared my love for ekmak ve peynir [Turkish bread and cheese] and recalled that while my dad was on sabbatical in Türkiye, I used to go buy bread every morning from a small supermarket near where we lived.

> There was a big bookcase behind her, filled from floor to ceiling. When I commented on the size of her bookshelf, she shared her passion for both fiction and non-fiction books. Our conversation naturally gravitated towards Orhan Pamuk's Snow and The Museum of Innocence.
>
> She, then, inquired about my research motivation, specifically why I had chosen Türkiye. I shared my early interactions with patriarchy. She was attentively listening with a smile, nodding with recognition […] "How similar", she remarked. This created a moment of connection; it transcended our researcher versus participant relationship. I am glad she has relived my story. This enabled me to expand my perceptions of my own lived experiences with patriarchy. Unfortunately, an internet connection issue interrupted our informal chatting. She emailed me shortly after, stating that she looked forward to our next meetings.

> It is 7:30 a.m. I am sitting in my home office, gazing out the window and thinking to myself: "Every woman's story is distinctively individual; it is as unique as our fingerprints, yet there are recognizable patterns that, despite our distinct cultural contexts and upbringings, create bridges into each other's stories of and lived experiences with patriarchy.

Richardson (2000) conceptualises writing as "a method of inquiry", asserting that "I write because I want to find out something. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it" (p. 924). Throughout this narrative inquiry, my journaling practice exemplified this epistemological stance. It functioned not merely as a documentation tool to record my observations, but as what Moustakas (1990) calls a "heuristic inquiry" instrument, enabling me to interact with the thoughts I had not navigated and, ultimately, to comprehend "the nature and meaning of experiences" told, lived, and relived (p. 9). Indeed, these journal entries served as both *an anchor* and *a compass,* grounding me in ontological awareness of my role as both researcher and knowledge co-constructor, while enabling me to navigate Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) three commonplaces—temporality, sociality, and place—with greater intentionality.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a systematic examination of the collected data to identify its components, the relationships among them, and their relation to the whole (Patton, 2002). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering *what* is

important and *what* is there to be learned, and deciding *what* you will tell others" (p. 54). Within narrative inquiry, data analysis primarily aims at understanding participants' experiences, with the process of analysis involving piecing together data, coding for particular themes, and linking seemingly unrelated facets of the storyteller's experiences together (Josselson, 2013).

Data analysis in narrative inquiry can be conducted in various ways. Riessman (2005) identifies four main approaches suited for analyzing oral narratives: *thematic, structural, interactional*, and *performative.* Each of these approaches, as Riessman (2005) contends, has an exclusive focus; nonetheless, they are broad groupings with blurred and often overlapping boundaries. In the thematic approach, researchers primarily focus on the content of a text, on *what* is said rather than *how* it is said, "the 'told' rather than the 'telling'" (Riessman, 2005, p. 2). Riessman (2005) posits that although narrative inquiry is concerned with the *what* of participants' stories, in thematic analysis, the focus is almost exclusively on the content of the narrative, and thus *how* a narrative is shared and the linguistic features of the narrative are not closely investigated. In the structural approach, the emphasis shifts to the *how* of the story, with language being perceived as an object for close investigation. The interactional approach focuses on the dialogic process between the storyteller and the listener. In this mode of analysis, attention to the *what* and *how* of the narrative is not abandoned; nevertheless, storytelling is perceived as a process of "co-construction" where meanings are collaboratively created between the teller and the listener (Riessman, 2005, p. 4). In the performative approach, "interest goes beyond the spoken word", with storytellers engaging their audiences through language and gesture. In the performative approach, inquirers examine various elements of the story including the setting, the characters and their positioning in the story, the dialogues, and the audience's interpretive responses to the drama as the narrative unfolds (Riessman, 2005, p. 5).

The exclusive focus of this study was on the content of participants' stories, the *what* of their lived experiences with patriarchy. To this end, I utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage approach to thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke's proposed six stages to carry out thematic analysis are: *1) becoming familiar with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining themes, and 6) writing up.* To these six stages, I added one more step of *restorying* participants story to enable readers to navigate the narrative space my participants and I shared over the course of this study. This additional methodological stage was implemented concurrently with the initial data familiarization process.

Thematic analysis began immediately after completing the online and/or telephone interviews. I transcribed all interviews verbatim. Rather than being a mechanical process, the transcription evolved into “an interpretive practice” as I deliberately paused after every few sentences and physically distanced myself from the text, often standing by the window or riding my stationary bike while contemplating what had been shared with me (Riessman, 1993, p. 13). This reflective practice facilitated my interaction with the data from an early stage. Reflection on participants’ stories in segments while transcribing them enabled me to “immerse [myself] in the data to the extent that I became familiar with the depth and breadth of the content” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that immersion in data usually involves “repeated reading” of the data and reading the data in an active way” (p. 87). After transcribing all interviews, I read the transcripts several times to deepen my understanding of participants’ lived experiences. While conducting the “repeated reading” of participants’ interviews, I consulted my notes taken during and after each interview and carefully constructed each participant’s narrative chronologically. Although narrative reconstruction is not included as a step in Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis, I re-storied the interviews as part of the immersion process prior to proceeding with the second stage.

Once I narrated all nine participants’ lived experiences, I continued with the second stage: generating initial codes. To create ample space for documenting my assumptions and initial codes, I adjusted the page margins to two inches throughout all documents. During this coding process, I adhered to what Braun and Clarke (2006) describe as “working systematically through the entire data set in order to give full and equal attention to each data item and […] code for as many potential themes as possible” (p. 89). After the initial codes emerged and were added to the margins of each narrative, I utilized the save-as function to save a separate copy of each participant’s narrative. I then removed my notes from the margins and stored them in a separate folder. These copies were named *Coding: The Second Stage* and were used to enhance the analytical rigour of the study. Next, I implemented a two-week reflection period to return to the transcripts and my notes with fresh eyes. I printed the second copies and gave them another round of careful reading; the initial codes were checked, and modifications were made as required. I cross-compared the initial codes from both phases and selected recurring patterns to advance to the next phase of data analysis: searching for themes.

After completing the comprehensive coding process across all nine participant narratives, I examined the emergent codes and “sorted them into potential themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). I approached this phase through a systematic, multi-stage process. First, I created visual

maps to arrange the common codes extracted from the two-phase coding process. The visual mapping technique allowed me to identify what Braun and Clarke describe as “candidate themes and sub-themes” (p. 90). Nonetheless, as Braun and Clarke posit, “Some initial codes may go on to form main themes, whereas others may form sub-themes, and others may be discarded” (p. 90). Accordingly, these candidate themes did not represent final analytical products but rather the foundation for the next two stages of reviewing themes and defining and naming themes. The objectives of these stages, as Braun and Clarke (2006) note, “involve[d] 1) the refinement of the themes”, and 2) ensuring that each candidate theme does not encompass too many disparate elements and reflects the meanings evident in participants’ narratives (p. 91). Once I had a set of fully worked-out themes, I began the final stage of my thematic analysis which involved “telling the complicated story of my data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of my analysis” (p. 93).

5. Trustworthiness and Credibility

A turn toward acceptance of multiple ways of knowing the world is a turn toward establishing findings through authenticity and trustworthiness (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002). In qualitative research, the trustworthiness of results is indicative of high-quality qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). It can be achieved through researchers being “balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities” (Patton, 2002, p. 575). The restorying of every participant’s account enabled me to establish a foundation of trustworthiness that honored the integrity of individual voices while acknowledging the complexity of their lived experiences with patriarchy. Additionally, by inviting readers to accompany me through my analytical journey, from participants’ narratives to thematic interpretations, I made the analytical process transparent and open to scrutiny.

To achieve credibility, I conducted narrative verification with each participant. Once the construction of narratives was complete, I shared them with participants, inviting them to review the narratives and provide feedback. This methodological approach, known as member checking, is the most critical technique for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The member checking process involved sending each participant their completed narrative with an invitation to review it for authenticity and resonance. Participants were invited to suggest modifications, clarifications, or elaborations that would better capture the nuances and complexities of their stories.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the research design utilized to explore Turkish women academics' lived experiences with patriarchal discourses and practices in Türkiye. This chapter provided a thorough examination of narrative inquiry as the methodology framing this study. It elaborated on participant recruitment criteria and strategies, along with semi-structured interviews and journaling as the principal data collection methods. It then detailed the data analysis process which followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, and the strategies employed to establish authenticity, trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. Chapters Five and Six present each participant's narratives and the study's findings.

Chapter Five: Participants' Narratives of Patriarchy and Resistance

Chapter Five attends to participants' profiles and their narratives of patriarchy and gender discrimination they were personally subjected to or witnessed in other women's lives. Each profile includes the pseudonym of the participant and her educational, familial, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Participants' narratives have been chronologically organised starting with their childhood up until their time in academia. To set the stage for readers to understand what to expect in each narrative, narratives are divided into several sections, each portraying a segment of the participant's lived experiences with patriarchy. Narratives conclude with the participant's insights on the status of women in the current political atmosphere in Türkiye, the roles of women in dismantling gender discriminatory discourses and practices in Turkish academia and beyond, and/or the reasons behind women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership positions in Turkish academia.

1. Dilay (The Moon)

▪ Profile

Dilay is single and between the ages of 35 and 44. She was born and raised in a middle-class, secular family in a small Southeastern Anatolia region city. She completed her elementary, secondary, and high school education in her hometown before she moved to a big Mediterranean region city to do her undergraduate and master's in a social science field. Dilay did her doctorate in humanities at a North American University. She has published more than fifteen peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and books. She has been teaching and researching in a public university in the Central Anatolia region for more than a decade.

▪ Fortunate in Education, Constrained in Social Interactions: Dilay's Pre-University Years

Dilay considered herself "fortunate" for having been brought up in a middle-class, secular family, with her parents supporting her pursuit of a doctorate. Dilay traced her motivation to become an academic back to her childhood. She recalled the conversations her parents had with her and her sisters about the importance of higher education in women's lives as what motivated her to earn her doctorate and enter academia. She shared, "My parents believed that a university degree, and especially a doctorate, would give me more leverage in marriage and make me more visible in the Turkish job market."

Dilay remembered her parents as “liberal feminists with some conservative thoughts.” Her parents were ‘liberal’ in that they both advocated for equal pay and job opportunities for men and women, yet they were conservative about their daughters’ pre-marital social activities. She shared,

> Although my parents supported our higher education, they discriminated between their daughters and sons. Unlike my brothers, my sisters and I were banned from going out after sunset [..] Going to dance clubs or bars and having a boyfriend were taboo for girls in our family as my parents were concerned about their daughters getting pregnant out of wedlock. I can say we were under their watch all the time; they wanted to make sure that we were not sexually taken advantage of.

- **Gender-Neutral or The Power of Numbers? The Gender Dynamics in Social Science Fields**

Dilay did not recall any incidents of patriarchal norms or practices during her higher education years in Türkiye. She described the lecture halls in her undergraduate program as “female-dominated,” with women making up more than two-thirds of almost every class she attended. Dilay described her professors, both males and females, as “gender unbiased,” noting that every student was equally treated. She, however, suggested that this lack of bias might have been due to the strong presence of women in her undergraduate and master’s classes.

Dilay described the social science fields in Türkiye as “feminized disciplines.” She went on to explain that it might have been because of the high number of female academics in social science and humanities that she had not experienced or witnessed any instances of gender discrimination in her department. She noted, “In my field, gender does not determine the teaching or research workload of women in academia. This is because our academic staff are mostly women and almost all applicants for teaching and research positions in our department are women.” Dilay considered herself “lucky” partly because she was in social science academia, where she was not exposed to “patriarchal discrimination,” which allowed her to “progress.” She stated,

> I feel lucky that I can progress in my career; this is to some extent because I am in the social science field. I have heard stories of women in male-dominated disciplines who are stuck in lower ranks and are not even given the chance to share their thoughts and suggestions in their departmental meetings.

- **COVID-19 and Gender Disparity in Research Opportunities**

Dilay described the COVID-19 pandemic as “an opportunity” for some male academics in that they could spend their lockdown time on research projects and improve their academic status. Academic women, on the other hand, Dilay continued, were burdened by the pandemic due to significant increases in household responsibilities. Dilay shared her observation regarding the number of research projects male and female academics applied for during the COVID-19 pandemic in her university. She stated that while the number of research projects led by women was almost on par with men’s before the pandemic, a higher number of male academics applied for research projects during the lockdown years of 2020 and 2021. Dilay attributed this disparity to men having more time to contribute to their research than the amount of time most women had, particularly those with young families to care for.

- **Systemic Gender Biases in STEM Academia: Who is to Blame?**

Reflecting on challenges encountered by some women in STEM academia in Türkiye, Dilay recalled her observations on the distribution of teaching and research tasks between male and female academics in some STEM departments in Türkiye. She stated,

> Your education does not seem to be sufficient to change this patriarchal culture some women experience in STEM academia in Türkiye […] I have heard stories of male academics in STEM who get the cream of tasks; they are assigned the easiest courses and are given the most lucrative and prestigious research projects […] Women, on the other hand, especially the younger ones, are required to do advising jobs, handle administrative stuff and teach… The courses they are given to teach are mostly undergraduate courses, not graduate ones.

Dilay elaborated on factors contributing to Turkish female academics’ underrepresentation in STEM. She began by expressing her frustration with the labeling of STEM disciplines as “hard sciences,” while social science fields were considered “soft sciences” and, hence, “easier to study.” To Dilay, such perceptions towards social science and STEM fields are among the main factors contributing to women’s underrepresentation in STEM academia. She stated,

> In many Turkish families, social science majors are reputed to be the least challenging; they are perceived as more women-friendly and more compatible with at-home responsibilities […] STEM fields, on the other hand, are viewed as more difficult and, as such, more appropriate

> for men […]There is also this perception among many Turkish families that STEM fields are masculine, unsafe, and much too competitive for women, while social science disciplines are seen as motherly, safe, less competitive, and more suitable for women.

Dilay described the gender-biased content of schoolbooks as another reason behind women's underrepresentation in STEM academia and in the managerial and leadership positions in both public and private sectors in Türkiye. She stated, "When I was a student, women were portrayed as teachers, nurses, and housewives, while men were engineers, managers, and CEOs; nothing has changed after almost three decades; in our schoolbooks today, women are still portrayed in the same non-managerial and lower-rank positions."

- **Challenging the Gender Climate in Türkiye: Connection Matters**

To Dilay, publishing on the topic of women's rights is an act of resistance women in social science and humanities academia can and should exercise to confront the current political "gender climate" in Türkiye. She, however, stated that unless women, regardless of their socio-economic and religious backgrounds, stand in solidarity, they would not succeed in their fight against gender discrimination. In this regard, Dilay considered scholarly publications presented in a non-academic, jargon-free language, whether in local newspapers or on digital platforms such as Instagram and Twitter, as a means that would enable women to connect with the general public, a connection that she maintained essential to creating a sense of solidarity among women. She noted,

> Because of their jargon and dense information, the scholarly works often fail to connect with non-academic communities. In order for this connection to actualize, we need to step out of the ivory tower and communicate with the general public, NGOs, grassroots movements, and those involved in developing policies and directives […] We need to use a language that everyone can connect to.

Dilay emphasized that women, particularly those in gender studies, need to make themselves more "visible" on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. She stated that by publishing popular articles on these platforms, women could shift from being perceived by the public as "outsiders" to being seen as "one of us." This transition is "vital" as it would enable women to be heard by and connect with the general public, she asserted. She, however, stated that while it is still relatively safe to publish on gender-related issues, the future remains uncertain,

especially given the influence of the religious sector on the current government's agenda. In this respect, Dilay elaborated on the AKP's populist, anti-intellectual, and conservative discourses and policies, and how they precluded academics, in general, and female academics, in particular, from connecting with the general public. She stated,

> We [academics] are called "*yarım porsiyon insan*" [half-people] and *lümpen"* [lumpen][66]. Such depictions have created a big chasm between academics and the public […] The current government is trying to brand us as outsiders, a bunch of narcissists […] To them, we are "*Karni Tok"* [rich][67] people who know nothing about the life and challenges of those with no higher education and low-paid jobs.

Dilay added that on top of being affected by the AKP's populist and anti-intellectual discourses, women in Turkish academia encountered additional hurdles in connecting with the general public based on their being *women* [emphasis added by the participant]. She contended that the presence of deeply rooted gender discriminatory norms and practices in Turkish culture, combined with the AKP's portrayal of women as unequal to men and academics as elites, has deepened the chasm between the public, especially those in conservative regions, and women in Turkish academia. Dilay perceived the divide between the general public and unmarried female academics as even more stark in light of the current political discourses. She recalled her disappointment when she heard the news of Erdoğan labelling unmarried women and women with no children as incomplete[68] regardless of their career success or their contribution to the country's economy. She stated, "I thought to myself, now that women with no children are considered incomplete, it will be even more difficult for women like me to connect with non-academic people, especially those in more conservative regions."

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[66] In a speech held in 2016, Erdoğan called academics half-portion intellectuals and lumpen.

[67] In Turkish, the expression "having a full stomach" indicates being rich and ignorant of those who do not have enough money to make ends meet.

[68] In a speech addressing Türkiye's Women and Democracy Association, Erdoğan encouraged women to have at least three children and stated that a woman's life was incomplete and deficient if she failed to reproduce. Adapted from: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36456878

Having elaborated on the AKP's neoliberal policies, Dilay reflected on the agreements signed between the Turkish government and Horizon Europe[69]. She shared the "bittersweet feeling" she experienced when she first heard about the project. She found the project "sweet", considering the main objective of the project being to enhance women's presence in research teams and in leadership roles. However, despite viewing the Horizon Europe agreement as a great initiative for improving gender equality in the country, Dilay maintained that these agreements were "very neoliberal" as gender equality was marketized by the Turkish government. She stated, "The bitter side of these agreements is that the current government signed them not because they believed in gender equality or were willing to do anything to improve women's status, but just because they desired the funds they would receive from the EU."

Navigating Gender (In)Equality amid the COVID-19 Pandemic and Türkiye's Gendered Climate: The Highlights of Dilay's Narrative

Dilay's narrative at the micro level revealed her parents' conflicting beliefs in gender equality. On the one hand, they displayed a conservative attitude towards their daughters' social interactions. On the other hand, they were supportive of Dilay's pursuit of higher education and gender equality in the workplace. In fact, her parents' endorsement of their daughters' higher education exposed their neoliberal mindset, shaped by the prevalent neoliberal discourses and the market-oriented knowledge it (re)produces, a mindset which perceived higher education, and especially a doctorate, as an asset that would increase a woman's desirability and value in Türkiye's marriage market.

At the meso level, Dilay's narrative of patriarchy clearly displayed the interplay between gender, numbers, and academic disciplines in her higher education years. It highlighted that, compared to more male-dominated majors, women in feminized fields such as social sciences and humanities might be subjected to fewer gender biases and academic mobility barriers. However, her reflection on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the career trajectories of women and

[69] Horizon Europe aims to increase the EU's global scientific competitiveness. It supports frontier research projects defined and driven by top researchers themselves through the European Research Council, funds fellowships for postdoctoral researchers, doctoral training networks, and exchanges for researchers through Marie Curie Actions. It also supports research relating to societal challenges, gender equality, and inclusiveness. Adapted from: https://rea.ec.europa.eu/news/tackling-gender-equality-research-and-innovation-2023-03-07_en

men in academia suggested that, due to the prevalent gendered roles in Türkiye, women were the ones whose career progression was predominantly affected by the pandemic. Dilay's observation of the challenges women faced in balancing their research productivity and domestic responsibilities during the pandemic indicated that even if she did not experience any blatant examples of gendered attitudes at the meso level, women's interaction with patriarchy at the micro level, could adversely impact their career advancement.

At the macro level, Dilay's narrative underlined the negative portrayal of Turkish academics rendered by the AKP's anti-intellectual and populist discourses. These discourses undermined the public acceptance of academics, thereby impairing their impact as agents of change. Her narrative also revealed that the intersection of these anti-intellectual and populist discourses and gender made the path to public acceptance even bumpier for women, especially the unmarried ones. Furthermore, the AKP's involvement in international educational projects, such as Horizon Europe, has emphasized the commercialization of gender equality initiatives and invited us to call into question the genuine intent of the AKP in signing such agreements beyond its financial incentives.

Dilay's narrative of resistance strategies included publishing academic articles, promoting solidarity among Turkish women from diverse backgrounds, and making academic knowledge more accessible to the general public. Her narrative also highlighted the strategic use of social media platforms by women to improve their visibility and facilitate interaction with non-academic communities.

2. Güneş (The Sunlight)

- **Profile**

Güneş is married and has two children. She is between the ages of 45 and 54. She was raised in a middle-class, secular family in a big Aegean region city. She completed her elementary, secondary, and high school education in her hometown. She attained her undergraduate degree and master's from a public university in a big city in the Central Anatolia region and earned her doctorate in a STEM field abroad. Güneş has been in Turkish academia for over two decades with more than twenty peer-reviewed journal articles and several book chapters. She is teaching and researching at a public university in Central Anatolia.

- **Parental Protectionism: Güneş's Early Encounters with Patriarchy**

Güneş described the unequal freedom she and her brothers had when they were teenagers. In retrospect, she remembered her parents as her "guardians." She stated that because "they were not girls," her brothers had their parents' "green light" to socialize with their friends and stay out late. Yet, to Güneş's dismay, her parents scrutinized her social activities and even her clothes to ensure that she was "safe and protected." Güneş recalled expressing her annoyance once, to which her parents responded, "We trust you, but it is the society that we cannot trust." Despite being subjected to her parents' restraints during her teenage years, Güneş considered herself "very fortunate" to have been raised in a family that provided equal educational opportunities for her and her brothers.

Güneş experienced the presence of her parents' protection well beyond her teenage years. She felt disheartened when her parents did not allow her to apply for the EU's Erasmus program[70] after graduating from high school. She stated, "They supported my higher education, but they thought Europe was not safe for young, unmarried women, so they did not let me leave the country […] They told me, 'Stay here, stay safe'."

- **Barrier Breaker: Güneş's Impact as the First Woman Academic in the Family**

Güneş did not recall any incidents of gender discrimination during her higher education years. Yet she stated that most of her professors in her undergraduate and master's programs were "old men" who were "boring, terrible teachers." Conversely, she remembered her women professors as "dedicated teachers" who "gave all energy they had" to ensure that their students were engaged in class discussions.

Shortly after Güneş completed her PhD, she began her academic career at a public university. She was the first professor in her family and the first woman professor in her community. She was the role model for her female cousins who followed in her footsteps and became the next generation of professors in the family. She stated, "Encouraging and guiding the girls in the family

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[70] The EU's Erasmus program is a European Union student exchange program established in 1987. It provides grants for students to study abroad both within and outside of the EU at the bachelor, master and doctorate levels. In the new Erasmus program called Erasmus +, lifelong learning programs as well as support for teachers and education staff to attend training courses are provided. Adapted from: [Erasmus + Study Exchange]

to earn their PhD and enter academia was a contribution that I gladly made to our fight against patriarchy." After two years in academia, Güneş was elected as the Student Exchange Program Officer. She recalled that she vigorously promoted women students' participation in the program and shared stories of times when she visited families who were initially unwilling to allow their daughters' participation in the program. Güneş asserted that if she had not been a woman, she might not have been as supportive of women's involvement in Student Exchange programs, as she would not have experienced the "bitterness" of gender-based violence. With a smile, Güneş stated that when her parents saw her enthusiasm and commitment to supporting women to partake in Student Exchange programs, they began to support women students in their community and help them earn their parents' approval to apply for the Erasmus and other Student Exchange programs.

- **Some of Us Are Lucky, Some of Us Are Cinderellas: Stories of Partner Support**

Güneş described herself as "fortunate" to have a "wonderful" husband who helped with childcare and household chores. She, nonetheless, stated that most academic women in Türkiye ought to "sacrifice their academic advancement" to care for their families. Güneş described the lack of support from some Turkish men as another instance of gendered attitudes that their academic wives encountered in Türkiye. In this regard, Güneş shared a story about one of her colleagues whose academic progress was impeded due to her husband's lack of assistance with household chores and child-rearing. She shared,

> My friend likened her life to Cinderella's. She said that much like Cinderella, her spell breaks at 6:00 p.m., the time when she must rush home to prepare supper. When she is home, the spell breaks, and she turns from an academician to Cinderella. She needs to get changed and run into the kitchen to prepare dinner, while her husband is sitting in his home office working on his research projects and publications.

- **Struggles and Strategies: Güneş's Experiences of Gender Roles, Age Discrimination, and Informal Networks of Power in Academia**

Güneş expressed frustration over women being considered "mothers of their students." She stated that such impressions towards women in Turkish academia exacerbated the already heavy burden of teaching and research. Güneş shared that, generally, women were perceived as "better listeners" and the ones with "motherly instincts," a perception that she described as "gendered."

Güneş noted that, compared to men, she and other women professors in her faculty were "more dedicated to teaching and connecting with their students." She stated, "Much like the women professors I had in my undergraduate and graduate programs, we [women professors] are dedicated teachers." She was unsure whether this dedication stemmed from women's love for teaching, or them "feeling obliged to be better than men," or it was simply a tool for them to survive in academia. However, Güneş went on to explain that the tendency for female academics to overwork was an outcome of the patriarchal culture in Turkish academia. She stated,

> Turkish academia is an unfair and patriarchal space […] Being mediocre does not matter for men as they can still climb up the academic ladder […] Women constantly need to be the best, they need to prove it […] One little mistake, and they would fall so deep that it might cost them years and years of hard work to go back where they had fallen off from.

Güneş shared stories on the interplay between the axes of age and gender in her department, the interplay that led to her and other women being subjected to the discriminatory attitudes from their men students. She stated that, at times, male students questioned the soundness of their female professors' academic knowledge, particularly, those who were younger and less experienced. She noted, "My colleagues and I experienced age discrimination when we were younger. I have never heard stories of young academic men being discriminated against because of their young age."

Güneş shared incidents whereby men altered the jointly-made departmental decisions without women's approval, an attitude that she described as "discriminatory, exclusionary and frustrating." She stated,

> It is quite common that, the very next day following our departmental meetings, we [women faculty members] receive an email informing us of the changes the men have made to our jointly-made decisions during a dinner together in a restaurant after our meeting [..] What they are trying to do is to exclude us; this is exclusionary, discriminatory and really frustrating.

Güneş stated that there was a WhatsApp channel launched by her department in order for all faculty members to share the departmental news, events, and decisions. However, much to women's shock, men set up their own WhatsApp group "behind women's back." To counteract, Güneş and other women in her department launched their own WhatsApp group to keep each

other informed about the latest departmental news and incidents and “support one another to grow,” a group that *“erkeklere yer yok”* [no men were allowed in].

Güneş elaborated on mentoring as an “essential” strategy to confront patriarchy in academia. She described women mentoring women as “the most effective” way to combat patriarchal norms and values in Turkish society. She asserted that women should support each other whether it be in publishing a scholarly article, applying for an Exchange Student Program, or seeking employment and obtaining financial independence. To Güneş, it would not be unfair nor discriminatory against men if women helped each other advance their academic career, as men do it all the time in their “buddy groups.”

Güneş recalled a meeting she and some women in her department had with their university’s newly appointed chancellor. During the meeting, Güneş shared the work-life balance challenges women in her department were dealing with and asked the chancellor whether he had any strategies to ease women’s burdens and facilitate their academic growth. She also inquired about initiatives to address the lack of recognition and support she and other women experienced. She recalled that while she was talking, the chancellor was nodding and taking notes. After the meeting, almost every woman who was present in the meeting thanked Güneş for her “outspokenness and bravery.” However, they expressed their doubt about whether the chancellor had truly “understood” her points. Güneş remembered replying, “I do not know if he understood me or not; what was important to me was to speak up.” With a smile on her face, Güneş maintained that she would continue voicing her thoughts and concerns at every opportunity. She stated, “I won’t give up, I will share, I will talk, I will express my thoughts.”

Güneş elaborated on the potential role of female academics in dismantling patriarchal norms and values in Türkiye. She perceived the populist discourses and policies of the current Turkish government as a “divide” between the general public and academics. She emphasized the importance of “building a feminist bridge” across Türkiye and, in particular, in small cities in Anatolia region, stating that such an initiative could confront the general public’s perception of academics as elites. In this regard, she recounted a conversation she recently had with one her former students who was currently teaching at a university in a small, conservative city in the Anatolia region. She stated, “We were talking about how to break academic elitism. We decided to launch a ‘feminist bridge,’ a platform through which women from different social classes could connect, share their concerns, and propose strategies to resolve their concerns.”

- **Equal Care Manifesto and Campaigns for Gender Equality: The Pathways to Change**

Güneş advocated for the launch of the *Equal Care Manifesto*[71] in Türkiye. She maintained that the actualization of such a manifesto would provide quality care for mother academics with young children, thereby assisting them with their career advancement. She stated that, much like other workplaces in Türkiye, public daycare services[72] for faculty and staff were almost unheard of in most Turkish universities. The scarcity of a quality and affordable daycare system in Türkiye has made the path to the top “rockier and longer” for some women in Turkish academia. This is because, as Güneş states, the lack of such a daycare system has forced women to either stay at home or work part time for a year or two in order to take care of their young children. Güneş shared a story of one of her colleagues who had to stop her research for one year to take care of her two young children because her husband had lost his job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and, as such, they could not afford private daycares. Güneş advocated for designating February 29th as the ‘Care Day’, the invisible day for the often-invisible work of caring for children and the elderly, a burden that most women, regardless of their professions, carry worldwide. She added that although some Turkish working mothers received help from women family members, “it is still women, and not men”, who are doing this unpaid work.

Güneş expanded on two campaigns in Türkiye aimed at raising awareness about the gender stereotypes and challenges encountered by Turkish mothers with young children in both public and private spheres. The first campaign, organised by the Mother Child Education Foundation, aims to highlight the roles both parents need to play in their children’s upbringing. This campaign provides quality education for Turkish fathers, encouraging them to be more involved in their children’s upbringing. The second campaign addresses the absence of diaper changing tables in men’s restrooms in shopping malls in Türkiye. Güneş maintained the latter campaign as a great step

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[71] Equal Care Manifesto for Türkiye demands social insurance and financial incomes for unpaid care work women do in Türkiye caring for their children and the elderly. It also demands the provision of 24/7 subsidized baby and childcare services and better working conditions for employees in the care professions. Adapted from: https://genderstudies.tedu.edu.tr/sites/default/files/docs/equal-care-menifesto-for-turkey.pdf

[72] According to the World Bank’s report on the effects of childcare in building human capital (2021), despite the increase in availability of daycare centers for children under the age of five over the last decade in Türkiye, less than one in three children are serviced by any form of childhood education and care services in the country. The report indicates that Türkiye’s funding level is the lowest with 0.1 percent of the country’s GDP compared to the target of 1 percent of GDP for childcare and early education across the OECD countries. Adapted from: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35062

forward since it defied the widespread perception in Türkiye, whereby women were viewed as the ones solely responsible for changing their children's diapers.

