

A FEMINIST STANDPOINT ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS:  
A CASE IN TURKEY

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Approval of the Graduate School of Sciences

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A FEMINIST STANDPOINT ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS: A CASE IN TURKEY**

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The aim of this thesis is to analyze women's shelters in the context of the Feminist Standpoint Theory by focusing on a case in Turkey. The majority of the previous studies has not regarded the women's entire subjective experiences of domestic violence and shelter stay. Rather they present a reductionist picture. In this study, women's experiences of violence and shelter stay are analyzed and discussed in relation to; their specificities, the shelter structure, and the system shelters are connected in Turkey, from the perspective of Feminist Standpoint Theory. The issue of to what extent empowerment is attainable within the existing structures of institutions is questioned through qualitative method. Participatory observation is the main data gathering method in this study; semi-structured in-depth interviews are also used as additional data gathering source. Interviews and interpersonal

relationships with 78 women are analyzed. The interviews aim at providing individual narratives of these women concerning the experience of violence and the process afterwards. In addition, interpersonal communications with the shelter staff are also added to the analysis. It was understood that the subjective experiences of the women are not wholly understandable under a fixed womanhood categorization of *gender*; they are mostly underestimated in the existing system of structure; and that the constraints specific to each woman's case combined with the rigid structural practices in the aftermath of violence entrap many women in situations difficult to escape, and the 'mediating role' of the structures and individuals are disempowering for the women.

Keywords: Women's Shelter, Feminist Standpoint Theory, Criticism of Gender, Structure

## ÖZ

### KADIN SIĞINAKLARININ FEMİNİST DURUŞ KURAMI ÇERÇEVESİNDE ANALİZİ: TÜRKİYE'DEN BİR VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'den bir vaka örneğine odaklanarak kadın sığınaklarını Feminist Duruş Kuramı çerçevesinde analiz etmektir. Şimdiye kadar yapılmış olan çalışmaların çoğu, kadınların öznel aile içi şiddet ve sığınakta kalma deneyimlerini bütünsel olarak incelememiştir. Aksine, indirgemeci bir bakış açısı benimsemişlerdir. Bu çalışmada, kadınların şiddet ve kadın sığınağında kalma deneyimleri; özgüllükleri, sığınak yapısı ve sığınakların Türkiye'de buldukları sistem bağlamında, Feminist Duruş Kuramı perspektifinden analiz edilmiş ve tartışılmıştır. Güçlenmenin var olan kurumların yapıları içinde ne kadar mümkün olduğu konusu niteliksel yöntem ile sorgulanmıştır. Araştırmanın ana veri toplama yöntemi katılımcı gözlem metodudur. Katılımcı araştırma metodunun yanında, yarı-yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlar da kullanılmıştır; 78 kadınla yapılan mülakatlar ve

kişilerarası ilişkiler ele alınmıştır. Mülakatlar kadınların şiddet ve şiddet sonrası kişisel deneyimlerinin öykülerine ulaşmayı hedeflemiştir. Ayrıca, sığınak personeli ile ilgili kişilerarası ilişkiler de ele alınmıştır. Çalışma bulgularından; kadınların öznel deneyimlerini sabit bir kadınlık kategorisi olan ‘toplumsal cinsiyet’ kavramı altında anlamının tamamen mümkün olmadığı; bu özgül deneyimlerin çoğunlukla var olan yapı sistemi içerisinde dikkate alınmadığı; her bir kadının kendi özgül durumunda var olan sınırlılıkların şiddet sonrasında katı yapısal pratiklerle birleştiğinde kadınları içinden çıkılması zor durumlara hapsettiği; yapıların ve bireylerin ‘arabuluculuk rolü’ nün kadınlar için güçsüzleştirici olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kadın Sığınağı, Feminist Duruş Kuramı, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Kavramının Eleştirisi, Yapı

**To All Marginalized Women Who *See* A Wider Space**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CTS</b>	Conflict Tactic Scale
<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
<b>FST</b>	Feminist Standpoint Theory
<b>LGBTT</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Travesties
<b>SSCPI</b>	Social Services and Child Protection Institute
<b>NGO</b>	Nongovernmental Organization
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>WAVE</b>	Women against Violence Europe

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is over the past forty years that violence against women has attracted political and academic attention and that public recognition has become increasingly common. Since the late 1960s, much research has been done about domestic violence (DV) against women. DV threatens the physical and emotional integrity of billions of women in the world; it constitutes even a dimension of many women's daily life. We now know that DV against women; does not discriminate; cuts across class, age, ethnicity, race and education level; impacts all areas of women's lives; takes many forms; usually involves a male batterer and a female victim; can result in murder; often goes unreported by victims, and that there is a significant requirement for support services.

For many survivors of DV, women's shelters are crucial in the aftermath of the violence experience. Despite the massive research on violence against women and the recognition of the importance of women's shelters in many survivors' experiences, remarkably little research has explored the interaction of the subjective violence experiences of women at shelters and specificities of the shelter structure they are in. Of that small number of studies, even fewer studies focus on women's empowerment in relation to specificities of women's experiences of violence and the process afterwards, in the context of a detailed portrayal of a woman's shelter. Research that focuses on the specificities of women's experiences has potential for promoting deeper understanding of the shelter work and filling the cavities in the whole system that the women's shelters are connected, in Turkey.

## 1.1. Scope and Purpose of the Study

Quantitative research is the most commonly used form of research in the larger field of violence against women (Altnay & Arat, 2009, p.7). However, a qualitative study, which considers analysis of the subjective experiences of women, is also of equal value. A participatory research method, which enabled me, as the researcher, to reflect on my situation of *powerfulness* and *powerlessness* during my employment at the Shelter A, was adopted. This method provided me with direct participation while monitoring and evaluating the effects of my practices, which aimed at improving women's conditions. The semi-structured life history interviews with the residents of the Shelter A were also used as an additional data source.

Throughout my employment at the Shelter A, in the position of director for four years, I was guided by these questions: what are the specificities in the experiences of women that particularly influence their process of shelter stay and empowerment; can these specificities be visible in the shelter system; how the specificities of the structure of shelters interact with women's experience of; violence, shelter stay, and empowerment? Through the analysis of the women's experiences of violence and shelter stay, I identified the key themes discussed in this study. Likewise, referring to my hands-on experience in shelter work, I tried to enrich the women's narratives by adding the analysis of shelter structure and by referring to the system shelters are connected in Turkey.

Standpoint theory asserts that the purpose of research must be *for* the subjects of research in order to improve their situations (Cook & Fonow, 1990). Thus, researchers should carefully consider whether their study contributes to the oppression or empowerment of the subjects. They must also act with critical thinking regarding the policy implications for the benefit of the marginalized (Cook & Fonow, 1990). At this point, participatory research method, which can be regarded as a

politically motivated act, contributes to the value of this study. In addition, the aim of this study, which is to bring the battered women's subjective experiences of DV and shelter stay in the sight, can be envisioned as valuable for policy-making.

Throughout this study, the inquiry of women's diversified subjectivities has been located in the center of the analysis. The meaning of the differences among women, and their potential theoretical and political results in the frame of feminist thought, were questioned by the Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST).

## **1.2. Organization of the thesis**

The thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter includes a brief introduction regarding the scope and purpose of the study, while the second chapter of the study focuses on the theoretical framework on which the study is based. Under the title of the theoretical framework, a literature review on; feminism's approach to violence; DV against women, and women's shelters is presented. In addition, a brief introduction to FST is held.

The third chapter describes the methodology of the study. The chapter includes discussions on; feminist methodology; feminist epistemology; FST, and the criticism of the concept of *gender*. An introductory part for the Shelter A is also presented. In addition, the method of the study is described in relation to the issues of; feminist standpoint methodology, the basis of the study, profile of the sample, procedure for data collection and analysis, ethical issues, and the researcher's reflexivity.

The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of the case study regarding its structure and residents. In the Structure section, management and organization of the shelter are described and discussed in relation to; its target group, principles, foundation,

organizational structure and its staff. In the Subjects section, the resident women are brought under close shot at two basic focus points. Namely, they are; the *gender category* and focus on the *difference*. While the basic characteristics of the women are described under the category of *gender*, their subjective experiences of violence and shelter stay are discussed in relation to the concepts of the FST, with a focus on the *difference*. The women's experiences of violence are discussed in the context of their relationships with the partners, family, and third parties. On the other hand, the women's experiences of shelter stay are discussed in relation to their; subjectivities, perceptions of the shelter staff, and relationships with the other residents at the shelter. The fifth chapter discusses empowerment of the women, in relation to their subjective perceptions of the shelter; constrains specific to their situation, and the structural limitations in the context.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1. Feminism

Through the first wave of feminism, DV against women was handled in the context of the generalized pattern of male violence. However, since the movement focused on suffrage and rights on property at the end of the century, the issue of violence was left relatively hidden, till the emergence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave feminism, in the 1960s and 1970s (Maynard, cited in McMillan, 2007).

Through the second wave feminism, in the 1960s and 1970s, the motto of the movement was ‘personal is political’, and the focus was on women’s daily lives. In particular, regarding the feminist agenda in United Kingdom (UK), which has been one of the standing out countries in the field, McMillan (2007, p.17) elaborated the demands of the movement, which focused on the state. Namely, they were; equal right to education and employment; equal pay; free child-care facilities; free abortion and contraception on demand; right to define own sexuality and an end to discrimination against lesbians; right to economic and legal independence; an end to male dominance and violence against women; and change in laws and assumptions that support male oppression.

The feminist movement challenged the distinction between the public and private. The movement asserted that power was a core issue in violence against women; and that, gendered social structures were both reflected in and were set by sexual and domestic violence (McMillan, 2007). In general, the feminist movement aimed at the visibility of the systematic nature of violence against women in the 60s and 70s. In specific, the 70s were the years, in which the legislations and institutionalizations of shelters and rape crisis centers were brought to the agenda of the states by the

feminist movement. In this regard, McMillan (2007, p.18 ) suggested that the movement had a radical feminist character in that; ‘it was begun by women for women’ and ‘because it aimed to dismantle the existing social order.’.

While the institutionalization in forms of women’s shelters and significant amendments came to agenda of some states such as UK, United States and Sweden in 1970s; these issues began to be handled by the state, as a result of the women’s movement of 80s, in 1990s and 2000s, in Turkey. In particular, by 1990s the central government agency, namely, Women’s Status General-Directorate, which currently serves under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, was established in Turkey. However, it began to play a more direct role in adopting a policy of multi-agency intervention for combat against DV, particularly, in 2000s. Although these structural changes in policy and legislation are prominent in theory, they are sometimes proved to be disappointing in terms of their practical implications for women.

## **2.2. Domestic Violence**

Reaching a consensus on a definition of *violence against women* may be problematic for different agencies in both practice and academia. While the detective forces, for instance, may define violence in terms of its effect, and perceive few DV cases as ‘violent’ due to the existence of visible injuries or blood, feminist women’s NGOs could depend solely on the narratives of women to define ‘violence’, regardless of ‘concrete’ proofs. Although there is no fixed definition of DV, the United Nations’ (UN) definition can be suggested as the one that has been broadly compromised in the field. The term *violence against women* was defined as “any act of genderbased violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life ” (United Nations, 1993).

Skinner, Hester & Malos (2005) suggested that this definition brought about the questions that whether, for instance, DV, rape and trafficking should be similarly defined. On the other hand, they asserted that the definition was useful in that it linked different violence forms against women. However, referring to Helster (2004), Skinner et. al (2005) cautioned that definitions were related to specific time and space locations. That is, in different countries and at different times, there may be a focus on only definite forms of violence as ‘violence against women’. The researchers also noted the broadening of perspectives in literature, by time, from using *violence against women*, as the inclusive term, to using the term *gender violence*. However, gender violence includes all types of violence against women in the UN definition, but also recognizes violence against children, the elderly or LGBTT people.

In the context of DV against women, Dobash & Dobash (2005, p. 169) defined *wife beating*, as ‘not a deviant; aberrant or pathological act’, but rather as an approved aspect of a patriarchal family in a patriarchal society, for centuries. In this regard, they also asserted that many of the institutional arrangements, which supported the patriarchy through the oppression of women, were still reflected in social institutions then. In addition, the authors pointed that researchers should ensure accuracy about their conceptions of *violence*, and search for explanations of these concrete forms in the wider society, as well as family context.

According to Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE, 2004, p.8), the issue needs to be considered in the historical, political and social context of gender relationships, since studying the issue as a personal problem or as a dysfunctional interaction will not reflect the reality and not achieve much in terms of social change. International bodies have for long issued this standpoint in documents and have explicitly defined violence against women as a *human rights violation* (WAVE, 2004, p.8).

Till the late 1960s, DV was believed to be a rare phenomenon in families and often associated with psychopathology or illiteracy of one family member, low socio-economic status of the family. However, with the emergence of the second wave feminism in the 1960s, violence against women came to the agenda as a hot issue for political discussions. Feminists focused on the analyses of questions such as; what function violence serves in a society and what social constraints prevent women from leaving the abusive relationships. In general, they took the men as a class with the assertion that;

Even if individual men may refrain from employing physical violence against their partners, men as a class benefit from how women's lives are restricted and limited because of their fear of violence by husbands and lovers, as well as by strangers (Bograd, 1988, p.14).

Feminist researchers often studied wife abuse in relation to; the development of the nuclear familial arrangements during the transition to industrialization; the public and the private division; gendered division of domestic work, and the economic and social dependence of women to their partners (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In addition, they criticized psychological theories and studies for disregarding the question of power (Bograd, 1988), ignoring the physical conflicts between husband and wife, and for their focus on the causes of tension, rather than the ways it is expressed (Martin, 2005). Thereupon, many psychological theories left the questions such as; why 'mentally ill' men beat their wives, but, not their boss, and how 'out of control husbands' preserve their anger till coming to their homes, unanswered (Bograd, 1988, p.17).

On the other side, feminist psychologists are assumed to reconstruct expressions of emotion and behavior common among battered women (Bograd, 1988, p.17). Rather than considering psychological attributions as already existing contributing factors to violence, feminist psychologists are assumed to handle them as a consequence of the trauma of violence (Bograd, 1988, p.17). In the absence of a critical evaluation, the

effects of violence are often misdiagnosed as psychiatric symptoms by mainstream psychologists. At this point, combating misdiagnosis is interpreted as a feminist issue by feminist scholars (Bravo Rosewater, 1988).

The emphasis in the literature is often on characteristics of women in the position of 'victim' and men in the position of 'offender', but rarely on a larger social context. In particular, feminist scholars criticize the literature which searches for differences between 'battered women' and 'non-battered women', with an indirect victim-blaming proposition (Bograd, 1988, p.22). In a similar sense, while searching the characteristics of the perpetrator, stress is often on issues such as past child abuse and alcohol/drug abuse. Likewise, the terms in the literature such as; 'battered husband', 'common couple violence', 'violence-prone women' and 'mutual combat among partners' also contribute to widely held negative attitudes towards the battered women.