- **From 'Publish or Perish' Culture to Public Engagement: The (Re)Definition of Career Success**

Güneş shared her perception towards academic career success. Having criticized the culture of "publish or perish," she maintained that academic career success ought not be solely determined by the number of scholarly works published in high-rank journals, or the volume of conference papers presented in top-notch international conferences. Rather, she asserted, "academics can consider themselves successful if they can leave an impact on their students' lives and provide them with lots of opportunities to think freely." For Güneş, another important criterion in defining the career success of Turkish academics is their effort to connect with the general public by creating accessible and jargon-free versions of their scholarly works. Such efforts, Güneş maintained, could bridge the gap between the academic community and the general public. Güneş appreciated some Turkish academics' contributions to popular newspaper and magazine columns, where they discuss social issues and their proposed solutions in non-academic language. To her, publishing and sharing in popular platforms accessible to thousands of people is a better indicator of academic career success compared to publishing scholarly articles in high-ranked journals that mostly appeal to those within academia.

- **Breaking the Glass Ceiling: The Hows**

Güneş described women's underrepresentation in full professorship and leadership positions as a "shocking fact." She stated that the main reason behind this disparity was "the teaching jobs that men do not want to do," noting that teaching undergraduate courses, with their substantial number of students, was usually assigned to women. To improve women's presence at the top, in both full-professorship and managerial positions, Güneş suggested implementing women mentorship programs. She, however, asserted that despite being a big step forward, increasing the number of women at the top per se would not suffice to alleviate the impacts of patriarchy, for such positions should be occupied by "not just any women, but women with gender equality perspectives."

- **The Plight of Women and Students in the Current Political Religious Climate in Türkiye**

Güneş described the current political atmosphere of the country as “dangerous” for Turkish girls and women, attributing the “worsening” status of women’s right in Türkiye to the growing power of the country’s religious sector in the economic and political arenas. She shared her concerns over the alarming rate of femicide cases in the country, which she attributed to the current conservative government’s unwillingness to act. She, however, stated that the women’s movement was still the strongest amongst other movements and one of the few that was still going on despite the pressure from the government and the religious sect.

Güneş concluded her narrative by expressing her concerns over the impacts of religious organisations and communities on university students. These religious organisations offer students, particularly those from financially uncomfortable backgrounds, incentives such as free dormitory and a small allowance in exchange for participating in religious activities. Güneş described these incentives as “tools to brainwash and oppress” Turkish students. She shared the story of a non-Muslim medical student who, in 2021, committed suicide in a cult-run dormitory due to the pressure to say prayers five times a day, read religious books, and clean the community’s religious classes. Güneş recalled that there were demonstrations in her university and other universities across Türkiye denouncing such pressures imposed on students residing in religious cult-run dormitories. She described this incident as “the failure” of the Turkish Higher Education Council and the academic community to protect Turkish students from such pressures.

Breaking Chains, Building Bridges: The Highlights of Güneş’s Narrative

Güneş’s narrative captured her lifelong interaction with patriarchy and systemic gender inequality at micro, meso, and macro levels. At the micro level, her narrative depicted how being under her parents’ watchful eyes in her childhood and teenage years restricted her freedom and educational opportunities yet sharpened her commitment to promoting other women’s participation in academia and international exchange programs. It also illustrated the ripple effects of such commitment as her parents began to advocate for women’s and girls’ education in their community. Her narrative also underscored the dual burden women underwent as they navigated their academic aspirations alongside their domestic expectations in a socio-political context that prioritized traditional gender roles over the individual and professional aspirations. At the meso level, Güneş’s narrative exposed several gendered obstacles that women encountered in her

department. These obstacles include double standards in career advancement, gendered expectations, and exclusionary informal networks. At the macro level, Güneş's narrative displayed how the interplay between religion, the current political atmosphere, and the prevalent cultural norms towards gender roles led to the erosion of women's rights and compromised students' freedom and mental well-being.

Additionally, Güneş's narrative underscored the importance of individual agency, solidarity, mentoring, women's support networks, connection to the general public, critical thinking, and campaigns for gender equality in dismantling the deeply ingrained patriarchal discourses in Turkish academia and beyond. Her narrative also proposed a set of transformative metrics to assess one's academic career success. These metrics, which go beyond traditional scholarly outputs, expand the academic success criteria to include academics' contributions to popular media, their connection with the general public, and their advocacy for student engagement with critical thinking and broader societal change.

3. Elmas (Diamond)

▪ Profile

Elmas is married with two children. She is between the ages of 35 and 44. She was raised in a middle-class, religious family in a big city in the Marmara region. She did her elementary, secondary, and high school education in her hometown. She completed her undergraduate degree in the STEM field in her hometown and earned her master's and doctorate in the same field abroad. Elmas has been in Turkish academia for over a decade and has published more than twenty peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. She teaches and researches at a private university in the Eastern Anatolia region.

▪ Pursuing STEM Education Amid Familial Pressures

Elmas began her narrative with a story from her childhood. She recalled that when she was nine, during a family gathering, her father bragged about her outstanding math skills. He commented that having a daughter like her had filled the gap of not having a son. Elmas described her father's words and their effects on her as follows:

> For some time, I thought of my father's words as *compliments* [emphasis added by the participant]; so, I felt proud that I made my father feel proud. You know, I was forced to like math, which helped me to succeed in my field. However, in retrospect, they were stressful as I felt compelled to both fill the gap and compete with a male sibling I had never had.

Elmas recalled that while her mother was supportive of Elmas's decision to do her graduate studies, she did not appreciate the field Elmas aspired to pursue her doctorate. She recalled a conversation she had with her mother when she was in her final year of her bachelor's program. Her mother tried to persuade her to study a more "appropriate, less masculine" major, a major that would not require dealing with *men* in the workplace [emphasis added by the participant]. Nonetheless, with the help of some university and college female professors in their neighborhood, Elmas managed to gain her mother's approval. Elmas considered herself "fortunate" to have the support of these women, whom she described as those "who opened the doors" for Elmas to follow her "dreams" of pursuing her higher education in a STEM field.

With a bitter smile on her face, Elmas shared how her parents attempted to organise her motherhood activities and behaviour. She recounted that while pregnant with her second child, her parents expected her to make a "sacrifice" and withdraw from her doctorate program. They even expressed their disappointment over how she was "neglecting her motherly responsibilities." She stated:

> My parents and in particular my mother tried to persuade me to withdraw from my doctorate and focus on my pregnancy and family. They believed that I needed to give preference to my young family and forget about my PhD that I had been working on for almost six or seven years at that point.

- **Far from Being Gender-Neutral: Elmas's Experiences of Gendered Assumptions and Hiring Practices in STEM Academia**

Elmas did not recall any incidents of gender discrimination in her undergraduate or graduate programs. She, however, described the working atmosphere for women in her field as "patriarchal and hierarchical." She shared the following story,

> A couple of months ago I attended a symposium in my field of study. On the first day, there was this woman academic who gave a presentation about her research. Then when a well-known

> male academic, who was also the mediator of that session, went up to introduce the next presenter, he first thanked her and other women in my field for their participation, stating, 'Thank you for your contribution to *our* field [emphasis added by Elmas]. Intentionally or not, his sentence was formulated in a way to show that this field belonged to men and that women were just participants […]. Later on, I told a woman colleague, 'I am wondering if he would say the same thing to men in our field. This is a very patriarchal and masculine narration of women's success in my field of study.'

Elmas further stated that women in her field of study often "felt the pressure to work twice as hard to prove" their competence and expertise to others, especially to men, and appear "perfect" in every aspect of their academic jobs, a pressure rarely felt by male academics. She shared,

> Every day, I see how hard women in my department work to prove that they are perfect and fully committed to their academic and/or administrative requirements; it is obvious in the evening meetings that they attend and the heavy machinery they work with […] Yet, men do not need to prove anything, they regard themselves intellectually superior; they definitely have this thing called men ego.

Elmas recalled a field project she and one of her female academic colleagues were leading. On the second day of the project, Elmas overheard one of her master's students telling his female fellow classmates about men's superior status in their field of study in that they had more stamina for physically demanding tasks. Elmas shared, "He was talking about the low number of job opportunities for women in our field of study and then suggested his female classmates to consider doing sedentary jobs or something that did not require that much stamina." Elmas recounted that when she confronted the student, he defended his words by stating that Elmas and the other faculty member, who were jointly leading that research project, were "exceptions." Elmas stated, "What he said basically meant that women who succeed in my field of study are exceptions as this is a field which requires masculine qualities."

Elmas described the mindset of her department's hiring committee as one of the main reasons behind women's underrepresentation in her department. She stated that the hiring committee, mainly constituted of men, perceived men as "more successful" than women in field research, "a mindset" that Elmas considered "ingrained." She shared, "Men's discriminatory perceptions of

women as less successful than men in fieldwork and research are somewhat ingrained in the mindset of some of our men colleagues, particularly in the mindset of men in our hiring committee."

Elmas shared that one of her unmarried colleagues was questioned by her department dean about her low number of publications, on the assumption that, because she was not married, she had no family responsibilities. She noted,

> I have not heard of men being asked about their academic contributions based on their familial status. I am not sure if he would have asked men the same question. Such comments are sexist, and what the dean meant was 'We tolerate your lack of academic contribution if you have a family, but if you do not, you should demonstrate more commitments to research and publishing your works.'

Elmas believed that the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes and practices and their resultant gender discrimination in her field of study originated from the patriarchal norms and values embedded in every structure in Türkiye, whether social, familial, or political. She shared an account of a field visit by a high government official while she was directing a research project, she stated,

> It was a kind of disappointing that he went straight to my man assistant, who was much younger than me with less experience to ask his questions about the project. I could see that he was confused when my assistant turned to me and asked 'Hocam,[73] I don't know the answer to this question, could you help me out?' It was quite obvious that the government official did not expect a woman to be the director of such a big national research project […] Such mentalities originate from the patriarchal norms and values deeply rooted in our society and in our families. It is everywhere.

Elmas felt frustrated by the expectations for her to act like "the mother of her students." She noted that the general public in Türkiye expected female academics to care about their students' academic needs and "beyond the lecture hall concerns." Elmas shared that when she had just started her position as an assistant professor, her students expected her to listen to their personal issues since she was a woman, and, as such, possessed "motherly instincts." These motherly expectations cost Elmas the time she could have spent on her research and/or with her young

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[73] *Hocam* is a respect word in Turkish language which means my professor or my master.

family. At times, she had to call the babysitter and ask her to get the children ready for bedtime as she would need to stay longer in the office. She stated that after a couple of years, she had enough and told her students that she would only attend to their academic needs. This "enough is enough" stance affected her student evaluations. She stated," I noticed that my evaluations started to drop since I started reminding my students that I was not their mother. I have seen comments like 'I had heard she was kind, but she was not.' I don't care though; I feel more like an academic now […] I am here to teach not to babysit."

- **Planting the Seeds of Change: Elmas's Efforts to Raise Awareness and Improve Inclusivity in her Department**

When I asked Elmas about the role of women academics in unlearning patriarchal norms and practices in Turkish academia and beyond, she stressed the importance of including women and other gender-marginalized groups in projects from which their gender identity has historically barred them. In this respect, she shared a forthcoming research project she would be directing, a project, for which, she would only recruit women and queer students. Elmas added that this project with its "unique, often marginalized contributors" would be the first of its kind in Türkiye in that there would be no men involved in its design or implementation. She, however, stated that this initiative was not because of her being against men's contribution to her research projects, but because there were usually far more research projects available to men than for women or queer students.

Elmas described mentoring as "a powerful tool" capable of mitigating the impacts of gender discrimination in Turkish academia and beyond. She stated, "Senior women academics ought to hold young women academics' hands and guide them through the gendered obstacles they might be facing in the workplace." She added that with the help and guidance of those who withstood discriminatory norms and practices, the next generation of women in Turkish academia would be better able to establish a system in which discriminatory attitudes and norms would be less tolerated. In such a system, as Elmas maintained, vocalizing gender-related problems is not silenced but appreciated.

Elmas maintained the importance of encouraging and enabling women students to confront and alter the culture of "you have a job, hush, and be grateful" in Türkiye. She described the "hush culture" as "immensely patriarchal" in that it rendered women to be grateful regardless of the discriminatory norms and attitudes they might be exposed to in their working environments in

Türkiye. She stated, “We need to discourage our women students from closing their eyes to discrimination simply because they have jobs. We need to talk them out of producing statements such as ‘This is what it is’ or ‘This is Türkiye, it has always been like this’”. She recalled that she always advised her women students “to speak their minds freely and not allow men to lead them and tell them what to do.” She analogized the conversation she had with her students about confronting oppressive gendered discourses to “planting seeds” stating, “I hope I am planting these seeds of not staying silent in the face of any sort of discrimination […] The seeds might not turn into fruits today, but they will eventually do.”

- **Strained Capacities: Women in Turkish Academia Are Under Neoliberal Patriarchal Pressure**

Elmas concluded by elaborating on the compounding impacts of the interplay between neoliberalism and patriarchy on the distribution of teaching load between male and female academics in some private universities in Türkiye. She stated that the neoliberal and patriarchal norms and practices have adversely affected women’s contribution to research and leadership roles in Turkish academia. She noted that due to the marketization of the educational system in Türkiye, each year, a substantial number of students are admitted into Turkish private universities. This influx resulted in an escalating teaching workload. Elmas further noted that as a result of the widely held beliefs that regarded women as better teachers with stronger nurturing characteristics, women in Turkish academia, and in particular those of a younger age, bore the heavy burden of teaching. This, Elmas added, forced women to compromise their research endeavour and show disinterest in assuming leadership positions. With a bitter smile on her face, she said, “Because I teach so many hours a week, some weeks I have no energy to work on my research projects; there have been instances where I missed grant deadlines or had to defer submission deadlines.”

When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Going: The Highlights of Elmas’s Narrative

Elmas’s narrative revealed the intersection of gender, education, and familial and cultural expectations that shaped her lived experiences in academia and beyond. At the micro level, Elmas experienced her parents‘ ‘building bridges and walls at the same time’ approach. They were supportive of her higher education, yet they expected her to conform to traditional gender roles and study in a major that was “less masculine.” Familial gendered expectations were also evident when

Elmas was pregnant; her parents advised her to make a “sacrifice” and drop out of her Ph.D. program to fulfill her perceived motherly duties.

At the meso level, Elmas’s narrative captured various forms of discrimination, both covert and overt, that she experienced in academia. She shared incidents of gendered assumptions towards women’s incapabilities to carry out physically demanding research projects. In another incident, a government official approached her assistant, a man, assuming that Elmas could not be leading the project simply because she was a woman. Elmas elaborated on motherly expectations from women in Turkish academia, stating that these expectations required women to care for their students’ academic and non-academic concerns. Elmas’s narrative also revealed the presence of systemic biases against women in hiring practices and research proposal evaluation which usually adversely affect women’s professional growth. Additionally, she touched upon the dual pressure of neoliberalism and patriarchy on women’s professional growth in Turkish academia. The market-driven policies of neoliberalism and the stereotypical perceptions of women’s teaching abilities and their nurturing roles have inflicted a heavier teaching burden on women, in particular the young ones, which in turn, has limited their research opportunities.

Elmas’s narrative exhibited the empowering influence of role models in her struggle against the gender expectations and stereotypes imposed by her parents. It also captured her initiatives to fight against the patriarchal discourses which affected her and other women and gender-marginalized groups in her department. These initiatives included launching gender-inclusive research projects and challenging the established “hush-culture” that invited women to silence in the face of discrimination and accept the norms imposed on them by the status quo.

4. Mehtab (The Moonlight)

- **Profile**

Mehtab is married with two children and between the ages of 35 and 44. She was born and raised in a working-class, religious family in a small Marmara region city. She completed her elementary, secondary, and high school education in her hometown before she moved to a big Central Anatolia region city to do her undergraduate degree. She did her master’s and doctorate in a STEM field in a big Marmara region city. She has several national and a couple of international

peer-reviewed journal articles. She has been teaching and researching in a private university in the Marmara region for less than five years.

- **Defying Familial Patriarchal Norms and Practices**

Mehtab's parents were "*dindar ve ilkokul mezunu"* [religious primary school graduates]. Having reflected on the patriarchal norms and practices her parents valued and enforced on their children, Mehtab described her parents as "*oldukça geleneksel"* [very traditional] who considered a high school diploma sufficient for girls, opposed their daughters' aspirations for higher education, and expected them to get married after high school. Mehtab remembered her adolescent years as *"erken çocukluk döneminden ziyade zorlu geçti"* [more difficult than her childhood] in that she had to fight her parents to obtain their approval to go to school outings or attend musical festivals. Mehtab recalled that her older sister had a more difficult childhood and teenage years than her. She shared stories of her sister's struggles against their parents' discriminatory and restrictive attitudes. She stated, "My sister fought hard to persuade my parents to respect her chosen lifestyle." Mehtab described her sister as "*devrim niteliğinde"* [revolutionary], stating that it was her sister who motivated her to be uncompromising in pursuing higher education.

- **Teachers, Peers, and Patriarchy: The Three Catalysts to Enter Academia**

Besides her sister, people outside Mehtab's household motivated her to choose a different path in life from what her parents had envisioned for her. Mehtab felt lucky because her high school was located in a non-conservative region in her hometown which allowed her to interact with students from non-religious backgrounds. Mehtab recalled that her high school friends and two of her high school teachers encouraged her to follow her dreams and resist her parents' effort to "dictate what she should do and how she should live her life." She described her philosophy and math high school teachers, both female teachers, as the ones who encouraged her to live her life "*özgür bir kadın*" [as a free woman], follow her dreams, pursue higher education, and enter academia. Mehtab sounded quite appreciative when she shared the activities that she and her philosophy teacher did together on weekends. They went to theatres and music concerts and had discussions afterwards about the plays or the music they enjoyed. These discussions, Mehtab maintained, expanded her worldview, allowed her to perceive her surroundings differently, and enabled her to envision a different life from what her parents were living. She stated,

> Living is just breathing in and out for my parents. Interacting with my teachers and classmates was a turning point in my life […] I learned what I did not want to be, I learned that I did not want to be lost in life […] And that life had so much more to offer me.

Mehtab described her teachers as the ones who encouraged her to consider academia as her career path. She maintained that her parents' controlling, and discriminatory attitudes functioned as *"en büyük itici güçtü"* [the biggest driving force for her to enter academia]. She stated, "My parents' pressure to persuade me and my sister to follow their ideologies pushed me towards research and academia […] I wanted to discover myself and to create my original self; I didn't want to become someone like my parents."

- **Systemic Gender Biases in Hiring Practices**

Mehtab experienced discrimination during the selection process for her master's program. She stated that because of her involvement in women's movements and demonstrations supporting the LGBTQ+ communities, her application got rejected. After a couple of years, she was accepted into a university in the Marmara region, where she did her master's and Ph.D. Mehtab shared stories of some of her female professors' tendency to hire male assistants for their field research projects. She stated,

> As a student, "*erkek olmak her zaman daha avantajlı oluyor"* [in our field, being a man was always an advantage], particularly if you were working for a female professor. Female professors always preferred male research assistants as they could carry heavy stuff to the field. Male research assistants were also considered more dependable as they typically had fewer domestic responsibilities than most female students, and as such, they could stay longer hours in the field and the lab.

Mehtab expressed her frustration over the gender-biased requirements in job postings for graduate students. She stated that when she was doing her graduate programs, the job requirements for graduate students mostly favoured men. They required applicants to work with heavy machinery, stay longer hours in the office, and be available to work on weekends. She noted, "These discriminatory job criteria automatically sent a rejection message to women, so they did not even consider applying for those jobs."

When Mehtab was in the third year of her doctoral program, she and a couple of other female graduate students, all at the top of their cohort, applied to a collaborative research project between their department and a university in Europe. To their dismay, their applications were rejected. She recounted,

> Our applications were rejected while male students with lower GPAs got the acceptance. We decided to email the dean for clarification, but adding to our frustration, he did not respond. One evening, we went to his office and asked him why our applications were rejected; he told us that the priority was first given to men. When we told him that such a criterion was not mentioned in the application, he replied that this position required traveling, and as such the committee found male applicants more suitable for the positions. They see us as a threat.

Mehtab made a promise to herself that when she entered academia, she would provide her women students with more field work experience, a promise that she fulfilled when she started her academic career. She shared,

> I know how frustrating it is to be excluded, so when I received my assistant professorship offer, I promised myself to recruit more female student assistants than male. […] and to let women shine. I am one of the few professors who gives priority to female students to do field work; I encourage other female professors to do the same. I always tell my female colleagues in the department that *"birbirimizi güçlendiremez kimse bizi güçlendiremez*" [no one will empower us if we do not empower each other].

- **Patriarchy Is Reinforced under the AKP Era**

Sounding frustrated, Mehtab associated the AKP's gendered and neoliberal policies and rhetoric with the heightening of patriarchal norms and practices in Turkish academia and beyond. She elaborated on women's rights status in Türkiye, stating,

> This is an intimidating era for women in Türkiye; violence against women is at an all-time high. We, Turkish women, academic and non-academic alike, "*patriarkayı iliklerimize kadar hissediyoruz"* [can feel patriarchy deep in our bones]; we have been intimidated away from managerial and leadership positions […] The top government officials would like us to only assume our traditional roles as mothers and "*çok çocuk sahibi olak"* [bring lots of children].

Mehtab provided her insights on the state of gender equality in Türkiye during the COVID-19 pandemic. She described the pandemic as an "eye opener," an incident that highlighted the gendered norms and practices deeply ingrained in the private sphere of Turkish women's lives. She stated,

> The COVID-19 pandemic clearly showed that gender equality is an illusion in Türkiye […] Women had access to different child-caring systems, ranging from their parents to paid childcare at home; when the pandemic hit, all those care systems vanished into thin air, and women were left to single-handedly organise everything.

Mehtab shared her observations regarding the influence of the AKP's neoliberal policies on young women at private universities across Türkiye. She stated, "*Neoliberal politikaları tüm hücrelerinizde hissediyorsunuz"* [We feel the neoliberal policies in each and every one of our cells]. To Mehtab, the strong neoliberal tendencies of the current government in Türkiye have made the atmosphere of Turkish universities more patriarchal, which, in turn, has affected the agency of young, untenured women in Turkish academia. She maintained that, with its emphasis on contractual and part-time employment, neoliberalism has forced untenured women to accept heavy teaching workload "in silence." She further argued that, compared to men, young contract-based women often found themselves stuck in "*yersiz ego savaşlarının ortasında"* [the middle of pointless ego battles] with those in higher positions to keep their jobs and secure their contracts.

- **Beyond Conventions: Mehtab's Suggested Criteria for Academic Career Success**

Mehtab expressed her perception of the notion of career success. She stated that Turkish female academics ought to reconsider the dominant definition of career success, which equates success with salary, ranks, and rewards. She maintained that women in Turkish academia should broaden their perceptions of career success beyond the number of their scholarly publications or their citation impacts. Instead, as she argued, women ought to assess their career success by the extent to which they contribute to reshaping the deeply rooted patriarchal structures in Türkiye through sharing their insights with fellow female academics, NGO activists, journalists, and broader society.

- **Challenging Patriarchy: Mehtab's Suggested Strategies of Liberation, Solidarity, and Visibility**

Mehtab concluded by elaborating on the roles and responsibilities of female academics in resisting and dismantling patriarchal norms and practices in Türkiye, in general, and particularly, in its higher educational settings. She began by maintaining that breaking the patriarchal system in Türkiye would require time and effort. She stated,

> *Türkiye de kişisel hak ve özgürlük mücadelesinin daha çok başındayız. Yolumuz çok uzun ve zorlu"* [In Türkiye, we are just at the beginning of our fight to win our rights and freedom; our journey is going to be long, difficult, and full of challenges].

Mehtab added that women in Turkish academia ought first to free themselves from their traditional roles as primary care providers for their families before they could assist other women in their fight for gender equality. She asserted that to resist patriarchy, women would need to work on their "*kişisel farkındalık ve dayanışmadan"* [personal awareness and sense of solidarity]. She maintained the crucial role of solidarity among women, stating that it was necessary to assure all women, particularly those who might feel lonely and intimidated in their fight to gain their equal rights, that "*onlar yalnız değiller"* [they were not alone]. She shared stories of times when she designed and delivered both in-person and digital workshops during which she and her female students discussed how they could use various platforms to remind themselves and other women that *"birlikte çok daha güçlüyüz"* [they were much stronger together], and that in order to bring down the patriarchal system in Türkiye "*dayanışmak şart"* [solidarity is a must].

To Mehtab, another strategy to resist the patriarchal norms and practices in Türkiye and in its higher educational settings would be to increase women's presence in managerial and leadership positions. She maintained that although the increased representation of women at the top might not guarantee the inclusion of their perspectives in the design and implementation of policies and initiatives, it is a strong stance against patriarchy. She asserted, "Women should make themselves more visible in leadership positions. Their strong presence in such positions would undoubtedly shake the pillars of patriarchy, the very system that those who benefit from it deem as unshakable."

Smooth Seas Do Not Make Skillful Sailors: The Highlights of Mehtab's Narrative

Mehtab's narrative offered a glimpse into the patriarchal challenges and aspirations she experienced across various domains of her life. At the micro level, her narrative captured how her parents' religio-conservative beliefs and limited educational attainment engendered a devaluation of higher education for their daughters. At the meso level, Mehtab shared instances of patriarchal discourses in the higher educational settings where she studied or worked. Examples of such discourses and practices included job postings and research opportunities which favored male applicants due to their fewer domestic responsibilities and dismissed women on account of marital status and activism in social movements, and the reluctance of some female academics to confront gender inequality in their workplaces out of concerns for maintaining their teaching contracts. At the macro level, Mehtab's narrative highlighted the AKP's neoliberal and patriarchal discourses and their impacts on the persistence and aggravation of gender norms and biases. Instances shared by Mehtab included: urging women to prioritize motherhood over their personal and professional aspirations, and a marked escalation of violence against women since the party took power in 2002.

Furthermore, Mehtab's narrative underscored the role of individual and collective agency in challenging patriarchal discourses at the micro, meso, and macro levels. At the micro level, we witnessed that her sister's "revolutionary" acts to attain personal autonomy intensified Mehtab's sense of individual agency and blazed the trail for her to fight against their parents' dictates. Mehtab's narrative also revealed the silver lining of patriarchy when parents' conservative discourses acted as motivators which sharpened her eagerness to pursue a career in academia and create an identity distinct from what her parents envisioned for her.

At the meso level, Mehtab's sense of individual agency was empowered by her exposure to the diverse worldviews of her high school teachers and fellow students. Instances of collective agency were also evident in Mehtab's narrative. In her higher education years, she and her peer students approached their dean to inquire about the rationale behind the rejection of their research proposals. In academia, she encouraged her students to exploit every available platform to consolidate their sense of collective agency by reminding themselves and other women that solidarity would be necessary to dismantle the patriarchal structures in academia and beyond. An additional modality for challenging patriarchy in academic settings, as Mehtab proposed, would be improving women's representation in leadership positions. This initiative would serve not only as a

symbolic act against patriarchy, but also as a practical approach to integrate women's perspectives into policy formulation and decision-making processes.

Mehtab also invited us to reexamine the conventional conceptualization of career success which appreciated quantifiable metrics such as the number of scholarly articles and academic rank as indicators for gauging one's educational success. While acknowledging the value of such metrics, she highlighted the importance of connecting with women outside STEM disciplines. Such a connection, as Mehtab underscored, would enable the dissemination of views, thoughts, and pragmatic means that could potentially drive transformative change in broader Turkish society.

5. Zümrüt (Emerald)

- **Profile**

Zümrüt is married with two children. She is between the ages of 45 and 54. She was raised in an upper-middle-class, secular family in a small city in the Eastern Anatolia region. She completed her elementary and secondary school education in her hometown before moving to a big city in the Mediterranean region to do her high school. She attained her undergraduate, master's, and doctorate degrees in a STEM field at a public university in Anatolia. Zümrüt has published more than fifty articles, books, and book chapters. She has two decades of teaching and research experience in private and public universities in Türkiye. She teaches and does research at a public University in the Anatolia region.

- **Academic Aspirations Amid Social and Familial Expectations**

Zümrüt considered herself *"şanslı"* [lucky] for having been brought up in a family that valued higher education. She recounted that it must have been because of her parents' high regard for educated people that she decided to pursue a PhD and enter academia at the age of six. Zümrüt did not remember any incidents of gender discrimination from her family during her childhood and teenage years. Nonetheless, she stated that when she was in elementary school, she wished to be a boy due to the culture of favoritism towards boys in Türkiye.

Zümrüt was subjected to some of her fellow male students' discriminatory comments while she was doing her undergraduate studies. She recalled that, at times, when she "outsmarted" them in math classes, they called her "too smart for a girl." Zümrüt noted that her university professors

treated students impartially regardless of their gender, an attitude that she attributed to their international education background.

Zümrüt elaborated on three primary motivations for her to join academia. She stated that one of her motivations was her parents' continual support and encouragement. Another motivation was the widely accepted perception of academia as a flexible and prestigious profession for women in Türkiye. Zümrüt, however, stated that the primary motivation for her to pursue her PhD and enter academia stemmed from the widespread distrust in women's reasoning and judgment abilities, particularly those with no higher education. She believed that this lack of trust was because of the prevailing patriarchal norms and values in Türkiye, especially in its conservative regions. She shared,

> I chose to become an academic mainly because of how differently men's and women's perspectives were perceived in our society; I have observed that suggestions and comments from uneducated women have not been given the same level of consideration and respect. If you are a woman without higher education, they would approach your comments with hesitation and doubt. However, if you are a woman and working in academia, people will demonstrate more trust in your judgement and what you are saying. […] This is not how Turkish men are perceived in our society; if they do not have a degree, their perspectives are still considered valid and to the point […] Becoming an academic has kept me relatively safe from such nonsense.

Zümrüt decided to pursue her post-doctorate while writing her doctoral dissertation, a decision that her parents did not support. Zümrüt recounted that despite providing her with ample support while she was doing her doctorate, her parents believed she should forgo a post-doctorate degree. She shared stories of her lengthy conversations with her parents in this regard. She recalled,

> I remember the lengthy discussions my parents and I had around our kitchen table, with them trying to persuade me not to apply for a post-doc position. They told me, 'You are ready to become an academician now, 'Having a doctorate is enough for a girl,' and 'You don't want to get married and become a mother?'

Zümrüt got married after she earned her PhD. Her husband was unsupportive of her academic career advancement. He considered himself "*aile reisi*" [the head of the family], the one holding the

reins and having the final say. When their children were young, he prevented Zümrüt from attending conferences and workshops abroad. Zümrüt elaborated on the burden of domestic work and childcare on the work-life balance of employed women in Türkiye. She stated,

> In Türkiye, if you are a woman, and in academia, and you want to be successful, you need to work much harder than men to show that you can do what men can do. This is because Turkish men are believed to be solely responsible for working outside the home and earning money; however, the story is different for working women; they are still the ones expected to do house chores, regardless of whether they work in a store or academia.

- **The Five Parallel Full-Time Jobs: Juggling Academia, Marriage, and Motherhood**

To Zümrüt, being a mother and an academic in Türkiye is similar to having five full-time jobs: a teacher, a researcher, a mother for your children, a mother for your husband, and a housekeeper. With a bitter smile, she described her first couple of years in academia as "*çok yorucu"* [draining]. She reflected on the many exhausting nights she had to stay up late to work on her publications and attend to the needs of her children. At times, Zümrüt only got three hours of sleep per night when her firstborn was a toddler, and she was pregnant with her second child.

- **Shielded by Status: The Alleviating Impacts of Seniority and Prolificacy on Gender Discrimination**

Zümrüt had heard about several incidents of gender inequality that some female professors and teaching assistants were subjected to. She, however, did not recall experiencing any such incidents personally, which she attributed to her civil servant status[74], her high academic rank, and her prolificacy. She stated,

> I have heard stories of some female academics with lower academic ranks whose comments and suggestions were treated with doubt and hesitation, or even ignored, in department meetings. These stories make me think that those of us who are teaching in public universities, particularly those holding a full-professorship status with a high number of publications, are not

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[74] Professors at public universities in Türkiye hold civil servant status.

usually affected by gender discriminatory norms and practices. That is why some of us feel safer than others."

- **Women's Rights in Retreat**

Zümrüt described the status of women's rights in Türkiye, in general, and in its conservative regions, in particular, as "It was bad, getting worse." She stated that with the current government's radical and Islamist gendered policies and rhetoric, Turkish women, especially those residing in more conservative regions of the country, were enjoying less freedom compared to a decade ago. Zümrüt shared that since the inception of the AKP, an increasing number of Turkish families in small, conservative cities in Türkiye were forcing the female members of their families to become *"kapalı*" [to wear hijab], a situation that Zümrüt considered a step backward from the democratization process Atatürk began almost a century ago. She, however, added, "I am not against women's will to choose their clothing or whether they want to cover their heads or not; what I advocate for is freedom of choice and women's rights to express themselves in any form or shape they wish."

- **Ladders and Snakes**

Zümrüt explained the reasons behind the high representation of women in Turkish academia. She noted that, in part, the flexible working hours encouraged women to consider academia as a career option. Another contributing factor in this matter, Zümrüt added, was male academics' inclination towards the private sector, driven by the prospect of its high salaries. Zümrüt, however, attributed women's strong presence in Turkish academia primarily to Atatürk, stating that "Our strong presence in academia is because of Atatürk, who granted women equal rights and encouraged them to be even better educated than men since he considered women as the ones who would train the next generations of Turks." While Zümrüt expressed her gratitude for Atatürk's contributions towards gender equality, she acknowledged that these perceptions were rooted in patriarchal norms and values. She noted,

> In Türkiye teaching is seen as a prestigious and suitable job for women […] This is partly because of the connection made in the Republican era between teaching and the upbringing of the nation's children and the general public's perception of teaching as a motherly act […] That is why the public sees teaching as suitable for women; they see women as mothers or future

> mothers and as such they believe they can take a better care of their children; in a sense, this is patriarchal because they see motherhood as our main responsibility.

Zümrüt attributed three factors to women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership positions in Turkish academia. She posited that the fierceness that existed in competitions for academic positions usually discouraged women from applying. Another reason, as Zümrüt noted, was the amount of support male academics provided for each other in the selection process. She stated that male candidates most often received more support from other male academics than female candidates showed towards other female academics' candidacy. She also linked women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership positions to their reluctance to engage in administrative work. She stated,

> Some women, including myself, do not even want to compete for rectorship or dean positions. We prefer to keep our flexible working hours rather than being in the office from nine to six signing documents and reading reports of this and that student […] It might be partly because of our domestic responsibilities, yet it is also because of how we perceive the nature of managerial positions in academia […] I personally do not see any creativity in administrative jobs; we prefer to stay creative by spending our time doing research.

- **The Contribution of the Fittest: Women Social Scientists and the Transformation of Patriarchy**

When I asked Zümrüt about the role she and other Turkish women academics could play in dismantling patriarchal norms and practices in Türkiye, she stated that women in social science academia could play a more impactful role than their STEM counterparts. She maintained that due to their academic discipline, social science academics engage extensively in reading and writing about social issues. Consequently, she added, compared to those in STEM academia, academics in social science fields fare far better in employing effective rhetoric to establish connections with the broader public. She noted that although some of her female colleagues in STEM were expressing their perspectives on the current trajectory of women's rights in Türkiye, she chose to focus her time on her research and publishing scholarly works. Zümrüt concluded her narrative by explaining what career success meant to her. She stated that for a woman in STEM academia, career success ought to be determined by the quantity of her publications, her full professorship academic status, and the number of theses and dissertations she supervised. To Zümrüt, these

criteria would enable women in STEM academia to demonstrate that "they were just as capable as men in conducting research and supervising graduate students."

Shielded in Academia, Exposed at Home: The Highlights of Zümrüt's Narrative

Zümrüt's personal lived experiences with patriarchy were evident at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Her narrative indicates that she was not exposed to her parents' discriminatory attitudes when she was in elementary school. However, societal favoritism towards boys often made her wish she were a boy. Although her parents were supportive of Zümrüt's pursuit of a doctorate, their attitudes towards post-doctorates for girls were gendered; they considered a doctorate "enough" for a girl and believed that, as a woman, she had other tasks to accomplish, such as getting married and having children. In her married life, Zümrüt experienced the dual burden of domestic responsibilities and her academic obligations due to her husband's patriarchal perceptions on gender roles in the family.

At the meso level, Zümrüt's experiences of patriarchy involved peer discrimination when she excelled in math classes in her undergraduate program. Although she did not directly experience gender-biased attitudes from her male colleagues, Zümrüt was aware of the gender discrimination faced by other female academics, especially those at private universities or those with lower academic ranks. In this respect, she believed that her academic status and prolificacy shielded her against the patriarchal attitudes other women might have been subjected to. At the macro level, Zümrüt's narrative depicts the negative impacts of the AKP's policies and ideologies on women's rights and the cultural enforcement of Islamic dress codes in conservative areas in the country.

Zümrüt's narrative also captured the factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in leadership and managerial positions in Turkish academia, such as men's support networks, and women's reluctance to engage in administrative roles. Her narrative also highlighted the influence of academic disciplines on dismantling patriarchal norms and values in Turkish academia and beyond, indicating that women in social science academia were better positioned to address gender inequality issues.

6. Inci (Pearl)

▪ Profile

Inci is single and between the ages of 35 and 44. She was born and raised in a working-class, secular family in a small city in the Mediterranean region. She completed her elementary, secondary, and high school education in her hometown. She moved to a big city in the Marmara region to do her undergraduate and master's degrees. She attained her doctorate in a social science field abroad. Inci has published over fifty journal articles, books, and chapters. She has over a decade of teaching and research experience at a public university in the Anatolia region.

▪ The Power of Luck in Inci's Journey from Childhood to Academia: Family Support, Social Capitals, and Opportune Connections

Inci began her narrative by stating that although her parents had only completed primary school education, they were egalitarian and held progressive views toward women's rights. Inci enjoyed more freedom when she was a teenager than other girls her age, for which she felt "lucky." Inci shared that, unlike her neighborhood girls who had to wear hijab, Inci and her sisters enjoyed a relaxed dress code and were not forced by their parents to cover their hair. However, Inci shared stories of her mother's disapproval of her involvement in mountain camping activities in grade eleven. She stated,

> My mother was not happy with my camping activities; she was always worried about where I was camping, who I was sharing my tent with, and if there were any boys in our camping groups. Eventually, she prevented me from camping and asked me to be a normal girl like my cousins.

Higher education for girls was highly valued and encouraged in Inci's family. Inci stated that in pursuit of her higher education, she had her parents' strong and continuing support. She asserted that she was "lucky," for despite having limited literacy skills, her mother recognised the "power" of higher education in enabling her daughters to live a more prosperous life than her own. She recalled,

> My mother was always involved in our education; she did her best to ensure that we received all the support we needed throughout our education […] Although she had only completed her

> elementary school education, she did whatever she could to make sure that we felt well-supported and succeeded in our studies […] She always told us 'You have two paths in front of you: you either go to university, get a degree, and find a decent job, or you can end up being like me and your father'. She knew the power of higher education for girls in Turkish society.

Inci acknowledged that throughout high school and higher education, she received the unwavering support of two of her father's male cousins, whom she regarded as her "social capital" and the ones who "illuminated" her path to academia. She recalled,

> I call my dad's cousins *"abi"* [big brothers][75]. They were the social capitals in my life […] My siblings and I spent a lot of time with them while we were studying in high school and university […] The time we spent together and the guidance they provided played a crucial role in where we are now and the social status we hold.

"Right place, right time, and right people" was an additional catalyst for Inci to pursue an academic career. In this regard, she emphasized the importance of women having women role models, stating that apart from her father's male cousins, the majority of the role models she had throughout her graduate studies and career were female university professors and/or colleagues. She recalled one committee member as a significant source of inspiration for pursuing a PhD and a career in academia. Inci admired this committee member's academic perseverance and the mentorship she offered to female students in the department. She recounted a conversation with this committee member. She shared, "I told her that I would love to be an academician like her in the future, someone who would facilitate women's presence in graduate programs." Inci considered herself "lucky" for having met her PhD supervisor who offered her a PhD position. Inci asserted that being in the right place at the right time and knowing the right people did not suffice for one to earn a doctorate and enter academia. She stated,

> At the end of the day, you need to have mental and emotional resilience as well as a strong knowledge base in what you are instructing; otherwise, you will not succeed in academia even if you find your way into it through your connections.

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[75] Turks may call someone whom they are not related to '*abla*' (older sister) or '*abi*' (older brother). This kind of address acknowledges the hierarchical order and social stratifications in the relationship whilst indicating fondness and respect. Adapted from: https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/turkish-culture/turkish-culture-greetings

- **Patriarchy Is Everywhere We Turn Even in the Air We Breathe**

Upon graduating from her PhD program, Inci was offered an assistant professorship in the same department where she earned her master's degree. She did not recall experiencing gender-based biases when she started teaching in her department. She attributed this to her excitement of becoming colleagues with her professors whom she had long admired. Nonetheless, after almost a year in academia, Inci observed that her major "was definitely male-dominated." She stated," Gender-based biases and practices are present everywhere in my department and even in the air I am breathing in and out." Inci maintained that although there was a high number of women in her department, there appeared to be an imbalance in power dynamics that favored male faculty members. She recounted meetings when she had to "literally" raise her voice to ensure that her input and suggestions were considered [emphasis added by the participant].

Inci did not recall any incidents of being "academically challenged" by her undergraduate students, yet she shared stories of some of her graduate students' discriminatory attitudes. Inci felt frustrated when she realized that one of her men students, who applied for a doctoral program abroad, had asked a male colleague to write him a recommendation letter. Inci remembered emailing him, writing, "I was your advisor and the one who spent hours and hours reading your thesis. Did you not consider putting your academic advisor's name as one of your references?" She recalled that the student sent her an apologetic email stating that he did not assume such matters would bother Inci.

- **Self-Assuredness Among Academics: A Silver Spoon for Men, an Uphill Battle for Women**

Inci recalled that her male colleagues almost always used a dominant and assertive tone when sharing their academic knowledge and expertise in department meetings, lecture halls, and email communications, a self-assuredness that she had rarely observed among her female colleagues. With a sad smile, Inci said that she believed that her male colleagues were unaware of their dominant and self-assured attitudes. She asserted,

> Self-assuredness is what men have in their genes; it is a built-in privilege with which they are born. Women ought to work hard to earn such a privilege, to prove that their academic and research skills and expertise were just as good.

Inci shared that she was not sure of herself when she was new in academia. This made her to doubt her academic knowledge and expertise and compare herself to her male colleagues. She recounted that when she was an assistant professor, two of her male colleagues excluded her from participating in collecting and analyzing data for an article the three of them were working on to present at an international conference. To Inci's surprise, during the entire process from registration to hotel reservations, her colleagues treated her as if she were their "secretary," not as someone with the same academic rank. Inci stated that she refrained from confronting her colleagues as she lacked "confidence" in her quantitative research skills. However, over time, she overcame this sense of self-doubt to a significant extent and felt "powerful enough" to confront such discriminatory behaviours. She further noted that, although she had developed resilience to withstand the gender-biased attitudes and remarks of her colleagues, she opted to ignore or make satirical comments on their gendered discourses and redirect her focus and energy to her research pursuits. She shared,

> I sometimes ignore what they are saying, I sometimes stop making eye contact or even crack a joke about what they are saying by blowing things out of proportion. I particularly remember one incident at a conference with the same colleagues who had excluded me from collecting data a couple of years back. One of them instructed me to take notes and share them later. I smiled at him and said, 'No problem, my publications in top national and international journals have well prepared me for taking notes, but the thing is that I am tired today. I believe your numerous publications have as well prepared you to take notes. What about you take notes and share them with us?' It seems to do the trick as they stopped asking me to do administrative work. My satirical comments have also made them make fewer comments about women's academic abilities when I am around.

- **Raising Awareness and Building Bridges: Inci's Strategies Against Patriarchy**

Inci explained the strategies Turkish women academics could employ to counteract patriarchy. She emphasized that despite being disproportionately impacted by gender discriminatory norms and practices, women in Turkish academia must "raise their students' awareness and to reach out to non-academic communities to share and exchange their expertise and knowledge." To Inci, for those women experiencing a lack of confidence, overcoming their sense of doubt is a "crucial journey" and a prerequisite to connect to non-academic communities. She added that the increase in rights violations against women in recent years and the persistence of the women's movement in

the country instilled in her a sense of determination to raise her students' awareness about the prevalence of the "gender discriminatory discourses" in Türkiye. She stated that she initiated group discussions with her students on gender discriminatory attitudes and practices in Türkiye, their causes, and how they could be addressed. Inci deemed it a "challenging yet vital task" to connect to the public and discuss gender-related issues. These issues, Inci maintained, were intensified by the current "populist, neoliberal, anti-feminist, and conservative ecosystem" in the country.

- **Invisible and Defined: Women in the AKP Era**

Inci considered the current government's policies and rhetoric responsible for the declining status of women's rights in the country, stating that the anti-feminist, neoliberal, and populist policies of the AKP pushed women even further into the private space. One of the anti-feminist actions of the AKP that Inci elaborated on was the replacement of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs with the newly established Ministry of Family and Social Policies. To Inci, this government act clearly conveyed one of the two messages: either women are not considered in the AKP's policies, or if they are, they are expected to occupy specific roles within certain domains. In this regard, Inci reflected on the European Commission President Ursula Leyen's visit to the presidential palace in 2021, whereby she was left without a seat[76]. Inci stated, "How she was treated clearly sent this message that women and men are not considered equal and that women are invisible in the eyes of our government officials." Nonetheless, having described her students, both males and females, as "agents of change," Inci felt confident that they could be influential in bringing about positive change. She stated, "I see my students as agents of change; the awareness they acquire in my and other feminist professors' classes will trickle down and leave its impacts on the lives of others."

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[76] The first woman president of the European Commission was left without a seat, and had to sit on a nearby sofa, as the bloc's leaders met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Only two chairs were set up for the meeting, which involved Ursula von der Leyen, President Erdoğan, and EU Council President Charles Michel. After this visit Ursula Leyen vowed to defend women's rights after admitting to feeling "hurt" by a chair snub during a summit with men leaders in Türkiye. https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-europe-56668347

- **Unlocking the Leadership Club: What Hinders Women from Reaching the Top?**

To Inci, one of the biggest challenges women in Turkish academia face is to join "the leadership club." Inci acknowledged that the recruitment policies outlined by the Turkish Higher Educational council for full professorship and leadership/managerial positions did not exhibit any gender preference criteria. She, however, proceeded to expound on the three factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in such positions. The gender norms deeply embedded in Türkiye's social, political, and cultural arenas and the domestic expectations from women were what Inci regarded as one of the main factors precluding women from reaching the top. She described motherhood responsibilities as what compelled most Turkish women academics to "slow down" their career advancement. Another hurdle is the low regard towards women's leadership competencies and the impacts that such regard leaves on women's self-perception and their willingness to seek out leadership positions. She stated,

> Oftentimes, women in Turkish higher education institutions are denied the chance to lead because those at the top view us as emotional and not cut out for the tough decisions that leaders need to take. Such biased views have created a kind of 'I am not sure if I can do this' self-perception in women, a sense of hesitancy that stops them from applying for such positions. Such a mindset also has made women think that they should be flawless in and excel at those positions; a sense of 'I need to be perfect to apply for these positions.' Such self-regard shuts the door for women to make mistakes and learn from them. Such self-perceptions are like a baggage that women carry with themselves all the time.

Additionally, Inci described women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership positions in academia as "political." She stated, "It does not matter how many publications you have or what you have achieved in your academic career, the road is blocked from the top." In this regard, she shared a brief history of women's appointment to the Ministry of Education and rectorship positions in the higher education institutions in Türkiye. She stated that since 1923, there has been only one woman appointed as Minister of Education, and no women have been appointed to rectorship positions since 1960. Inci expressed frustration over the recent "political to the bone" atmosphere of Turkish academia. She shared a story of the appointment of a man as the Head of the Higher Educational Council in Türkiye (YÖK). This man had *"not even one single"* international publication and no leadership knowledge [emphasis added by the participant]. To

counter the male-dominated atmosphere of her department, Inci “created her own leadership club” instead of trying to “fit into the leadership clubs made by men to support men”.

- **Wittingly or Unwittingly, Women Contribute to Patriarchy**

Inci expressed her frustration over the role some Turkish women played in perpetuating patriarchy. She recalled two conversations she had with two female colleagues. In one, one of her colleagues regarded male leaders as “stronger and better,” a comment that frustrated Inci. She maintained that by making such remarks, her colleague, wittingly or unwittingly, reinforced the gender-discriminatory norms and perpetuated their influence. In another incident, one of Inci’s friends, a remarkably successful academic with a managerial position, expressed doubt about being a “good wife for her husband.” With a bitter smile, Inci recounted,

> My friend told me ‘I am organizing everything for the kids, yet as I work a lot to succeed in my career, I am not sure if I am a good wife for my husband. I was listening to her, like, what do I even have to say to that? It got me thinking, ‘If this is how an academician thinks, what can we really expect from women with no formal education?’

The Journey Towards Empowerment: The Highlights of Inci’s Narrative

Inci’s narrative captured the impacts of sociocultural expectations, familial dynamics, mentorship influences, and Türkiye’s current political climate on her lived experiences with patriarchy. At the micro level, we witnessed the juxtaposition of her mother’s conservative attitudes towards Inci’s camping activities, and her progressive attitudes towards her daughters’ education. Inci’s narrative also underscored the role of “social capital,” provided by her father’s cousins, in paving the way for Inci and her siblings’ pursuit of higher education.

At the meso level, Inci’s narrative highlighted her perception of the “right place, right time, and right people” as the three elements of luck that facilitated her entry into academia. Luck, however, was not the only factor to which Inci attributed her academic career pursuit. She also regarded “emotional and mental resilience,” with a solid academic knowledge base and expertise within one’s field, as necessary to enter academia. After her first year as an assistant professor, Inci discovered that her department was permeated with patriarchal norms and behaviours. These norms and behaviours, which found expression in her male colleagues’ self-assured, dominant

tones and the gendered attitudes of her male students, were so prevalent in her department that she likened them to being “in the air” she was breathing in and out.

Furthermore, Inci’s narrative revealed the inadequacy of the high number of women in her department in balancing the power dynamics between male and female faculty members. This is because, as she asserted, despite the high numerical representation of women, they still faced numerous impediments to “joining the leadership club.” One of the salient impediments in this respect is women’s internalised self-doubt manifesting as a reluctance to apply for leadership positions, the sense of doubtfulness that is mainly rooted in their perception that they need to attain academic and administrative perfection before aiming for such positions. Another obstacle to reaching the top is the AKP’s intervention in academic leadership appointments. Such politically motivated appointments “block the road from the top” for those who are not openly displaying their allegiance to the AKP. Inci’s narrative also highlighted women’s role in sustaining patriarchy at the micro and meso levels. A couple of examples included women regarding male leaders as “stronger and better” than women, and one of her female colleagues who doubted her abilities to be a “good” mother and wife because of her heavy academic responsibilities.

Apart from meddling with academic leadership appointments, Inci’s narrative exposed the ramifications of the AKP’s anti-feminist, neoliberal, and populist discourses on the degradation of women’s status in Türkiye. Such discourses have created a patriarchal “ecosystem,” whereby women are either rendered invisible or, even if their presence is acknowledged, they are expected to occupy specific gender roles within certain sociocultural domains propagated by the government.

Inci’s narrative suggested strategies for Turkish academics to fight against patriarchal norms and attitudes including raising students’ awareness and bridging the communication gap with non-academic communities in Türkiye.

7. Yakut (Ruby)

- **Profile**

Yakut is single and between the ages of 35 and 44. She was raised in a middle-class, secular family in a small city in the Southeastern Anatolia region. She completed her elementary, secondary, and high school education in her hometown. She moved to a big Mediterranean city to

do her undergraduate and master's in the social science field. Yakut did her doctorate abroad. She has published over thirty scholarly articles, book chapters, and books. She taught in a private university for less than ten years before leaving Türkiye to do her post-doctorate abroad.

- **Beyond Degrees: Gender Socialization and Educated Turkish Families**

Yakut considered herself "lucky" for being brought up in an educated, middle-class family, for both her parents supported her decision to pursue a doctorate. From an early age, Yakut's parents instilled in her the value of pursuing higher education and achieving financial independence. When Yakut was six years old, they made her promise she would not get married unless she had a university degree and secured a decent job. Yakut was four when her brother was born. She stated that because of the cultural norms in Türkiye, which dictate that mothers take on the primary caregiving role, her mother had to leave her job to look after Yakut and her younger brother. Yakut recounted that her parents never restricted her socialization with boys during her teenage years. However, while boys were not constrained in their interactions, it was widespread among well-educated parents in Türkiye to prevent their daughters from interacting with unfamiliar boys.

- **The Influence of Institution, Gender, and Rank on Women Academics' Experiences of Gender Bias**

Yakut described patriarchy as "a demon" embedded in the fabric of Turkish society. She maintained that a result of the deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and practices in Türkiye, women in Turkish academia were expected to be "timid, accommodating, and motherly." She, however, noted that female academics in public universities appeared to be "more immune" to gender discrimination compared to their counterparts at private universities. She attributed such immunity to the civil servant status of professors in public universities, some of whom have been granted green passports.[77] Yakut also shared her observations on the prevalence of gender discrimination incidents among women academics across different private universities in Türkiye. She stated that, compared with their counterparts in top-ranked private universities, women academics at lower-ranked private universities, and particularly those in junior positions, often experienced a higher

[77] In Türkiye, those who have civil servant status are issued green passport, while Turkish citizens are given a regular passport which is maroon in color. Green passport holders can travel visa-free to most European countries compared to maroon passport holders. They are also exempted from the passport fee.

prevalence of gender-based discrimination. In this regard, she shared stories of male students who questioned their female professors' academic knowledge, the validity of their course content, and/or course outlines. Yakut shared her firsthand experiences regarding the gendered attitudes her male students exhibited towards her. She recalled,

> Sometimes, they addressed me "*sen"* [singular 'you' in English] or by my first name. They don't call their male professors or older female full professors by their first names. They address male professors *"siz"* ['you' plural] *or "hocam"* […] Young female academics in lower- ranked private universities are often belittled; they are infantilized because they are less experienced than other professors, and, on top of that, they are *not men.* [emphasis added by the participant]

Additionally, Yakut shared instances of gender discrimination she was subjected to by her male colleagues and her department dean. She stated that there was a tendency among male academics in her department to address her and other young female academics informally. She also noted that, in general, women do not receive the appropriate level of recognition for their achievements, as if merely being in academia is a recognition that they ought to be grateful for the rest of their lives. Yakut reflected on the first time she met her department's dean to sign her contract. She described the dean's reaction when she inquired about her salary as "shocking." She recalled,

> When I asked him about my salary, he stared at me with a frown as if I had asked him something random. He told me, 'Oh! You are not married! I thought you were, and your husband gave you enough pocket money.'

- **The Horror of Precarity: The Impacts of Neoliberal and Populist Policies on Women Academics' Employment**

Yakut further expounded on the "precarity" of Turkish academia and its detrimental impacts on academics in general, and on women academics, in particular. She maintained that the neoliberal policies of the AKP, coupled with the cultural expectations that place the responsibility of satisfying families' financial needs on men, created a hurdle for women to attain full-time, permanent jobs in Turkish academia and other professional domains. Yakut described the precariousness of academia as being more visible in private universities, stating that those teaching at private universities were perceived as "disposable, second-rate academics" and offered contracts yearly

with no guarantees of renewal. To Yakut, for those academics working at private universities, the month of June is “the month of horror” as it is when they find out whether their contracts will be extended for the next academic year.

- **Turning Challenges into Opportunities: When Discrimination Fertilizes Growth**

Yakut appreciated the resilience and perseverance she developed in the face of the precarious norms and practices to which she was subjected. She shared that she and one of her colleagues had published some of their best scholarly works while working under precarity and “suffering” from the impacts their working conditions left on them. She recounted,

> My friend and I were chatting during our lunch break, trying to figure out how to vent our frustration about the crappy working conditions at our university. We decided to utilize our academic expertise as our tools, sort of weapons, to confront the working conditions imposed on us […] facing discrimination and precarious norms and attitudes teaches you a lot; it helps you grow; it provides you with an insight that you would likely never gain otherwise. So, in a sense, living and working under those conditions have been valuable.

- **Quadruple Tools of Resistance: Publishing, Public Engagement, Student Empowerment, and Feminist Rallies**

Yakut posited that while publishing in scholarly journals can serve as a tool to challenge precarious conditions and gender discrimination, its effectiveness in dismantling patriarchal norms and values remains limited. She argued that the specific criteria academics must meet for publishing in scholarly journals often render their works unintelligible and therefore inaccessible to non-academic individuals. Yakut further explained that these criteria make it difficult for Turkish academics to reach the public through their publications. She, however, emphasized that because establishing this connection is crucial for combating gender discrimination prevalent in various spheres of Turkish women’s lives, academics ought to use alternative channels to connect to the general public. One such channel, used by some of Yakut’s female colleagues, is interacting with the general public through students. She stated,

> I have seen how hard some of my feminist colleagues work to connect with the general public through sharing their academic findings and observations with their students; they try to open their students’ eyes and to inspire them to challenge the patriarchal norms and practices we

> experience these days more than ever in our society […] I know some of them even encourage their students to share what they have learned in their classes with their parents and communities.

Yakut described the Turkish feminist groups' contribution to the fight against sexual harassment, rape, and femicide as "strong." She further regarded feminist groups in Türkiye as the only groups that persistently pushed back against the current government's discriminatory policies and practices imposed on women, LGBTQ communities, children, and the environment. Yakut expressed her appreciation towards the strength, courage, and resilience Turkish women displayed in rallies held nationwide every year on March 8th. She described the strong presence of women from various socio-economic backgrounds in these rallies as "daring" and "admirable." She stated,

> Whenever I see the footage of International Women's Day rallies in Türkiye, I am in awe of our women's bravery. The government tries to crackdown on these movements. I have seen police dragging women by their hair on the ground; women's strong presence in these rallies, however, clarifies one thing, these movements are far from being shut down.

- **The Ceiling Is Made of Concrete Here: Women as Disposable Teaching and Caring Machines in Academia**

Yakut explained the factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership positions within the broader context of Türkiye and its academic sphere. To Yakut, one of the principal reasons behind "the glass ceiling phenomenon," existing in almost all workplaces in Türkiye, is the general perception that regards women's careers as "disposable." Such perception, Yakut maintained, has made the ceiling almost impenetrable resulting in leadership positions "being mainly reserved for men." Sounding frustrated, she stated,

> Marriage and motherhood are two of the main factors that make women's careers disposable in Türkiye. You know, a married woman does not need to have a salary as there is this widely accepted opinion among Turkish people that if a woman is married, she does not need to work; in our culture, working for women becomes optional after they get married.

Yakut added that in addition to being considered disposable, female academics working at private universities, particularly those at the entry-level, were subjected to an extra layer of discrimination; they were often required "to do the least rewarding drudgery of teaching." In this

regard, she analogized female academics at private universities to “teaching machines” and “students’ mothers,” who had to teach “every course thrown at them” and assist their students with their academic and non-academic concerns. She recounted,

> Sometimes I was required to teach around twenty hours a week. I had to do all the marking on my own. On top of that, in general, female academics are usually expected to listen to their students’ problems and help them find solutions. With this high teaching workload and motherly expectations, I hardly found time for my research; it was much like working in a sweatshop […] Male academics in my department were given a fewer number of courses to teach. They were not expected to help their students with their problems, so no wonder they could focus on their research and publish more.

Yakut likened expectations that female academics should assume maternal roles for their students and commit to long teaching hours to broader societal perceptions of Turkish women, particularly those from traditional, conservative families. She referred to both groups as “birth-giving machines”, stating, “In the current anti-gender, neoliberal, and religious climate, both groups of women are expected to do one job: to reproduce. Women academics to gargle the same content over and over again, and women in general public to give birth to more children.”

Yakut elaborated on the interplay between patriarchy and Turkish women’s career advancement. She maintained that the cultural expectations for men to be the leading financial providers for their families benefited academic men with their career advancement. She stated,

> The expectations from men to be the breadwinners of their families have somewhat exempted them from doing the domestic chores […] This makes it difficult for women, academic and non-academic alike, to progress in their careers as they are the ones who should take on most and sometimes all responsibilities at home […] In this context, Turkish men have definitely the luxury of focusing solely on their career advancement whether they have a supermarket or an academic.

Yakut concluded her narrative by sharing her definition of career success. Expressing her frustration over the current neoliberal, anti-feminist, anti-intellectual, and Islamist climate in Türkiye, she stated that “in the face of these discriminatory forces, a woman academic’s career success

relies on the attainment of a permanent job and the ability to allocate ample time towards her research endeavors."

The Black Cloud of Patriarchy, the Silver Lining of Resilience: The Highlights of Yakut's Narrative

Yakut's early experiences with patriarchy were formed by gender roles and gender-specific socialization norms and practices which influenced Turkish women's educational path, career choice, and professional growth. Her narrative revealed the paradoxical gender dynamics in her family as while Yakut's pursuit of higher education was supported, due to gender roles prevalent in Turkish society, Yakut's mother was compelled to leave her job to care for her children. At the meso level, Yakut's narrative captured the systemic nature of patriarchy in Turkish academia. It highlighted the experiences of female academics at private universities, who face a continuous struggle for proper recognition and gender equality, versus female academics in public universities, who work on the 'sunnier' side of Turkish academia. Another challenge for female academics working at private universities was the precariousness of their positions instigated by the neoliberal and populist policies of the AKP and the gendered societal expectations from women in Türkiye. These factors undermined women's job security, professional growth, and mental well-being. Yakut's narrative also revealed that the widely-held perceptions toward women's jobs as disposable, discriminatory teaching loads, motherly expectations, and the current anti-feminist neoliberal and populist policies have collectively solidified the glass ceiling in Turkish academia, particularly at private universities.

Furthermore, Yakut's narrative depicted an unintended benefit of gender-based discrimination in Türkiye's private academia: it enabled her to harness her academic expertise and scholarly work to counter such discrimination and advance her career. The strategic use of scholarly work and collaborative efforts among female academics and students displayed the transformative potential of higher education, whereby academics and students could collectively produce counter-patriarchal discourses capable of driving societal change and facilitating the unlearning of patriarchy in Turkish academia and beyond.

8. Firuze (Turquoise)

- **Profile**

Firuze is divorced with no children. She is between the ages of 35 and 44. She was born and raised in a middle-class, religious family in a big city in the Anatolia region. She completed her elementary, secondary, and high school education in her hometown. She did her undergraduate degree in a humanities major in her hometown. She earned her master's and doctorate in a social science field from a public university in the Central Anatolia region. She has more than twenty peer-reviewed articles published in both national and international journals. Firuze has been teaching and researching in a public university in the Anatolia region for over a decade.