Since the 1970s, the literature on DV has been formulated by two different paradigms, namely, they are; the 'family violence' paradigm and the feminist 'male violence' paradigm (Altınay & Arat, 2009, p.7). The National Family Violence Survey carried out in the United States in 1975 was one of the first studies to apply the 'family violence' paradigm, and it was among the first in revealing that the American family was a violent institution (as cited in Altınay & Arat, 2009, p.7).

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), which was developed by Murray A. Straus, has become a starting point for surveys carried out in DV literature since the mid-1970s (Straus,1979; Altınay & Arat, 2009). The scale is based on conflict theory, which claims that conflict is inherent to any human groups, including the family (Straus, 2005, p.195). CTS analyses domestic conflict in relation to the role structure in the family, that is, between children, mother/father-to-children, wife-to-husband, husband-to-wife and child-to-mother/father; and the three levels of conflict tactics are defined as; Reasoning, Verbal Aggression and Violence (Straus, 2005).

While the national surveys of CTS carried out in the 1970s revealed that the family is a violent institution, the scale was criticized by feminist scholars for underestimating; the context; the causes and the meaning of violent acts; and questions to detect sexual and economic forms of violence (Altnay & Arat, 2009, p.8). Although, in the 1990s, Murray had revised CTS, he told that, in revisions, he had not ‘corrected’ the basic tenets of the scale, that is, it does not measure the causes, context and the meaning of violent acts, since it is not intended to be used with measures of a specific subject, such as DV against women (Straus, 2005, p. 196).

Likewise, in the 1970s, another challenge to the feminist conceptualization of DV against women appeared on the agenda, with the emergence of the concepts of the *battered husband syndrome* and *mutual combat* in marriage (Saunders, 1988, p.90). In particular, Steinmetz’s assertion- in her article ‘The Battered Husband Syndrome’ in 1978- which claimed that men were also battered as often as women, was evaluated by the feminists as a backlash, since it has served the attention away from the realities of the women. In essence, it was criticized for; underestimating who initiates violence; ignoring the issue of power in relationships, and its painful results (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Depending on their experiences in anti-violence work in the 1970s, feminist researchers handled DV, predominantly, as ‘male violence’. They located power and control at the heart of men’s violence towards women. Thus, they developed ‘male violence’ paradigm as a criticism against ‘family violence’ paradigm, which is gender-blind, and they claimed that physical violence could only be understood within the context of this power relationship (Altnay & Arat, 2009, p.9).

Regarding the role of the family in DV against women, Del Martin (2005) commented that;

The privacy that protects the family can also muffle the blows and stifle the yells of a violent home. People who would not otherwise consider striking anyone, sometimes act as if establishing a household together gives them the right to abuse each other. (p.160)

In this regard, referring to the book *The Violent Home* by Richard Gelles, Martin (2005) suggested that it might be the shared home, not the marriage that contributed to some men's perception of having the right to exercise power over the women they lived with. The author also criticized the popular assumption among middle-class researchers that marital violence occurs more frequently in the ghetto and among lower-class families, and commended that this is due to the inability of these researchers to realize the universality of the issue.

Dobash & Dobash (2005, p. 176) defined violence as a tool 'used by men to chastise their wives for real or perceived transgressions of his authority and as attempts to reaffirm and maintain a hierarchical and moral order within the family'. The authors asserted that men's authority is still preserved by social institutions and maintained by the socialization of children. They also criticized the interpersonal violence research for its focus on the background characteristics of offenders and/or victims, and suggested researchers to search for explanations in a wider socio historical context.

Likewise, Walker (2005, p.220) noted that especially the nuclear family has been manifested as 'a frequently a fertile ground for often lethal aggression' in the recent years. Walker (2005) criticized the previous literature on family violence for its tendency to be clinically oriented and its underestimation of the social dimension of the issue. At this point, Walker (2005, p.220) suggested that 'a combination of sociological and psychological variables better explains the battered woman syndrome'. On the whole, feminists handle the family as a system defined by 'inequity, conflict and contradiction' (Stark & Flitcraft, 2005, p.254).

In addition to the local and national bodies, international institutions are also interested in the issue of DV. The survey, which was conducted by the World Health Organization between the years 2000-2003 in 10 different countries, was one of the most comprehensive surveys in the field, after the pioneering survey in 1993 by Statistics Canada, which defined its framework as ‘violence against women’, rather than ‘family/domestic violence’ (as cited in Altınay & Arat, 2009, p.9).

Regarding women’s movement in Turkey, the year 1987 is often described as a milestone. In particular, in 1987, the novel *Kadının Adı Yok* (The Woman Has No Name), which criticized the oppression of women in the marriage, by Duygu Asena, was published. In addition, the first significant feminist protest, and also the first mass demonstration in the aftermath of the military coup in Turkey, took place after the court decision, which rejected the divorce petition of a battered woman (Yeşilyurt-Gündüz, 2004, pp.119-120).

In 1990s, the only wide in scope survey in the field was *Causes and Effects of Domestic Violence*, in Turkey. The survey was published by the Family Research Institution in 1993-94. However, in 2009, The National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey came to the agenda. It was the first study that has ever been the most comprehensive research on DV against women in Turkey that has representation quality in the country scale. The research found out that; women are more likely to experience physical or sexual violence by their husbands/partners than violence by members of their families, relatives or strangers in their lives. While 39% of women had experienced physical violence and 15% of the ever-married women had experienced sexual violence; 44% had experienced emotional abuse in any period of their lives. 3% of the women reported having experienced sexual violence by perpetrators, other than their intimate partners, since age 15. In particular, the prevalence of exposure to sexual violence, before the age of 15, for the whole country, was 7%. One out of ten women has been exposed to physical

violence during pregnancy from her husband/partner. The proportion of the women, who have ever thought of suicide, is 3 times higher among the women, who have experienced physical/sexual partner violence, in comparison to the women, who did not report such violence. 49% of women, who have experienced physical or sexual violence by their husbands/partners, had not revealed the violence to anyone. 23% had reported that their husbands/partners prevented them from getting a job, or caused them to quit their jobs. 3 out of 10 women, who have a higher school or higher education, have been exposed to physical or sexual violence by their husbands/partners. The results also highlighted that; 31% of women, who have experienced physical violence by their husbands/partners, reported that they had ever fought against violence with the intention of protecting themselves. In addition, among them, while 42% reported an increase of violence due to fighting back, 28% reported that fighting back had stopped the violence at that moment. Besides, among women, in Turkey, who experienced physical/sexual violence by their husbands/partners, 26% had left their homes at least once, even if for one night, due to violence. While 13% of the women left their homes only once, 11% stated to have left 2 to 5 times; and returning was found to be commonly related to the children. However, 86% of the women reported the idea that physical violence is unacceptable (The National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey, 2009).

In their study, in which the focus was limited to DV, by male spouses, and 1800 ever-married women, in Turkey, constituted the population, Altınay & Arat (2009) had found that; 34% of women had been subjected to physical violence at least once; at least 1 out of every 10 college/university graduates, and, at least, 4 out of 10 illiterate women have been or are being battered by their spouses. 63% of the women, who told that they earned more income than their spouse, reported having been subjected to physical violence by their spouse at least once. Among women, who are divorced/separated, reported experience of physical violence is as high as 78%. The percentage of women living in cities, who are or have been subjected to physical

violence, is approximately 42% greater than those living in small towns. The testimony of women to their mother's abuse is found to increase the likelihood of the woman's being abused by her husband significantly. 1 out of every 2 women, who are subjected to violence, keep it secret. In addition, the results also revealed that 9 out of every 10 women agreed that 'there is never a valid justification for beating'. However, at this point, the researchers cautioned that this does not automatically demonstrate that the women are equipped to deal with real-life present or future DV. In support of this, the researchers provided the results in response to the question; 'if your spouse were to beat you today, what would you do, how would you react?'. 24% of the women are found to tell that they would/could do nothing for various reasons (The percentage for the East sample is even higher, at 46%). Likewise, 45% of women told that they would/could do nothing, if their neighbors were to be beaten by their spouses (Altman & Arat, 2009).

On the whole, research on DV against women has gone through a fast development over the past thirty years, both at the national and international level. Feminist conceptualizations of gender and DV against women have shaped the improvements in the field of research.

### **2.3. Women's Shelters**

There has been a distinction under the titles of 'experts' and 'non-experts', that is mainstream researchers and activists in the movement, in the field (Yllö, 1988, p.43). The mainstream researchers are likely to be criticized for; their dependence on untested cultural assumptions of women; their focus that is not feminist, and for their research questions and methods, as muting the voices of women. On the other hand, the activists in the movement and the shelter workers, who are often supposed to be formerly battered women, are often criticized as 'nonscientific, subjective, and political' (Yllö, 1988, p.43). The activists may often be regarded as the passive

objects of the research, by the mainstream researchers. In my opinion, the passive position of the activists and battered women, as *objects*, in some mainstream researches, poses an ethical problem for the researcher/knower, since it means to make the experiences of the *subjects* invisible.

Feminists researchers challenge the idea that wife abuse is an easily recognized issue that can smoothly be handled by traditional institutions (Bograd, 1988, p.20). Thus, women's shelters are at issue. In this respect, Hague & Mullender (2005) noted that women's shelters and support organizations maintain the position of being the voice of the survivors, and are still remarkably better at resident and survivor involvement than other agencies.

Regarding the literature on shelter work, some studies focused on the shelter regulations. Although confidentiality has been a widely accepted policy by many shelters, the address disclosure becomes an issue of controversy, in the recent literature. Increasing number of shelters are beginning to publicize their locations in some countries (Roberts & Lewis, 2000, p.671). Referring to Belluck (1997), Roberts & Lewis (2000, p.671) stated that the shelter directors have done so for a range of reasons, including the following: (a) to help the local battered women know where to go for assistance, (b) to help the community-at-large become more aware of the extent of the problem of DV, (c) to increase their fundraising capability and to develop improved interactions with the police and other public officials through increased public awareness of the extent of DV, and (d) to promote the message that the abused women should not have to seek services secretly, because they have done nothing wrong. On the other hand, Roberts & Lewis (2000, p.671) noted that the other shelter directors view the disclosure of shelter addresses as a potential risk of violent attacks against residents.

Likewise, the issue of organizational structure, in particular, *hierarchy* has begun to be questioned in the context of shelter work, by feminists. Although feminist

organizations are often associated with collective organization, feminist work is not necessarily practiced within that form of organizing (McMillan, 2007; p.142). Thus, women's shelters can take a variety of forms. In Turkey, since the majority of the women's shelters are run by the central government and local authorities, there is less room, for staff, to influence the organizational structure of the shelters. However, in my opinion, there is some space left for the shelter directors to influence the organizational structure and principles, given the lack of concern and political will; and the excessive dependence on the individual shelter staff, by the running organizations, in Turkey.

McMillan (2007) found that while the majority of centers in Sweden and the UK organized collectively in accordance with their feminist politics, a significant minority organized hierarchically/traditionally, and a fewer number practiced alternative forms of organization, such as democratic or cooperative. However, the researchers revealed considerable similarities, in the working practices of those defining themselves as 'collective' or 'hierarchical', as well as within the groups. That is, in Sweden, they found out that ROKS were far more likely to organize hierarchically with 50 per cent (8) of their organizations, compared to only 11 per cent (2) of SKR groups, which noted that they organized collectively, despite the consideration of the ROKS network as the more 'radical' network and SKR as the more 'liberal' one. Therefore, the researchers concluded that the results can be interpreted as being in support of the argument that, the link between structure and ideology is not empirically proven.

Regarding the institutional intervention to DV in Turkey, the results of the study conducted by Altınay & Arat (2009) underscored the loneliness of women, who have been subjected to DV, as an alarming issue. According to the results of the study, among 1 out of every 2 women, who told that they had revealed their experience to others, the total number of women, who have told the muhtar (the lowest rank local elected official in neighborhoods in the public administration system), police,

gendarme, lawyer, or public prosecutor constituted 3%. Likewise, while 5% of women indicated that they would go to the police, if they were to be beaten themselves; the percentage increased to 13%, if their neighbor were to be beaten. The majority of the women reported that state institutions fail either partially or totally at their responsibilities in combat against the problem. While The participants evaluated women's organizations (34%) and the courts (28%), as the best institutions at responding their responsibilities. Only 20% or less of the women told about other institutions (Parliament, Municipalities, the police, the gendarme, and bar associations). The women elaborated the ways, they believe, that the state can prevent violence, as follows; by educating men (nearly 60%), by establishing shelters (53%); by supporting concerned organizations (45%); by giving heavy penalties to abusers (45%), and by educating the police (33%). On the other hand, between 14% to 22% of the women suggested that the state can prevent violence in *some* situations by taking these precautions. Thus, the researchers concluded that between 60 to 74% of women are in support of the idea that there are definite precautions that the state can take in combat against male violence towards women. Given the number of women's shelters in Turkey (as being 35) then by the researchers, 85% of the women stated that this number was inadequate, and 87% were in support of having their tax money used to found additional shelters (Altınay& Arat, 2009).

Likewise, in The National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women, in Turkey (2009), 92% of the women, who reported physical/ sexual partner violence, were found not to have ever applied to any concerned institutions. In line with the results of the study conducted by Altınay & Arat (2009, p.40), the women were found more likely to share their DV experience with their family, friends or neighbors. Even among the urban women, who were more likely to reveal the violence and apply to official/unofficial institutions/persons, there was a notable difference between disclosure of violence (55%) and asking for official help (9%). In particular, the women, who had applied to an official institution or NGO due to

physical/sexual violence, predominantly (41%) noted their burnout against their experience of violence, as the triggering factor (The National Research on Domestic Violence Against Women, 2009).

Altınay & Arat (2009) concluded that for women, in Turkey, today, DV is not a domestic matter anymore; women assign responsibility to the central and local authorities, and legal actors for stepping in the domestic sphere, and ending male violence. However, women are left alone with their lack of information, tools and awareness to defend their rights against violence (The National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey, 2009).

Despite the range of studies on DV against women, in Turkey, there are few studies, which focused on women's shelters. Some of these studies were conducted by Purple Roof Women's Shelter Foundation, which is one of the early women's shelters in Turkey. Their publications, *The Terror at Home: Violence Against Women* (1996), *My Future in My Hand* (1998) and *Guidelines for Setting up and Running a Women's Refuge Away From Violence* (2007), had done valuable contributions to the field in terms of the authors' *outsider-within* positions, as they were shelter workers.

In this regard, a recent study was carried out by Sallan Gül (2011). The study was sponsored by The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (STRCT) and was conducted in 24 shelters (12 shelters run by municipalities; 10 shelters run by the SSCPI; 2 shelters by independent women's NGOs), in 10 cities, in Turkey. The interviews were made with shelter directors and 103 women, who were current shelter residents. Regarding the route of women's applications to the shelters, the results of the study revealed that 57% of the women applied to the police while 22% applied to municipalities, and only 9% of the women applied to the SSCPI. Sallan Gül (2011, p.159) suggested that the excessive bureaucracy adopted in the methods and attitude, in the application procedure for the SSCPI, gives the

impression of a practice that discourages women, and fosters their return back home. In addition, one of the striking themes the study highlighted was that, out of 24, 19 shelter administrations adopted a *mediating role* between the perpetrators and women. In particular, in 8, out of 10, shelters run by the SSCPI, this tendency was found to be quite powerful (Sallan Gül, 2011, p.115).

On the whole, however, a large number of previous studies have not discussed the subjective experiences of women at shelters, within a detailed analysis of shelter structure. Besides, a few studies had been carried out by the shelter workers, from an *outsider-within* perspective, in Turkey. Rather, in the majority of the studies, the interaction with the shelter residents were, mostly, limited to a few hours, uttermost. In this regard, the current study contributes to the attempt of filling that gap in Turkey.

### **2.3.1. Women's Shelters: Beyond a Roof Over Heads**

Women are able to cope with DV by their own resource in some situations, however, in some others, they also seek for outside support against their abusers. They seek for assistance from shelters, especially, when they perceive a threat against their (or intimate others) lives, and they do not have adequate support to survive. However, even in such situations, women's shelters are usually a last resort (Shostack, as cited in Haj-Yahia & Cohen, 2009). In this regard, women cannot be expected to apply to an unspecialized body, which cannot meet their specific needs. In ideal construction, a women's shelter is more than a safe place, where battered women, who are often survivors of male violence in the family, are welcomed by women's solidarity, in an atmosphere free of violence.

Besides an understanding of the DV against women, the basis of shelter work is empowerment of women in the aftermath of their experiences of violence. As a

human rights violation, the issue needs to be analyzed in a political context since dealing with the issue as a personal problem will not reflect the realities of women.

Ideally, what distinguishes women's shelters from existing mechanisms, is their system, which is organized to respond to women's specific needs, and their stance for empowering its residents. However, in my opinion, the importance given to the realizations of these distinctive features has been often rated lower in rank, by the running institutions, in the practices of shelter work, in Turkey.

At first, a feminist, and nowadays, almost a standard government response to DV in many countries is the provision of women's shelters. Ideally, women's shelters are not 'mediating' institutions with the objective of preserving the family. Rather, they aim at prevention of further violence, and empowerment of women. However, ending or sustaining the relationship with the abuser(s) is the women's own decision.

Approaching the issue in the frame that there could be no justification for violence, women's shelters have also developed effective batterer programs in the field, such as the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), which was initiated by the activist women in the shelter movement, in Minnesota, in 1980 (Pence, 2005, p.372). However, similar developments have not been observed yet, in the practice of shelter work, in Turkey.

Ideally, women's shelters offer support in all matters related to the violent experience, such as; psychological counseling, legal assistance, housing and employment matters. In this way, survivors gain strength to prepare the grounds for an independent life. At this point, some scholars and practitioners attributed a wider function to the shelters, and described them as 'an egalitarian system, which serves as an alternative to the women's previous living situation' (Haj- Yahia & Cohen, 2009, p.96). At the higher level, aiming at social change, by eliminating sexist

notions, women's shelters act a significant role in combating violence against women in society. Their functions can be evaluated as serving beyond the provision of a safe roof for survivors of DV, since they also act for preventive fieldwork, such as awareness-raising activities and training development for practitioners in the field.

#### **2.4. Feminist Standpoint Theory**

Regarding the theories of DV, there are four leading types: micro-level theories, which claim that violence is caused by the psychopathology of one family member; mezzo-level theories, which examine DV in the context of the relationships and interaction between family members; macro-theories, which describe DV with socially-constructed variables; and multi-dimensional models, which define DV in relation to several different variables (Swanger& Petcosky, 2003, as cited in Sallan Gül, 2011, pp. 21-22).

Macro-level theories of violence against women focus on social and cultural aspects of violence. Among these, while others focus on cultural norms and values, cultural acceptance of violence, subcultures of violence, environmental stress, or political economy theory; feminist theory focus on the social structure, which depends on gender and patriarchal system, as the primary cause of violence against women in the family (Swanger& Petcosky, 2003, as cited in Sallan Gül, 2011, p.22).

My theoretical framework lies within the feminist perspectives of violence against women in the domestic sphere. The basic argument of feminist theories is the rejection of master narratives and universal grand theories, which disregard the voices of women. Thus, inquiries about the legitimacy of grand theories have long been on the agenda of feminist studies, in terms of their dependence on research about men, and tendency to see theories as universal. Locating women at the center of research and challenging gendered regime have been primary concerns of feminist

researchers for long. While feminists criticize that patriarchal thought has made the error of making claims of universality by depending on a small group of upper-class white males, some feminists within the modernist discourse have also criticized the feminist theory in relation to the limitations of a fixed category of womanhood, namely, 'gender'. In particular, they criticized feminist theory for not carefully considering the diversified experiences of marginalized women.

Among other theories of feminism, FST is chosen as the guiding framework for this study, due to its emphasis on 'giving voice' and listening to women's voices (Swigonski, 1994). My feminist standpoint means rejecting explanations of violence against women that regard violence as an individual-based problem and attempts for manipulation of women's experience. Likewise, I assume that the women, as the subjects in this study, have specificities that they need to express in the shelter system. Therefore, I did not attempt to explain my participants' subjective experiences, with a goal of generalization in mind, under any category of 'womanhood'. Rather I attempt to reflect multiple voices and perspectives. Thus, in order to succeed vocalizing the individual subjective experiences of women, with a specific focus on 'difference', I tried to make references to position, situation, context, constrains, contingencies; which have become salient themes in the FST, since the theory posits that knowledge is socially constructed and context-sensitive. In particular, from a feminist standpoint framework, I consider the women's experiences as valuable. I claim that the subjects in my study had a 'privileged epistemological stance', and 'hearing' their voices in a potentially pressuring state structure, from a women's standpoint, is valuable. In line with the teachings in FST, I tried to achieve the utmost self-reflectivity in the analysis process of the study, since I consider the potential effect of the knowers on the reality.

The feminist research is based in an epistemology that focuses on the politic nature of the personal. In line with this compromised assumption, feminist researchers

primarily focus on women's experiences. In this regard, my study of women's subjective experiences of violence and shelter stay is also grounded on my belief in this idea.

In FST, the criticism of *gender* does not lead to a loss from the ground for political action, rather it empowers the political character of the women's anti-violence movement. Likewise, in this study, the criticism of the rigid *structure* of some state institutions in Turkey, does not equate the rejection of the structure on the whole. Rather, it is an attempt to demonstrate to what extent empowerment is attainable within the existing structures, and to find more 'flexible' routes to empower women against male violence in the domestic sphere.

Many women's experiences of DV got even more complicated and painful by constrains of poverty, limited education, age, race and ethnicity; and by their further victimization due to rigid and inadequate structural practices they face in the aftermath of violence. Therefore, despite many of the women's expectations of constructing an independent life, upon application for the Shelter A, a significant number of them fail. However, despite the existence of troublesome constrains in their situation, I observed the self-determination of many women at the Shelter A, in order to challenge their experiences of violence.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Feminist methodology

Feminist methodology has developed for analyzing the experiences of women and the other marginalized groups. Questioning the dominant dualisms of positivism, such as men/women and subjective/objective, feminist methodology changed the position of the men, in the traditional knowledge production process.

In this regard, methodology is defined by Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002) as a complex political process, which dealt with setting the contested links between epistemology, theory, ontology; as well as a reflection on the validity, ethics and accountability of the produced knowledge. Hereupon, Ramazanoglu & Holland (2002, p. 154) cautioned that ‘the interaction of your process of investigation and techniques of data production with your theory, ontology and epistemology’ should be termed ‘research design’ not ‘methodology’. From this point of view, Skinner et. al (2005, p.10) suggested that although they agreed with Ramazanoglu’s definition, they maintained that ‘the choice of method is influenced by one’s epistemological and theoretical position and is thus of methodological concern’.

Regarding the features identified with the feminist research, Skinner et. al. (2005, pp.10-15) elaborated five characteristics; 1) the focus on gender and gender inequality; 2) the rejection of the conventional academic distinction between the researcher and the ‘researched’ (Bergen, 1993; Cancian, 1992; Renzetti, 1997); 3) its enabling the voices of women and other marginalized groups to be heard and their experiences valued (Cancian, 1992; Renzetti, 1997; Oakley 2000); 4) the assertion of the importance of politically active (or political activist) (Bergen, 1993; Cancian,

1992; Renzetti, 1997) and indeed emancipatory research (Oakley, 2000), and 5) reflexivity. To put it another way, on the whole, feminists asserted that feminist researches should; focus on the experiences of women; problematize the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched; and should be *for* women, that is they should not only aim at analysis, but also at changing women's lives.

Concerning the discussion regarding the distinctive features of feminist methodology, Ramazanoğlu & Holand (2002, pp.15, 16) summarized four points. They suggested that; 1) 'Feminist methodology is not distinguished by female researchers studying women'; 2) 'There is no research technique that is distinctively feminist'; 3) 'There is no ontological or epistemological position that is distinctively feminist.'; and 4) 'Feminist methodology is distinctive to the extent that it is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women's experience.'. In particular, the researchers emphasized that the political positioning of theory, epistemology and ethics that enable the feminist researcher to question existing 'truths' and to study the knowledge-power relationship.

Regarding the recent criticisms directed at feminist theory, Ramazanoglu with Holland (2002) noted three different sources of criticism. Namely, they were; first, dominant approaches of science have criticized feminists for the failure to test their knowledge in terms of rationality, validity, methodology, control of subjectivity and political bias; second, women's diversified experiences of cultural and social differences, and power relations have challenged feminist theory; and, third, post-structural and postmodern thought, which gives up any conception of methodology for knowledge production of factual reality, have questioned the basics of feminist knowledge and methodology (Ramazanoğlu & Holand, 2002, pp.3-4). In this respect, it is noteworthy that since there is no single unified feminist theory or feminism, and feminists take differing ontological and epistemological standpoints, there can be no single feminist methodology (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002).

### 3.2. Feminist Epistemology

The traditional epistemological approach has argued that it provided room for everyone's interest on the basis of 'objectivity'. Criticizing this approach for muting the voices of women and the other marginalized groups, feminist epistemology has challenged it by problematizing the research strategies.

Focusing on the women's experiences, feminist epistemology questions women's neglect in the context of knowledge production. In addition, it argues that knowing includes power dynamics, and, thus, research grounds on a political basis. In this respect, feminist epistemology highlights the inquiry that whose knowledge is at work. Besides, it tries to demonstrate how the formation of knowledge is realized in a positional knowledge context; and how value judgments direct examination towards the conceptions, instruments, and procedures it requires to answer 'our value-laden questions' (Anderson, 2004, p.23).

As a consequence of the feminist epistemology discussions, the notion that men do not have the womanhood knowledge, which is based on the subjectivities of the women's life experiences, was brought about as an essential epistemological result. In addition, on a higher level, feminist epistemology discussions highlighted that knowledge and science have relations with sovereignty and hegemony, since knowledge includes organizational and institutional power relationships (Ecevit, 2011, p.47). Thus, feminists have been struggling to re-construct the conventional epistemological approaches, since the 1980s. In this respect, while some feminists grounded their epistemological discussions on the basis of the features of the data/proof, as *feminist empiricism approach*, others did, on the basis of the case of knowledge and the knower, as *FST*, which sets the theoretical framework of the present study.

### 3.3. The Criticism of the Concept of ‘Gender’

Feminist theory provided us with the concept of *gender*, which had been a powerful analysis tool for long. However, the concept got stuck by the emergence of different voices within the movement. By the criticism of the concept of *gender*, dynamic feminist discussions were brought to the movement’s agenda. In this regard, the criticism of *gender*, which resulted in the refreshment of feminist thought, particularly, after the emergence of the feminist epistemology discussions, has been a groundbreaking contribution in feminist thought (Ecevit, 2011).

In 1970s, the feminist intellectuals defined *gender* as a socially constructed concept. However, the content of the *gender* category has been started to be questioned after 1980s. In this respect, it has been emphasized that *gender* should be handled as both a subject relationship and a structural context, position and situation beyond being a cultural fact (Connell, 1995).

Referring to the feminist thought’s claim that women have common interests over which they can act collectively for improvements in their social situation, New (1998) also told that this ‘obvious’ truth has been increasingly challenged over the last two decades. Thus, the divisions between different groups of women and differences between feminists activists make the assertion of commonality, which is based on a universal category *woman*, impossible (Moore, 1994, p.79). In this respect, referring to the diversity among women, New (1998) discussed that women’s experiences are not the same and that even when they seem so, women reflect on them differently. Women are socially positioned on different dimensions, and this affect their way of living (Ramazanoglu, 1989, p. 145). Therefore, women’s ways of understanding their subjective situations are varied and there is no automatic collective action due to ‘similar’ ways of being to similar ways of knowing (New, 1998).

Regarding the content of 'gender', Ramazanoğlu & Holland (2002, p.4) stated that;

Feminism provides theory, language and politics for making sense of gendered lives, but no orderly position on pinning down the contradictions of 'gender'.

In particular, the researchers suggested that there are significant differences between thinking about *gender*; and that, rather than any compromised feminist position, there are profound arguments.

Referring to Western feminists in particular, Ramazanoğlu & Holland (2002) also discussed how the modernist feminists' extensive reliance on an undifferentiated category of *women* has shaken by the criticisms, which saw variations in subjective experiences of the women. The researchers also noted that *gender* has long been handled by the feminists as if *women* were a unified category throughout history and all over the world. In addition, Ramazanoğlu & Holland (2002, p.4) claimed that the issues of difference 'fracture, politicize and personalize all approaches to understanding gender'. Moreover, they positioned feminist knowledge claims, in tensions, between the knowledge of gender relations that take women's presence for granted, and the theories that detach the basis of feminist claims to knowledge, by handling *women* and *gender*, as products of ideas, rather than of embodiment, patriarchy or social construction (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002).

The inquiry of *gender-bias*, and thus, the focus on difference and subjectivity has brought about the fundamental initiatives and richness in the field. Besides, it has taken a stand against the bias of generalization of differences under the title of *gender* and prevented a serious mistake for social analysis (Ecevit, 2011).

### 3.4. Feminist Standpoint Theory

FST was named and defined firstly, in 1983, by Nancy Hartsock. Since then, the theory has undergone a range of theoretical and epistemological changes, as it still continues to provoke discussions among feminist scholars (Lenz, 2004).