- **Stories of Constraints and Inspiration: Formative Years and Higher Education**

Firuze shared her experiences of patriarchy and gender discrimination in her childhood and adolescent years. She recalled stories of her paternal family opposing her involvement in certain sports and forbidding her from socializing with boys. Her paternal aunts and grandmother dissuaded her from participating in horseback riding and kickboxing as they viewed these sports as masculine, and hence, inappropriate for girls.

Firuze felt "lucky" when she talked about one of her maternal aunts, the biggest supporter of her higher education pursuits. She reflected on the tea break conversations she and her aunt had when she was in her last year of high school and preparing for the National Entrance Exam. Firuze described those tea breaks as "*bana yeni bir ufuk açtı*" [opened new horizons for me] and enabled her to pass the National Entrance Exam with high marks. Firuze recounted that during one of those conversations, the idea of an academic career ignited in her mind and gathered momentum over her undergraduate years. Firuze did not recall any instances of gender discrimination in her higher education years. She described her undergraduate and graduate professors as respectful and impartial, stating that they treated their students impartially.

- **From Marital Misery to Reclaiming Freedom**

Firuze got married in the second year of her PhD program. With a regretful tone, Firuze recounted her marriage as *"mutsuz"* [miserable] and her former husband as "*kontrolcü"* [controlling] whose lack of support and understanding elongated her PhD timeline. She shared stories of times

when she had to balance her paper submissions and household chores without support from her former husband. Once, when she was working on a research report, her former husband asked her to pause her writing to prepare his dinner. She recalled, “He told me that he could not eat my article for dinner, but I could work on it after he went to bed.” Firuze likened the day she got divorced to the day “*annemden doğduğum gün”* [she was reborn]. “It was the day when I regained my freedom,” she added.

- **The Ubiquity of Gender Discrimination in Turkish Academia**

In sharing her experiences of gender discrimination in academic settings in Türkiye, Firuze began by asserting that gender discrimination existed in “every cell of Turkish academia’s body.” However, she noted that, compared with more progressive regions, female academics living in conservative areas and working in male-dominated academic fields often experienced greater discrimination. She further stated that, despite their strong representation, female academics in social sciences and humanities experienced instances of gender-discriminatory attitudes. Firuze recounted a meeting several years earlier in which she, four junior male faculty members, and her department’s vice dean discussed launching a new online course. She recalled,

> During the meeting, the vice dean mostly asked the male academics for their opinions and then turned to me and asked if I agreed with their suggestions and if there was anything I would have liked to add. It felt like they believed I had nothing valuable to add.

Firuze shared a STEM female academic’s experience with gender discrimination. She stated, “When a close friend of mine in Civil Engineering shared her pregnancy news with her department’s vice dean, he told her that she should have informed the administration of her pregnancy intention before she accepted the position of research director for a national project.”

- **Political Misogyny and Women’s Movements in the AKP Era**

Firuze reflected on the declining status of women’s rights in the current political atmosphere in Türkiye. Considering the AKP officials’ words and actions “misogynist,” Firuze described Turkish women’s situation as “deteriorating” since the inception of the AKP. She contended that by upholding conservative, Islamist values and displaying inaction towards the worsening status of women’s rights in the country, the AKP “neglected” the issue of gender inequality. This negligence, Firuze maintained, reinforced gendered norms, practices, and gender violence in Türkiye. She

recalled a conversation she had with one of her colleagues after Erdoğan advocated for the word *adalet* [gender justice] and challenged the notion of *eşitlik* [equality][78]. She stated,

> My friend and I were talking about Erdoğan's comments and the way women were treated and addressed by his party's officials. We concluded that how the government was treating gender issues was not simply ignorance, it was gender *negligence* [emphasis added by the participant].

Firuze expressed her frustration over Erdoğan's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention[79]. She described Erdoğan's decision as "*en çirkin karar"* [the ugliest decision]. This decision was imposed by Islamist hardliners. She added that the withdrawal from The Istanbul Convention demonstrated "the government's intent to interrupt gender equality." She recalled a lunch with a couple of women colleagues after the announcement. She recalled,

> We were all shocked over Erdoğan's decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention. The lunch gathering changed to a coffee break as we all had lost our appetite after hearing the news. We talked about the consequences of this decision and how it would affect all of us, regardless of our positions [...] You know, it is scary that we are getting increasingly invisible in policies and directives.

Firuze regarded the women's movement in Türkiye as "the strongest movement" in the country. She stated that those participating in the women's movements were from different ideological and religious backgrounds. Yet despite its heterogeneity, she asserted, the women's movement was "the strongest, and the most stable and progressive movement" in Türkiye.

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[78] At a conference in Istanbul in 2014, Erdoğan contended that women cannot be treated as equal to men. He also accused feminists of rejecting motherhood. His comments arose controversy and were considered as blatant sexism. Adapted from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/24/turkeys-president-recep-tayyip-Erdoğan-women-not-equal-men

[79] The Istanbul Convention is a treaty entailing comprehensive legal standards to prevent violence against women. It is known as the Istanbul Convention after the city whereby it opened for signature in May 2011. Governments which ratified the treaty are bound by its obligations to prevent and combat violence against women. The four pillars of the Istanbul Convention are prevention, protection, prosecution, and coordinated policies. In March 2021, the Turkish government withdrew from Istanbul Convention despite being the first country to ratify it back in 2011. Adapted from: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/key-facts

- **From Publication Machines to Agents of Change**

Firuze elaborated on the role of Turkish women academics in undermining patriarchal norms and attitudes in Türkiye. Emphasizing women's potential in this regard, she described forging a connection between women academics and the public "a necessary step to take." Firuze, however, identified "the academic bubble" as the "main obstacle" to such connection. She attributed two factors to the formation of this bubble: the current authoritarian and anti-intellectual political atmosphere of Türkiye and the "publish-or-perish" aphorism.

Firuze stated that due to the 2016 attempted coup and the widespread purge of Turkish academics in its aftermath[80], a significant majority of Turkish academics, irrespective of their gender, have abstained from engaging in and commenting on political matters. She stated,

> Gender and women's rights are still relatively safe to talk about in Türkiye these days. However, mainly because of what happened in 2016, academics prefer to stay in their academic bubbles where they feel more secure […] There is this atmosphere of fear among academics that somewhat makes them feel like they are walking on eggshells; they are super cautious about what they are saying and even about what they are thinking.

Firuze maintained that the institutional pressure to publish a certain number of scholarly works functioned as a "wall" between academics and the public. To Firuze, the culture of 'publish-or-perish' had forced academics to spend most of their time in their academic bubble conducting research and publishing findings, which has reduced the time and opportunities they could potentially use to connect with the public.

Despite the aforementioned obstacles, Firuze asserted that it fell upon all women academics, regardless of their disciplines, to transcend being mere "publication machines". She asserted that women in Turkish academia should "destroy the wall" that existed between them and the public. To

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[80] The current ruling party in Türkiye views universities and intellectuals as the main sources of anti-establishment and subversive ideas. They intend to abolish the relative autonomy and democratic procedures of the universities through the introduction of strict disciplinary regulations against students and faculty members. Under the command of the Higher Education Council (YÖK), the conservative ideology known as the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" has been imposed on universities. Adapted from:
https://merip.org/2018/12/turkeys-purge-of-critical-academia/
https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/24/magazine/the-era-of-people-like-you-is-over-how-turkey-purged-its-intellectuals.html

this end, Firuze maintained that women academics ought to “use their agency at every opportunity” and voice their concerns about the worsening status of women and other gender-marginalized groups in Türkiye. She recounted that “she used her agency and fought like never before” at a faculty meeting where the department dean proposed banning on-campus gatherings intended to support transgender students. She shared,

> I was upset with what the dean was proposing; I could not help but interrupt him and tell him that what he was suggesting would be unfair and against the values our great grandfathers fought so hard almost a century ago to build a secular, free Türkiye.

Firuze described mentoring students as another effective tool to combat patriarchy in academic settings and beyond. She shared a story about how through mentoring one of her students, she connected to the student’s mother who was living in a small Anatolia region city. She shared,

> I had this student from a small Anatolia town. I was helping her to do her research and build connections with other academics and graduate students. In our one-on-one meetings, we sometimes talked about women’s rights. For the first couple of meetings, she was silent just listening, but after a while, she told me she had started sharing our conversations with her mother and sisters. Once, she came back to me with a question her mother had for me asking ‘my mother would like to have your advice, she would like to know what you would do if you had a family to care for and would like to get financially independent.’

Firuze shared that there was a three-day workshop on women’s empowerment organised by some feminist women scholars and an NGO. This workshop was sponsored by an international organisation and aimed to increase students’ awareness of the impacts of gender discrimination and to introduce strategies to mitigate these impacts. Around fifty female university students from across Türkiye attended this workshop. Firuze described the outcomes of the workshop as “productive” and expressed hope that similar workshops and seminars would be held in other regions. She also suggested a nationwide Women Academics Mentoring Network through which women academics could seek and provide mentorship and peer support. Firuze asserted that such networks would enable women academics to navigate routes to social transformation. She stated, “We need that connection among us now more than ever in order to work closely together and turn all kinds of our challenges, whether they be social, cultural, or academic, into change.”

- **Domestic Burdens and Assertiveness Deficit: The Culprits to Women's Underrepresentation in Turkish Academic Leadership**

Firuze concluded by elaborating on the reasons behind women's underrepresentation in leadership positions in Turkish academia and her perception of academic career success for women. She stated that, in general, women faced more challenges than men on their way to the top. For Firuze, the main obstacle was the burden of domestic responsibilities that fall primarily on Turkish women regardless of profession. She further noted that another important reason contributing to the small number of women leaders and managers in academia was that women academics sometimes displayed a lack of assertiveness in defending their arguments in academic discussions with men. Compared with the impact of women's domestic responsibilities on career progression, this lack of assertiveness, Firuze contended, might have a more detrimental effect on women's academic career success. She recalled,

> I have been in departmental meetings in which research projects or administration tasks were discussed. I have seen how men confidently argued 'This is the only way to do this.' Women, on the other hand, used statements such as 'This is the solution that might work.' To feel and be considered academically successful, one area that we need to get better at is getting our points across with more confidence and assertion.

Bridging the Divide, Forming National Networks, and Organizing Educational Events: The Highlights of Firuze's Narrative

Firuze's narrative at the micro level captured her encounters with patriarchy, both as a teenager, when her family enforced traditional gender roles by preventing her from participating in sporting activities that they deemed inappropriate for girls, and in her married life, when her husband's lack of support and his traditional expectations compelled Firuze to prioritize him over her academic tasks.

Firuze's experiences with patriarchy at the meso level were mixed. Unlike her experiences at the micro level, gender did not determine Firuze's interactions or opportunities when she was doing her undergraduate and graduate degrees. However, her narrative depicted the embeddedness of patriarchal norms and attitudes in "every cell" of Turkish academia regardless of the field, whether

it be in STEM, which is perceived as male-dominated, or in Social Science and Humanities, where women are numerically strong.

At the macro level, Firuze's narrative exposed the presence of misogynistic actions and attitudes of AKP officials, which have contributed to the deterioration of women's rights in the country. Her account also depicted how gender inequality enforced by the current government's policies, directives, and initiatives did not stem from unintentional "ignorance" but from "negligence." This intentional oversight has created more setbacks to the advancement of women's rights in the broader social and political arenas since the inception of the AKP.

Various resistance strategies were featured in Firuze's narrative. It revealed that amid Erdoğan's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and other misogynist discourses of the AKP, Turkish women, regardless of their various ideological and political affiliations, persistently advocated for their rights. Firuze's narrative also highlighted the importance of building bridges between the academic community and the public as a critical strategy to combat patriarchy. Additional strategies she suggested included a National Women Academics Mentoring Network and workshops and events to educate women, especially women students, about strategies to counter gender inequality in Türkiye's higher educational settings and beyond.

Despite the strategies highlighted in Firuze's narrative, the divide between the academic community and the public still appears unbridgeable due to two main obstacles: the culture of "publish-or- perish," and the current anti-intellectual and anti-feminist atmosphere. These obstacles have shaped "academic bubbles" that isolate academics from the general public and make it difficult to bridge the divide between the two.

9. Cevher (Jewel)

- **Profile**

Cevher is married with two children. She is between the ages of 45 and 54 and was born and raised in a middle-class, religious family in a small Anatolian city. She completed her elementary, secondary, high school, and undergraduate education in her hometown. She did her master's in humanities in a big Anatolian city. Cevher earned her doctorate in a social science field from a North American university. She has more than thirty peer-reviewed articles, books, and book

chapters. She has been teaching and doing research at public and private universities across Türkiye for over two decades.

- **Cevher's Pre-Academic Years: A Path Unmarred by Patriarchy**

Cevher fondly remembered her mother and grandmother as the most prominent advocates of her and her sisters' pursuit of higher education. Despite being illiterate, Cevher's grandmother was well aware of the transformative power that education, particularly higher education, held in enhancing women's lives in Türkiye. Similarly, Cevher's mother, who only completed primary school education, encouraged her daughters to pursue higher education. With a smile, Cevher shared that her mother's only expectation from her daughters was "to study and become someone for themselves."

Cevher did not recount any incidents of discrimination in her undergraduate or master's programs, for which she felt grateful. She attributed her professors' "non-gendered and equal" attitudes to them having earned their degrees in either European or North American universities.

- **Verbal Aggressions and Discriminatory Pregnancy Policies: Cevher's Initial Exposure to Workplace Patriarchy**

Cevher recalled that although she was aware of the existence of patriarchy in Turkish society, she had assumed that her degrees would shield her from workplace discrimination, an assumption that was proven wrong when she began her first job soon after she graduated from her master's program. Cevher described her first workplace as "very male-dominated," where she "tasted the bitterness of patriarchy for the first time." She shared stories of her male directors and managers raising their voices at her and other women who occupied almost all positions below the managerial level in her department. At times, Cevher and her colleagues were required to stay in the office until late at night to attend their directors' update meetings. These meetings, Cevher recalled, put much emotional pressure on married women, particularly those with young children. In another incident, one of Cevher's colleagues was questioned by her director, a man, about why she had not informed the upper management of her pregnancy intention. She stated, "The message our director sent out to every woman in our division was clear: 'You need to talk to your managers before you plan your pregnancy'".

- **Hiring in Academia Is Far from Being Gender-Neutral**

Cevher did not experience gender discrimination while pursuing her PhD at a North American university. Upon completing her PhD program, she returned to Türkiye, and shortly after, applied for an academic position at a public university. Cevher recalled the job interview with the department head, a man who doubted Cevher's academic skills and abilities because she was pregnant. She shared,

> I was pregnant with my first child when I met the head of the department to which I had applied. He told me, 'Pregnant women and mothers with young children should not apply for academic positions.' To back up his point, he mentioned that his wife decided to give up academia after they had their first child even though she had a PhD. He also said that there would be little chance for mothers with young children to succeed in academia. He even suggested that I apply for part-time jobs outside of academia.

The comments of the department head shocked Cevher, yet she decided to say nothing as, back then, she perceived him as "an exception," a decision that she later regretted. She stated,

> I thought he was one of the very few male academics with this mindset, but later on, I heard and experienced similar comments […] It was a big mistake that I left his office without saying anything; I should have resisted him; I could have given names of female academics who were mothers and still very productive in their fields of study.

A couple of months after her first child was born, Cevher got her first academic position at a private university in a city in the Anatolia region. After almost a year in academia, she attended an international conference where she facilitated a panel discussion alongside a Turkish male professor from a small Anatolian university. She recalled a conversation they had about women's presence in Turkish academia. She shared,

> I asked him about the number of female academics in his department. To my surprise, he stated that *they*, the male academics in his department, decided not to recruit women after they once hired a female research assistant who, in their view, was not smart enough and did not do her job well [emphasis added by the participant]. He was going on and on about the reasons behind their decision not to hire women, while I was reflecting on my first job interview; it

became clear to me that what I had experienced a year ago was not an exception and that female academics face discrimination from the very start, even before they enter academia.

- **Individual and Collective Activism: The Silver Linings of Patriarchy**

After experiencing several incidents of gender discrimination within her workplace, Cevher discerned that neither her graduate degrees, nor her peer-reviewed publications would safeguard her against the patriarchal norms and practices she was subjected to in the workplace. She, however, asserted that her interaction with patriarchy did not merely yield "repressive" outcomes, stating, "Once I realized the pervasiveness of gender-based challenges in Turkish academia, I became sensitive to the issue of gender and felt determined to incorporate the gender lens in my research." Cevher added that she utilized publishing as a strategy to "prove" her research skills to men and challenge the patriarchal assumptions that viewed women with young children as less competent researchers. She stated, "We know publishing is what academics need to do to survive in academia. Publishing has also enabled me to prove to my male colleagues that, when it comes to research, I am as good, if not better than them."

Cevher stated that her lived experiences with patriarchy in Turkish academia prompted her to sharpen her students' understanding of patriarchy and the culture of male-privilege through in-class, group discussions. One of the highlights of these discussions, Cevher added, was when she encouraged her students to explore effective strategies for combating the patriarchal norms and practices that they might have faced or witnessed in various spheres of their lives. One of the strategies Cevher encouraged her female students to adopt was "to say no." She stated,

> I always tell my students to stand up for themselves, to break their silence in the face of discrimination, to put their foot down and say no to patriarchal norms and attitudes whether they face them in their workplaces or at home […] Women in general should learn how to say no; in academia, women need to learn how to say no to the extra workload thrown their way. Talking about these topics makes me feel that I am alive.

Another strategy to combat patriarchy that Cevher elaborated on was utilizing virtual platforms to foster a sense of "solidarity, unity, and collaboration" among female academics from across Türkiye. In this regard, she mentioned a Telegram channel and a website she and a few fellow female academics in her field had created. The primary goals of these women-centric platforms

included sharing the most up-to-date news and promoting collaborative efforts and cooperation among women academics within and across their respective domains. Cevher recounted an incident whereby she and some of her female colleagues used their Telegram and personal Twitter accounts to express their dissent towards the decision made by some male academics to organise a panel to discuss some latest findings within their field of study. This panel consisted exclusively of men. She stated,

> It was late at night when I received a message from one of my colleagues via our Telegram channel. She was letting us all know that there would be an event with panel discussions at a big university in the Anatolia region and that all panelists would be men. We could not let it slide. So, we chatted throughout the night and finally decided to tweet at the event organiser, a renowned professor, asking him: '*Hocam, neden sadece erkekler?*' [Sir, why only men?].

Cevher recalled that their tweets received an overwhelming response. With a triumphant smile, she stated that when they decided to tweet at that event's organiser, little did they know that their tweets would be liked by thousands and retweeted by hundreds in less than twenty-four hours. The next day, the event organiser sent Cevher an apologetic email in which he invited her and a couple of other female academics to the panel. Cevher remembered that after she received the organiser's email, she shared the news with other women on their Telegram channel, stating, "Next time they would be more careful; they would not dare to exclude us." Cevher shared that there existed strong male networks in Turkish academia, and as such, when there were panels, men introduced other men to the panel organiser. Nonetheless, after that incident, Cevher added that when there was a panel in her field, both male and female panelists were invited. Women's invitation to scholarly panels was "a success" that Cevher described as "one of her biggest career success instances and the first of its kind in the history of Turkish academia." Later that week, Cevher shared with her students how a short tweet brought people from different socio-economic backgrounds together and dismantled the men-only panels at that event. She stated, "I advised my students not to underestimate the power of the social media platforms in amplifying their voices and bringing about change; I told them, 'Put your experiences with discrimination on a social media platform, and people will take care of it'".

- **Gender Equality in Erdoğan's Era: A Shadow of Its Former Self**

Cevher reflected on the ongoing quest for gender equality among Turkish women amidst the current political atmosphere in Türkiye. She stated that due to the current government's gendered comments and policies in the last two decades, the status of gender equality experienced "backwardness." She expressed her frustration over the remarks made by the top AKP officials, who openly regarded women and men as not equal, called upon women to bring at least three children, and advised them not to laugh in public[81]. Adding to her frustration, Cevher stated, "These anti-women practices and norms are not just produced by AKP officials; we often hear our male colleagues implying the same things." Cevher contended that because women in academia are women and are considered elite in the current atmosphere of anti-intellectualism and anti-feminism in Türkiye, they face additional discrimination and biases in their professional lives.

Another instance of gender inequality that Cevher elaborated on was women's decreased "visibility" in the debate shows on Turkish TV and radio channels. She stated that before the inception of the AKP, there existed more gender parity in debate shows, allowing for higher visibility of women. Nonetheless, Cevher noted, in the past ten years, and especially after the Gezi Park incident, most media outlets became pro-government which rendered a drastic decline in women's presence in the News programs and debate shows. Women journalists, particularly those who were critical of the policies and practices of the AKP, were among those whose visibility mostly waned.

- **Alternative Media and The Feminist Night Walk: The Resistance Initiatives of NGOs and Women Journalists**

Cevher elaborated on women journalists' strategic responses and NGOs' crucial role in promoting gender equality in Türkiye. She stated that despite being excluded from the mainstream, pro-government media, some female journalists leveraged online opposition media platforms to deliberate on the political, social, and economic issues experienced by marginalized groups, including women. Some, Cevher added, took the initiative to launch their websites and blogs. Cevher maintained the contributions of NGOs in Turkish women's fight against patriarchy. She

[81] In July 2014, Bulent Arinc, the then deputy prime minister, urged women not to laugh loud in public to "protect moral values". Adapted from: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-07-31/women-in-turkey-defy-call-not-to-laugh-in-public/5637742

sounded proud while sharing stories of the tireless work of pro-women NGOs which organised the annual *Feminist Gece Yürüyüşü* [The Feminist Night March][82] on International Women's Day despite the imposed restrictions by the government. She, however, asserted that to connect with the general public, female academics, opposition journalists, and NGO activists would need to strive to regain visibility on mainstream radio and TV channels. Such action will enable consistent improvement in political and gender-related issues in the country's public media and the broader media landscape.

- **Tokenism Does Not Take Us out of the Woods**

Cevher outlined three factors contributing to women's low representation in managerial and leadership positions in Turkish academia. She stated that when a managerial position became available, male directors almost always recommended other men. Heavy at-home responsibilities, Cevher added, were another reason deterring women academics from applying for these positions. The AKP's intervention with academic appointments was the third reason that Cevher expounded on, the reason that Cevher described as "the most decisive, yet frustrating" of the three. She stated that these "politically-motivated appointments" often occur in public universities and have experienced a sharp increase in the past couple of years and, in particular, in the aftermath of the 2016 coup attempt[83]. Cevher noted that almost all appointees to academic leadership positions in public universities met four criteria: they were mostly men, occupied lower academic ranks, had weak publication records, and displayed a willingness to comply with "whatever orders" dictated

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[82] The Feminist Night March began in 2003 and has been held ever since every year in March despite the state-enforced oppressions, bans, and obstructions. The 2023 Night March met with police violence and Tear Gas. During the demonstration, Turkish women called on the government to resign chanting *"Tayyip Kaç, kadınlar geliyor"* [Tayyip run away, women are coming" and "*Jin, Jiyan, Azadi*" [Women, Life, Freedom], "Long live women solidarity", and "*Geceleri de, sokakları da, meydanları da terk etmiyoru"* [We are not leaving the streets, we are not leaving the squares, we are staying here over the night].

[83] On 15 July 2016, a faction within the Turkish armed forces attempted a coup d'état to topple President Erdoğan's government. Ankara declared a state of emergency that continued for two years. Tens of thousands of people were arrested and at least 125,000 civil servants, military personnel, and academics were sacked or suspended from their positions. Meny critics have accused Erdoğan of using the incident to crack down the opposition groups.

from the top. These four criteria, as Cevher asserted, rendered the appointees more susceptible to manipulation.

Cevher elaborated on the number of women rectors in both public and private universities in Türkiye, stating that only 8% of rectors were women, most of whom worked at private universities. To Cevher, however, being a woman rector per se fails to improve the issue of gender inequality in leadership and managerial positions in Türkiye's higher education institutions since those appointed to rectorship positions are strongly affiliated with the AKP. Cevher compared academic leaders during the AKP era to "puppets," highlighting their apparent submissiveness and their willingness to disregard their own perspectives in their leadership roles and responsibilities. In this regard, she recalled a faculty meeting during which their faculty dean, a woman, informed the attendees of a decision that had been made by the University Senate about course grading and some other academic activities. To Cevher's surprise, when she and other faculty members questioned the feasibility of the decision, the dean admitted that despite being a poor decision, she felt compelled to vote in favour of it as it was what the university rector and his vice rectors, all men, had voted for. Despite acknowledging that some women academics displayed no tendency to challenge their "male bosses' decisions," Cevher maintained the importance of gender parity in academic leadership and managerial positions. She stated,

> Although having women at the top does not guarantee change, having more women up there would improve our visibility in decision-making positions in academia; it would also convey this message to our women students that it is possible to climb the ladder; but the most important thing is that it would persuade our male colleagues to drop their biases and try to collaborate more with women in making important academic decisions.

- **I Can Play in the Same League as My Male Colleagues**

Cevher concluded her narrative by sharing her perspectives on the notion of career success. To Cevher, an individual's academic career success, regardless of gender, is determined by their capability to highlight their well-established research skills and publish in esteemed scholarly journals. However, she asserted that, in the AKP era, her definition of career success was hinged upon "the extent to which I could prove my academic abilities to men and show them that I am no less equal to them."

We Resist; Therefore, We Exist: The Highlights of Cevher's Narrative

Familial support and progressive educational practices caused Cevher's pre-academic lived experiences to be free from patriarchal constraints. However, at the meso level, patriarchy began to manifest itself. In her first workplace, Cevher's male supervisor's aggressive communication, along with the late meeting practices and intrusive pregnancy policies were patriarchal as they exerted control and reinforced a gendered hierarchy. This first encounter with patriarchy shattered Cevher's belief that her degrees would protect her from patriarchal norms and attitudes. Also, Cevher's experiences with academic hiring processes were far from gender-neutral. Her narrative revealed explicit biases towards the suitability of women, particularly those with young children, to fulfill academic roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, Cevher's observation of men recommending other men for leadership and managerial positions depicted the prevalence of gender biases in Academic leadership. Her narrative also suggested that the tendency to 'sweep the issue of gender biases under the carpet of tokenism' and sprinkling a few women at the top would fail to guarantee gender equality in leadership appointments within Turkish academia.

At the macro level, Cevher's narrative exposed that in the current misogynist and anti-intellectual political climate in Türkiye, women academics face dual prejudices of gender and perceived elitism. Her narrative also revealed that the reinforced gender dynamics of the AKP had influenced her perception toward the notion of career success as, for her, proving her academic competence to her male colleagues became an important career success criterion. Furthermore, Cevher's narrative captured the AKP's involvement in academic appointments, which often overrode merits and qualifications.

Cevher's journey towards resistance against patriarchy began when she regretted her decision to stay silent in the face of the discriminatory attitudes she was subjected to during her first academic job interview. Later in her narrative, we witnessed that Cevher's advocacy for gender equality within her department and in the broader context of Turkish society became more explicit. She employed various strategies such as integrating gender in her research, using digital platforms as solidarity tools, and sharing her experiences of challenging manels, men-only panels, with her students. Her narrative also highlighted the resistance strategies that other women and pro-women NGOs employ, including leveraging alternative digital media platforms such as personal blogs and websites and organizing events such as *Feminist Night Marches*. These resistance strategies, Cevher's narrative indicated, highlight women's powerful and uncompromising determination to

continue their fight for freedom of expression and exercising their rights despite the AKP's backlash.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Five presented the profiles and narratives of nine Turkish women academics from diverse familial and religious backgrounds, holding different ranks and tenures at higher education institutions in Türkiye. Participants' narratives attended to what propelled them in their pursuit of higher education and academia, their lived experiences of patriarchy in academic settings and beyond, the interventions they developed in response to patriarchal discriminatory norms and practices, and their perceptions of career success. This chapter also captured participants' perceptions towards the status of women's rights in Türkiye and their proposed and implemented strategies for improvement. Furthermore, this chapter provided participants' perspectives towards women's underrepresentation in managerial and leadership positions in Turkish academia. The narratives and insights presented in this chapter informed the development and identification of the prominent themes and helped answer the research questions posed within this study. The next chapter presents three overarching themes and their related subthemes in relation to the theoretical framework and the scholarly literature anchoring this study.

Chapter Six: Findings and Analysis

Chapter Six presents the results of thematic analysis employed to analyze participants' narratives within the proposed theoretical framework and existing scholarly literature. The initial step involved careful reading and re-reading of the verbatim transcripts. Next, participants' narratives were created and chronologically organised. The subsequent steps sought to identify the initial codes by reading and re-reading participant narratives and the original interview transcripts, followed by the development of three overarching themes including, *1) micro-level patriarchy and women's navigation between compliant and resistant subject positions*, 2) *Turkish academia as a nexus of gender power dynamics and formation of diverse subject positions 3) state-endorsed patriarchal biopower technologies, mechanisms, and discourses.* Several sub-themes were identified within each theme, illuminating the nuances of participants' lived experiences with patriarchy. These themes and subthemes underscore the existence of various technologies of patriarchal power, the (re)production of and interaction between patriarchal and counter-patriarchal discourses, and the emergence of fluid distinct subject positions oscillating between compliance and resistance across micro, meso, and macro levels in Türkiye.

To provide a rich representation of participant voices and to bring the reader closer to their stories, direct quotes from the original transcripts were selected and included in the analysis of each theme. While some quotes might appear repetitive, they enable the reader to judge the quality of the findings of this study grounded in participant narratives, they enhance the transparency of the analysis, and they ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of its findings (Patton, 2002).

1. Micro-Level Patriarchy and Women's Navigation Between Compliant and Resistant Subject Positions

Foucault (1977) underscores the mutually constitutive relationship between power and knowledge stating, "Power produces knowledge, and there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (DP, p. 27). It is within the "complex and circular" relationship among various mechanisms of power that, as Foucault (1982) maintains, subjects take up, negotiate, or resist distinct subject positions (p.782). The micro-level narratives of Elmas, Dilay, Güneş, Firuze, Inci, Mehtab, and Zümrüt resonate with Foucault's understanding of power as an

unstable, relational, and productive phenomenon, the practice of which enables the emergence of particular discourses and subjectivities. To be more precise, these women's narratives revealed family as a breeding ground for patriarchal power techniques (Connell, 2020), the institution where, through "hierarchical observation and normalising judgment instruments", patriarchal disciplinary power was exercised, gendered knowledge was (re)produced, and certain subject positions were constituted (Foucault, 1977, p. 170).