Regarding its roots, FST is used to be linked to Marxist concepts of class, power relations and economy (Smith, 1987). In particular, it is associated with the Marxian analysis of the conditions of the working class as regards to the standpoint of the slave's life versus that of the master's life (Harding, 1991). Notably, through the 1970s, many feminist intellectuals began reflecting on how the Marxist analysis could be used as a tool, for the analysis of the way, the structural relationship between women and men had influenced the production of knowledge (Harding 1992, p. 442).

The concept of *standpoint* has been defined by different scholars. Lenz (2004, p.98) suggested that, for some feminist standpoint theorists, *standpoint* refers to a comprehension of perspective and experience as part of a larger social setting, that is a standpoint is 'an intellectual achievement that reflects political consciousness'. At this point, Lenz (2004, p.98) cautioned that the term *standpoint* refers to 'a fluid and dynamic negotiation of experience and point of view that can be temporarily stabilized in order to interrogate dominant ideologies', in direct contradiction to its daily usage that refers to 'a rigid or permanent stabilization of perspective'. Likewise, Sprague (2005) defined *standpoint* as 'the combination of resources available within a specific context from which an understanding might be constructed', and warned that it is 'not the spontaneous thinking of a person or a category of people' (p.41).

On the other hand, Edmonds-Cady (2009, p.15) defined *standpoint* as 'a critical perspective that marginalized or oppressed individuals may have about the ways in

which unequal power relations operate within society’, while Swigonski (1994, p.390) defined the term as ‘a position in society, involving a level of awareness about an individual's social location, from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured.’.

Swigonski (1994) defined *standpoint* as ‘a social position’ from which, ‘definite certain properties of reality come into prominence, and one can see some things more clearly than others’(p.172). Referring to Hartsock (1987), Swigonski (1994) emphasized that standpoints involve a level of conscious awareness, regarding two issues: one; being the location of the person in the social structure; and the second, being, the relationship of the location to the person’s true life experience.

Emphasizing the role of the oppressed group’s political struggles in revealing their standpoints, Edmonds-Cady (2009) claimed that standpoints are not automatic. Regarding the roots of one’s standpoint, Swigonski (1994) told that it emerges in relation to one’s social position as regards to gender, culture, color, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation; and how these factors influence each other and operate in one’s daily life. On the other hand, Wormer (2009) defined standpoint feminism in relation to the issues of power, marginalization, personal choice, and reliance on insider knowledge. In this respect, Ramazanoğlu & Holland (2002, p.171) defined *standpoint* as cited below:

An area of debate on how to produce the best current understanding of the relationship of feminist knowledge to women’s experiences and the realities of *gender*. Knowledge can (potentially) be produced from a feminist standpoint wherever women live in unequal gendered social relationships, and can develop a feminist political consciousness. It covers various ways of exploring (as opposed to assuming) the specificities of how women experience life differently from men, or intersexuals, or others, where they live in specific social relationships to the exercise of male power.

In reference to the relationship between knowledge and science, feminist standpoint epistemology at first questioned the concepts; the *knower*, the *known* and the *method of knowing*. Then, it claimed that knowledge, the knowledge of womanhood is partial, specific, situational and having alike features, and it is produced by the *knower*, who already has subjectivities.

Lenz (2004, p.100) suggested that standpoint theory offers a conceptual framework, which focused on the ‘deconstruction and decentralization of dominant ideologies’. In particular, the theory’s focus on outsider within perspectives enables deeper analysis of marginalized points of view to emerge, as not fixed or constant, but rather as continuously negotiated and progressive (Lenz, 2004).

Regarding the way for the less-powerful group’s developing a standpoint, Swigonski (1994) claimed that education is the basic means, and it is among the tenets of the standpoint theory. In specific, Swigonski (1994) asserted that, in the absence of any effort to reinterpret reality, that is, political consciousness, the marginalized are likely to accept the dominant worldview. Carrying the argument one step further, Swigonski (1994) suggested that, in order to survive, the oppressed groups should have a *double vision* or *consciousness*, that is, the knowledge of both the dominant group’s view of reality and their own. She also commented that marginalized groups have the potential for a more complete view of social reality. However, at this point, Swigonski (1994) cautioned that this more complete perception should not be considered as negating the serious and debilitating effects of oppressions, but rather should be taken a survival skill to cope with oppression (Swigonski,1994).

Emphasizing the importance of political consciousness and struggle, Swigonski (1994) noted that the comprehensiveness of the marginalized group’s view cannot be taken for granted and, that is it is contingent on the struggles they have against their oppressors. She claimed that researchers can understand hidden aspects of social relations between the marginalized groups and the institutions that structure their

lives, through their struggles against them; and can make sense of how the social order is constructed and maintained.

As a criticism directed at the fundamentals of science, the research that based on standpoint theory strengthens the objectivity of analysis, by denial of the Western 'native's' view of life, and offers an explanation for the production of preferable results in researches guided by social and political values (Swigonski, 1994). Thus, standpoint theorists ground their 'truth' claims on self-conscious analysis of power relationships, rather than on any universal epistemological standard (Lenz, 2004).

The assertion that *life experience* structures one's understanding of life is one of the tenets of the standpoint theory (Swigonski, 1994). The theory asserted that the life experiences of the marginalized groups -such as women, colored people, the poor, the elderly, lesbians and gay men, persons with disabilities- which have been mistakenly underestimated as starting points for scientific research for long, should be at issue for the research (Swigonski, 1994). In particular, beginning research from the lives of women has made the issues such as wife abuse, incest and rape visible, which are often invisible from the life experiences of most men (Swigonski, 1994).

FST seeks to understand social structures from a variety of locations (Lenz, 2004). The researchers, who have adopted working within FST, find that research problems emerge from the everyday life of marginalized-oppressed groups in relation to the social structure (Smith, 1987). Thus, research from this perspective attempts to understand how the social structure contributes to the daily life problems of the marginalized, and seeks for a liberating transformation of the social structure. (Swigonski, 1994).

*Difference* is one of the operational variables of the FST (Lenz, 2004). Lenz (2004) suggested that this theory can revive the inquiry of rigid categorizations, since it verifies that both individual experiences and their interpretations vary among members of any social group. Besides, the theory regards such variations as deepening and strengthening our understanding of the positions, at which various forms of oppression intersect, rather than seeing them as decreasing the study's possibility for wider application (Lenz, 2004).

As also emphasized by Swigonski (1994), the theory differs in its approach from the positivistic approaches, in which problems are often defined in reference to the personal differences, rather than to the wider context of the situation. Cautioning that the conception of the problems predominantly set the goals chosen, Swigonski (1994) claimed that the research focused on personal differences frequently results in victim-blaming notions regarding the social inequalities. Therefore, by considering the complex conditions, in which marginalized people experience oppression, feminist standpoint theorists can make sensible analyses, as regards to both individual perceptions and the wider social agents (Lenz, 2004). At this point, *social location* is another effective factor in shaping and constraining individual's perceptions of reality, which needs to be included in these sensible analyses. In this regard, Swigonski (1994) cautioned that all social workers should be informed that social location has a deep impact on perceptions of research issues and questions.

Apart from its focus on the difference, the theory also keynotes *daily life*. Swigonski (1994) suggested that the assertion, which envisions the development of the perspective of the oppressed group from their daily activities, is one of the tenets of the FST. These daily activities can help the less powerful to bridge the gap between ideological dualisms and the perspective of the *other*, and allows diverse cultural irrationalities/inconsistencies to emerge as sharper in view (Swigonski, 1994). In this

regard, the theory envisions that beginning research from everyday lives of the marginalized reveals the ways that the structuring of public world makes their lives invisible (Swigonski, 1994).

In reference to its claim of *epistemological privilege* of the marginalized, FST asserted that the most and the least powerful groups will potentially have conflicting ideas of the world (Swigonski, 1994). Since the least powerful groups have fewer interests for maintaining the status quo, their vision of life is more complete compared to those of the most powerful groups (Swigonski, 1994). In this regard, the theory argues that women are epistemologically privileged by virtue of their social positioning, that is, the women's position in society provides them with a vantage point from which they can view their own social reality (Swigonski, 1994). Furthermore, the theory portrays the members of marginalized groups as valuable *strangers* to the social order (Swigonski, 1994).

Regarding the literature on FST, some researchers have mentioned the compatibility of the theory with social work, which also focuses on people at the margins in society (Wormer, 2009; Swigonski, 1994; Edmonds-Cady, 2009). Emphasizing the significance of the theory for the social work research, Swigonski (1994) claimed that not only the life experiences of the marginalized are brought at the center of the research, but also the view of the researcher toward the social structures, which shapes the lives of the group members, is guided by the theory. At this point, in relation to women's victimization, Wormer (2009, p.109) underlined the importance of the following standpoint feminist values: reliance on the woman's narrative for truth telling; acceptance of a holistic view of reality covering a union of the personal and the political; a focus on choice and alternatives; an understanding of the gendered nature of power relations in the society; and an emphasis on empowerment and personal dignity of the individual.

Likewise, in her article, in which the claims of positivist approaches to science and research were discussed and some of the conflicts between those assumptions and the professional commitments of social work were highlighted, Swigonski (1994) suggested that approach of FST to research is highly in accordance with values and goals of social work. She also asserted that FST offers a less partial and less distorted approach to support social work's understanding of clients and practice. In addition, Swigonski (1994) highlighted the commitment to the oppressed groups' *empowerment* as a common feature of the theory and the social work, by pointing at the standpoint of the more general *other* in social work, and the standpoint of *women* in FST. Referring to the premise of the theory that all research should define its purposed benefits, she suggested that since social services researchers take on the role of change agents, their work is consistent with the tenets of the theory. Similarly, Wormer (2009) claimed that a conception of justice, namely *restorative justice*, particularly in the context of handling of some DV cases, is highly consistent with the basics of FST. In specific, Wormer (2009) emphasized that a woman-centered model of justice, which values caring and personal relations, might better reflect women's specific needs than the conventional forms of justice.

As the last word, regarding the tenets of the FST, Ecevit (2011, p.35) concluded the following propositions; 1) the concept of *gender* is a social construction; 2) it is constructed on the basis of women's life experiences; 3) the differences among women's life experiences depends on their subjectivities; 4) the subjectivities of the women are positional, contextual, situational, and even temporary and coincidental; 5) the subjectivities are constructed as reflexive and expressive; and 6) this construction corresponds to a political position and a standpoint. In addition, he commented that these propositions could clearly be interpreted as the 'last stop' that the feminist theory comes, in the context of modernity approach, and noted that it is noteworthy that the theory does not bring about the complete rejection of the positivist science apprehension.

### **3.5. The Case of Shelter A**

Shelter A has been one of the women's shelters, which was founded after the Municipality Law 5393 was in act, in 2005, in Turkey. It provides housing for battered women and their children for at least 3 months period; 7 days a week, on a 24-hour-basis. Its residential capacity is defined as *27 women* and the age restriction of the residents is defined as *18-60 years old* by the Province Directorship of the SSCPI. Living facilities include a first-admission room, three staff rooms, 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms (with toilet), 3 toilets, a communal living room and two kitchens, a multifunctional room for children, a play-ground for children, a multifunctional saloon and two living rooms for women, a laundry room and a storeroom. Normal living routines are encouraged as much as possible since the shelter is not considered an institutionalized living arrangement. Only paid staff members work at the shelter. While the security staff members work on 7 days a week on the 24-hour-rotation basis, in general, other staff members work from 8:00 a.m. to 17:00 p.m. 5 days a week.

For the first 29 months of the shelter, the staff was consisted of five security personnel, a psychologist (director), an administrative officer and associate personnel. Immediately after this period, one more psychologist and a social worker were employed. A sociologist was employed after almost three-and-a half years (41 months later). Although each staff has specific responsibilities in principle, job sharing is common due to demands of the shelter work, and institutional constrains.

The shelter was defined in a hierarchical administrative model. That is, it has served under a directorship; the directorship was bound up with a deputy mayor and the mayor came in the top of the hierarchy. Thus, the responsible institution for the funding of shelter has been the municipality.

## **3.6. Method**

### **3.6.1. Standpoint Methodology**

FST grounds its methodology in ‘outsider within’ positions, which are occupied by groups that are ‘included in dominant cultural practices but are nevertheless, for various reasons, unable to fully participate in them’ (Lenz, 2004, p.99). In addition, the theory promotes raising new questions that do not blame the victim.

Referring Harding, Swigonski (1994) noted that, in order to approach a research based on standpoint theory, researchers must consider the purpose of the research and the way the study welcomes the victim’s reflexivity. Swigonski (1994) also discussed the link between feminist standpoint methodology and social work. She criticized much social work research for their starting point from the privileged perspective of those, who control the social structure. In this respect, Swigonski (1994) suggested that grounding on this theory, social workers can carry out studies, which promotes diversity, and empowerment of both the clients and profession. Thus, the research that based on FST is political in the sense that it is committed to social action on behalf of oppressed groups (Belknap, 2007).

### **3.6.2. The Base of the Study**

Building on the epistemological ground that life experience shapes one’s understanding of life, FST drives the attention of researchers to widen resource base of the research by including problems from the everyday life reality of the marginalized groups (Harding, 1991).

In beginning research from the lives of the battered women as a researcher, I had the opportunity to ask questions about how the social structure and the welfare system

perpetuate DV against women, rather than how the battered women are different from 'non-battered women', for instance. As my interest grew for the issue as a potential research problem, I began to question: for whom this issue is a problem; the conditions of her daily life; and the determining features of the social structure, which contribute to the creation of those life patterns (Swigonski, 1994).

In addition, the claim that the dominant group's view will be partial and less realistic directed me, as a researcher, to question about: how my life experiences have influenced my understanding of this issue; how the world is like from the perspective of the subjects in my study; what choices the women in my study made and why they believed to do so (Swigonski, 1994). Besides, as also suggested by Swigonski (1994), I believe that social work researchers should take responsibility for developing a critical view on the daily realities of the research issues and helping members of marginalized groups in development of a critical way of thinking.

Adopting a feminist standpoint perspective, my epistemological stance in the study covers the notion that the voices of women, who were subjects in my study, should be privileged. I grounded this epistemic privilege on FST's claim that members of such marginalized groups are better positioned than members of dominant groups. In other words, I approached the battered women in my study as the experts on their own. Thus, for me, their subjective experiences were valuable for understanding the complexity of realities of DV against women, and were strong in terms of validity.

Basing my study on the FST, I envisioned room for social policy. Herein, as the researcher, I can explicitly tell that I had political motivations regarding the area of anti-violence work. Centering the experiences and ideas of the battered women at a women's shelter, which was run by a local authority in Turkey, could give signs of my political motives to the reader, in that, this means often challenging the hegemony of structure. In this respect, I totally agree with Harding's (1991)

assertion, which sees no room for an impartial, disinterested, value-neutral perspective in society, since the power is organized hierarchically on several dimensions within it. Thus, also, in line with Swigonski's (1994) claim that the researcher's repression/denial of the purposes of the work is a weakness rather than the 'objectivity', I approach my declaration of political motives as a powerful side of the research analysis.

Standpoint theory guides the researchers to choose the data collection methods that best fit their research questions (Swigonski, 1994). I grounded my study a *participatory method*, which is 'primarily differentiated from conventional research in the alignment of power within the research process' (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995, p.1668). The data included my own observations, experiences, inter-personal relationships, field notes; and the narratives of women and typescripts of interviews with the women and some staff meetings. In this respect, I believe that the participatory method was the best route for the voices of the marginalized women to emerge. Referring to the FST's commitment for *empowerment* (Swigonski, 1994), as the researcher, I can also tell that this method was directly in line with my conceptualization of this study.

In this study, *women's shelter* is defined as a safe, service-giving institution for women and children, who have been exposed to (often male) violence in a domestic context. Whether it is named as *women's shelter*, *women's shelter house*, or *women's guest-house* by different agencies in Turkey, they are described primarily 'as safe houses for women and children'. The term *women's guest house* is often used by the staff working in the shelters run by the SSCPI, while the terms *women's shelter/shelter house* sound more civilian and often used by the feminist staff in the field. The use of the word *house* with either *shelter* or *guest* is common in the field of shelter work, in Turkey.

### **3.6.3. Profile of the Sample**

The sample consisted of 78 women with an age range between 18 and 54 years, at the time of data collection, by participatory research method. 20 (25.6%) women were aged 18–25 years, 37 (47.4%) were aged 26–35 years, and 16 (20.5%) were aged 36–45 years, 5 (6.4%) were aged 46-55 years. The women entered the shelter during a 25-month period between the years 2007-2009.

The majority of the women were Turkish citizens; out of 78, only 4 (5.1%) were refugees. They arrived at the shelter from all regions of the country; while 53 were local applicants, 25 were applicants from other cities.

Almost all of the women suffered from poverty. None of the women had an independent personal income. The majority of the women was of low socio-economic class and earned minimum wage or subsisted from district/province allowances. Some of them were employed upon their arrival at the shelter, however the majority of the women did not have a profession. Among the ones, who told about having work experience, the majority stated that they had worked in unskilled occupations, such as housekeeping.

Regarding education levels; 2 (2.5%) women were illiterate; 2 (2.5%) were primary school drop-out; 47 (60.2%) were primary school graduates; 8 (10.2%) were secondary-school graduates; 16 (20.5%) had high school educations, and 2 (2.5%) had more than high-school education. There was one missing data due to the language problem with a refugee woman.

The majority of the women had children; out of 78 women, 61 (78.2%) had children. 26 (33.3%) women had 1 child; 20 (25.6%) had 2 children; 8 (10.2%) had 3 children, and 7 (8.9%) women had more than 3 children. However, not all women were with

their children during their stay at the shelter. Out of 61 women, who had children, only 27 (44.2%) women were with all of their children, while 10 (16.3%) women had some of their children with them; and 24 (39.3%) had none of their children with them during their shelter stay.

Upon their arrival at the shelter; 41 (52.5%) women were married (legally); 23 (29.4%) were divorced; and 14 (17.9%) women were single. Among the 64 (82%) women, who had an experience of marriage, only 6 (9.3%) had more than one (legal) marriage.

Regarding their departures from the shelter, out of 78 women, only 18 (23%) women were found to return to their abusers. The length of stay in the shelter ranged from 1 day to 8 months. Of 78 women; 26 (33.3%) women stayed up to 2 weeks; 12 (15.3%) stayed between 3-4 weeks; 27 (34.6%) stayed 5-12 weeks; 8 (10.2%) stayed between 13-24 weeks, and 5 (6.4 %) women stayed between 25-36 weeks.

During this participatory research, the women shared varied experiences with me since I was in the position of the *psychologist* and *director* at the shelter. Salient among these experiences were their experiences of family and/or partner violence; concern for their children (if they had any) and their future. Overall, the women told their experiences of DV, and their attempts for seeking help from support mechanisms in order to end the violence, before their arrival at the Shelter A. They shared many recollections of the ways in which specific factors affected their decisions to leave the abusive relationships. In order to present a whole picture of the shelter, apart from the experiences of the women, I also focused on the women's experiences of shelter stay, in which I had witnessed and taken an active role.

#### **3.6.4. Procedure for Data Collection and Analysis**

The sampling method was purposive; although I had been in the director position for more than four years, I studied the cases of the women, only, with whom I had one-to-one relationship, in the first 2 years of the shelter service. Despite the fact that a purposive and non-statistical sample was used, a heterogeneous sample was present. The sample consisted of women, who had stayed at the shelter between October 2007-November 2009. A participatory research method, which focused on the interpersonal communication among different parties, was adopted. As additional data source, the audio-recorded information and written notes on intake interviews and in-depth interviews following intake interviews; written reports, and observational field notes were included. Notably, no criterion for inclusion in the study was set in advance, except for being victims of violence and residents at the shelter.

Regarding the recorded data mentioned above, I conducted the interviews in comfortable settings as far as the institutional facilities allowed; in a vacant office at the municipality, at the shelter or a counseling center of another municipality. The intake interviews were semi-structured; this allowed the women to shape the flow and content of the talk in accordance to their needs. Thus, the standpoints of the women were not disregarded; this provided a richer set of data. Each intake interview covered general questions about the woman's personal background, her experience of violence, the circumstances that had brought her to the shelter, the ways in which she had sought help and the responses to her help-seeking efforts. In addition, if applicable, each woman was asked about her previous experiences of staying at a women's shelter.

In interviews after the intake session, since the women have become the residents of the shelter then, the focus was on the women's current needs then. That is the agenda of these interviews was defined by each woman's specific situation. In addition,

questions related to each woman's experience of life at the shelter were directed. The unstructured interviews allowed me to ask questions to clarify the women's responses, and also allowed the women to ask me questions. Each interview lasted for varying time periods and the number of the interviews changed depending on the situation, the demand of the women, and my availability at the shelter.

Some of the intake and after-intake interviews were audio-recorded, and others were taken notes by hand. I analyzed and wrote up the data in the form of case studies, a useful approach for analyzing the subjects' subjective experiences and ideas. Afterwards, the tape-recordings were transcribed, and written notes and reports were examined, that is, a preliminary analysis was conducted. This process included categorization of content and identification of salient themes, with a focus on the *difference*. Re-reading the recorded material enabled me to make draft plan regarding the organization of the data. In the data analysis, the specificities of the women were highlighted together with salient themes that repeated themselves in the data. Then, the process of analysis came to the level of abstraction and integration of concepts to a theory. The findings were discussed in reference to what the women experienced and how they experienced descriptions, with quotations from interviews. The private names of the individuals, places and cities cited in the quotations are either omitted or changed, in order to maintain confidentiality of the subjects, in the study.

Apart from the recorded material (audio-recorded data and written reports), since a participatory method is adopted, interpersonal communications among different parties were included. This constituted the basis and richness of the data in this study. Contrary to many conventional researches that involve limited interactions with the subjects of the study, this research covered data on an enriched spectrum. Overall, the present study covered a high-level of in-depth participation. It grounded on my four-year-shelter-work-experience, thus, a shelter staff's active role taking in a variety of situations. In particular, during my employment for the Shelter A, I had

taken both the position of the learner and facilitator in my relationships with the women, children, the staff, the municipality administration, and other actors in the field, outside the municipality. In addition, this study did not have a rigid design. Including the audio-recorded data presented in the other chapters, none of the data was obtained in the context of a previously set specific research agenda, in this study.

### **3.6.5. Ethical issues**

Throughout the analysis of my experience at the shelter, I addressed the issues of power relations, reflexivity, ethics, reciprocity, and representation, which were detailed in the ‘Self-Reflection’ part of the study.

Regarding my position in the intake interviews, although I had declared that I was a psychologist, I had tried to be distant from the psychologist role and tried to adopt the role of a silent listener for encouraging the women tell about their narratives, as they wish, as much as possible. However, since the majority of the interviews were emotionally charged, I had often intervened and reflected on the situation.

Since this study depends on my work experience as a shelter staff, rather than being a product of a planned and structured research design; reciprocity and reflectivity through several interactions had been at issue between me, as the researcher, and the women, as the subjects of the study. Due to my position as a psychologist and director at the Shelter A, I had rarely taken the role of a *silent facilitator* in my interactions with the women, contrary to many studies in literature. I had been often in the position of an *active facilitator* in my relationships with the women.

Regarding the participatory method I adopted, without a doubt, I can acknowledge that it was not a simpler alternative to conventional research methods. It was far from easy to work on my *visible* position in the study. In particular, often, I experienced

the ethical unease about whether I could have reflected the reality as it had been, or unconsciously not. The fact that I was the only person active in the position of controlling the data could have posed ethical problems in the analysis. In this respect, I tried to overcome this problem by attempting to achieve utmost transparency of my motivations, reflections and emotions, by issuing them, particularly in the ‘Self-Reflection’ part of this study.

### **3.6.6. Researcher’s Reflexivity**

The documentation of lived experience of women while respecting their subjectivities necessitates specific attention to methodological issues and the type of methods adopted (Mauthner, 2000). The role of the researcher’s own subjectivity in the production of knowledge throughout the research process is one of the major focuses in FST.

In this respect, Harding (1991) took notice of the researcher’s ‘social fingerprints’, which define the problems, concepts, assumptions and hypotheses of the research. To say it differently, she cautioned that the class, culture, ethnicity, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the researchers should be placed in the frame of analysis and report (Harding, 1991). Likewise, Ramazanoglu (with Holland 2002) suggested that in order to succeed an effective reflexivity, the researcher needs to consider and be willing to discuss: the effects of power relations on the research process; the ethical judgments made; and her/his accountability for the produced knowledge. Besides, researcher’s reflexivity is a valuable tool in that it can be used to identify cultural assumptions and biases (Swigonski, 1994).

With such considerations in mind, I have worked on my *self-reflection* by referring to my motivations, realizations, disappointments and emotions through my employment at the Shelter A.

### 3.6.7. Self-Reflection

*My motivations:* Regarding women's rights issues, our education system and social tenets are based on discourses that disable us from recognizing many questions, let alone looking for answers. Thus, as women, realizing the implications of the sexist practices on our lives and working on them is far from easy.

One of the discourses, which I have witnessed its rehearsal many times throughout my education up to the university, includes the teaching that 'Turkish family structure is patriarchal'. In her book *Sexism in School Books: 1928-1995 (Ders Kitaplarında Cinsiyetçilik: 1928-1995)*, Helvacıoğlu (1996) commented on the portrayal of women in school books in 1990s, in which I was a primary-school child, as follows;

The woman type drawn in 1990s depends on the man for living. The 'self-regained' woman type, which has been often mentioned in the textbooks in the early years of the Republic, has already been dropped behind for long. In Turkey of the 1990s, the artificial respect in the textbooks for this woman type, which lost her 'self', serves for the rolling back of the woman's position even more (p.40).

In the absence of feminist consciousness, such portrayals come along with us throughout many years and reflect in our practices, when we get in employment. In particular, regarding the shelter system, the discourses like 'Women often lie in the intake interview'; 'It is required to listen the story from both parties'; or 'The majority of the women receiving service at shelters are not the ones, who are in need of a shelter, in fact' influence our ability to find the questions and answers that impact survivors experiences. At this point, I had realized that the specificities of the experiences of women, who have been subjected to DV, have almost been erased in the existing system, in Turkey. In addition to sharing the *invisible* experiences of the women they had gone through in the aftermath of the violence, I have also attempted to challenge these discourses by focusing on their specificities. As an

*insider/outsider-within*, I have questioned myself; whether I could have managed to reflect on my experience honestly, throughout this study.

My own personal experience of violence, and a DV field study I had conducted in my undergraduate years had motivated me to become involved in anti-violence work. In particular, it was primarily my personal case of a dating experience through my undergraduate years, and my testimony for the experience of some friends and relatives. The significance of my personal experience is that it helped me to develop an awareness of the impact of violence on women's lives; and to realize how the women with adequate resources loose in taking action, against a violent partner, in the lack of feminist consciousness.

Referring to the several positions I had taken through my active involvement at the Shelter A, and the reflections of the many residents, I can conclude that I had altruistic motivations throughout my employment at the shelter. In this respect, my altruism was strongly related with my political motives and the desire for widespread social change in the area. In other words, the feminist politics were of higher importance for me. This was related to my feelings of anger and frustration about my own experience, my concern for the billions of other women in the world, and my testimony regarding the further victimization many women had experienced at the hands of statutory agencies, in quite many of the situations.

Through the years of my experience in shelter work, I had never had a fear of naming myself as 'feminist', due to the probable perception of 'promoting women, rather than promoting equality' by the administration. However, I had often questioned the extent of the applicability of feminist politics, within the organization of a women's shelter, which was run by a municipal authority. In addition, I had to deal with a range of constrains in order to make a small difference. This contributed to my burn-out, particularly in the first two years of my job.

Apart from perceiving my position in a local authority as an opportunity for doing feminist politics -pushing either the administrative or the *invisible* limits in every specific case of woman as far as I could- had meant an ethical responsibility for me in that, I believed, I was in a position to transfer. Therefore, I had experienced a tension with some staff members, who had basically the motivation of gaining a social status with the title of 'being an expert in the shelter work'.

*My disappointments/realizations:* I had often overworked and under severe stress particularly in the first almost two-and-a-half years of the shelter. I had worked as the only professional staff, in the norm permanent staff, which was defined in the regulations of women's shelters, by the SSCPI, then. The work was all-consuming; almost I had been breathing together with the women at the shelter. Thus, I was ill prepared to deal with some problematic practices of the professional staff members, who did not define themselves as feminists; and who had been employed almost with two-and-a-half years of delay. In particular, the escalating power struggles by time had left me frustrated and passive to react against the tactics that were politically unethical for me, in the last year of my employment. Therefore, I was driven out of the shelter work by systematic *invisible* attacks on my character, in fact, my political motivations. As being one of the consequences, the local civilian network for the shelter work, which I had initiated in the third year of the shelter, has lost from its political character. In this respect, for me, running anti-violence work, when, often, there was no administrative demand or vision; and setting an agenda, regarding combat against DV in a city, could not be done just for helping in itself, but rather it was specifically about being a *feminist*.

Regarding my personal transformation, I feel I had changed working in a women's shelter. In specific, I have learnt to live with anger for the people in position of power, who do not act for their responsibility, in the field, since they do not envision it as a material for politics. Likewise, regarding perceptions of my role in the helping process, by the time I began to no longer view a successful intervention in terms of

whether a woman permanently leaves her abusive partner or not. Rather, I began to view my role as assisting a woman to challenge her views of the violent relationship.