When Elmas's father praised her math skills and framed her as a compensatory figure for a son he did not have, he (re)produced gender-stereotypical knowledge that assigns higher social value to boys. The production of such gender-stereotypical knowledge aligns with Foucault's (1982) conceptualization of subjectification, in both its subjugating and self-constitutive senses. It offered a particular subject position to Elmas, one that required her to "fill the gap" of a son her father had always yearned for, a subject position that "she had to recognise, and which others recognised in her" (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). At the same time, the self-constitutive aspect of this subjectification is apparent in Elmas's narrative as she "felt proud that she made her father proud." Similarly, Dilay's narrative of her early interaction with patriarchy revealed that despite being "liberal feminists," by discriminating between their daughters and sons, her parents (re)produced conservative and gendered knowledge. When Dilay's parents prevented her from partaking in social activities with boys and she complied with these constraints, she became both subject to her parents' patriarchal disciplinary power while simultaneously contributing to her own subjugation. Foucault (1977) notes that "disciplinary power draws upon three instruments of hierarchical observation, normalising judgment, and examination to succeed" (p.170). Under the guise of "family dignity", Dilay's parents employed a hierarchical observation instrument to strictly *surveil* and *regulate* the social interactions of their daughters, thereby *normalising* the gendered discriminatory behaviours they displayed [emphasis added]. Similarly, Inci's narrative revealed the deployment of hierarchical observation and normalising judgment apparatuses of patriarchal disciplinary power. Foucault (1997) defines "practices of the self" as practices through which "the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion" (p.291). These practices, Foucault adds, are models which are suggested, proposed, or imposed upon individuals by their culture, and their social groups. Through the hierarchical observation instrument, Inci's parents imposed particular "practices of the self" aligned with traditional gender norms, thereby restricting the range of subject positions she could have otherwise occupied. Additionally, when Inci's mother considered mixed-gender camping activities inappropriate for girls and asked Inci "to be a normal girl like her female

cousins," she implemented the normalising judgment apparatus of patriarchal disciplinary power and was involved in "comparing, differentiating, homogenizing, and exclusionary acts" (Foucault, 1977, p. 183). Inci's subjectification process aligned closely with Foucault's (1982) conceptualization of subjectification in its subjugated form. This mode of subjectification, which was produced by the patriarchal disciplinary power instruments mentioned above, constrained Inci's actions and choices.

The hierarchical observation and normalising judgment instruments of patriarchal disciplinary power were also observed in Güneş's narrative at the micro level (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). We witnessed that Güneş was subjected to the scrutinizing gaze of her "guardian" parents, who policed her to ensure she was "safe and protected." Her parents' telling response, "We trust you, but it is the society that we cannot trust," depicted the enactment of the normalising judgment instrument of patriarchal disciplinary power. Firuze's childhood narrative also illustrated Foucault's understanding of hierarchical observation and normalising judgment as instruments of disciplinary power. By perceiving horseback riding and kickboxing as "masculine" and inappropriate for girls, Firuze's aunts and grandmother (re)produced patriarchal knowledge that reinforced rigid men/women binary divisions in sporting activities and barred her from participating in her leisure activities. Likewise, Mehtab's parents exercised disciplinary power and enforced patriarchal discourses and practices on their daughters. We witnessed in her narrative that her parents applied the hierarchical observation tool when they closely monitored and regulated Mehtab and her sisters' behaviours and aspirations. By opposing the desires their daughters expressed for higher education and by expecting them to marry after high school, Mehtab's parents actively participated in a power mechanism that "coerces by means of observation" (Foucault, 1977, p. 183). Mehtab's parents employed the normalising judgment instrument of patriarchal disciplinary power when they set a limit on their daughters' education. As Foucault (1980) suggests, knowledge is constituted by and is constitutive of power. By exercising patriarchal disciplinary power, Mehtab's parents produced the knowledge that "a high school diploma is sufficient for girls", which in turn, legitimised and strengthened patriarchal power structures within the family.

Foucault (2000) highlights the inherent co-existence of power and resistance, asserting that human interactions would manifest obedience rather than power relations without resistance. He

also regards power as relational *if only* [emphasis added] it is exercised over "free subjects",[84] underscoring the interconnectedness between power relations and resistance (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). Given that Elmas, Dilay, Inci, and Güneş's childhood and adolescent experiences of patriarchy exhibited no articulated desire to resist, we observed power functioning in a *less relational* and *more dominating* mode, ultimately constituting disciplined and subjugated bodies. To be more precise, compliance with patriarchal disciplinary power rendered these women both *compliant* and *self-disciplining* subject positions, whereby they were both "subject to someone else by control and dependence" and involved in their own subjugation (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). While this apparent lack of resistance appears to challenge Foucault's power/resistance dyad, it exposes how gendered, sociocultural norms and values mediate the early experiences of participants with patriarchy. In the context of Türkiye, compliance with parental disciplinary mode of power is culturally framed as care and family dignity; such discourses compel obedience (Çelik & Lüküslü, 2012). Additionally, complying with patriarchy reflects the prevalence of "the politics of gender" in MENA countries, including Türkiye, where girls are expected to appreciate the gaze of their parents and interpret their surveillance as protective rather than restrictive (Moghadam, 1992, p.36). Hence, these gendered discourses of care delegitimise resistance. They also constitute self-disciplined subjects who regards constraints as protection rather than oppression.

Nonetheless, not all participants displayed compliant and self-disciplining subject positions in their childhood and teenage years. Tow participants, Güneş and Mehtab engaged in parrhesiastic resistance when they openly problematized their parents' gaze and their normalising patriarchal discourses. Acts of parrhesia were evident in Güneş's narrative when she challenged her parents' decision to prevent her from studying abroad, and in Mehtab's narrative when she "uncompromisingly" fought her way to higher education despite her parents' patriarchal mindset.

Zümrüt and Firuze's narratives of their married life revealed the prevalent micro-level patriarchal discourses in Türkiye which place the burden of household chores on women (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010; Özdemir, 2020; Özkanlı, 2007; Yıldırmış et al., 2021). Indeed, Zümrüt and Firuze's husbands upheld and (re)constituted patriarchal discourses and knowledge when they withheld support for their wives' academic pursuits and refused to contribute to household chores. Zümrüt's husband positioned himself as the head of the family, which Zümrüt did not challenge. Zümrüt's

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[84] Here by free subjects Foucault (1982) means "individuals who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comport- ments, may be realized" (p. 790)

lack of resistance to her husband's patriarchal conduct resulted in what she described as a few "*çok yorucu"* [draining] years when her children were young. This gendered hierarchy between Zümrüt and her husband manifested power in its less relational mode, and revealed Zümrüt's role in her own subjugation, and thereby placed her in a more compliant subject position. Similarly, Firuze contributed to her subjugation when her husband's gender-stereotypical attitudes impeded her academic progress and elongated her PhD timeline. Interestingly, through occupying a compliant subject position, Zümrüt and Firuze (re)produced and disseminated patriarchal knowledge, and thereby contributed to the perpetuation of the very patriarchal power structures that constrained them. Nonetheless, unlike Zümrüt, whose married life narrative revealed no resistance, Firuze's subject position shifted from compliant to *resistant*, when she displayed resistance and ended her marriage, a parrhesiastic act that allowed her to assume a *"reborn"* subject position.

The pervasiveness of micro-level patriarchal disciplinary power and women's complicity in its persistence was further exposed in Inci's narrative about two of her colleagues, also women working in academia. Like Zümrüt and Firuze, these women's narratives unveiled their active participation in a recursive gendered hierarchy process within which patriarchal power relations generated gendered discourses and knowledge that fostered compliant subject positions, perpetuating the very patriarchal structures that constrained them. For instance, when one of Inci's colleagues expressed that she regarded male leaders as "stronger and better," she complied with the patriarchal normalising judgment instrument and reinforced male-dominant and male-centered discourses. Inci's narrative about her other colleague, who, despite her academic achievements, doubted her worth as a "good wife", revealed a self-reinforcing patriarchal cycle that contributed to her own subjugation and the (re)production of patriarchal power relations and their resulting gendered knowledge.

When Güneş's friend characterized herself as "*Cinderella"* while characterizing her husband as "*Cinderella's sister,"* she showcased more of a *problematizer* subject position. Through employing the Cinderella analogy, she engaged in a *de-normalising* practice. She challenged the patriarchal discourses and knowledge that promote the subject position of domestic caretaker among women. By assuming the subject position of a problematizer, Güneş's friend exercised "the art of not being governed so much" by the patriarchal power structures (Foucault, 1997, p. 45), giving herself "the right to interrogate truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourse and truth" (Foucault, 2005, as cited in Heyes, 2007, p. 117).

Inci and Dilay's narratives of micro-level gender equality during the COVID-19 pandemic illuminated the *endurance* [emphasis added] of gendered discourses and the patriarchal technologies of power in Türkiye, which adversely affected women's work-life balance and academic advancement. Inci shared her observations on the growing disparity in household responsibilities during the COVID-19 lockdown, challenging the notion that "educated women enjoy gender equality", considering it "an illusion". Along similar lines, Dilay considered the COVID-19 pandemic "a career advancement opportunity" for men in academia. She stated that while most men in academia enjoy the luxury of spending all their at-home time on their research, women in academia, and particularly those with young children, remained the main homemakers and caregivers, and thus had to postpone their research projects.

While these women's early lived experiences of patriarchy dated back several decades and thus might not fully reflect the current realities of girls in Turkish families, the prevalence of patriarchal male-centeredness and male dominance in marital relationships, as shared by Zümrüt and Firuze, is confirmed by available literature. For instance, Sunar and Fişek (2005), and Özdemir-Sarigil and Sarigil (2021) argue that although the Turkish constitution mandates egalitarianism, and the new 2001 Civil Law removed the designation of the husband as the head of the family, a substantial chasm persists between the country's legal arrangements and its broader cultural realities. They argue that this discrepancy mostly manifests in informal institutions like the family, where subscription to traditional gender roles remains prevalent.

2. Turkish Academia as a Milieu of Gender Power Dynamics and the Formation of Diverse Subject Positions

Having secured a prominent presence in academia from 19% in 1960, to 34.6% in 1998, and 45% in 2022, Turkish women academics stand above the average of 42% of women's representation in academia amongst the OECD countries (World Bank, 2022). Despite these gains, the findings of this study revealed a gendered university culture in Turkish academia; this multifaceted culture consists of interrelated gendered discourses and knowledge, including gender stereotypes, homosociality, hegemonic masculinity, gender microaggressions, and imposterdom. It is also observed that through their engagement in an intricate gender power web, Turkish women in academia contributed to both the perpetuation of departmental patriarchal culture and sought opportunities for subversion and resistance, a paradoxical dynamic which enabled the emergence of various subject positions. The theme of *Turkish Academia as a Milieu of Gender Power*

Dynamics and the Formation of Diverse Subject Positions captured this interplay and depicted how the ongoing gender power dynamics in specific Turkish academic settings shaped and were shaped by the interaction between patriarchal and counter-patriarchal discourses and the knowledge and subjectivities they produced. The six interconnected subthemes dissecting the intricacies of such dynamics are: *1) motherly expectations from women academics, 2)* the *reciprocal causation between hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy, 3) the intersectionality of gender and age, gender and bodily status, and gender, academic status, and institutional context 4) patriarchy and imposter phenomenon reinforce each other, 5) the misalignment between the macro-level structures and women's values and beliefs redefines the notion of career success,* and *6) inhabiting both the periphery and center produces resistance and transformation strategies.*

2.1. Motherly Expectations from Women Academics

In *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Arlie Hochschild (1983) explores the *emotional labour* demanded from flight attendants and debt collectors, arguing that certain jobs require individuals to "commercialize" their emotions (p. 136). She also maintains that, compared to men, women disproportionately withstood most of this emotional labour, and thus, were forced into exhibiting certain emotions at their workplaces. In an opinion piece for the *New York Times,* Carol Hay (2016) draws upon Hochschild's notion of emotional labour to argue that the prevalent gender stereotypes portraying women as naturally caring and empathetic has led to gendered expectations from women to manage not only their own emotions, but also those of others at work and beyond. She shared her experiences of being a professor at the University of Massachusetts, stating:

> I am not their mother. At times I encounter students, both men and women, who do not quite grasp this […] If I were to serve as their mother, I would have only compassion and unconditional acceptance to offer, not intellectual lessons […] My male colleagues do not have these problems. [85]

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[85] Adapted from: https://archive.nytimes.com/opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/01/25/girlfriend-mother-professor/

Similar to Hay's (2016) account of gender stereotypical discourses in her academic setting, the narratives of Günes, Elmas, and Yakut exposed a patriarchal institutional culture which employed the "normalising judgment technique" to extend women's domestic caring responsibilities to their academic duties, thereby normalising the assumption of the academic emotional caretaker subject position as one of several subject positions available to them (Foucault, 1977, p. 177). Additionally, their narratives revealed that the patriarchal normalising judgment technique engendered masculinist normativity and reinforced gender essentialization. For instance, Güneş's narrative highlighted the prevalence of gender-essentialized views and expectations from women academics based solely on their gender, with men assuming women naturally possessed "motherly instincts" and were "better listeners. Simultaneously, navigating the subject positions of a professor, a researcher, and an academic emotional caretaker extended Güneş's research and publication timeline, which in turn, decelerated her career advancement.

Elmas shared similar experiences. Her students' expectations for her to extend motherly qualities affected both her professional trajectory and work-life balance. As an assistant professor, she extended meeting hours with students who asked for her guidance and opinions on various subjects, many of which fell outside her academic specialty. Yakut's account of gender-stereotypical expectations in her department paralleled those of Güneş and Elmas. Her stark analogy comparing private universities to "sweatshops" clearly portrayed the intense pressure and deep frustration she experienced occupying the academic emotional caretaker subject position, which consumed the time she could have otherwise devoted to occupying her researcher subject position. Research on gender dynamics in academia reports similar feminization of academic responsibilities (Crabtree & Siel, 2019; Cree, 2012; Eddy & Ward, 2015; Mariskind, 2014; Ramsy & Letherby, 2006). For instance, Ramsy and Letherby (2006) report that the ideology of motherhood, which regards women academics as "natural carers", is thrust upon women, regardless of their motherhood status at the micro level (p. 25). Comparable findings are shared by Cree (2012) who posits that while some women academics might be inclined toward a maternal role with their students, for others, adopting the role of a mother- academic creates this expectation among their students that their women professors will not only "look after" them, but also "look out" for them (p. 456). Likewise, Crabtree and Siel (2019) argue that gendered expectations from women academics compel them to sacrifice their "precious academic time commodity" to care for their "student children" (p. 8).

However, as "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free," these women had access to "a field of possibilities of *several ways* [emphasis added] of behaving and reactions" to confirm or challenge normalising patriarchal power techniques and the discourses and gender expectations they produced (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). On the one hand, by complying with motherly expectations, these women contributed, albeit unwillingly, to the (re)production of the patriarchal discourses that normalized the emotional caretaker subject positions for Turkish women in academia. Put another way, as Foucault (1977) maintains, once embracing the emotional caretaker subject position, these women became the "instruments" of patriarchal power in Turkish academia and reaffirmed and strengthened the gender-stereotypical discourses and knowledge it produced (DP, p. 170). On the other hand, as free subjects, these women could, and occasionally did, reject the academic emotional caretaker subject position, and challenged the gendered knowledge that normalized motherly expectations, regardless of whether they were at home or in academia, and dictated them to adhere to their essentialized roles as caring subjects. For instance, Elmas evolved from initially conforming to her students' motherly expectations to establishing firm academic boundaries. When she reached the "enough is enough" point and asked her students to approach her only with their academic questions, she directly challenged the normalising technique of patriarchal disciplinary power and the gendered discourses and knowledge it (re)constituted. In rejecting the academic emotional caretaker subject position, Elmas produced counter-patriarchal discourses and occupied more of *a defiant subject position*, which manifested itself in her frank speech acts; despite being cognisant of the impacts of her boundary-setting act on her evaluations, she "did not care" and felt "more like an academic" in her defiance.

Like Güneş, Elmas, and Yakut, Zümrüt challenged motherly expectations placed on women academics, informing her students that her office door was closed to those who wished to "share their dramas with her." Interestingly, while Zümrüt rejected occupying the subject position of an academic emotional caretaker, her narrative indicated that the motherly expectations from women academics in Türkiye's patriarchal society created a contradictory complex dynamic. While limiting their time to contribute to their academic advancement, the assumption of such a subject position served as a *catalyst* [emphasis added], facilitating the entry of these women into Turkish academia. Such contradiction emerged from the interplay between global patriarchy, which demands women's subordination (Johnson, 2014; Moghadam, 2004; Walby, 1989), and the Republican state feminism which encouraged Turkish women to fulfill the national duty of educating Turkish children (Diner &

Toktaş, 2010; Dogangün, 2020; Kandiyoti, 1987; White, 2003). The complex interplay between these two *interactive, reinforcing* patriarchal forces generates a negotiated space where women engage in what Kandiyoti (1988) terms “*patriarchal bargaining”*, and “a difficult compromise” between cultural scripts that regulate gender relations, and the gains women might secure through navigating such scripts (p.286). In effect, by complying with the mandates of state feminism and embracing the *nation’s educator* subject position, Turkish women benefited from the educational opportunities and professional advancement previously unavailable to them. Nonetheless, the same Republican mandates swept the micro-level patriarchy under the carpet of modernization (Arat, Z.,2022; White, 2003), and thus, reinforced the normalising techniques of the global patriarchal power and the gendered discourses and emotional caretaker subject positions it constitutes and is constituted by.

2.2. The Reciprocal Causation Between Hegemonic Masculinity and Patriarchy

As articulated in chapter two, hegemonic masculinity is “a strategy” that *establishes* and *validates* gender relations between men and women, and among men, thereby “*legitimises patriarchy*” [emphasis added] (Connell, 2020, p.77). The subtheme of *the reciprocal causation between hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal discourses and practices* was developed to examine the dialectical interaction between hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy as it arises from participant narratives. Given the multifaceted nature of hegemonic masculinity and the tools it utilizes to validate patriarchy, the sub-theme 2.2. was further divided into *2.2.1. the institutional perpetuation of patriarchy through homosocial behaviours and informalism, and 2.2.2. men do hegemonic masculinity through gender (micro)aggression.*

2.2.1. Homosocial behaviours, informalism, and institutional patriarchy

One of the manifestations of homosociality is informalism, a male network which emerges from and simultaneously reinforces hegemonic masculinity and the gendered knowledge system it (re)produces and disseminates (Collinson & Hearn,1994; Fisher & Kinsey, 2014; Hammarén & Johansson, 2014; Holgersson, 2013; O’Connor, 2011). Six of the nine participant’s meso-level narratives exposed how, through deploying informalism, men “sought and prioritized their relationships” with other men, thereby performed hegemonic masculinity (O’Connor, 2011, p.90). These informal male networks served as patriarchal *vehicles* [emphasis added] for enacting hegemonic masculinity, specifically manifesting in hiring processes, professional networks,

research access, scholarly debates, citation practices, and leadership advancement within these women's departments. For instance, when Güneş's male colleagues launched a men-only WhatsApp group, they practiced informalism, which reflected homosocial behaviours and reinforced hegemonic masculinity within their department. Likewise, Inci's narrative revealed the prevalence of informalism and homosocial behaviours in her department, which denied women academics' access to men's "leadership clubs." *Gendered citation practice* was another pattern of homosociality that emerged from Inci's narrative. This pattern of homosociality manifested homosocial behaviour wherein men academics predominantly cited other men's scholarly works, even if reputable women academics conducted comparable research within the same field of expertise. Zümrüt's narrative also shed light on homosocial behaviours among men academics. Men academics in Zümrüt's department were more likely to promote the candidacy of other men to leadership and managerial positions over women candidates. This was also more likely than women promoting other women for these positions. Cevher shared another instance of homosociality. Her narrative of her and other women academics' exclusion from panel discussions exposed the prevalence of *manel* in social science academia, a gendered gatekeeping practice that restricts women's presence in scholarly forums. This exclusionary practice reveals that despite social science academia being characterized as feminized (Bucior & Sica, 2019; Casad et al., 2020; Charles & Bradley, 2009), the numerical representation of women academics in these fields does not necessarily translate into equal academic visibility and recognition.

Notably, the pervasiveness of homosocial behaviours and informalism, as observed in Güneş, Inci, Inci, Zümrüt, and Cevher's narratives, is indicative of men's efforts to ensure *homogeneity* (Grummell, Devine & Lynch, 2009) and "to effectively *clone* [emphasis added] themselves in their own image and to guard access to power and privilege for those of their own kind" (Savage & Witz 1992, p. 16). In this regard, an interesting observation emerged from Mehtab's narrative. She stated that particular men academics perceived women academics as a "threat." This perception exposed the efforts of men academics to expand their masculine circle, a patriarchal power mechanism aiming to preserve men's homogeneity and prevent any challenges that might *threaten* their *patriarchal "ontological security*" (Giddens, 1991) [emphasis added].

In Elmas's narrative, the hiring committee's homosocial behaviours facilitated the (re)production and dissemination of the patriarchal discourses and knowledge that portrayed men academics as inherently more successful in conducting fieldwork than women. This is an instance of homosocial behaviour which imposed systemic barriers on women and blocked their access to

research opportunities. Notably, restricted access to research opportunities did not merely affect women academics already established in their fields. Mehtab's narrative revealed systemic exclusion from research prior to her entering academia. This exclusionary practice manifested in her department's gendered job postings for PhD students, which disproportionately favoured men students for research assistantships. These homosocial behaviours and the gendered discourses and knowledge they disseminated constrained women's access to academic knowledge production channels, while simultaneously enhancing men's publication and citation rates and granting them a *superior researcher* subject position. The occupation of the superior researcher subject position enabled men to enjoy an *epistemically privileged* status within academic hierarchies. Ultimately, these practices (re)produced androcentrism in scholarly output, thereby reinforcing the very gendered biases in academic research that feminists have long sought to dismantle (Gardner, 2006).

The Science Question in Feminism (Harding, 1986) and *The Feminism and Science* (Keller, 1982) present various biases through which androcentrism operates within scientific inquiry. Among these biases, *interpretive* and *problem selection* biases emerge as particularly significant, originating from men's preference for "certain methodologies and research situations […] which systematically prevent the emergence of certain kinds of information and interpretations" (Harding, 1986, p. 90). In Elmas and Mehtab's narratives, androcentrism was particularly manifested through *interpretive* and *problem selection* biases, wherein the asymmetrical distribution of research opportunities between men and women engendered "biases in the choice and definition of problems […] as well as biases in interpretation of observations and experiments" (Keller, 1982, p. 590-91).

Elmas and Mehtab's accounts of their limited access to research opportunities and the adverse impacts on their career advancement were corroborated by global data on the publishing rates of women academics. According to the Wordsrated report (2022), the percentage of articles published by women academics in Türkiye from 2017 to 2020 stood at 38.58%, one of the lowest among the OECD countries. This is peculiar given the relatively high number of women in Turkish academia compared to other OECD countries, standing at 45%, which is above the OECD average (World Bank, 2022)[86]. While one might argue that the lack of work-life balance and other micro-level

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[86] Adapted from: https://wordsrated.com/gender-diversity-in-academic-publishing/

challenges that Turkish women academics encountered might have played a significant role in women's underrepresentation in scholarly publications, the narratives in this study revealed that the pervasive impacts of homosociality in Turkish academia cannot and should not be overlooked.

2.2.2. Men do hegemonic masculinity through gender (micro)aggression

> I'm regretting my decision to take an academic path, and I feel decisively that universities are very much a "man's world" because of the attitudes I experience among both staff and students […] I am tired of dealing with everyday passive aggression and mistrust of our work simply because we are women […] During a conference, I was accused of being wrong about my work by a man academic who had read some of *The Beauty Myth*. This would be akin to telling a security studies academic that you have read "some of James Bond" and so can disprove their eight years of research.[87]

These are an anonymous woman academic's words, illustrating how, through "subtle snubs, tones, […] and the communications that exclude[d], negate[d], and nullify[ied]" her thoughts and experiences, the man academic performed gender microaggressive behaviours (Sue et al., 2007, pp. 271-4).

Gender aggression is one of the "numerous configurations" of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 840), a mechanism through which hegemonic masculinity is "express[ed] and reconfirm[ed]" (Robinson, 2005, p. 20). While gender aggression, in both its microaggressive and overtly violent manifestations, has received ample attention in scholarly literature, the narratives of this study predominantly revealed the prevalence of gender-based microaggressions in participants' academic settings. Notably, Güneş was the only participant who recounted an incident of sexual harassment one of her colleagues had experienced. The scarcity of gender violence disclosure in participants' narratives is striking on two grounds: First, a substantial body of scholarly work demonstrates that patriarchal systems are built upon hierarchical power relations between men and women and between men and men (Hapke, 2013; Johnson, 2014; Kandiyoti, 1988; Millet, 1977; Mogaddam, 2007; Walby, 1989). Within these systems, sexual violence functions as a mechanism through which such power relations are "maintained and

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[87] Adapted from: https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2017/sep/08/im-tired-of-men-belittling-femen-academics-take-our-research-seriously

regulated" (Robinson, 2005, p. 19). Second, Türkiye is part of a "classic patriarchy" (Kandiyoti, 1988, p.278), has a long history of misogyny (Arat, Z.,2022), and experiences one of the highest femicide and honor killing rates worldwide (Anavatan & Kayacan, 2024; Gursoy et al., 2016). In light of these conditions, we expect participant narratives to contain more accounts of gender violence. This peculiarity can be primarily attributed to the interplay of specific cultural, political, and legal elements in Türkiye. Notably, the cultural sensitivity surrounding topics related to sexual harassment and violence has engendered a profound reluctance to discuss such issues openly and in public (Kukulu, Gürsoy & Sözer, 2009). This reticence is further reinforced by the AKP's patriarchal discourses which have permeated the country's judicial system and exacerbated its inherently masculine culture. Within this masculine legal culture, claims of provocation by perpetrators are perceived as a legitimate reason for sexual harassment and violence, especially if the victim's behaviour is deemed as 'improper' according to conservative legal standards (Mwaba et al., 2021; Sümer & Eslen-Ziya, 2017). Another factor behind this peculiarity is "the politically correct" nature of academia, which shapes academics' shared sense of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' topics to discuss, in particular, those related to sexual harassment and violence (Maldonado & Draeger, 2017, p. 6). Within the interplay among these factors, women, in general, and women academics, in particular, might construct their 'own panopticons,' occupying a *self-censor* subject position to ensure the propriety of their discourses. This internalised system of control operates under the gaze of various guards, including macro-level patriarchal discourses, the country's masculine legal framework, prevalent gendered social and familial expectations, and the politically constrained nature of academia. Together, this multi-layered system of internalised control likely explains the marked absence of explicit meso-level gender violence in participant narratives.

The interplay of political correctness in academia and specific cultural, political, and legal factors in Türkiye may not only compel women academics to police their discourses but also facilitates the emergence of gender microaggression in the country's academic settings. Sue et al. (2007) understand microaggressions as behaviours that are "often unconsciously delivered in subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones […] They seem to appear in three forms of microassault, microinsult, and microinvalidation" (pp. 271-3). Among these, microinsults and microinvalidations emerged from eight out of nine participant narratives. Specifically, these types of microaggressions manifested in various gendered biases, including *assigning mundane tasks to women*, *gendered assumptions of intellectual and research abilities*, *underestimating women's*

academic achievements, male-preferential job postings and selection processes, discrimination based on pregnancy and marital status, and *addressing women professors informally*.

Dilay, Elmas, Inci, and Yakut's accounts revealed the bias of *assigning mundane tasks to women*. In Dilay's narrative, we noticed that men academics in specific STEM departments received "the cream of academic tasks," including "the easiest courses and the most prestigious and lucrative research projects". At the same time, women were burdened with heavy teaching and administrative duties. Likewise, Elmas's narrative highlighted the unequal distribution of teaching loads between men and women, which she attributed to the marketization of universities and the gendered expectations from women academics to act as their students' mothers. Similarly, Yakut analogized private universities to "sweat shops" and women academics working at private universities to "teaching machines," stating that compared to their male colleagues, women professors at private universities were the ones who had to do the "drudgery task of teaching and teaching every course thrown at them." Inci was sidelined from a research project that she and two of her male colleagues were to present at an international conference. Throughout the process, her male colleagues treated her as their "secretary", excluding her from the data collection and analysis processes.

The gendered assumptions of intellectual and research abilities were evident in Elmas and Cevher's narratives. In a field visit, a government official appeared to be "confused" upon learning that Elmas was one of the two women directors of the research project. Additionally, we witnessed one of Elmas's men students producing invalidating discourses about women's research abilities. The student advised his women classmates to pursue sedentary jobs as he deemed them unfit to conduct field work and use heavy machinery. Interestingly, when confronted, the student produced more invalidating discourses, referring to Elmas and her woman colleague as "exceptions." Cevher was another participant whose account disclosed the bias of gendered assumptions of intellectual and research abilities perpetuated by the gendered discourses that regarded women as "not smart enough" to carry out research.

Elmas, Inci, and Yakut's accounts point to the bias of *underestimating women's academic achievements.* In Elmas's narrative, a male academic employed gender-based exclusionary discourses that downplayed the scholarly contribution of women academics. He expressed his thanks to women academics for their contribution to that specific STEM discipline, stating, "Thank you for your contribution to our field." This apparently appreciative remark positioned men as the

owners of the discipline [emphasis added], and as such, it (re)produced gendered hierarchy. Additionally, by characterizing women's scholarly work as contributions, Elmas's male colleague framed women as *helpers* rather than *equal knowledge producers* [emphasis added]. Inci experienced this bias when one of her men students, whose master's thesis Inci had supervised, applied for a doctoral program. In his application form, he listed a male academic's name as his first reference, despite Inci having comparable national and international academic achievements.

Additionally, Inci's narrative revealed that women could also engage in producing this bias. She recounted a conversation with a woman colleague who advocated for men leaders, asserting that men were "stronger and better" leaders. The underestimation of women's academic achievements became apparent in Yakut's narrative when some of her men students demonstrated skepticism toward their women professors' academic soundness and compared their course content to that of male professors.

Elmas and Mehtab's narratives revealed bias in *male-preferential job postings and selection processes* were exposed in. Elmas's narrative highlighted that male-preferential biases were "ingrained" in her department's hiring committee's mindset, resulting in the underrepresentation of women in her department. Similar to Inci's perception of women's role in perpetuating gendered discourses, Mehtab's narrative revealed that women academics reinforced male-preferential selection processes bias when they perceived male research assistants as "more dependable" compared to women. Mehtab's narrative of job postings in her graduate programs exposed "second generation" gender discrimination. In *Second Generation Employment Discrimination: A Structural Approach,* Sturm (2001) conceptualises second generation discrimination as "a subtle, *indirect form of bias* within the workplace […] which excludes nondominant groups over time" [emphasis added] (p. 468). Although these job postings did not explicitly exclude women, their long working hours and availability criteria "sent women a rejection message". These practices which dissuaded women from applying for these positions functioned as patriarchal power mechanisms. They produced ideal worker discourses, and filtered out women, especially young mothers, from research opportunities without explicit discrimination.

Cevher and Firuze's narratives exposed *the pregnancy bias*. Cevher was subjected to this bias when her first job application was rejected due to her pregnancy, and she was told that "pregnant women and mothers with young children should not apply for academic positions." In another incident, the department's vice dean confronted one of Firuze's academic friends, questioning why

she had not disclosed her pregnancy intentions before accepting a research director position. The biases related to marital status and addressing women professors informally were each witnessed in only one participant's narrative. We noticed the marital status bias in Elmas's narrative when her department dean questioned a woman colleague's limited number of academic publications, deeming it unacceptable given her single status. The informal addressing bias emerged in Yakut's narrative when her men students addressed her informally in lecture halls, an "infantilizing and belittling" treatment that she was subjected to due to her status as a young woman.