*My emotions:* The thoughts of potentially violent situations had been almost a part of my everyday life. They were not only present in my office hours, but also in my dreams, in such a way that for a long time, I had even feared from sleeping.

As a shelter staff and a feminist woman, I had sometimes got depressed from hearing all the suffering. The number of women and children, the complexity of their situations, the concern about their situation after the shelter, and the most important of all, institutional constraints had often worn me out. In the early two years, in particular, I had become burn-out and destroyed my health and, thus, my personal life. At this point, what kept me going on, was the belief that the shelter could facilitate the women's empowerment.

I had often not regarded my office, at the shelter, as a regular workplace. In fact, it was not, either. My perceptions concerning my position at the shelter have often changed along a continuum; from 'building manager' to 'baby-sitter', or 'repairer', and the like. In line with my perceptions, throughout my direct experience with the women at the shelter, I was often called 'sister, sister-in-law, lady manager, lady doctor, hodja' by the women and children.

The central coping mechanism I had used in dealing with the emotional difficulties of shelter work was not 'talking to colleagues and relying on their support', as the literature often suggests. Rather, it was, relying on the support of the women and children at the shelter, my instructors in the graduate program, and some women, in shelter work, in other cities. However, without my own political motivations, such support would not be adequate to keep me working at the shelter. Thus, despite difficult times, I was sustained in shelter work, by my relationships with the residents, and by the knowledge that my work was politically of worth. In this respect, I saw the reliance on the feminist women in shelter work, in other cities, as

related to notions of feminism. In the course of time, I had also discovered that, acknowledging the effects of working with the survivors of DV, is the first step towards self-care. In that sense, being a master's student in Gender & Women's Studies contributed me a lot. In addition, relying on the feminist women experienced in shelter work, to discuss the impact of the work, also increased my overall situation of psychological health.

By the time I had begun to work at the Shelter A, I had just graduated from the university. Thus, I was inexperienced in shelter work. In addition, since I had been the only professional staff for the first almost two-and-a half year, which resulted in role-confusion for me and also for the residents, I had no opportunity of any form of intervision and supervision. Furthermore, I was the first one to settle up the system in the context of both the municipality and the city, since there had been no women's shelters, or counseling centers, run by any of the municipalities in the city, up to then. This position provided me with a different point of view regarding what could be further done, and helped me, often, in keeping myself away from the standard tough practices. However, it had also weighted me down with a range of responsibilities. I was also positioned within a context, in which the political will of the administration regarding running a women's shelter, had often been questionable. Besides, throughout my employment, experiencing psychological harassment had been at issue for me, from time to time.

On the other hand, there were no women's NGOs experienced in shelter work, to collaborate, in the city, by the time I had begun to work. In addition, I had almost no social network in the city, for the first two years, since I had moved to that city for the job. At that point, the institutional constraints and the potential risks of shelter work were added to my personal limitations, and, thus, professional burn-out became unavoidable for me. In that sense, witnessing a woman's suicide at the shelter, in the first year, and the institutional responses I had observed in that case, were the most traumatic experiences I had ever had. Afterwards, I had also witnessed a shelter staff

lost her baby due to the fear she had experienced in that occasion. Moreover, some women had left the shelter with the pressure of conscience they had, since they had thought that, their children had witnessed the suicide because of their decision to leave the house. The belief that, it could be prevented, if the system had not been that unresponsive, terrorized me inside. It did not only impact my professional view point, but also it impaired my personal life, at that time.

Apart from the psychological effects, I had gone through varicella with the risk of encephalitis, in the first year of the work, which was transmitted me from a 4-year-old child of a resident. The virus could not have been detected, through the health checks, on their admission to the shelter. Those days, this experience had also added to my inquiry, regarding the value of the work I had done at the shelter. Is it worth keeping on working, despite all the negative experiences I had gone through? Then, again I had the energy to maintain the impoverished shelter by the help of my close relationships, particularly, with the women at the shelter. My political motivations and the energy I had gotten from the women and the children sustained me at the shelter, despite the existence of tiring interactions both within and outside the institution. However, I can acknowledge that, I had *not always* perceived the shelter, as a powerful uniting point over the differences among women- who never would have met otherwise- in terms of class, race, ethnicity and the like. I had also witnessed that, the shelter atmosphere served as a point to marginalize the differences, when the specificities of the experiences of women were underestimated, by either the staff and or the system.

On the whole, writing this thesis means much to me: it means; confrontation with my practices; questioning my effectiveness as a professional woman, who defines herself as feminist; recall of the pain of many women and children, and the pain brought about my feelings of loneliness that I had for long wanted to erase from my memory. Therefore, it is an energy-consuming process that I had often felt like giving up.

## CHAPTER IV

### CASE STUDY

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the Shelter A regarding its structural organization and residents. In the *Structure* section, issues regarding management and organization of the shelter are described and discussed, in relation to its target group, principles, foundation, organizational structure and its staff. In the *Subjects* section, the women are brought under close shot under two basic focus points. Namely, they are the *gender category* and focus on the *difference*. While the basic characteristics of the women are described under the category of *gender*, their subjective experiences of violence and shelter stay are discussed in relation to the concepts of the FST, with a focus on the *difference*. The women's experiences of violence are discussed in the context of partner violence, family violence, and violence of the third parties. On the other hand, their experiences of shelter stay are discussed in relation to their subjectivities; their perceptions of the shelter staff; and their relationships with the other residents at the shelter.

#### 4.1. The Structure of Shelter A

##### 4.1.1. Residents: For whom the shelters are?

By their nature, women's shelters are for all women, who have been subjected to any forms of violence in the domestic sphere. Even though, the majority of the battered women has been subjected to DV and, in particular, to the violence of men; in some situations, they may be abused by women, or by a third party outside the family, as in the case of some residents of the Shelter A.

Women's shelters should admit all women regardless of age, religion affiliation, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities, legal, marital status, political belief and social status. However, serving all women in a system, where there is almost no specialization among shelters, seems problematic for the quality of shelter work, in Turkey. Even if, it cannot be regarded as a specialization, there is a distinction between the women's shelters run by the SSCPI and the municipalities. That is, there is an age range, which is 18-60, regarding residents, defined for shelters run by municipalities, by a regulation.

Although their aim of existence is strongly linked with combating DV, in practice, it depends on the decision of the individual shelter to define a target group, apart from the victims of DV. Ideally, the definition should be grounded on the available services that can be provided at the shelter and the shelter's cooperation network with specialized services in that city. However, in practice, in addition to the available services and safety provisions; the attitudes, prejudices of the staff and political or hierarchical pressures on the shelter staff can be at issue. In addition, lack of other alternative mechanisms for the women, who have been victims of other forms of violence, seems to be the key problem. At this point, it should be taken into account that these women, the women that suffer from alcohol/substance addiction or severe psychiatric health problems could have a past and/or current experience of DV, and should have an access to a service. However, a standard women's shelter, in which the specificities of the women were blurred, in the absence of the specialized services, may not be a right address for these women.

Women's shelters are also for children, who are victims and/or witnesses of violence against their mother. The key problem regarding the children is that there is an age limit for male children, in the majority of the shelters, as in the case of Shelter A, in Turkey. This may be, in part, due to the living conditions and absence of privacy in the large number of women's shelters, in Turkey. In addition, there is an article in the

regulations of women's shelters defined by the central government, which limits the age of the male children to 12-year-old. In such cases, finding an accommodation for the male children can be done through cooperation with the SSCPI. However, in all cases, in which the women, who had male children older than 12-years-old and applied for a place in Shelter A, no solution could be achieved by means of this way. In these cases, the salient problems emerged as the institutional constraints of the SSCPI, the women's reluctance for separating from their children and their negative attitude towards this institution. Therefore, through cooperation with social welfare authorities, helping women to receive social assistance for an apartment, in a safe place, was a reasonable alternative, in the case of the Shelter A.

#### **4.1.2. Principles of Operation**

By the women's movement, in general, the feminist principles are assumed to work well in shelter work. In the context of Shelter A, since it is run by a municipality, it is not a dependent, separate institutionalization. Thus, the working principles were defined within the limits set by the people in authority, who were often inexperienced in shelter work. Therefore, the principles of the shelter could be often an issue of *bargaining* between the shelter staff and the top administration. At this juncture, the principles defined by the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE, 2004) were discussed in the context of the Shelter A, as below:

*Feminist analyses* : Ideally, DV should be considered primarily as a social and political problem and the shelter should be 'allowed' by the running organization to act a political role in awareness-raising activities. That is, the context for women to speak out and act against violence should be set by the authorities running women's shelters. However, in the case of the Shelter A, apart from acting for the implication of feminist analyses, even the definition of DV as a 'political' problem, and the

pronunciation of the word ‘feminist’ had been, often, distant, for the administration of the municipality, for 4 years.

*Women helping women:* As suggested by WAVE (2004), since women, who are subjected to DV, suffer predominantly from male abuse, it is vital to provide support from a female counselor specialized in the field. This has also been taken part, as a suggestion, in the shelter’s regulation, by the SSCPI, in Turkey. In the context of Shelter A, all of the staff members, except the three of the security personnel, were women. Apart from internalizing the principle of ‘women helping women’, the administration’s perception towards the practice of this principle was, almost, related to; its provision of ‘comfort’ that women-men contact at the shelter was at the minimum level.

*Advocacy for women:* Working at a women’s shelter requires taking a clear stance on that it is always the perpetrator, who has the responsibility for the violence. Otherwise, falling in the trap of being ‘neutral’ comes along with the tolerance for violence against women. In the case of the Shelter A, what the women told was not a subject of inquiry. However, I witnessed that, in some cases of women, the institutional concerns came prior to the advocacy for women, and structural constraints set barriers against women’s empowerment. In particular, in some cases, the shelter’s relationships with other institutions such as, the Bar and the SSCPI became at issue; while, in others, the concerns were often related with bypassing a perceived risk/threat against the institutional reputation, directed by some women.

*Team work:* Promoting participatory practices is essential in the sense that it can be a model for the residents. However, in the context of Shelter A, the applicability of this principle was squeezed within the limits of a hierarchical structure defined, by the SSCPI, and practices by the administration. In addition, as if they were an independent group of staff, the security staff (with 5 members) of the Shelter A was,

principally, at first, responsible to their own chief; and the chief depends on the manager of the security company, which had the protocol with the municipality. In theory, it could be easy to compromise that, working on a team basis and involving the staff in all the decisions, in order to enable them to participate in the development of the service, is paramount. However, it could be often problematic in such structural organization.

*Participation and democratic structures:* Ideally, in a women's shelter, there are regular meetings, which give the women opportunity to be involved in shelter life. At this point, it is noteworthy to be careful that the meetings are not turned into an atmosphere, in which the regulations of the shelter constantly repeated by the staff and women's lives are controlled (WAVE, 2004). In the case of the Shelter A, realization of this principle was, often, problematic, due to the institutional constrains. In particular, it was due to factors such as; the burn-out of some shelter staff, the professional shelter staff's preoccupation with the economical cuts on the shelter budget, and the inexperience/low-quality of the shelter staff.

*Right to self-determination:* Regarding the woman's right to self-determination about what steps to take, in relation to her perpetrator(s); almost all the staff members of the Shelter A had succeeded in maintaining a negotiation. In addition, as in a ideal situation, it should be the woman's right to define her duration of shelter stay. However, due to the capacity limit, it could pose problems, as it was in the case of Shelter A, from time to time. Apart from the capacity limit, the formation of a rigid hierarchy between the former residents and current residents then, had caused problems. Besides, it threatened the efficacy of the shelter's operation in some cases.

*Confidentiality:* The disclosure of no information about any women, without their consent, is one of the basic principles of the shelter. In the intake interviews, exceptions (i.e. women abusing their children or another resident, etc.) were

explained by the staff to the women. Even if, the confidentiality of the residents could be achieved, in the majority of the cases of Shelter A; there had been also exceptional cases, in which it failed. The reason was the act of an associate shelter personnel in some cases. However, in the majority of the cases, the reason was the act of a staff in other institutions, which transferred the woman to the Shelter A.

*24 hour service and no time limit for stay:* Principally, a woman should be able to reach a women's shelter 24 hours a day for immediate support and protection. In the case of Shelter A, there was no specialized hotline set by the municipality, but there was a general telephone number available for 24 hours a day and for also weekends. In addition, there was a hotline serving on 24-hour-basis, which had been run by the SSCPI. However, it could be suggested that the publicity for this emergency phone number was inadequate, since any residents of the Shelter A had stated that they had been guided by this helpline, which is 187, to the shelter.

A policy, which considers not turning away any women in acute danger, was adopted in Shelter A. The members of the professional staff were available within the office hours in weekdays. Thus, upon the applications for the shelter outside office hours or days, the staff responding the phone or contacting with the police used to get in touch with the shelter director, and took the applicant women to the shelter (in some cases, despite the guidance of the shelter staff for the municipality building, the police directly took the women to the Shelter A). The shelter staff used to help the woman settle down in the first admission room of the shelter, in which the woman stayed till she had an intake interview with a professional staff. In addition, since there was one more women's shelter in the city, which has been run by the SSCPI and has ensured round the clock service, the applicant women could have also been addressed in some cases, due to some reasons such as; capacity limit and the woman's age being either under 18 or over 60.

*Accountability:* In principle, the conduct of the shelter staff should be answerable to its residents, to the institution and society in general. However, in my opinion, this is closely linked to documentation, and the documentation is linked to the human resource capacity of a shelter. In Shelter A, particularly in the first two-and-a-half year, in which there was only one professional staff taking several roles simultaneously, the staff realized that when accountability aspect -in the sense of documentation of the shelter work- was tried to be managed, much work was sacrificed on the side of the women, at the shelter.

*Principles regarding the quality of service:* As suggested by WAVE (2004), professionalism, staff training and supervision, the balance between the staff's workload and shelter's capacity, regular quality control checks and the staff's being adequately paid are prerequisites for the quality of service given at a women's shelter. In the Shelter A, regular quality checks had never been an issue, that is, evaluations had been made through individual cases and complaints. In some women's cases when a problem was reflected to the administration of the municipality, the quality became an issue; but this time in the context of questioning the practice of the shelter staff members rather than the structural/organizational constraints.

Regarding the evaluation of the quality of service, at the Shelter A, in the context of staff-related issues; a poor picture has emerged. Due to the same reason mentioned above, that is, since, in the first two-and-a-half year, there was only one professional staff taking several roles simultaneously, no balance between the staff's workload and shelter's capacity was at issue. Likewise, no supervision was available for the shelter staff. Afterwards, with the employment of additional professional staff in the third year of the shelter service, training of the staff came to the agenda.

*Principles regarding the structure and funding:* As suggested by WAVE (2004), in principle, women's shelters should be run by women's NGOs, and funded by the state. However, in practice, the majority of the women's shelters, in Turkey, are predominantly run by either the central government, or the municipal authorities, as in the case of the Shelter A.

*Services free of charge:* As also noted by WAVE (2004), in order to ensure that survivors of DV can find shelter regardless of their financial status, free shelter services are essential. Since the Shelter A had been run by a municipal authority, a public service that was free of charge had been given.

#### **4.1.3. Funding and Founding**

Since financial issues have considerable effect on the quality of services in a shelter, they are vital in both the process of settlement and service provision processes (WAVE, 2004). For the Shelter A, the financial considerations, often as constituting one of the most difficult tasks to handle, could be suggested as, the clear measures of the political will of the administration has, in combating DV.

As defined in the shelter regulations, municipal authorities that run women's shelters require meeting with definite standards, in terms of quality and professional services. In fact, it is vital that all women's shelters -whether run by women's NGOs, by the central government, or by municipal authorities- should be provided with an adequate funding. However, although, a large number of municipalities that run shelters state in their own women's shelter internal guidelines that, they will run shelters at all costs; as it had, often, been at issue, in the case of Shelter A, the financial considerations often becomes a battlefield between the shelter staff and the top administrators. In addition, risking their position as a public servant in the municipality, the shelter staff sought for donations of individuals. At this point, I

think, the regulations should be binding, that is, a control mechanism should be at issue in the system, to act against financial cuts.

Regarding *founding*, creating an awareness about the benefits and functions of women's shelters is essential before practical steps are taken for its foundation. In the case of Shelter A, there had been no network of people at the municipality, who had supported the idea of setting up a women's shelter, except a woman assembly member, who had been pointed at by the administration, as the person, who 'constantly insisted on' the municipality's opening a women's shelter.

Founding a women's shelter requires political will, a detailed planning and a collaborative work of committed staff in the concerned local administration. In this regard, there are standards defined by the SSCPI. In particular, they are the standards regarding; the legal basis, aims, target group of service, administration and organization, the quality and responsibilities of the staff, location, and infrastructure, services provided and working principles, which should be complied by the municipality, in order to receive a legal opening permit by the SSCPI. Additionally, each municipality has to prepare its own Women's Shelter House Internal Service Guidelines, in which basic responsibilities and duties must be defined.

Before the construction of the Shelter A, a preliminary study had been carried out by the initiative as regards to; the number and capacity of shelter houses in the city and public transport facilities. However, no studies had been reviewed regarding; the incidence rate of DV, service provision system, in the city, for the battered women, and shelter work experience at the national and international level. In addition, before the practical steps were taken, no detailed plan had been made as regards to; capacity, services, workflow of the staff, a management plan for the shelter, budgeting and cooperation with other stakeholders.

Regarding the *seize* of the shelter, what is determinative is the capacity defined. A women's shelter is a public building with specific needs. Thus, the underestimation of the shelter design at the project phase may result in further challenges as it begins to service, as it was in the case of Shelter A.

The project of the building began after the municipalities law was in act, in 2005. At first, the building was designed in order to serve two different functions; one as a women's shelter, and the other being a shelter for street urchins. From outside, the building seems to be as one single apartment, but inside there are two separate buildings. Thus, the building has 2 entrances. The entrance, which was designed for the women's shelter, seems as more sheltered when compared to the other. The reason why the project of the building was designed envisioning two different functions was that the architect of the municipality aimed at creating the idea that it was just a shelter for street urchins, hiding the women's shelter function of the building. However, having received negative responses and complaints from residents of the district, after a while the municipality announced that the building would serve as a sports center for women, not as a shelter for the street urchins.

Since the plot space of the building was too narrow for serving too different functions, the building needed to be heightened up, and thus it had four floors. Since the building was at the city center and located nearby other apartments in the neighborhood, the architect designed it as having no balconies with the reasons of safety and confidentiality. Instead, she preferred to design an inner garden as a play ground for children within the building, between the two different functioned buildings. In the project, it was assumed that the inner garden would be used only by the women's shelter. However, in reality it was seen that the building designed as a sports center for women had windows seeing the inner garden. In addition, there is a contradictory relationship between the location of the building and its physical structure. The neighborhood at issue was surrounded overwhelmingly by detached

houses. However, the shelter building was as four-floor apartment with no balconies, opal-glass windows, no apartment name and number. Therefore, due to the location of the building, the outward appearance of the shelter was quite remarkable and could not succeed in drawing an image of an ordinary house.

The building, which was designed as the shelter, initially had two offices and one bathroom for the staff on the ground floor. On the first floor, there were two multi-purpose etude rooms for women and children. On the second floor, there was a kitchen and a saloon. On the third floor, there were four bedrooms and two bathrooms. On the fourth floor, there were four bedrooms and two bathrooms, one bedroom and one bathroom being for the staff with night-shift. On the other hand, the building, which was designed as the women's sports center, had a saloon, a children's play room and a toilet on the first floor; and a saloon and a kitchen on the second floor. However, there were no space designed for this building on the third and the fourth floor. Thus, there, two bedrooms and two bathrooms for the residents of the women's shelter house were present. Therefore, the inside design of the building seems like a labyrinth; too complicated and problematic as regards to confidentiality and safety. In addition, the design was inadequate in terms of functions of a women's shelter.

After the construction of the building was over, the shelter could not begin to serve for almost 8 months. It could not receive a legal opening permit from the SSCPI due to the absence of a professional (a psychologist or a social worker) defined in the law by then. After its recruitment of a psychologist as the director of the shelter, the municipality received a legal opening permit and after almost 3 months, it began to accept applications. Through these three months, the director succeeded to persuade the administration to abandon the idea of using the building for two different purposes; that is, rather use the building just as the women's shelter.

In the course of time, the shelter began to transform itself with its staff and residents as new requirements arose. At first, before the shelter began to service actively, the director -as the only staff employed for the shelter at her first three months- started to define the missing equipments at the shelter such as; the security camera system, and the window-guards for the ground floor of the building. Since the administration preferred to employ security staff from the private corporation that it had a contract before, and there was an alarm system directly linked to the security company, additional technical equipments such as, glass breaking sensors, magnetic locks main floor door were not present. On the other hand, as women and children began to reside at the shelter, the staff and the women tried to make the shelter more like a home. The women told the psychologist that due to the bunk beds reminded them of the days they received psychiatric treatment at the hospital; and that they felt as if they were trapped in a grave. Therefore, the majority of the bunk beds in the bedrooms were dismantled and organized as single beds after consideration of these criticisms by the staff.

Regarding the physical structure, what most shelter houses lack was adequate space for each woman. As the tension escalated, and women began to complain more of each other to the director, functions of some rooms were changed. Likewise, the other part of the building, which was designed as a sports center for women in the neighborhood, was also opened for the shelter residents use. In addition, the women changed the places of the furniture as long as they compromise among themselves. Thus, forcing the existing physical constrains to widen the personal space of women, and provide them an appropriate environment, to be able to recover from their traumatic experiences, the director attempted to make life as comfortable as possible. However, since the initial project of the shelter design was inadequate, and the completion of the basic equipments and other necessary staff, had been often subject to negotiation between the director and administration, design of the rooms could not done at first. Rather, it could be succeeded almost in two and a half years time.

As shown in the study of Haj-Yahia & Sadan (2003), there is a need to improve the physical infrastructure of the shelters. According to Haj-Yahia & Sadan (2003), a respectful environment helps reduce resistance to outside intervention, and facilitates acceptance of assistance from the social services. It is also essential to take the women's satisfaction with the services, at the shelters, into account.

#### **4.1.4. Management and Organization**

Women's shelters have developed varied management models in the world. Basically, the management structure is subject to specific conditions of shelter at issue. WAVE (2004) defined four basic themes under the title of 'management and organization' of a women's shelter, as discussed in relation to the Shelter A below;

*Team work:* When team work becomes an issue, flexible structures, which are prominent in the provision of a exemplary, empowering model, for the residents, come to the agenda, as also suggested by WAVE (2004). In the case of Shelter A, the approaches of all staff members could vary, and even some of them had attempted to exercise harsh practices, from time to time. However, due to approach and mediating role of the director undertook, particularly, in the first two-years, there was not an excessively hierarchical structure, in which the staff and the residents could not access to decision-making. In this regard, the different roles (e.g. psychologist, director, social worker, etc.) the director had to undertake simultaneously, due to the institutional constraints, and her feminist approach to shelter work could be suggested as influential factors. However, in the third year-of-shelter service, additional professional staff members were employed. In addition, the director was also assigned as the coordinator of women's services, and she moved to the project office in the main building. Despite the shelter director's declaration of will to the managers, for the assignment of the director role, to one of recently employed professional staff; the concerned manager did not accept the offer pointing at the

‘inadequacies’ of these professional staffs. Therefore, low job satisfaction on the side of the recently employed professional staffs, and burn-out on the side of the shelter director started to emerge and deteriorated by time.

*Authority and responsibility:* More independence in terms of management structure can be at issue in shelters run by women’s NGOs. However, in shelters run by either central government, or municipal authorities, there are formal structures of authority defined by the law, as in the case of Shelter A. In particular, the shelter staffs are salaried employees of the institution, that is the institution has the power to hire and easily fire them, if not in full-employment. Thus, the staff members are concerned in a clash of interests. In addition, the director has almost the ultimate responsibility for shelter work. However, as in the case of Shelter A, particularly, in the first two-years, the balance between the authority and the responsibility of the shelter director may often be subjected to inquiry.

*Employees’ rights:* In most countries, shelter staffs enjoy certain rights under labor legislation and additional rights can be formulated in the context of the running institution (WAVE, 2004). However, the practice of the minimum rights of the shelter staff had been often subjected to negotiation between the shelter staff and the top administration, in the first-two-years of the service, in the Shelter A. That is, due to institutional constraints in terms of the staff number, the manager of the directorship was used to ask the existing staff, from time to time, to work overtime, regardless of any extra payment, even in official holidays.

*Organizational consultancy:* As WAVE (2004) suggested, shelter work includes crisis work by its precise nature and, thus, external consultancy on regular is significantly important for the well-being of the staff; for team cooperation development; and for quality enhancement in the organization. However, investment in consultancy can be regarded as a luxury by institutions. In the case of Shelter A,

until almost the third year of the shelter service, the demand for supervision had not even been pronounced by the professional staff, since the staff did not perceive the demand as *realistic*, while they had been ‘bargaining’ with the concerned managers for the minimum requirements for the shelter.

#### **4.1.4.1. Management Areas**

The clearly defined assignment of duties and responsibilities are essential for running a women’s shelter efficiently. In the case of Shelter A, there was already an existing ‘Women’s Shelter House Internal Service Guidelines’ set by the municipality, in line with the requirements of the shelter regulation defined by the SSCPI. However, the guideline had been written for an *ideal* case of a women’s shelter. That is, there was a gap between theory and the practice, since structural constraints were at issue. Therefore, in the very beginning of the shelter service, problems had begun to emerge among the staff due to role ambiguity. In particular, some of the staff had been employed in the shelter with ‘political promises’, which were unrelated to their actual qualifications. Thus, all the definitions of management areas and staff duties defined, in the guideline, were adapted by the shelter director, realistically, in negotiation with the staff and the concerned manager.

**Internal administration:** In the case of Shelter A, the tasks often conducted in terms of personnel management includes; training new personnel, informing staff of their rights, assisting staff related to defined duties and the problems occurred, handling leaves and replacements for sick leave, and organizing internal meetings. In addition, in the third year of shelter service, the administration had assigned the shelter director for writing job profiles, interviewing and selecting professional staff members. However, employing and preparing work contracts were done by the human resources directorship of the municipality. Organizing supervision had been stayed as an unresolved issue, for four years, due to institutional constraints.

*Adequate payment* for the staff is among the prerequisites for a sound-operating shelter (WAVE, 2004). In Shelter A, in accordance with the collective salary agreements, the staff members, who were defined under the same title in the standard staff, were paid in the same amount; regardless of the personnel's qualifications, workload, responsibility and position in the institution. That is, since the psychologist and social worker were defined under the same standard staff definition; the shelter director, social worker and the psychologist had been paid equally, but the sociologist was paid less in comparison to them since the title sociologist was defined in a different category. On the other hand, the other staff members (5 security staff; 1 office personnel and 1 associate staff), who were working on the basis of the annual contract of their company with the municipality, had often problems in getting regularly paid.

Since a complex service is at issue in shelter work, the responsible institution must decide which services to provide, then which *professional skills* will be required by these services at the first hand, before taking steps in practice (WAVE, 2004). However, in the case of Shelter A, the situation had been reverse in some occasions, that is, first a staff could have been employed, and then a suitable position had been searched for the staff. In addition, the employment of a staff, who was of a quite different profession, 'as a deportation due to the political reasons', was also at issue.

In determining the *number of staff*, the capacity of the shelter and the services should be considered. However, particularly, in the first two years of the service, at Shelter A, the institution sacrificed from the quality and the quantity of the services given, by employing a minimum number of staff. By the way, since the Shelter A did not have a separate women's counseling centre, intake interviews and counseling services had also been run by the same professional staff, employed at the shelter. In this respect, it is crucial that there is a balance between the number of professional

staff and workload. Otherwise, the result could be detrimental for both the staff and the institution, as from time to time, it was in the case of Shelter A.

*Staff training* is also of high importance for the service quality. In the case of the Shelter A, although the staff's opportunities in term of training was limited in the first two-years of the shelter service, in the second two-years-of-term, the professional staff had been provided with several means of training at the local, national, and also international level. In addition, in the third year of the shelter service, through the organization of the shelter director, a local network of women with a focus on combat against DV was established in the city. In the regular meetings, in which the professional staff of the Shelter A were attending, were also combined with reading specific material on the issue. However, as mentioned before, the issue of supervision could not be achieved due to the institutional constraints in the case of the Shelter A. In specific, it was, in the first three years due to its perception as a 'luxury' and the fourth year- despite the approval of the concerned manager- due to the inadequate number of professional staff for group supervision. However, in the form of an internal support, intervision was at issue, in which the director reviewed the other staff's work.

Due to the nature of shelter work, *communication among the staff* is quite significant; information needs to be passed on promptly and effectively (WAVE, 2004). In the case of Shelter A, written reports, face-to-face interviews organized promptly in alarming situations, phone calls and regular team meetings constitute the internal communication means among the staff members. In specific, the security staff, who were working in the night shift between the hours 5p.m.-8 a.m., used to phone the director (often in the first two years of the shelter service), or other professional staff (in the second two years of the shelter service) in urgent situations. They used to wait in the morning for arrival of the professional staff to talk, or leave written notes in less urgent situations. Likewise, in the second two-years-of shelter service, the

shelter staff used to call or come to talk with the shelter director, who was working in the main building of the municipality, in order to discuss current or upcoming events or problems. In cases, in which the shelter director and the other professional staff could not have managed to find a way out, the issue had been reflected to the concerned managers. In this regard, planning and holding regular team meetings with all of the shelter staff and the municipality administration had been at issue, rarely, only in a few cases of the threats, nearby the shelter building.