These narratives support the findings of available literature on the prevalence of gender microaggressions in academia and their impacts on women academics (Blithe & Elliott, 2020; Periyakoil et al., 2020; Sekaquaptewa, 2019; Yang & Carroll, 2018). For instance, Sekaquaptewa (2019) perceives microaggressions as behavioural manifestations of implicitly held stereotypes in STEM, arguing that such manifestations undermine women's contributions to knowledge production in STEM academia. Additionally, the manifestations of gender microaggression exposed in participant narratives corroborate the findings of Periyakoil et al.'s (2020) study. Their research, examining the experiences of gender-based microaggressions among 79 women faculty in medicine, uncovered the prevalence of "pregnancy bias, having abilities underestimated, and being relegated to ordinary tasks" (p. 353-54). Also, women's contribution to gender microaggression, as revealed in Inci and Mehtab's narratives, aligns with Johnson's (2014) understanding of 'everyone's' involvement in perpetuating patriarchy. Johnson asserts that the systemic nature of patriarchy and the maintenance of patriarchal systems do not fall solely on a collection of men manipulating all women; rather, it is a society in which "both men and women participate" (p.5).

2.3. The Intersectionality of Gender and Age, Gender and Bodily Status, and Gender, Academic Status, and Institutional Context

In modern analysis, intersectionality is not confined to merely examining interrelated identities such as gender and race. Rather, it explores how one's various identities intersect with and are influenced by historical, political, and economic forces, including but not limited to colonialism, neoliberalism, and geopolitics, to create distinct experiences of oppression and privilege (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Rice, Harrison & Friedman, 2019). Six out of nine participants highlighted the prevalence of such a complex dynamic web in Turkish academic settings, where not only do "multiple grounds of their identity" impact each other, they also interact with and are

influenced by the current sociopolitical and economic forces in Türkiye (Crenshaw, 1991b, p. 1245).

The narratives of Elmas and Mehtab exposed the influence of current patriarchal and neoliberal forces on their experiences of intersectionality, revealing how the discourses (re)produced by such forces undermine the leveraging potential of women professors' academic status to alleviate the impacts of reverse-ageism. Elmas identified the interconnectedness between neoliberal policies, that marketized universities, and the pervasive patriarchal discourses in Turkish academia and beyond, that perceived women as better teachers and caretakers, as factors that led women academics, particularly younger ones, to bear the imposed heavy teaching load at private universities. Mehtab described the impacts of the heavy teaching load imposed by the neoliberal policies on young women academics, as something they could "feel in their bones," yet they had to suffer "in silence" and avoid any conflicts with those in positions of power since they needed their contracts to be extended. Similar insights were articulated by Yakut who shared the "horror" experienced by those contracted by private universities in the current patriarchal, neoliberal Türkiye, which caused academics at private universities to be perceived as "disposable and second-rate." While acknowledging that both men and women academics at private universities faced precarious employment conditions, Yakut stated that women academics, particularly those at the entry-level, were more at risk. She attributed the heightened precarity among young women academics at private universities to the intersection between gendered discourses that regard men as the breadwinners, coupled with neoliberal policies and the marketization of universities.

While Güneş did not explicitly refer to the current patriarchal, neoliberal climate in Türkiye, her narrative illustrated reverse-ageism and its compounding impacts on her experience of gender discrimination during the earlier stages of her academic career. She shared stories of men students challenging her and other young women professors' academic knowledge and expertise, a stereotyping and discrimination that young men academics in her department did not face. Such stereotyping and discriminatory discourses produced and disseminated by young men students can be analyzed through Foucault's (1977) instruments of the disciplinary mode of power, namely "hierarchical observation, normalising judgment, and examination" (p. 170). We observed in Güneş's narrative that men students exercised patriarchal disciplinary power within the lecture halls, resulting in the production and dissemination of the three pillars of patriarchal (dis)values of "male-domination, male-centeredness, and obsession with control" (Johnson, 2014, pp. 7-14). Upon closer analysis, the role of the "combination of hierarchical observation and normalising

judgment instruments" in the emergence and perpetuation of the patriarchal disciplinary power examination technique was revealed (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). We observed that students' examining techniques were informed by the hierarchical observation instrument of patriarchy, whereby "women are considered subordinated both in private and public spheres" (Walby, 1990, p. 417).

Additionally, Foucault (1977) presents normalization, another key apparatus of disciplinary power, as what enables "the classification, hierarchization, and distribution of rank" (p. 184). When applied to certain patriarchal discourses and practices, produced through the intersectionality between age and gender, normalization establishes a system where men are granted a higher rank and male dominance is deemed *normal* [emphasis added]. Accordingly, in Güneş's narrative, we observed how the normalization instrument of patriarchal disciplinary power contributed to the naturalization of male supremacy and its entrenchment within the lecture halls, where men students felt entitled to challenge their young women professors' academic knowledge. These women's intersectional experiences of age, gender, and political forces aligned with the findings of Rodham's (2017) study on reverse-ageism among young academics. Rodham's findings demonstrated that young academics were subjected to ageist attitudes and comments from their colleagues and students. However, unlike Rodham's study, which did not reveal any interplay between reverse-ageism and gender, Elmas, Mehtab, Yakut and Güneş's narratives demonstrated the mutually intensifying impacts of gender and age on women academics' experiences of discrimination in their academic settings.

Cevher's narrative exposed the intersectionality of biological status and gender, leading to her being subjected to meso-level exclusionary gendered discourses. The rejection of her application for an academic position while pregnant exposed the patriarchal mindset of the department head, who believed that "pregnant women and mothers with young children should not apply for academic positions." This exclusionary stance toward mothers in academia is shaped by deeply entrenched patriarchal discourses and the gender-stereotypical assumptions, which, as Mogaddam (2004) notes, "romanticize the family, domesticity, the private sphere, and […] lays an emphasis on women's maternal roles" (p.138). Such gender-stereotypical assumptions influenced the head of the department's perceptions of Cevher's academic skills and abilities, leading him to consider Cevher unfit for the position for which she had applied. This, in turn, informed his actions and resulted in the rejection of Cevher's application.

Additionally, this incident demonstrated how sovereign and disciplinary techniques of power both constituted and were constituted by patriarchal discourses. In the *History of Sexuality*, *Volume One*, Foucault (1987) describes sovereign power as “essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself” (p.136). Although in its modern form, in general, and particularly in Cevher’s case, the sovereign power *does not* “exercise the right of life and death, as in its ancient and absolute form,” when the department head rejected Cevher’s application and advised her not to apply to academic jobs because of her biological status, he occupied the subject position of an *academic sovereign* who exercised his sovereignty and *did not let Cevher live the life of an academic* [emphasis added] in his department (Foucault, 1987, p.136). Additionally, by citing his wife, who had forgone her PhD to care of their children, the department head employed the normalization instrument of patriarchal disciplinary power, thereby reinforcing gendered expectations which required women to prioritize their perceived micro-level gender roles over their professional growth.

Zümrüt’s narrative revealed the intersectional discrimination faced by women academics, exposing the intersectionality among institutional context, academic status, and gender. Her narrative suggested that the interconnectedness between gender and academic status manifested differently in public universities, where women professors were subjected to fewer gendered biases from their men students and colleagues. She attributed this difference to their status as civil servants, which came with a different passport colour and greater employment stability, which enabled an *ontologically secure* subject position.

Given these women’s experiences of neoliberalism in Turkish academia, combined with the country’s long history of patriarchy (Arat, Z.,2022), the AKP’s familialization of women (Naz, 2016), and its hostility toward academics, whom it brands as elites (Doğan, 2023; Vatansever, 2018), this subtheme not only revealed the interconnectedness of gender, age, and bodily and academic statuses within the broader sociopolitical and economic forces in Türkiye, but also demonstrated how such an interplay led to the emergence of a *precarious* subject position among women academics contracted by private universities. Occupying such a subject position produces ontological insecurity, which, as Fanon (1967) argues, prevents these women from inhabiting an *ontologically secure* subject position “as they are always in the becoming status” (as cited in Capan & Zarakol, 2019, p. 266).

2.4. Patriarchy and Imposter Phenomenon Reinforce Each Other

In 1978, Clance and Imes introduced the concept of the *imposter phenomenon* (henceforth, IP) to describe high-achieving women*'s* fraudulent thoughts and internalised doubts toward their achievements. Rather than acknowledging the role of *internal traits* such as skills, abilities, and competence in their accomplishments, those experiencing IP attribute their success to external factors such as *luck, knowing the right people, and being in the right place at the right time* (Clance & Imes, 1978; Clance & O'Toole, 1987) [emphasis added]. Those prone to imposter feelings often experience various psychological challenges, including diminished self-confidence (Clance & O'Toole, 1987; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; Topping & Kimmel, 1985), fear of failure (Thompson, Foreman & Martin, 2000), depression (McGregor, Gee & Posey, 2008), and an urge toward perfectionism, workaholism, and proving oneself to others (Clance & Imes, 1978; Clance et al., 1995; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; Sakulku & Alexander, 2011)

The interplay between gender and IP is contentious in scholarly literature. While some contend that, compared to men, with similar ranks and achievements, women are more likely to regard themselves as imposters (Dahlvig, 2013; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; McGregor et al., 2008), others argue that men and women experience IP at almost similar rates (Blondeau & Awad, 2016; Shreffler et al., 2023). IP and its impact on academics across different career stages have been explored in numerous studies since 1983. These studies have noted that in the highly competitive and stressful environment of academia, where the pressure to publish or perish looms, feelings of imposterdom and its psychological ramifications are pervasive among faculty members with different tenure statuses and across various disciplines, from Medicine, to STEM, to social and behavioural sciences (Chakraverty, 2025; Clance & O'Toole, 1987; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Jöstl et al., 2012; Robinson, 2018; Shreffler et al., 2023; Sims & Cassidy, 2019; Zorn, 2005).

Mirroring the existing literature, the findings of this study revealed manifestations of IP. Participants' reluctance to acknowledge their internal capabilities and their tendency to ascribe their academic success mostly to external factors such as being lucky in having supportive families, having access to mentoring opportunities, and being in the right place at the right time, aligns with the core principles of IP, whereby individuals struggle to acknowledge their intrinsic qualities and skills (Clance & Imes, 1978; Clance et al., 1995). Notably, micro-, and meso-level 'luck' emerged as the most recurring factor in participants' entry into academia and their subsequent academic success. Interestingly, all nine participants mentioned the word 'luck' early in

their first interview session, with most of them beginning their narratives with the phrase “I was *lucky* that…” [emphasis added].

Instances of micro-level luck included having supportive parents and family mentors, and/or a pro-education domestic atmosphere. Almost all participants, except for Mehtab, attributed most of their academic success to having supportive parents or other family members. For instance, Elmas regarded the women academics in her family as the ones “who opened the academic doors for her in a major perceived as masculine”. They guided her through, “an opportunity” she felt “lucky” to have. Inci felt “lucky” that her mother recognised “the power of education for girls in Turkish society.” Additionally, her father’s male cousins were her “social capital; they were “the lucky stars” who “illuminated” her path to academia. Similarly, Yakut considered herself “lucky,” as both her parents were educated and supported her pursuit of a doctorate. Firuze’s narrative revealed that although patriarchal discourses and practices were familiar in her paternal family, she was “lucky” to have a maternal aunt who “opened new horizons for her” and kindled the idea of becoming an academic in her mind when she was still a teenager. Notably, among the six participants who were currently or formerly married, Güneş was the only one who felt fortunate for having a supportive husband who enabled her to focus on her research and academic progress during her PhD years and afterwards.

I would argue that although Güneş’s account of having a supportive husband, who *helped* [emphasis added] with the domestic chores, might appear positive on the surface, it is paradoxical. Referring to one’s husband as a ‘helper,’ rather than an equal partner, reveals the deeply ingrained gendered discourses in patriarchal countries, including Türkiye. Such discourses shape distinct gendered responsibilities and assign them to men and women, with caring for children and household duties falling primarily upon women, while men are positioned as breadwinners and are not typically expected to participate in household chores as equal partners (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010; Özdemir, 2020; Özkanlı, 2007; Yıldırmış et al., 2021). Consequently, this discursive imbalance creates a system of gendered knowledge whereby women, like Güneş, tend to view the support they receive from their spouses as a *gesture* [emphasis added] worthy of appreciation. Drawing upon Foucault’s (1977) concept of subjectification, I would propose that such domestic patriarchal discourses and the gendered knowledge they produce ascribe men the subject position of *helper* while advocating women to occupy the subject position of *primary homemaker*. Indeed, “this categorization of individuals […] and imposing a law of truth and identities on them” enables domestic patriarchy to prevail (Foucault, 1982, p. 781).

At the meso level, “knowing the right people and being in the right place at the right time” manifested luck. Dilay described herself as “lucky” for pursuing social science, where the academic environment did not expose her to patriarchal discourses and practices. She felt this luck allowed her to progress in her career, attributing her success to being ‘in the right place, rather than to her internal abilities. ‘Knowing the right people’ mostly manifested through mentorship opportunities that participants had during high school and/or while pursuing their higher education. For instance, Inci deemed herself “lucky,” because during her graduate studies, she met the “right people” who mentored her throughout her PhD program and guided her entry into academia. Feeling lucky for having mentorship opportunities was also evident in Mehtab’s narrative. Mehtab considered herself lucky for studying in a “non-conservative” high school, which enabled her to interact with individuals with different worldviews from those of her parents. Among the nine participants, Zümrüt was the only participant who explicitly acknowledged the role of her internal attributes, such as talent and intelligence, in granting her entry into academia and for her subsequent academic success.

The male-centeredness of academia, particularly in positions of power, is well-documented in both the Global North and Global South (Abalkhail, 2017; O’Connor, 2017; 2019; Morley, 2014; Burkinshaw & White, 2019). This masculinized structure of academia and the struggle women experience to acknowledge their internal abilities engenders *a self-doubter subject position* in these women, which in turn leads to the validation and circulation of patriarchal discourses that question women’s competence and belonging in academia. In this study, the subject position of self-skepticism was also manifested as a perceived lack of self-esteem, another indicator of IP (Clance & O’Toole, 1987; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; Topping & Kimmel, 1985). Such a manifestation was observed in Inci’s narrative, when she shared her experience of working with two of her male colleagues in her department and feeling doubtful about her academic expertise and knowledge. Inci also recounted stories of other women academics who displayed a sense of inadequacy when they regarded men leaders as” stronger and better.”

Another hallmark of IP is the urge that individuals, predominantly women, feel to *prove* [emphasis added] themselves (Clance & Imes, 1978; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017). Zümrüt’s narrative revealed that “academic women need to work much harder than men to show that they can do what men can do.” Likewise, Güneş shared, “Women constantly need to be the best, they need to prove it.” Elmas reported that women in her field of study “felt the pressure to work twice as hard to appear perfect, and to prove their competence and expertise,” a trait that men academics

in her department did not feel compelled to exhibit. Her account also suggested that the academic patriarchal culture created barriers for women to advance in STEM academia.

Likewise, Inci and Cevher asserted that women had to work harder to prove that they were, as Cevher stated, “as good, if not better than their male colleagues.” Likewise, Inci described the sense of “self-assuredness” as what “men have in their genes, the built-in privilege that they are born with.” Her narrative indicated that the patriarchal knowledge that grants men the *self-assured subject position* and denies women such privilege, forces women “to work hard to earn such privilege and to prove that they were just as good.” This pressure to prove themselves, much like the element of luck previously alluded to, underscores the pervasiveness of patriarchal discourses not only in male-dominated STEM fields, but also in seemingly feminized social science and humanities disciplines. In the context of Türkiye, with its long history of patriarchy and misogyny (Arat, 2020), such discourses deepen the severity of women academics’ experiences of IP, compelling them to develop more profound senses of *not belonging* and *inadequacy* [emphasis added].

From a Foucauldian standpoint, “power produces; it produces reality, it produces domains and objects and rituals of truth” (1977, p. 194). This understanding of power and the ‘rituals of truth’ that it produces is particularly relevant when examining these women’s experience of IP in Turkish male-centered academia (Bakioğlu & Ülker, 2018; Bülbül, 2021). Such a gendered ‘domain’ coupled with the micro and macro-level patriarchal culture in Türkiye created a ‘ritual of truths’ that perpetuates the notion of men being superior to women. This, in turn, intensifies IP traits, urging women to work harder to overcome their perceived inadequacies and strive for recognition in male-dominated academic spaces in Türkiye. Paradoxically, this drive to work hard to prove oneself has simultaneously facilitated the emergence of a *high-achiever* subject position in these women and enabled their access to the center of academia. In other words, given the impressive number of these women’s publications, interacting with patriarchal discourses and practices led to the emergence of two seemingly contradictory subject positions of *self-skepticism* and *high achiever*, where the former led to the latter’s emergence.

2.5. The Misalignment Between the Macro-level Structures and Women's Internal Values (Re) Defines the Notion of Career Success

In their proposed academic success framework, Karam and Afiouni (2013) emphasized the subjective malleability and localised nature of the notion of career success. Their framework suggests that "in the MENA region, with its ingrained gender ideology, women academics are faced with the mandated structures of academia as well as the mandated structures of gender ideology. They further argue that "sometimes these multiple mandated structures are congruent, and at other times they are misaligned, and when such misalignments happen, a sense of tension arises along with a desire and/or need to dissipate that tension […] manifested in a sense of urgency and the resultant agentic processes" (p.551). Participants' understanding of the notion of career success aligned with Karam and Afiouni's (2014) conceptualization of career success as "a subjectively malleable and localised concept" (pp. 548-49). Their narratives also revealed a misalignment of the interacting forces at various levels, albeit with a different dynamic than what Karam and Afiouni suggested in their framework. The following sub-sections present participants' definitions of academic career success, demonstrating two distinct approaches: working within existing patriarchal system versus seeking to transform them.

2.5.1. Leaning toward conventional objective criteria

Seven out of nine participants elaborated on the notion of career success, with their narratives revealing a spectrum of perspectives. While for some participants objective, "other-referent," and quantifiable criteria remained primary, others placed less emphasis on objective career success criteria, and instead took a more subjective, "self-referent", and transformative stance (Heslin, 2003, p. 262). Zümrüt, Yakut, and Cevher mainly associated their academic career success with verifiable objective academic achievements. According to Zümrüt, the career success of STEM academics should be determined by the number of their scholarly works and supervised theses and dissertations. Likewise, Yakut stressed quantifiable academic career success metrics, regarding landing a permanent academic job and having enough research time as the key academic career success parameters. Cevher shared the same objective criteria, maintaining academics' high number of publications and prestigious research projects in determining the career success of academics.

Notably, aligned with Karam and Afiouni's (2013) career success framework, not only did Zümrüt, Yakut, and Cevher's narratives reveal their emphasis on objective career success indicators, but their narratives exposed their conceptualizations of career success as "a localised […] dynamic social construction" (p. 549). To reframe it, although Zümrüt, Yakut, and Cevher's narratives presented specific tangible career success criteria, these criteria did not emerge in a 'vacuum.' Instead, these criteria were formed by the tension between Zümrüt, Yakut, and Cevher's self-referent, anti-patriarchal values and beliefs and the gendered discourses disseminated by current sociopolitical factors in the country. These anti-patriarchal values and beliefs emerged in Zümrüt's narrative when she stated that obtaining objective academic achievements would enable women in STEM academia to demonstrate that "they were just *as capable as men* [emphasis added] in conducting research and supervising graduate students". When Yakut stated that in the current neoliberal, anti-feminist, anti-intellectual, and Islamist climate of Türkiye, "a woman academic's career success relied on the attainment of a permanent job and the ability to allocate ample time toward her research endeavors", her perception of the notion of academic career success was influenced by the AKP's neoliberal strategies, its populist agenda, and the patriarchal and Islamist discourses it disseminated. A similar conceptualization was observed in Cevher's narrative when she maintained the importance of "proving her abilities to men and showing them that she was just as equal to them." Zümrüt, Yakut, and Cevher's narratives demonstrated that their anti-patriarchal commitment to proving women's academic competencies was pursued within the existing patriarchal structures in Türkiye rather than challenging the underlying beliefs and ideologies of such structures. Consequently, we witnessed the emergence of *validation-seeking* subject positions, by occupying which, Zümrüt, Yakut, and Cevher *secured* their academic career and *proved* their academic values to their male counterparts [emphasis added].

2.5.2. From conventional to transformative perceptions of career success

While Güneş, Mehtab, Inci and Firuze did not disregard objective academic career success criteria, their narratives demonstrated transformative redefinitions of success as primarily acts of resistance. Rather than channeling their counter-patriarchal acts toward achieving objective career success criteria, they defined what career success meant by prioritizing their democratic and empowering values. Unlike Karam and Afiouni's concept of modified structures emerging from a *structure-to-structure* tension, Güneş, Mehtab, Inci and Firuze's perceptions of career success presented a *self-structure* tension informed by the misalignment between their internal values and patriarchal forces. More precisely, these women's narratives exposed the misalignment between

their anti-patriarchal, democratic, bridge-building, and self- and other-empowering values and aspirations, and the current polarizing, neoliberal, anti-intellectual, conservative, and gendered discourses prevalent across macro, meso, and micro levels (Degirmen & Atik, 2016; Doğan, 2023; Sözen, 2020).

This misalignment led to the emergence of *transformative agentic processes* and their accompanying *resistant* subject positions in these women. Güneş's perception of academic career success exposed the emergence of transformative agentic processes, as evidenced when she stated, "Academics could consider themselves successful if they could connect to the general public and leave an impact on their students' lives by providing them with lots of opportunities to think freely." We witnessed the importance of 'connection' in Mehtab's understanding of academic career success. She stated that women academics' career success should be determined "by the extent to which they have succeeded in sharing their insights and ideas with other women academics outside STEM, NGO activists, journalists and the general public."

Inci and Firuze's definitions of career success involved overcoming their internalised barriers. These women recognised and confronted their perceived internal barriers, which manifested as self-doubt, lack of assertiveness, and a compulsion to prove their academic skills. Inci doubted her academic and research skills in her years as an Assistant Professor. This sense of doubt precluded her from applying her academic skills and expertise while doing joint research projects with her male colleagues. This self-doubt diminished her sense of achievement. However, to a considerable extent, she managed to overcome her sense of self-doubt and create her own "leadership club". This leadership club boosted her sense of academic success and granted her a sense of belonging rather than merely "fitting in". Firuze maintained that "to feel and be considered academically successful, one area that we need to get better at is to address our lack of assertiveness, […] We need to get our points across with more confidence and assertion."

2.6. Inhabiting both the Periphery and Center Produces Resistance and Transformation Strategies

In *The History of Sexuality: Volume One*, Foucault (1978) maintains the co-existence of power and resistance, stating, "where there is power, there is resistance" (p.95). Further, he argues that "through a multiplicity of forces, desires, and thoughts, various subject positions are gradually and progressively constituted" (Foucault, 1980, p. 97). It is through navigating various subject positions

that, as Foucault (1982) asserts, the subject is capable of both (re)producing and subverting the oppressive structures with which they interact.

Aligned with Foucault's understanding of the interplay between power dynamics and the formation of various subjectivities, participants' narratives of resistance revealed a distinct *peripheral-central* subject position. This subject position emerged from simultaneously inhabiting the margin, due to the prevalent patriarchal discourses and practices in Türkiye, and the center, due to their role as academics. Inhabiting such a unique subject position granted epistemic privilege, enabling participants to identify and confront normative gendered assumptions through (re)producing counter-patriarchal discourses and practices. The subtheme *Inhabiting both the Periphery and Center Produces Resistance and Transformation Strategies* examines counter-patriarchal discourses and practices, ranging from individual to collective acts of resistance, and from overt parrhesiastic critique to indirect confrontational practices.

2.6.1. Individual acts of resistance

At the individual level, participants' counter-patriarchal resistance comprised *parrhesiastic critique* and *covert resistance strategies*. These approaches varied in their directness, visibility, and associated risk, with the latter involving indirect confrontation with an authority figure.

2.6.1.1. Parrhesiastic critique

In *The Politics of Truth*, Foucault (2007) posits critique as an essential form of resistance, defining it as "the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question power on its discourse of truth […] It is the art of voluntary insubordination, and […] an act that would essentially ensure the desubjugation of the subject" (p. 47). The narratives of this study revealed individual acts of critique as a recurring theme where participants' resistance of patriarchy manifested itself in parrhesiastic practices. Through enacting parrhesiastic critique, participants exposed the existing patriarchal power/knowledge apparatuses in their academic settings and beyond, constructed counter-patriarchal discourses and practices, and advocated and occupied *de-subjugated* subject positions.

Dilay, Güneş, Firuze, and Elmas's narratives of resistance highlight Foucault's (2005, 2010, 2011) parrhesia, a dimension of critique performed by these women to expose, challenge, and subvert patriarchal power/knowledge apparatuses and the discourses and practices these devices

disseminate. According to Foucault (2005), for a discursive act to be regarded as parrhesiastic, it ought to be willful, truth-revealing, courageous, and risky. These women enacted parrhesia by ‘directly’ challenging authority figures through disclosing gendered challenges they witnessed or experienced first-hand, an act of “voluntary inservitude and indocility” demonstrated despite its associated risks (Foucault, 2015, as cited in Lorenzini & Tiisala, 2024, p. 117). Foucault (2010) holds that the risk of practicing parrhesia can range from as high as death to as minimal as breaking the relationship between the parrhesiast(es) and the addressee(s). While Dilay, Güneş, Firuze, and Elmas’s narratives of resistance did not reveal life-threatening risks, they still faced an “undefined eventuality” since their parrhesiastic acts directly created moments of accountability for those in power (Foucault, 2010, p. 63).

Dilay’s parrhesiastic act took the form of scholarly publications on the deteriorating status of women in the current gendered, authoritarian, and Islamist climate under AKP. Güneş’s colleagues appreciated her frankness and courage when she “threw the truth in the face” of the newly appointed chancellor, exposed the work-life balance challenges that women academics in her department grappled with, and inquired about the chancellor’s plans for alleviating the burden women academics had to bear (Foucault, 2010, p. 54). We observed a similar parrhesiastic act in Firuze’s narrative. During a faculty meeting, she confronted the dean and “fought like never before” against his proposal to ban on-campus gatherings organised to support transgender students. Elmas’s intention to include gender-marginalized students in her future research projects formed a parrhesiastic act since it stood in opposition to the current homophobic discourses of Islamist groups and AKP officials, who stigmatize LGBTQ communities as sinners, deviants, and as “sympathetic to terrorists” (Özbay, 2022, p. 201).

2.6.1.2. The Indirect modalities of individual resistance

Mehtab, Zümrüt, Inci, Yakut, and Cevher enacted acts of resistance using primarily indirect methods, including mobilizing other women to conduct counter-normative practices, employing satirical comments, overcoming their internalised self-doubt, and emphasizing their academic credibility.

Mehtab endorsed a two-tiered individual resistance strategy. At the meso level, she invited women to enhance their visibility in academic leadership, asserting that their strong presence would transform the patriarchal culture prevalent in the country’s higher educational settings,

thereby “undoubtedly shake the pillars of patriarchy.” As another individual act of resistance, Mehtab advocated counter-normative practices at the micro level. By urging women to defy gender roles and “free” themselves from traditional caregiving duties, Mehtab encouraged them to embrace a *de-subjugated* subject position. Mehtab’s call for women’s liberation from the ingrained gendered expectations in patriarchal Türkiye disclosed two key insights. First, it displayed that even after almost a century since the inception of modern Türkiye, Turkish women do not feel fully liberated. This aligns with Kandiyoti’s (1987) and Arat’s (2022) analysis of women’s status in contemporary Türkiye. Both scholars contend that while Atatürk’s secular reforms provided legal emancipation, they failed to liberate women from cultural and micro-level gender discriminatory and restrictive norms.

Additionally, in emphasizing the need to break free from micro-level gender roles to undermine broader patriarchal structures, Mehtab’s narrative revealed a paradox. By maintaining these roles, women contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal discourses and practices. Such contribution, whether deliberate or unconscious, reflects the systemic nature of patriarchy, which persists through varying degrees of *participation* across genders (Johnson, 2014). While Mehtab did not explicitly articulate a causal relationship between her suggested resistance strategies, her narrative indicated that breaking free from micro-level gender roles and acquiring leadership positions were interlinked, with the former facilitating the actualization of the latter.

Zümrüt, Yakut, and Cevher highlighted the role of scholarly publications in challenging both broader patriarchal norms and values, as well as androcentrism in academia. Yakut regarded publishing scholarly articles as a catalyst that enabled her to challenge the precarious policies of the populist and neoliberal AKP. While Zümrüt noted that social science academics were more adept at writing about gender inequality issues, her view of publishing as a tool “to demonstrate to men that she was as capable as them in conducting research and publishing” suggested her strategic use of academic publications to confront both patriarchal discourses and the androcentric knowledge that they produced. Similarly, Cevher linked her ability to display her academic competence to the deconstruction of patriarchal discourses, which characterize women with young families as less capable researchers.

Inci’s acts of resistance were informed by the “sense of self-doubt” she experienced in her early academic years. She considered navigating self-doubt as a “crucial journey” that women academics need to undertake before they can successfully engage in collective modes of

resistance against patriarchy. Additionally, her narrative revealed that as she challenged her academic insecurities, she felt empowered to focus more on her research endeavors and to initiate a leadership club. Inci's leadership club served two purposes: it challenged the culture of androcentrism in academia, and it created spaces for women academics to engage in intersubjective collective modes of resistance.

In *Funny but Not Vulgar*, George Orwell (1945) stated, "a thing is funny when it upsets the established order […] Every joke is a tiny revolution". Likewise, Connery and Combe (1995) regard satire as "a site of resistance to cultural and political hegemony" (p.11). While it might appear that Inci receded from direct confrontation when she ignored the gendered discourses of her male colleagues, she opted for a more nuanced counter-patriarchal strategy. Through employing satire to respond to a male colleague who asked her to take notes on behalf of everyone, Inci highlighted the absurdity of the gendered discourses her colleague had produced. This *tiny yet mighty revolution* enabled her to deflect the power dynamics through *wit rather than direct confrontation* [emphasis added].

2.6.2. The co-authorship and enactment of counter-patriarchal discourses in inter- and intra-institutional spaces of appearance

In *Human Condition,* Arendt (1958) conceptualises the *space of appearance* as a political space wherein individuals "make their appearances explicitly […] in the manner of speech and action" to deliberate about matters of public concern (p. 198-9). This study's narratives revealed the emergence of inter- and intra-institutional spaces of appearance. These spaces embodied Marková's intersubjectivity, enabled feminist resistance, and prompted the (re)constitution of specific subject positions. To be more precise, occupants of inter- and intra-institutional spaces of appearance *reduced the distance between the self and others while preserving their subjectivity* [emphasis added]. The self/other interplay, facilitated through diverse modalities ranging from in-person discussions to digital activism to mentorship, nurtured solidarity among micro- and meso-level feminists.

Mehtab, Dilay, Inci, Güneş, Yakut, Cevher, and Firuze's narratives of resistance revealed the co-authorship of counter-patriarchal discourses in inter-institutional spaces of appearance. While acknowledging individual perspectives on lived experiences with patriarchy, these women's narratives underscored the importance of establishing inter-institutional spaces of appearance in

bridging academic-public divides, fostering intersubjective self-other bonds, and performing collective counter-patriarchal acts. Through operating within both “the I-other(s) irreducible dyad” and “I and other(s)” ontologies of Marková’s intersubjectivity, those navigating the inter-institutional spaces of appearance (re)produced counter-patriarchal discourses and practices, destabilized patriarchal power structures, and occupied novel subject positions (Marková, 2003, p. 250). For instance, Mehtab’s public in-person and digital workshops provided a political space of appearance within which participants problematized the prevalent gender regime in Türkiye. Additionally, in this meso/micro space of appearance, Mehtab embodied the subject position of *boundary-spanning intellectual*, while enabling the (re)constitution of *individual situated knower*, *cross-situated knower,* and *co-problematizer* subject positions. When Güneş emphasized the necessity of “breaking academic elitism” through “a feminist bridge”, she advocated for a political space of appearance that fostered the embodiment of the *boundary-spanning intellectual* subject position by women in academia. This, in turn, could bridge the micro- and meso- level feminisms and allow “women from different social classes to share their concerns and propose strategies to resolve them”. Unlike Mehtab, Güneş did not specify a certain modality through which her proposed feminist bridge between academics and the general public could be established. Nonetheless, her narrative revealed that she and her students transformed the lecture halls into an intersubjective resistance space whereby they articulated their narratives, engaged with other narratives, and (re)co-produced counter-patriarchal discourses. *Equal Care Manifesto*, *Mother Child Education,* and *Baby Changing Tables for All* campaigns crated the broader political public spaces of appearance which Güneş regarded as initiatives that successfully challenged the prevalent gender norms and practices at the micro-level.

Dilay, Inci, and Firuze’s narratives revealed the emergence of the *boundary-spanning intellectual* subject position. Dilay urged academics to appear on digital and print outlets to communicate their scholarly works in “a language that everyone can connect to”. Likewise, Inci regarded connecting to the general public as a “vital task”, particularly in the current “populist, neoliberal, anti-feminist, and conservative ecosystem” in Türkiye. At the same time, Firuze encouraged academics to “destroy the wall” separating them from the general public.

Notably, among all participants, only Firuze regarded the pervasive “atmosphere of fear”, following the 2016 political upheaval, as what “forced academics to stay in their academic bubble […] and made them feel like they are walking on eggshells”. Indeed, Firuze’s description of academics becoming “super cautious about what they were saying and even what they were

thinking", coupled with her metaphor of "academic bubble", mirrors Foucault's (1977) understanding of the panopticon as a self-regulatory mechanism of power. Within this academic panopticon, academics occupied the subject position of *docile academics,* becoming both guards and prisoners of their discourses and practices.

Inci and Yakut's narratives emphasized the role of students in connecting the meso- and micro-feminism through their in-class discussions. Like Güneş, Yakut, Inci, and their students established a political space of appearance in lecture halls whereby they collectively challenged both the patriarchal regimes of truth and the subjectivities they induced and relied on. Notably, when Inci and Yakut positioned their students as "agents of change", they implied that the patriarchal regimes of truth were not "unavoidable, but contingent and modifiable" (Foucault, 1984, p. 45).

Cevher was another participant whose narrative highlighted the role of in-class discussions in the emergence of a political space of appearance, which in turn unsettled patriarchal power structures and promoted the (re)constitution of the individual situated knower, the cross-situated knower, and the co-problematizer subject positions. Cevher encouraged her women students to "say no" to patriarchy and leverage social media platforms to produce and sustain counter-patriarchal discourses and practices. Her narrative also demonstrated the crucial role of digital platforms in establishing an intra-institutional space of appearance whereby they could exercise feminist solidarity to problematize the exclusion of women academics from a panel. When Cevher and other women academics collectively tweeted "*Hocam, neden sadece erkekler?*" [Sir, why only men?], their intra-institutional feminist solidarity sparked change: the panel organiser contacted Cevher to apologize to her and invite her and other women academics to the panel. Put another way, this intra-institutional feminist solidarity enabled the immediate inclusion of women academics on the panel and increased their representation in similar subsequent panels. It also fostered the emergence of an inter-institutional space of appearance through which their tweets were retweeted numerous times by the general public. The emergence of intra-institutional counter-patriarchal space of appearance was likewise evident in Güneş's narrative when she and her women colleagues launched an all-women WhatsApp group. This tool fostered the emergence of a political space of appearance within which Güneş, and her colleagues problematized their department's gendered practices of withholding information from women and altering decisions without their knowledge.

Mentorship stood out as another counter-patriarchal modality that fostered an intra-institutional space of appearance. Güneş regarded more experienced women academics mentoring novices as the “essential” and “most effective” strategy to confront patriarchy in Türkiye’s academic settings. Elmas similarly framed mentoring as a “powerful tool”, urging senior women academics to “hold young women academics’ hands and guide them through the gendered obstacles they might face in the workplace”. Firuze’s narrative revealed the ripple effect of feminist academic mentorship. She shared an incident in which a student’s mother sought her counsel through her daughter, a narrative illustrating the flow of counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance between meso and micro levels. Collectively, Güneş, Elmas, and Firuze’s understanding of mentorship transcended simple professional development, functioning instead as a counter-patriarchal tool problematizing androcentrism, thereby enabling the emergence of the *feminist mentorship* subject position. Such a subject position enabled its occupants to (re)produce feminist solidarity and sustain the counter-patriarchal space of appearance within academic settings and beyond.

Arendt (1958) highlights the transitory nature of the space of appearance, asserting that its persistence “is potential and not forever” and endures merely through constant political assembly by individuals (p.200). Building upon Arendt’s understanding of the ephemerality of the space of appearance, I argue that the sustainability of counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance occurs when feminists persistently appear to each other “in the manner of speech and action” (Arendt, 1958, pp.189-9). To elaborate, the unceasing mutual exchange and acknowledgment of individual lived experiences in counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance enables individuals to progressively transform personal experiences into political insights, form mutually agreed upon feminist objectives, and counter-act “in concert”. This ongoing dynamism in counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance could generate a ripple effect that would strengthen the “receptivity and reciprocity” of feminist solidarity, ultimately broadening and sustaining the counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance within and across macro, meso, and micro levels (Allen, 2000, pp. 111-127). As spaces of appearance expand, they nurture the more profound “development of unique self-concept” along with “the I–Other(s) validation as an irreducible dyad” (Marková, 2003, pp. 250-7).

3. The State-Endorsed Patriarchal Biopower Technologies, Mechanisms, and Discourses

In *The History of Sexuality, Volume One,* Foucault (1978) defines biopower as a form of power seeking to secure and foster life, identifying the *disciplining of the individual body* and the

regulatory control of the population as its “two basic forms” [emphasis added] (p. 139). In Foucault’s reading, sexuality is an “political issue” formed by the alliance between these two forms of biopower. Sexuality, as Foucault posits, “fits in both forms at once which gives rise to infinitesimal surveillances, permanent control, and indeterminate medical examination” (p.145). Since its rise to power in 2002, a comparable alliance appears in AKP’s gendered policies and discourses, showcasing the comprehensive patriarchal biopolitical agenda aimed at subjugating women. Through Islamist, patriarchal bio-political, neoliberal, and populist discourses, the party systematically seeks to discipline women’s bodies, monitor their sexuality, subjugate their needs to those of the family, and turn them into child-bearing machines. Instances of such biopolitical discourses manifest in the party’s pronatalist policies, its attempts to restrict abortion and c-section access, and in its glorification of motherhood (Kandiyoti, 2016; Acar & Altunok, 2012; Cindoglu & Unal, 2017; Miller, 2007; Naz, 2016).

Aligning with existing literature on the AKP’s patriarchal biopolitical Islamic discourses and practices and with Foucault’s (1978) conceptualization of sexuality as a state-implemented “biopolitical apparatus […] to regulate and control” bodies, the majority of participants articulated their apprehensions over the current status of women’s rights in Türkiye (pp. 139-145). Güneş shared her concerns over the alarming rate of femicide in Türkiye, describing the country’s current religio-political atmosphere as “dangerous” for women. She pinpointed the religious sector’s leverage on the AKP as the central force behind the party’s gendered and misogynist narratives and regulations. Zümrüt described women’s status in the Islamist political climate in Türkiye with stark simplicity: “it was bad before but now it’s getting worse”. Her observation about the increasing number of women forced by their families to wear the hijab in conservative regions in Türkiye demonstrated two significant insights. First, it illustrated the *cascading impacts* [emphasis added] of the AKP’s religio-patriarchal biopolitics, reinforcing and intensifying micro-level patriarchy. Second, it exposed a contradiction in the AKP’s rhetoric. While the party claims they represent the Prophet Mohammad’s Islam (Lardner, 2017)[88], they also implement political Islam that, according to Badran (2013a), endorses patriarchal norms and practices and governance over women’s bodies. Inci’s narrative exposed the patriarchal biopolitical interventions of the AKP. Mehtab voiced her frustration over the AKP’s gendered discourses, which portrayed women as mothers of the

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[88] Adapted from: https://intpolicydigest.org/erdogan-self-proclaimed-caliphate/

nation and demanded from them "*çok çocuk sahibi olmak*" [to have lots of children]. The production and dissemination of such discourses is another instance of the "*regulatory control"* over women's sexuality in the AKP era, generating gendered regimes of truth which treat women's bodies as "machines" required to "produce life through and through" [original emphasis] (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). In such gendered regimes of truth, "the womb has become an inviolate place possessed not by an individual woman, but a predominant political space regulated by the state" (Miller, 2007, p.361).

Dilay's account of women's status in the AKP era revealed the convergence of populism and patriarchal biopolitics in the country's political landscape. Her narrative of Erdoğan and other AKP officials' pronatalist discourses illustrated how these socioeconomic systems intersected to establish patriarchal regimes of truth wherein women's bodies became sites of state scrutiny, conservative familism became institutionalized, and social polarization emerged among women according to their adherence to state-endorsed reproductive discourses. To elaborate, by encouraging women to have three children and labelling those with no children as incomplete, the AKP promotes a patriarchal value system which sanctions the subjugation of self to the family and regards women's primary subject position as *the national reproductive custodians.* Additionally, these patriarchal discourses are populist as they divide women into two "homogenous and antagonistic groups": the "virtuous", "pure" women who fulfill their reproductive duties, and "the others", non-mothers who have failed to meet their "moral" duty to the nation and are thus, *incomplete* [emphasis added] according to the AKP's patriarchal populist framework (Mudde, 2017, pp. 27-29).

In Margaret Atwood's (1985) *The Handmaid's Tale*[89], the character Offred describes herself and other women in the pre-Gilead era as those who "lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print" (p. 57). This metaphor demonstrates how the already marginalized status of women deteriorated dramatically under the totalitarian theocracy of Gilead, where women were identified by their commander's names and rendered invisible under their headpieces. Firuze and Inci's narratives of the AKP's patriarchal power technologies, power mechanisms, and discourses and

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[89] In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the Republic of Gilead is a totalitarian theocracy where fertile women, called handmaids, are forced to wear red robes, which symbolize their fertility, and white wing-like headpieces, that restrict their vision and hide their faces. These women are stripped of their original identities and re-identified according to the names of the commanders they are serving (e.g. Ofglen, signifying "of Glen"; and Offred, signifying "of Fred").

practices resonate with Offred's description of women's marginalization under the Gilead regime. For instance, Inci considered the deliberate removal of the word "women" from the title of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs a gendered neoliberal practice aiming to confine women to the private sphere where they are expected to carry out unpaid domestic labour. This change goes beyond linguistic erasure and signifies the AKP's familial biopolitics, which, much like Gilead's regime erasing women's autonomous identity by renaming them after their commanders, aims to *reorganise* women's interests by subsuming them under the family institution, creating gender-based "social hierarchization and […] relations of domination" (Foucault, 1978, p. 141). Put another way, such discourse presents a patriarchal technology of power that creates a self-perpetuating cycle of reducing women's visibility through pushing them under the *headpiece*[90] [emphasis added] of the family, while simultaneously "produc[ing] and sustain[ing]" patriarchal regimes of truth (Foucault, 1978, p.132). Similarly, Firuze's understanding of the AKP's "negligence" towards women's "deteriorating" status in the country and Erdoğan's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention (re)produced patriarchal regimes of truth that position gender-based violence as a matter unworthy of state concern.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Six presented the analysis of participants' lived experiences with patriarchy across macro, meso, and micro levels in Türkiye. The three overarching themes that structured the findings of this study were: *1) family patriarchy and women's navigation between compliant and resistant subject positions*, 2) *Turkish academia as a nexus of gender power dynamics and the formation of diverse subject positions* and *3) state-endorsed patriarchal biopower technologies and discourses.* These themes demonstrated how women's interactions with various patriarchal power techniques (re)produced and challenged existing patriarchal discourses, hierarchical power

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[90] The logo of the Ministry of Family representing women under the shield of family.

relations, and multiple subjectivities within academic settings and in broader societal contexts in Türkiye.

The theme of *Turkish academia as a nexus of gender power dynamics and the formation of diverse subject positions* revealed Turkish academia as a power/knowledge/subjectivities production site. Within this site, multiple patriarchal tools and strategies including expectations of motherliness placed upon women in academia, homosocial networks, informalism, and gender microaggressions reinforced male dominance. At the same time, these tools and strategies initiated inter- and intra-institutional spaces of appearance wherein women exercised parrhesiastic acts and challenged the gendered discourses, knowledge, and the regimes of truth they established and (re)produced in Turkish academia and beyond. The emergence of inter- and intra-institutional spaces of appearance fostered the convergence of individual and collective acts of feminism, enabling their occupants to engage in intersubjective acts of resistance through in-class discussions and solidarity networks such as WhatsApp and Telegram groups. These digital spaces of appearance fostered the transformation of individual struggles into collective political awareness, allowing participants to resist and subvert patriarchal discourses and practices they experienced in their academic settings.

The nexus of power/knowledge/subjectivities was also evident in the emergence of an array of subject positions that participants occupied while interacting with other individuals and patriarchal power modes. These subject positions were not sequential but existed concurrently and included: individual situated knower, cross-situated knower, counter-patriarchal co-author, problematizer, catalyst, and change agent. These subject positions allowed participants to fluidly exercise their agency while navigating patriarchal discourses and practices (re)produced at macro, meso, and micro levels in the country.

The sub-theme of *the intersectionality of gender and age, gender and bodily status, and gender, academic status and institutional context* highlighted differential experiences of women academics in Turkish academia. The intersection of gender and age rendered young women academics vulnerable to reverse ageism. Bodily status, particularly pregnancy and motherhood, triggered exclusionary discourses and practices, acting as obstacles to women's academic career advancement. Academic status and institutional context highlighted participants' experiences of ontological insecurity at private universities, where precarious contracts triggered more exclusion and vulnerability. The sub-theme of *patriarchy and imposter phenomenon reinforce each* other

exposed how structural gender inequalities became internalised as personal qualities and as not being good enough, with participants attributing success to “luck” rather than competence and hard work.

The findings also highlighted transformative perceptions of career success, with some participants’ understanding of career success revealing a misalignment between their personal values and Türkiye’s current macro-level structures. While neoliberal metrics demanded quantifiable outputs and Islamic conservative discourses promoted traditional roles, these participants emphasized meaningful connections across and beyond the meso level along with the importance of overcoming internalised barriers as complementary indicators of career success.

The individual and collective resistant strategies and the knowledge and subjectivities they produce lay the groundwork for the next chapter, which explores patriarchy’s inherent vulnerability. Chapter Seven open in *my* borderlands, where my positionality transformed and *the story I had refused to tell became the story I couldn't not tell.* It then exposes the dynamic nature of patriarchy and presents strategies for its ultimate defeat.

Chapter Seven: From Iran to Tomorrow:

Personal Transformation and Spatiotemporal Resistarity

It was September 16, 2022, an ordinary workday like any other. I was designing an online course when my friend called with *the* news: Jina Mahsa Amini died in the custody of the morality police in Iran. She was in her early 20s. Her crime? Not wearing the 'proper' *mandatory hijab*[91]. Mahsa Amini's death sparked the most significant women-led uprising in Iran since the 1979 Revolution. It inspired the "*Woman, Life, Freedom*" movement, an anthem of resistance in Iran and beyond its borders.

What began in Iran quickly transcended its borders, with solidarity protests erupting globally, including in numerous Canadian cities. Cultural and political figures such as Nobel laureates Malala Yousafzai and Nadia Murad, and former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell[92] endorsed the bravery of Iranian women and expressed their solidarity. Coldplay performed the Iranian protest song 'Baraye' with exiled Iranian actress and women's rights activist Golshifteh Farahani[93]. These

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[91] I must stress that the issue at stake is not 'hijab' itself, which remains a personal choice exercised by even financially and emotionally resourceful Muslim women across the Global South and North for a variety of reasons (See Hasan, 2018). Rather, it is the violence of compulsion and control over women's bodies in countries where women are obliged to cover their hair and bodies in public. This biopolitical oppression which is inflicted by the state permeates meso and micro spheres of women's lives, intensifying the patriarchal control. In such a context, hijab shifts from being an act of faith and identity to an instrument of oppression.

Additionally, not only does such a measure contradict personal autonomy and freedom of expression, but it also distorts Islamic texts. Despite the claims of following Quranic mandates, these texts reveal otherwise. For instance, the Quran (24:31) states: "And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their khimar over their bosoms …" (The Qur'an 24:31). Drawing upon this verse and other Islamic texts, Ahmed (1992) argues that khimar (veil) denotes the head-covering that was customarily connected with social status and worn as ornaments among Greek, Roman, Jew, Assyrian, and Arab women even before the advent of Isam. Additionally, these scholars maintain that while verse 24:31 advises women to cover themselves modestly, it specifies only their blossoms and prescribes no penalties for a woman who is not veiled. This absence of Quranic basis for dress code enforcement exposes the contradiction between Islamic mandates and the patriarchal biopower techniques towards women's bodies.

[92] Adapted from: https://www.womanlifefreedom.today/

[93] Adapted from: We send our support': Coldplay perform Iranian protest song Baraye in Buenos Aires

resistance and solidarity strategies strengthened Iranian women's resistance, manifesting in their defiance of mandatory hijab[94].

As news of Mahsa Amini's death spread across the Internet and global media, I found myself in a state of *nepantla*[95]: I felt belonging nowhere and everywhere at once. I was caught in the space of transformation and reside in the borderlands between the two worlds. In one world, I had the right to voice my dissent and in the other world, I faced absolute void. Navigating the space of the nepantla was not easy. It was painful and messy. It was in this space that transformation unfolded. I was changing, and I witnessed the unravelling of *my panopticon*. Life's irony never ceases to amaze me. For years, I had deliberately steered clear of writing about Iran's patriarchal system in my academic work. I had convinced myself that distance was necessary and that changing the context of my research was a wise and safe decision. Yet here I am, writing the final chapters of my dissertation, revealing what has become the most powerful narrative of my lived experiences with patriarchy. Navigating the space of nepantla transformed my silence into a story of resistance. *The story I had refused to tell became the story I couldn't not tell, the story of feminist resistance and collective resistarity.*

Patriarchy: Endured but Vulnerable

Despite feminist achievements in challenging and exposing patriarchal structures, the bodies and minds of women and other gender-marginalized groups are still subjected to sustained repression operationalized through various biopower and disciplinary power techniques. A few examples among numerous global instances are: abortion bans in some U.S. states[96], Taliban's gender apartheid in Afghanistan (Human Rights Watch, 2024), alarming rates of femicides in Türkiye[97], male guardianship in Saudi Arabia (Alotaibi, Dasuki & Zamani, 2025), decriminalization

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[94] Adapted from: https://www.npr.org/Women across Iran are refusing to wear headscarves

[95] In order "to elaborate on the psychic and emotional borderlands" Gloria Anzaldúa uses the term nepantla. Nepantla indicates the process of transformation in the liminal space of the borderlands. Anzaldúa's borderland refers to a space where you are not this or that but where you are changing (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 176).

[96] Adapted from: https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/dashboard/exceptions-in-state-abortion-bans-and-early-gestational-limits/

[97] Adapted from: https://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/

of ‘light’ domestic violence in Russia (Johnson, 2024), dowry deaths and honor killings in India (Kaur & Byard, 2024), and son preference in China (García, 2024). These manifestations of gender-based repression depict the ability of patriarchal systems to endure throughout history and in every geography, albeit varying in form and severity. In *The Big Push: Exposing and Challenging the Persistence of Patriarchy,* Enloe (2017) attributes the endurance of patriarchy to its adaptive nature, describing patriarchal systems as *dynamic webs* [emphasis added] capable of updating, evolving, and modernizing themselves. Enloe maintains this dynamism is a key characteristic of any given patriarchy, enabling its persistence across time and space. Further, Enloe emphasises the vulnerability of patriarchy, arguing that the endurance of patriarchal systems does not mean they are invincible, as they have frequently been “shredded by feminists and their allies” (p. 160). Enloe’s insights into patriarchy’s vulnerability suggest that shredding patriarchal webs does not suffice. Building on her insight, I argue that we ought to sever the head of the *patriarchtopus.* However, given the historical endurance of patriarchal systems and their capacity to traverse geographies, cutting off the head of patriarchtopus requires *spatiotemporal feminist bridges.* Such bridges transcend local contexts, operate across time and space axes, and form connections between and among ‘situated’ resistance agents and their allies across macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. The temporal axis of spatiotemporal feminism weaves together past achievements and setbacks of feminist movements, current counter-patriarchal discourses and practices, and emerging resistance trajectories. Along the spatial axis, spatiotemporal feminism exposes how patriarchal systems manifest across various institutions, communities, and geographical boundaries.

By navigating spatiotemporal feminist bridges, we, the people[98],can activate what I term *spatiotemporal resistarity*, a concept that captures the deep connections between solidarity and resistance across time and space. Spatiotemporal resistarity constitutes and is constituted by various subject positions, including: the *bridge-builder* subject position that emerges through and enables connections across different social statuses, geographical locations, cultures, and generations; the *inside-outsider* subject position, mainly navigated by those living in borderlands and experiencing nepantla; the *guardian* subject position, preserving the legacy of resistarity; the *visionary* subject position, arising from and generating possibilities for envisioning, articulating, and

[98] I have borrowed “we, the people” from Judith Butler’s (2015) analysis of collective action and resistance in public spaces.

mobilizing towards a future free from fear and oppression; and the *deconstructor* subject position, constituted by and constitutive of recognizing and challenging our internalised mechanisms of surveillance, our panopticons. It is crucial to note that these subject positions are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they flow into and emerge from one another, allowing us to simultaneously inhabit multiple subject positions or shift across them. It is crucial to recognise that as we navigate spatiotemporal resistarity*,* novel subject positions will inevitably emerge and enter the dynamic interplay between spatiotemporal resistarity and the subject positions it shapes and is shaped by.

The confluence of these subject positions was demonstrated in one of the most striking chants of the Women, Life, Freedom movement: *Don't be afraid, we are all together; be afraid we are all together!* The first part of the chant, which declares the power of assembly, indicates the bridge-builder subject position and invites people to connect. Nonetheless, becoming a bridge-builder requires the subject to face their fear of direct encounters with brute force and the ingrained fear of being under the gaze of its watch tower. This is the juncture where the deconstructor subject position emerges. This is the subject position whereby a paralyzing sense of fear is transformed into a collective parrhesia. Additionally, the subject position of the deconstructor enables its occupants to deconstruct the various modes of patriarchal power relations and the produced regimes of truth which reinforce one another and (re)constitute "docile bodies". The second part of the chant invites people to break free from their internalised panopticons, calling them to embrace the visionary subject position whereby unity engenders collective parrhesia and dismantles oppression.

To sever the head of the patriarchtopus and its arms of biopolitical, disciplinary and sovereign control, we, the people, need to embody the same chant in our virtual or physical rallies: *Don't be afraid, we are all together; be afraid we are all together!* In today's interconnected digital and physical world, this chant, with its intertwined subject positions, bridges borders, genders, languages, and screens. It offers a universal roadmap of resistarity that combines individual parrhesia with collective resistance, enabling the simultaneous exercising of both *I versus other* and *I/other* intersubjectivity, and ultimately render patriarchy unsustainable.

Chapter Eight: Study Overview, Implications, and Stories Ahead

This narrative inquiry explored the lived experiences of nine women academics with patriarchy across macro, meso, and micro levels in Türkiye. Chapter One established the background, contextualized the research problem, and articulated the guiding research questions. Chapter Two provided an extensive literature review, examining the nature of patriarchy, its manifestations, and its intersections with ethnicity, Islam, and the political-economic frameworks within the context of contemporary Türkiye. Additionally, Chapter Two traced the historical educational progress of Turkish women since the foundation of the Republic of Türkiye and the evolution of the women's movement in the country since the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Chapter Three outlined the research paradigm and theoretical framework underpinning this study. The framework integrated a Foucauldian understanding of the nexus among power relations, knowledge, and subjectivity; Amy Allen's theorization of power-with; Crenshaw's intersectionality; and Marková's understanding of intersubjectivity within Arendt's spaces of appearance. Additionally, the theoretical framework incorporated Karam and Afiouni's career success framework to examine how patriarchal power technologies, and the discourses and knowledge they produced, influenced Turkish women academics' perceptions of academic career success.

Chapters Two and Three necessitated extensive development because exploring the concept of patriarchy and constructing an analytical framework to study it resembled an archaeological excavation wherein each conceptual layer unearthed demanded deeper exploration. I began with the concept of patriarchy, and then, as I delved deeper into the relevant literature, I recognised the necessity to explore its intersections with other social identities and the broader political-economic context of Türkiye. In the same way, the theoretical framework, which commenced with the concept of power, expanded to include intersectionality, intersubjectivity, and spaces of appearance, all of which proved essential tools for better understanding the complexity and nuanced lived experiences of this study's participants with patriarchy. Chapter Four detailed the methodology employed to collect and analyse data, and the ethical considerations established to maintain the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Chapter Five retold participants' narratives, inviting readers to relive their lived experiences with patriarchy from their childhood through academia. The rich, detailed retelling of each participant's story preserved its authenticity and complexity. Chapter Six presented the findings of the study, mapping recurring themes across narratives. The emergent themes illustrated participants' interactions with patriarchal power technologies and the subject

positions that emerged in the process. Additionally, Chapter Six synthesized the findings in the context of current literature and the proposed theoretical framework.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation comprises six distinct yet interconnected sections that collectively synthesize the research findings and their broader implications. Section One builds upon the overarching themes to address the three central research questions. Section Two articulates the study's contributions to empirical knowledge and theoretical development, highlighting novel theoretical insights derived from participants' narratives and my personal evolution. Section Three examines the limitations of this study. Section Four discusses implications for academic institutions, policymakers, and grassroots organisations in Türkiye and other countries located in the patriarchy belt. Section Five offers recommendations for future research that could further advance our understanding of women academics' lived experiences with patriarchy in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts.

1. Addressing the Research Questions

This study was guided by three overarching research questions and three sub-questions designed to explore patriarchal power technologies and mechanisms and their manifestations in participants' personal and professional lives. Additionally, these questions were formulated to capture how participants experienced, navigated, and contested patriarchy within the socio-political landscape of contemporary Türkiye, along with the subjectivities that emerged through these dynamics. Drawing upon the comprehensive thematic analysis of participants' narratives detailed in Chapter Six, this section addresses the study's research questions.

1.1. Research Question 1: How does patriarchy manifest at the micro, meso, and macro domains of Turkish women academics' lives?

Research Question One sought to understand how patriarchal power technologies, their constituent mechanisms, and the discourses and knowledge they produced manifested across various spheres of Turkish women academics' lives. The three main themes of—family patriarchy and women's navigation between compliant and resistant subject positions, Turkish academia as a nexus of gender power dynamics and formation of diverse subject positions, and state-endorsed patriarchal biopower technologies, mechanisms, and discourses—exposed the pervasiveness of patriarchal power technologies across participants' familial, higher-educational, and broader

societal spheres. These themes demonstrated the recursive nature of the patriarchal system in Türkiye, wherein patriarchal discourses, practices, and regimes of truth simultaneously constituted and were constituted by patriarchal power technologies and their established power mechanisms.

At the micro level, the family emerged as a primary site of patriarchal disciplinary power technologies and mechanisms, where “hierarchical observation and normalising judgment instruments” were employed to surveil, regulate, and constrain women’s agency (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). Restrictions on girls’ social interactions, policing of their behaviours under the guise of family dignity, and discriminatory treatment between sons and daughters functioned as patriarchal mechanisms that (re)produced gender-stereotypical discourses and knowledge, thereby legitimising familial patriarchy. Participants found these family-based patriarchal mechanisms difficult to resist as such practices were mostly interpreted and justified as expressions of loyalty, protection, and love. The subjectification process within the familial milieu was mostly indicative of the subjugation dimension of subjectification, with most participants occupying compliant and self-disciplining subject positions (Foucault, 1982). However, some participants engaged in acts of parrhesia (Foucault, 2005, 2010, 2011), demonstrating courage in challenging parental authority, disciplinary power mechanisms, and the patriarchal discourses (re)produced throughout the process. Among married participants, patriarchy is manifested through the unequal distribution of household responsibilities and husbands’ lack of support. These patriarchal power mechanisms were further exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when women bore the brunt of caregiving and domestic responsibilities while men maintained access to “a room of their own”, in which they could pursue their academic work uninterrupted (Woolf, 1929, 2005).

Although women comprise 45% of Turkish academia, which is the highest amongst OECD countries (World Bank, 2024), participants’ narratives exposed their academic settings as sites of power relations where patriarchy was negotiated, reproduced, challenged, and subverted. Motherly expectations, homosocial behaviours and informalism, gender microaggression, and imposter phenomenon were the patriarchal power mechanisms through which patriarchal discourses and knowledge were (re)produced and various subject positions were constituted.

The mechanism of motherly expectations of women academics operated through Foucault’s (1977) normalising technique to create and regularise the emotional labour of women academics at the meso level, which consumed time and energy they could have otherwise spent on their research and academic progress. This patriarchal power mechanism of motherly expectations

appeared paradoxical since it simultaneously constrained women academics' career advancement while, as a result of state feminism mandates introduced in the republican era, serving as a catalyst facilitating their initial entry into academia.

Connell (2020) posits hegemonic masculinity as a "strategy […] that legitimises patriarchy" (p. 77). In this study, hegemonic masculinity operated through the two interconnected mechanisms of homosocial networking and gender microaggression to ensure male homogeneity and androcentrism in participants' academic settings. Homosocial networking is a hegemonic masculinity mechanism enabling men "to effectively *clone* themselves in their own image and to guard access to power and privilege for those of their own kind" (Savage & Witz, 1992, p. 16). In this study, men academics' homosocial networking was manifested through male-only communication channels, preferential citation of male scholarship, excluding women from leadership positions, assignment of mundane academic tasks to women, and limiting women's access to prestigious research opportunities. Gender microaggression emerged as a hegemonic masculinity mechanism to reconfirm patriarchy. Microinsults and microinvalidations were two forms of gender microaggressions identified in this study, manifested through assigning mundane tasks to women, gendered assumptions of intellectual and research abilities, underestimating women's academic achievements, male-preferential job postings and selection processes, pregnancy and marital status discrimination, and addressing women professors informally.

Imposter phenomenon (IP) emerged as another patriarchal power mechanism, manifesting as an internalised sense of inadequacy among women. Participants' tendency to attribute success to "luck" in having supportive family members, empowering supervisors, academic mentors, and favorable circumstances revealed how patriarchal power technologies, mechanisms, and their constituted discourses and knowledge produced feelings of inadequacy despite women's objective career achievements. From a Foucauldian perspective, "power produces reality; it produces domains and objects and rituals of truth" (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). The IP mechanism identified in this study exemplified the productive nature of power as it allowed the emergence of self-skeptical subject positions while paradoxically enabling high-achiever subject positions, where the compulsion to prove competence facilitated exceptional performance.

At the macro level, patriarchy operated through the AKP-endorsed biopower technologies and their "biological apparatus[es]" (Foucault, 1978, p. 138). The systematic portrayal of women as mothers of the nation, wherein their reproductive capacity was glorified and perceived as a patriotic

duty, exemplified the biological apparatuses that the AKP employed to regulate women's sexuality and reduce their bodies to reproductive "machines" (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). The AKP's biopower mechanisms converged with its Islamist, neoliberal, and populist framework to "produce and sustain" gendered regimes of truth across Türkiye (Foucault, 1978, p. 132). Additional patriarchal biopower mechanisms included intensified societal pressure on women to wear hijab in conservative areas, the state's reluctance to protect women from gender-based violence and femicide, and the symbolic removal of "women" from the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs. The convergence of Islamist, populist, and neoliberal patriarchal discourses created competing subject positions: while the AKP's Islamist populism dichotomized women into morally hierarchical categories of "the virtuous" and "the pure", neoliberal pressures demanded women's participation in the job market. The findings of this study revealed that navigating these seemingly contradictory macro-level discourses enabled the emergence of resistant subject positions that challenged, rather than merely accommodated, patriarchal regimes of truth.

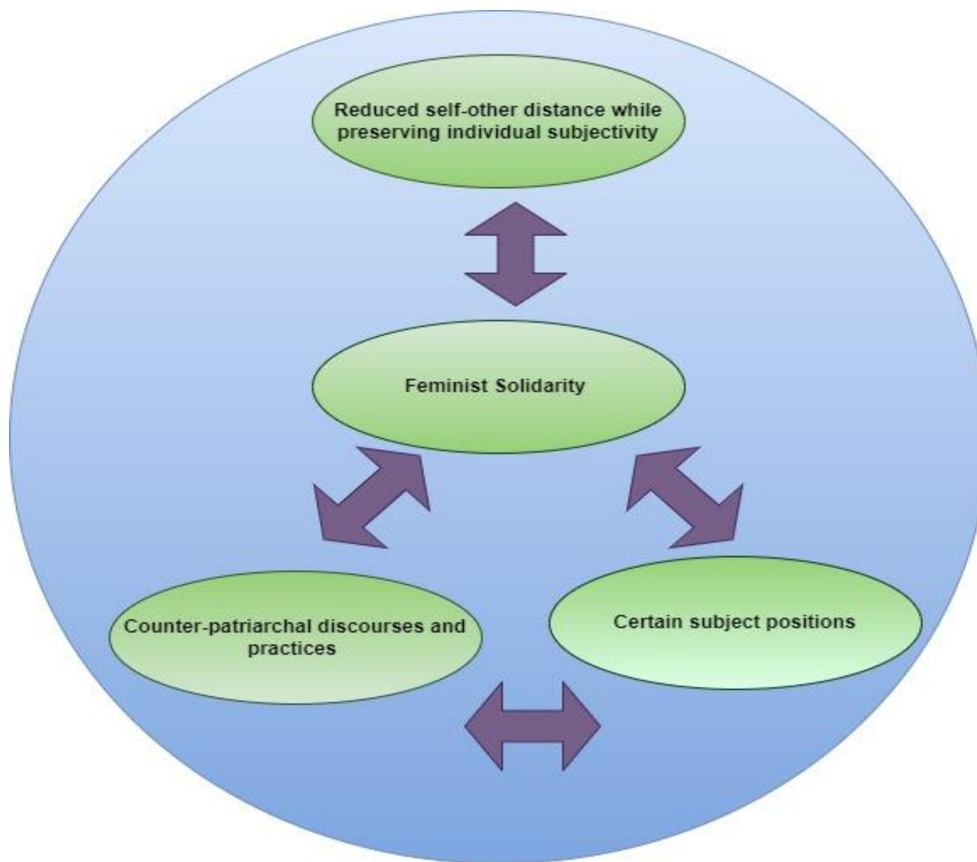
1.2. Research Question 2: How do Turkish women academics navigate patriarchal power technologies?

Research Question Two examined the counter-patriarchal strategies Turkish women academics developed and deployed to contest patriarchal power technologies, while simultaneously exploring how they might inadvertently (re)produce patriarchal discourses and knowledge, thereby reinforcing the very patriarchal regimes of truth they sought to dismantle. To capture the dialectical nature of resistance to and (re)production of patriarchy within participants' academic and/or personal spheres, this research question was broken into three interconnected sub-questions, which examined participants' collective and/or individual counter-patriarchal strategies, analyzed how these strategies challenged and disrupted gendered discourses, practices, and knowledge, and explored the mechanisms through which participants might contribute to the sustenance of patriarchy within and beyond their academic settings.

Informed by Foucault's (1978) power/knowledge/subjectification triad; Arendt's (1958) spaces of appearance; Allen's (1999) understanding of solidarity as a form of power-with; and Marková's (2003) conceptualisation of intersubjectivity as operating within both "I-other(s)", and "I and other(s)" ontologies, my analysis revealed the emergence of counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance within which intersubjective processes fostered a feminist resistance ecosystem and various novel subject positions. These subject positions (re)produced counter-patriarchal

discourses and practices, which in turn enabled further counter-patriarchal subjectivities and consolidated feminist solidarity.

As alluded to in Chapter Six, a peripheral-central subject position emerged from participants' simultaneous occupation of the periphery and the center. This subject position proved productive, facilitating the development of de-subjugated subjectivities—namely, boundary-spanning intellectual, feminist mentor, and co-problematizer. Occupying these subject positions allowed participants to contest and disrupt normalised patriarchal discourses and practices and the gendered regimes of truth they produced and legitimised. These counter-patriarchal subject positions do not act in isolation; rather, they act as resistance nodes.



The Feminist Resistance Ecosystem in Inter- and Intra-Institutional Spaces of Appearance

These nodes generated ripple effects across inter- and intra-counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance, strengthening feminist solidarity across micro, meso, and macro levels.

Individual counter-patriarchal mechanisms manifested through Foucault's (1997, 2005, 2010, 2011) parrhesia, fearless speech acts deployed despite uncertain and potentially dangerous ramifications. Participants' individual parrhesiastic mechanisms encompassed scholarly publications, direct confrontations with institutional authorities, mobilisation of colleagues to counter gendered norms and practices, and satirical resistance as a discursive subversive mechanism. Collective acts of resistance emerged within Arendt's (1958) spaces of appearance, the political spaces where participants "made their [counter-patriarchal] appearances explicitly in the manner of speech and action" (pp. 198-9).

Foucault (1977, 1982) emphasises the co-constitution of power relations, knowledge production, and subjectification processes, inviting us to understand power as both productive and constraining. In accordance with this dual nature of subjectification, my analysis revealed that women's compliance with patriarchal structures operated not merely through external coercive mechanisms but through the constitution of self-regulating subjects who monitored and constrained their own actions This phenomenon materialized when some academics occupied the subject position of 'docile academic', becoming both guards and prisoners of their discourses and practices, thereby reproducing the patriarchal structures they simultaneously sought to challenge. Turkish academics' retreat into academic bubbles in the aftermath of the 2016 academic purge exemplified the constitution of self-regulating subjects who became surveillance agents, monitoring their research trajectories, rhetorical choices, and public engagement within the AKP's surveillance apparatus of the panopticon.

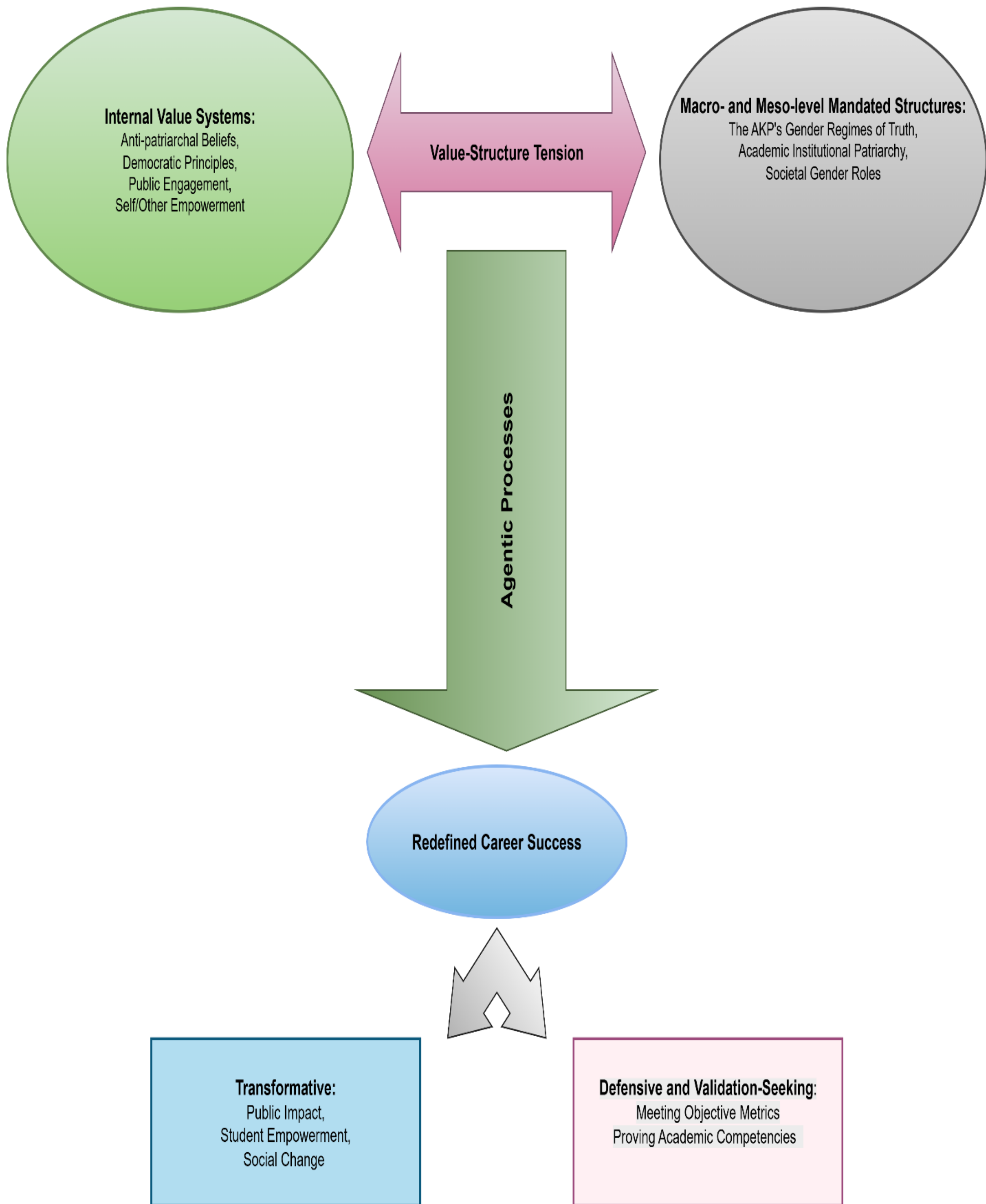
Additionally, women's participation in reproducing patriarchy exemplified what Johnson (2014) describes as "dramatically different from that of men, but it is participation, nonetheless"; as such women are not "powerless and irrelevant" in this regard (pp. 28 -30). Consistent with Foucault's dual process of subjectification, Johnson's perspective recognises that women can contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchy. My analysis demonstrated that, through their strategic navigation of and bargaining with institutional, cultural, and political patriarchy in Türkiye, women, academic and otherwise, could contribute to the sustenance of patriarchy.

1.3. Research Question 3: How do Turkish women academics conceptualise and navigate career success within patriarchal Türkiye?

Research Question Three examined how Turkish women academics conceptualised and navigated academic career success within Türkiye's patriarchal sociopolitical landscape. Employing Karam and Afiouni's (2013) career success framework, my analysis revealed both alignment with and extension to their framework.

Karam and Afiouni conceptualise career success as a "complex, dynamic, and localised notion", maintaining that when "individuals experience tensions due to misaligned mandated structures", they engage in agentic processes to dissipate such tension (pp. 550-51). Consistent with their framework, my analysis identified comparable tensions arising from misalignments between societal gendered expectations and the institutionally-established, "other-referent" mandates (Heslin, 2003, p. 262). However, my analysis revealed an additional tension type, which I termed values-structure tension. This tension was engendered through conflicts between participants' self-referent, counter-patriarchal values and macro- and meso- level mandates perpetuated by the AKP's neoliberal, populist, anti-intellectual, and patriarchal regimes of truth.

The values-structure tension operated as a catalyst enabling participants to transcend conventional objective career success criteria and occupy counter-patriarchal resistant subject positions. To be more precise, while Karam and Afiouni's structure-structure tensions primarily generate accommodative responses, the values-structure tensions enabled alternative success criteria aligned with participants' feminist and anti-patriarchal commitments. These agentic processes generated two distinct career success trajectories: 1) a transformative pathway that was revolutionary in nature and enabled personal, institutional, and social transformation, and 2) a defensive and validation-seeking pathway that, while appearing accommodative, was counter-patriarchal and employed to challenge androcentrism and institutional patriarchy.


Internal Value Systems:
Anti-patriarchal Beliefs,
Democratic Principles,
Public Engagement,
Self/Other Empowerment
Value-Structure Tension
Macro- and Meso-level Mandated Structures:
The AKP's Gender Regimes of Truth,
Academic Institutional Patriarchy,
Societal Gender Roles
Agentic Processes
Redefined Career Success
Transformative:
Public Impact,
Student Empowerment,
Social Change
Defensive and Validation-Seeking:
Meeting Objective Metrics
Proving Academic Competencies

2. Contributions to Knowledge

This section articulates this study's theoretical and conceptual contributions, informed by participants' narratives, genealogical analysis of emergent subjectivities, and my own epistemological transformation from reluctance and fear to resistance.

As explicated in Chapter Three, despite Foucault's theoretical interventions on power/knowledge and subjectification, feminist scholarship has critiqued the androcentric limitations and insufficient theorization of gender, power, and resistance within his analytical framework. While feminist poststructuralism has substantially addressed many of these gender-blind limitations, Foucault's account of resistance, particularly his notion of parrhesiastic acts, remained largely unexamined from a collective stance. Although Allen's (1999) understanding of solidarity as a form of power-with has partially addressed this theoretical oversight, her proposed framework lacks specificity regarding *how* this solidarity operates and in *what spaces* [emphasis added]. This study addressed these gaps by integrating Marková's (2003) theory of intersubjectivity and Arendt's (1958) spaces of appearance into Amy Allen's (1999) understanding of solidarity as a form of power-with, enabling me to propose a collective resistance framework that I conceptualised as the 'feminist resistance ecosystem'. My proposed feminist resistance ecosystem allows researchers to examine individual and collective resistance to macro-, meso- and micro-level patriarchy in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts globally.

Additionally, by introducing the values-structure tension model, this research extended Karam and Afiouni's (2014) career success framework. While their original framework identifies structure-structure tensions, this study revealed that misalignments between women's anti-patriarchal values and patriarchal power structures generated values-structure tensions, which in turn enabled distinct agentic responses. This extension to Karam and Afiouni's original framework enables career success frameworks to incorporate both accommodating and transformative dimensions of agentic processes in defining academic career success within any given oppressive context.

Also, this study revealed a mutually constitutive relationship between impostor phenomenon (IP) and patriarchy within Turkish academia. While IP and patriarchy have independently received ample attention in the scholarly literature, their dynamics among women academics in patriarchal settings, including Türkiye, have remained unexplored. Drawing upon Clance and Imes's (1978) understanding of IP as a psychological phenomenon, and Foucault's (1978) triadic framework of

power/knowledge/subjectification, the findings of this study demonstrated that IP is not merely an individual psychological experience but a discursively-constituted phenomenon emerging from participants' interactions with patriarchal regimes of truth and hegemonic masculinity discourses circulating across macro, meso, and micro levels. This reciprocal constitution produced self-assured subject positions for men and self-skeptical subject positions for women, compelling women to work harder, and paradoxically enabling their academic advancement and occupation of the high-achiever subject position within Turkish academia.

A further contribution of this study lies in the development of new concepts. Enloe (2017) asserts that "one of the crucial elements of past and current feminist activism in tilting and shredding patriarchy has been new feminist concepts" (p.166). Responding to Enloe's call, this study introduced some interconnected feminist concepts that demonstrate the dynamism between patriarchal and counter-patriarchal power relations: First, *patriarchtopus* represents a novel conceptualisation of patriarchy as an adaptive, multi-tentacled system capable of sustaining itself and transcending geographical and temporal boundaries. Second, the concepts of 'spatiotemporal resistarity' and 'spatiotemporal feminist bridges' explicate the interplay between resistance and solidarity across time and space. These concepts recognise that feminist networks cannot and should not be understood as isolated, localised efforts, but rather as interconnected networks that span institutions, regions, and generations to function as strategic responses to the adaptive nature of the patriarchtopus. Third, among the various subject positions that emerged from participants' narratives, five proved instrumental in capturing how individuals engaged in spatiotemporal resistarity: 'the bridge-builder', who facilitated connections across boundaries and differences; 'the inside-outsider', who navigated liminal spaces between conformity and resistance; 'the guardian', who preserved feminist wisdom and knowledge and spaces of appearance, 'the visionary', who envisioned and articulated transformative possibilities; and 'the deconstructor', who exposed patriarchal power mechanisms and their established regimes of truth. These subject positions collectively contributed to the emergence and maintenance of counter-patriarchal power mechanisms and the discourses and knowledge they constituted and were constituted by.

3. Limitations

While narrative inquiry effectively captures the complexities and in-depth details of individuals' lived experiences within particular social, economic, and political contexts, there are practical and methodological limitations that can arise throughout research processes employing this

methodological framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Josselson, 2009; Riessman, 2008). The limitations of this study included recruitment and temporal challenges and considerations.

Research protocols in Türkiye require international researchers to obtain approval from the Council of Higher Education. However, given the current anti-intellectual climate in Türkiye, I chose not to recruit participants through this channel. Instead, I recruited participants using their publicly available email addresses. This recruitment approach was time-intensive as I had to find and contact each potential participant. Despite taking this precautionary approach to safeguard participants, Türkiye's current political climate still deterred potential participants, with several invitees explicitly declining participation because of political concerns. Beyond recruitment challenges, technological constraints also affected data collection. Internet connectivity issues necessitated conducting several interviews by phone rather than video calls. Without visual cues, this shift in medium may have potentially limited my ability to fully capture participants' narratives.

Another limitation of this study was an urban bias[99], created by having all nine participants located in large cities across the country. The urban bias limited this study's ability to capture how regional cultural norms and practices influence women academics' lived experiences with patriarchy. Extending recruitment to women academics working in smaller cities, particularly those in conservative regions, would have provided valuable insights into how socio-geographical factors inform women academics' navigation of gendered power structures in their academic settings and the broader regional communities in which they live.

The temporal distance between experience and recounting constituted another limitation of this study. Josselson (2009) emphasises that narrative inquiry is particularly susceptible to temporal limitations, noting that narratives are inherently temporal as participants rely on their memories to reconstruct their past lived experiences. Since memory is a dynamic process that can be affected by various circumstances over time, Josselson advises narrative inquirers to be cognisant of "the actual narrative of twice-told memories" (p.649). In this study, participants might have unconsciously filtered their lived experiences of patriarchy through their present-day understanding of Türkiye's current political, economic, and social climate rather than reflecting their

[99] I borrowed the concept of *urban bias* from Lipton (1977), who argued that disproportionate allocation of public resources between rural and urban areas might contribute to poverty in rural areas.

experiences as they originally occurred. To address these potential limitations, Josselson (2009) recommends "reevaluate[ing] the same memory over long periods of time in light of ongoing experience" (p.649). However, given practical constraints, primarily the geographical distance between the researcher and participants, such long-term longitudinal approaches were not feasible within the scope of this study.

4. Implications

The implications of this study extend beyond the confines of Turkish academia. The theoretical and conceptual innovations, practical strategies, and personal transformations developed throughout this study speak to broader conversations within feminist scholarship, institutional practice, and methodological approaches to examining systems of oppression. Together, these implications demonstrate how scholarly inquiry can serve as both a site of knowledge production and a power mechanism for broader social transformation. The following sections present the theoretical, practical, and personal implications of this study.

4.1. Theoretical Implications

The current feminist theoretical frameworks, while foundational, lack adequate tools to explore the complexity of women's fluid subjectivities, particularly those of women academics, and the spatiotemporal dimensions of resistance strategies that develop through their interaction with patriarchal power mechanisms in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts. By integrating Allen's (1999) solidarity, Marková's (2003) intersubjectivity, and Arendt's (1958) spaces of appearance, the feminist resistance ecosystem developed in this study addresses this theoretical gap, offering a framework for studying such complexities. Feminist scholars can utilize this framework to explore the geographical, contextual, and generational transcendence of individual and collective resistance strategies in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts.

The values-structure tension model, which extends Karam and Afiouni's (2013, 2014) career success framework, represents another significant theoretical implication of this study. This theoretical extension offers career success scholars a comprehensive analytical framework for exploring the concurrent values-values and values-structure tensions and how individuals navigate between accommodating and transformative responses when they face such tensions in Türkiye and other patriarchies across the MENA region and beyond.

4.2. Practical Implications

The findings of this study carry practical implications for academic institutions in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts. As a foundational step, these findings necessitate that institutions first acknowledge the persistence of institutional gendered hierarchies that patriarchal power technologies and mechanisms generate and sustain. The evidence of homosocial networks, informalism, and motherly expectations revealed that Türkiye's seemingly gender-neutral academic policies and its high representation of women academics alone cannot dismantle the ingrained patriarchal power/knowledge systems that advocate and maintain male dominance across various academic disciplines. Given that women academics' unique peripheral-central subjectivities enable them to create feminist bridges across various disciplines and higher educational settings, institutions should recognise and support these bridges as they operate as counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance. This requires that professional development initiatives such as mentorship opportunities and cross-disciplinary feminist networks be intentionally developed not solely for academic purposes but as mechanisms for challenging and unlearning patriarchy ingrained at macro, meso, and micro levels in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts.

Karam and Afiouni's (2013, 2014) career success model highlights the tension between macro-level mandated structures in the context of Arab countries' higher educational settings. This study supports their proposed structure-structure tension and additionally calls for attention to values-structure tension. This recognition requires practical action: it encourages academics, regardless of their gender, to step out of their academic bubbles and both advocate for and pursue transformative career success criteria that value public engagement and individual and collective empowerment activities. Equally important, it requires higher education institutions to move beyond recognition to actively implement transformative definitions of career success rather than merely advocating for objective career success criteria. Such measures ought to include revising promotion and tenure criteria to meaningfully incorporate public engagement activities and recognising academics' broader social impact alongside traditional academic attainments.

The findings of this study also underscored the diverse challenges that women academics across different institutional contexts with various intersectional identities and career trajectories encountered in their academic settings. For higher education institutions in Türkiye and other patriarchal contexts, these findings necessitate acknowledging the adverse impacts of such challenges on women academics and implementing initiatives to alleviate them. Practical

implications for stakeholders committed to advancing gender equity within patriarchal contexts include, but are not limited to, establishing and expanding feminist networking opportunities, implementing equity-promoting training programs such as monthly gender-themed workshops for academics, administrative staff, and students, and providing scholarships and financial assistance for students. Crucially, since institutional neoliberal patriarchy might compromise the transformative potential of such initiatives, those with higher and more stable academic positions are in better positions to champion and protect such initiatives. Additionally, given the sustainability of patriarchal systems and their ability to reconstitute themselves (Enloe, 2017) coupled with the fluid and contextual nature of intersectional identities, long-term institutional changes require that such initiatives remain vigilant about emerging patriarchal power mechanisms and transform themselves accordingly. Hence, to maintain the momentum of change, institutions ought to establish regular evaluation mechanisms to assess the impacts of these initiatives and their responsiveness to emerging patriarchal power mechanisms, knowledge, and discourses.

4.3. Researcher Positionality Implications

This research journey fundamentally altered my understanding of the depth and breadth of a researcher's positionality when studying oppressive systems while simultaneously being positioned within them. My personal transformation from reluctance and fear toward dismantling my internalised panopticon represented more than an unintended consequence; it constituted a methodological process that enabled me to critically examine my interaction with the very oppressive system I was, albeit unwittingly, avoiding examining. This transformational process resonates with Foucault's observation that "people know what they do, frequently they know why they do what they do; yet what they don't know is what what they do does" (as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 187). Through this process, I discerned the interconnectedness among my positionality as a researcher, my personal transformation as a woman who lived and worked in patriarchal settings, and the significance of transnational feminist resistarity in dismantling patriarchy. The trajectory of my lived experiences within this research, from avoiding confrontation with macro, meso, and micro-level patriarchy in Iran to feeling compelled to narrate the stories of those fighting against the very same oppressive system, suggests profound implications for how feminist researchers might approach positionality in their research endeavour. My transformative journey implies that feminist researchers ought to embrace their research as a dual knowledge-production process of generating scholarly insights alongside self-transformational understanding, with the latter enhancing rather than compromising the rigour and credibility of their findings. This

reconceptualization of researcher positionality offers broader implications that transcend individual academic achievement and point toward new possibilities for both individual and collective growth and resistance. Such a perspective has implications for phenomenological research frameworks that invite researchers to bracket their experiences, suggesting instead the need to validate researcher transformation and recognise it as a contribution to self-knowledge rather than a methodological limitation to be mitigated.

5. Future Research and Stories Ahead

The findings of this study open several promising avenues for future scholarly inquiry into patriarchal power mechanisms and feminist resistance strategies in Türkiye and comparable contexts. First, longitudinal research examining the same cohort of women academics would illuminate how their subject positions and resistance strategies evolve in response to shifting political and institutional mandates in Türkiye. Such research would hopefully reveal whether the values-structure tensions identified in this research intensify or diminish as women academics gain academic seniority, and whether the feminist resistance ecosystem sustains itself or fragments across time and space.

Second, comparative studies examining women academics' experiences across different geographical regions within Türkiye, particularly contrasting urban and rural settings, would address this study's urban bias limitation. Research incorporating voices from conservative regions could expose how regional patriarchal manifestations inform women academics' navigation strategies and the counter-patriarchal spaces of appearance they construct.

The third limitation of this study was the absence of women academics from Alevi[100], Kurdish, and Arab communities in the participant sample. As discussed in Chapter Two, patriarchy intersects with various social identities, one of which is ethnicity. Considering the historical conflicts between the Turkish state and the Kurdish community, Kurdish women academics likely navigate additional layers of discrimination, which remain invisible in the findings of this study. Similarly, since all participants identified as secular and non-religious, recruiting women academics who

[100] Alevis are the largest religious minority in Türkiye. While they are considered under the Shia denomination of Islam, they have different attributes and beliefs. Freedom of religion in Turkey - The Alevi issue

actively practice Islam would enable us to better understand how religious identity intersects with gender and academic status within Türkiye's complex sociopolitical landscape.

Fourth, future research should examine men academics' roles in perpetuating and challenging patriarchal structures. While this study focused on women academics' experiences, understanding how men navigate, resist, or reinforce patriarchal power mechanisms within Turkish academia would provide crucial insights into dismantling institutional patriarchy. Guiding questions such as "How do progressive men academics navigate homosocial networks?" or "What role do men academics play in reinforcing or weakening the feminist resistance ecosystem?" could guide research in this area.

Last but not least, cross-national comparative research examining women academics' experiences across the patriarchy belt, encompassing MENA countries, South Asia, and other geographical locations with entrenched patriarchal systems, would test the transferability of this study's theoretical contributions, particularly the feminist resistance ecosystem and spatiotemporal resistarity concepts.

Final/Ongoing Thoughts on Resistance and Transformation

The stories shared in this dissertation extended beyond merely documenting the lived experiences of women with patriarchy. The warp and weft of each story exemplified women's courage and commitment to fighting against gender discrimination and patriarchal power mechanisms in their academic settings and beyond. These women spoke truth despite risks, created feminist networks despite institutional hurdles, and maintained hope despite repression. Among the many messages that this study's narratives demonstrated, one stood above all: patriarchy is not a monolithic domination apparatus but a dynamic web vulnerable to feminist critique, collective action, and persistent challenge. Yet this research also revealed stories of complicity and perpetuation, where academics became, wittingly or unwittingly, instruments of patriarchal self-regulation and surveillance power technologies. This recognition carries no judgment but demands reflexive honesty: dismantling patriarchy requires us to acknowledge our own participation in its sustenance even as we resist its impositions.

As this dissertation concludes, patriarchal systems worldwide continue attempting to subjugate women's bodies, minds, and aspirations. The years 2024 - 2025 have witnessed an alarming escalation of state-endorsed patriarchal control across the patriarchy belt. In November 2025,

Taliban banned women doctors, nurses, and patients to enter hospitals without wearing a burqa, with the morality police detained and arrested women for violating the Taliban's imposed dress code[101]. In September 2025, the Turkish girl band Manifest, whose songs contained opposition slogans like "law, justice, and equality", faced criminal investigation for "indecent and immoral acts" after their Istanbul concert. President Erdoğan's adviser called the band members "immoral, shameless, demonic creatures", resulting in the cancellation of their sold-out national tour[102].

Yet feminist resistance persists, adapts, and proliferates across these same geographies. From the streets of Iran to Turkish universities and concert halls, global solidarity networks and spatiotemporal resistarity grow. In Iran, women and girls continue fighting gender inequality. In Türkiye, women academics challenge institutional androcentrism while Turkish women more broadly continue resisting the patriarchal discourses and practices aiming to confine them to domestic spheres and police their bodies.

This dissertation began in borderlands and concludes in them. Yet these are not the same borderlands. The nepantla I inhabited at the outset was characterized by silence and avoidance; the nepantla I now occupy pulses with voice and rays of purpose. The stories documented here are not endpoints but *waypoints* in a longer feminist journey towards liberation. The demands for gender equality chanted in rallies in major cities or whispered between two women working on their husbands' farms in rural areas in the patriarchy belt are not mere words, they are a revolutionary epistemology, a way of knowing, reborning, becoming, being, and resisting.

Audre Lorde (1984) reminds us: "Revolution is not a one-time event" (p. 140). I would add that revolution is one story, one voice, and one act of parrhesia at a time. This dissertation demonstrated that revolutions live in stories: the ones we (re)tell, the ones we (re)live, and the ones we pass on. These final words conclude this dissertation but not the stories it invited its readers to relive. The stories it told are ongoing; the struggles it documented continue. Perhaps, at this very moment on October 5, 2025, as I am in my office typing these words with the late afternoon sun warming my face, new warps and wefts are being added to the fabric of the feminist

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[101] Adapted from: https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/19/talibans-mandatory-burqa-in-herat-assaults-womens-autonomy

[102] Adapted from: https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-government-clamps-down-on-female-artists/a-74051574

resistance ecosystem, each opening opportunities for the next knot of parrhesia wherever, and by whatever means, women fight back against subjugation.

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