Regarding the *communication of the shelter staff with the residents*, holding regular meetings on a weekly basis could be managed from time to time. One of the main reasons suggested by the shelter staff was the overlapping of their working hours with the hours, in which women had works to do in terms of seeking employment, seeing a doctor for treatment or a lawyer for legal consultancy and alike. Even in situations, in which the women were employed, the professional staff's communication with the women had decreased to the minimum level.

Even though, Shelter A often did not have a high turn-over rate, the furniture and equipment were constantly in use and frequently need repairing, and also renewal. Due to the institutional constraints on the shelter, these issues had posed tensions in the shelter staff, and sometimes reflected to the residents. That is, the shelter staff felt often under stress; since the supply of the maintenance often included the explanation of its cause, the 'persuasion' of the manager, paperwork and a definite time to wait for its provision. Likewise, repairing often meant several phone calls with a range of personnel in the municipality and also meant the repetition of these calls again and again until the concerned personnel came to the shelter to start to operate. However, in some situations, in which there was no effective institutional response or the shelter staff were reluctant to get in the process of demand with the administration, the shelter staff had solved the problems, depending on the capacity of either themselves, or the local network of women in the city.

Regarding *quality checks*, regular monthly statistical reports were sent to the province directorship of the SSCPI. In addition, in the third year of the shelter service, regular monthly activity reports were asked by the municipal administration. In the case of Shelter A, I think, the answers to the questions; ‘who cares about the quality of work done’; ‘why’; and ‘when’ were often basically interlocked in the institutional concern for its *reputation* on the basis of complaints and problems. In other words, the issues of evaluation and quality came to the agenda of the top managers when; an investigation had been at issue, by an institution higher in position, upon the request of some former residents; an institution complained about one conduct of the shelter, or an assembly member issued a question regarding the services of the shelter.

The issue of *planning* could be handled as regards to financial planning and the long-term planning (WAVE, 2004). Formulating a long-term perspective and financial planning was much linked to the political will of the municipal administration and the administration’s vision, in the case of the Shelter A. It became to the agenda in the third year of the shelter service.

**Safety and security as an area of generosity:** Since the persistence of perpetrator’s violence may exist in some cases of women during their shelter stay, the shelter is prone to violent attacks. The issue of security could be suggested as an area of generosity, in comparison to other aspects of the shelter work, in the case of the Shelter A. It was the first area in the rank that the municipal administration had not ever attempted to save money. In particular, they were; secure entrances with always locked doors made of iron and constant monitoring camera system, windows with gratings on the ground floor, an alarm system directly linked to the private security company, and five security personnel, who were working on a shift basis. Due to the existence of security staff on the ground floor, and their wireless phone network, there was no extra direct emergency line to the nearest police station. The existence

of two different entrances and wide windows, which had constituted a security risk, and the absence of a sheltered inner garden were attempted to be compensated by these security precautions.

Keeping the address of the Shelter A confidential, in order to maintain the security of the residents and the staff, was practiced, as a basic principle. In addition, the telephone number of the shelter was kept confidential, in accordance with the shelter regulations in Turkey. However, although confidentiality issue was handled with care by the shelter staff, it had been uncovered, partially, in the neighborhood, since the shelter had been existed for some time. Therefore, in the fourth year of the shelter service, address change was brought to the agenda of the municipality by the shelter staff. Although this was approved by the municipal administration, it could not be realized immediately, due to unavailability of a proper location in the city. In this respect, the cooperation with the police regarding security issues is also vital. At the very beginning of the service of the Shelter A, the nearest police station was contacted and was informed about the security requirements of the shelter. However, since a private security company was responsible for the security of the Shelter A, the police station was contacted only in emergencies, in which extra precautions were required. Although the security planning was made by the private security company, security precautions were gone through upon perceived threats, in each case, due to their specificities.

Likewise, individual security plans, even if not in the form of a structured risk assessment scale, were also made on an individual case basis. Through interviews with the professional staff, it was revealed that while some of staff made security plans for specific situations in detail (e.g. for the duration of the woman's stay at the shelter; for the condition that the woman returns back to live with the perpetrator, or she ends her relationship with the perpetrator and live by herself, etc.), the other staff were contented with telling the women that they could turn back to the shelter upon

the experience of any violence again. In addition, when the case of a dangerous perpetrator was at issue, everybody in the shelter were informed regarding the issue and some special security precautions to be enforced if decided as a must. However, upon the approach of a perpetrator around the shelter building, in the majority of the cases the Shelter A experienced, the police stated that they were not authorized by law to take the perpetrators to the police station since they had not acted for any violent attack. The police also added that they were only authorized to 'warn' the perpetrators that if they did anything, they would take them to the police station. Therefore, due to a 'crack' in the system, the perpetrators are 'tolerated' to approach around shelter and 'allowed' to act against his partner, children and the shelter staff.

**Services:** 24 hour service, which enables women come to the shelter at any time, has already been discussed under the title of the 'Principles'. *Counseling* is another key service for women's shelters. The Shelter A did not have a separate counseling centre, and there was not a definite office in the main building of the municipality, in which the shelter staff could offer counseling for non-resident women. Therefore, upon applications, the concerned staff in the main building used to contact by phone with the professional shelter staff; and the shelter staff made an interview with the applicant in a vacant office, in the main building.

Regarding the *admission procedures*, often the women were picked up by car from the main service building of the municipality and were brought to the shelter. Due to the inadequate number of professional personnel to be staffed on a 24-hour basis, upon the applications for the shelter outside office hours or days, the women security shelter staff and the other residents used to help the women settle down in the first admission room of the shelter, in which the women stayed till she had an intake interview with a professional staff. The women were provided with personal basic needs, by the staff, upon her arrival at the shelter.

During the *individual counseling* sessions, the woman reflected on their needs and concerns, and priorities were established in cooperation with the professional staff. In addition, available options were discussed and an individual plan was formed for supporting the woman. Practical assistance in dealing with various administrative bodies was also given and, in some cases, companionship was provided by the staff.

*Recreational activities*, such as going to a picnic, theatre, cinema, concerts and alike were also among the services provided. While the organization of these activities were problematic in the first two-years- of the shelter service due to the institutional approach, in the second two-years- of the shelter, women were often provided with these services for free. Mostly, the women benefited from the municipality's social organizations at different centers, or from the social activities of other cooperative institutions.

Regarding *legal consultancy*, since in the first year of the shelter service, the cooperation with the Women's Rights Commission of the Bar was interrupted due to a woman lawyer's unethical act against a shelter resident and the commission's stance in that case, inadequate and irregular support was at issue. However, from the second year of the shelter service, with the renewal of the administration of the Bar, the service of legal consultancy began again in cooperation with the Women's Rights Commission of the Bar and the counseling center of another municipality for free. The service was covering information on; the rights under civil law, divorce laws, specific laws concerning immediate and/or long-term protection from violence, police procedures, restraining orders, custody rights, criminal law, social insurance and welfare regulations. In addition, information regarding the sequence of legal procedure were also given by the shelter staff.

Shelter work also requires strong relationships with the institutions working in the field of *social welfare, health and employment*. In the case of Shelter A, due to

having no independent income, majority of the women at the shelter were entitled to social welfare. By the aid of the cooperation of social assistance foundation of the administrative district, monetary assistance, including support in housing matters, was provided for women without time consuming administrative delays, which was quite valuable. Regarding *support in health-related matters*, in the first year of the shelter service, cooperation had been established in terms of the residents' free health checks as regards to contagious illnesses and renewal of health reports. In addition, the medicines of the women and children had been provided free of charge from a pharmacy, which had an agreement with the municipality. However, support in *job-related matters* was among the most problematic areas of service at the Shelter A. Although the unemployed women were often encouraged and assisted to find a job or to improve their qualifications by the shelter staff, it was often a hopeless issue due to several factors throughout the four years of the shelter. Among them, the factor related with the institution was that the manager of the directorship, which was concerned with the vocational trainings given in the social centers of the municipality, had a negative attitude toward the idea of 'a women's shelter' and the shelter staff. Thus, there was no cooperation within the institution regarding vocational training of the resident women. However, in the third year of the Shelter A, through the efforts of the shelter director and the concerned manager, a quota was established for the employment of resident women within a directorship, which had a cooperative woman manager.

Regarding *service provision for women with specific needs*, it could be suggested that due to the constructional constrains, in particular, due to the vertical and narrow stairs and absence of an elevator, the building of the Shelter A was not much suitable for the women with physical disabilities, the elderly women and even for the little children. Upon such applications, the shelter staffs were used to contact with the other women's shelter in the city and, if applicable, guide the women there.

Ideally, the *services upon leaving* the shelter include planning of a regular income for the women, safe housing, arrangements for children and the arrangements for further support by the shelter or other institutions. However, since there was no counseling center, in the case of the Shelter A, the issue of after-shelter support was problematic. It often depended on the women's effort to communicate with the shelter staff, for further support, after the departure from the shelter.

As in the case of the women at the shelter, *services for children* requires specific expertise. In the context of Shelter A, there was a widespread perception among the administrators that, a regular psychologist or a social worker, regardless of having a specialization in the field or not, could work with every person, who had a problem. Thus, there had been no specialized staff employed for the children services, for four years, in Shelter A. Thus, the services provided to children were limited and poor.

**Community life at the shelter:** Women's shelters have regulations, ideally, in order to ensure a positive life experience for their residents. As also highlighted by Shostack (as cited in Haj-Yahia & Cohen, 2009), most shelters have similar regulations. The most common rules among most shelters are: 1) violence is prohibited in any form; 2) no smoking in private rooms; 3) alcohol and psychoactive substances are prohibited; 4) each woman is responsible for her personal effects, and provides clothing for herself and her children; 5) all of the women are expected to participate in routine maintenance of the shelter; 6) mothers living in the shelter with their children are responsible for their care when there are no organized arrangements; 7) women who disclose the location of the shelter will be asked to leave; 8) women who leave the premises for personal arrangements must return as early as possible, and in most shelters no later than 11:00 PM; 9) any woman, who violates the rules, will be asked to leave the shelter (Shostack, as cited in Haj-Yahia & Cohen, 2009, pp.95-96).

Different from the mentioned rules, often, women are not defined as being responsible for providing clothing for themselves and their children, by the internal guidelines of the shelters, in the case of Turkey; clothing can be often provided by the shelter administration.

In the case of Shelter A, the administration of the shelter had, from time to time, run the risk of setting rules beyond necessary. Depending on the context, while, in some situations, it was, predominantly, due to the shelter staff's inexperience, in others, it was due to the structural constrains. Therefore, particularly, in the first months of the shelter service, that is, in the process of institutionalization of the shelter, the rules had been considered of greater importance than the residents, in some situations.

**Public relations and networking:** Since shelter staffs need supporting networks to influence public discourse, their provision of information about their work is considerably valuable. Training courses for partner organizations, workshops, conferences, seminars, consultative meetings, campaigns are among the means to promote consciousness-raising and networking.

Shelter work requires inter-agency cooperation. That is it is vital to have close cooperation with professionals in; child protection services, social welfare services, health care services, the police/gendarme, legal system and also refugee authorities. In its third year of service, by the support of the concerned deputy mayor, the director of the Shelter A took initiative for a forming a local multi-professional network of women from different governmental and non-governmental institutions. The basic goal was taking a joint stand for acting against DV in the city, rather than seeking cooperation only on a case-by-case basis for the survivors of DV. In this respect, the shelter staff provided its knowledge and expertise to other professionals working in the field. The group achieved to prepare a local agreement on gender equality, which specifically addressed combat against DV through policy-making.

After numerous lobbying activities, a variety of governmental institutions and almost one hundred NGOs in the city signed the agreement. However, despite the success of the lobbying and networking activities in the first 6-months of the project, the movement lost from its political character and much prominent work was left unfinished at the end of the first year due to the power struggles and problematic attitudes in the group.

#### **4.1.5. Staff**

Women's shelters have often operated under extremely difficult conditions and been subject to many conflicting demands. Working in a shelter means crisis and risk for all staff. The staff may be subjected to the violence of the abuser, as it was in a few cases at the Shelter A. In addition to dealing with the overwhelming problems of shelter residents, staffs have to confront problems of security, administrative pressure and inadequate budgeting.

In Turkey, there is often inadequate budget for women's shelters. Therefore, the staff of shelters, run by women's NGOs, 'have to' learn how to write grant proposals for the European Union funded projects, train themselves in fund raising and lobby. Likewise, staff of shelters, run by municipalities, 'have to' learn, particularly, how to negotiate with the politicians, significant local authorities, and to network with the local women's NGOs, and depend on them 'quietly', without drawing attention of the administration.

As quoted by Schechter (2005, pp.204-209), in the case of Women's Advocates, in the early times of organization of grass root shelters, the women began by asking friends for grants for operating expenses. Then the sequence, which is similar in cases of grass root shelter initiatives in the early days of the movement, was as follows, in the case of Women's Advocates; when the calls for help went beyond the existing capacity, they took the battered women into their homes; made friendships

with them beyond a staff-resident relationship; moved into their first house as the conditions improved; defined their philosophy through the discussions about principles of work; took clear stance against demands of some funders to change their standpoint; aimed, primarily, at the empowerment of the battered women, through a collective model of work and resident-strengthening-resident strategy; employed primarily former victims, and defined flexible working principles since they agreed that there was no ‘correct’ approach to the work (Schechter, 2005, pp. 204-209).

As the results of the study carried out by Schechter (2005) highlighted, grass root shelter workers were politicized through battered women’s experiences. In the case issued in the study, by redefining a social problem into a movement, women from Transition House and Women’s Advocates promoted the emergence of other shelters and ‘served as catalysts for the state, and the regional and national coalitions’ (Schechter, 2005, p.209). However, although they were respected as pioneers, as in the case of Purple Room Women’s Shelter Foundation in Turkey, their efforts and ideology were not always practiced in other cities, at the national level (Schechter, 2005, p.209).

Although, at first sight, the women working in the field could be regarded as somewhat *feminist* due to their will to end violence, this is not the case, in fact. Due to the impacts of the trend towards professionalism in the field, any professional of a related field could take place in shelter work, regardless of being *feminist* or not. As Hague & Mullender (2005) suggested, when the shelters’ institutionalization towards *professionalization* was accompanied by the demands of the funders for a more managerial approach, in the countries, where shelters are used to be run by women’s NGOs, there have been losses in commitments to collective organization. In addition, some researchers also suggested that increasing levels of funding might reinforce professionalism, in that, regular funding and recruitment of paid staff require

workers, to gain qualifications, in order to justify the funding and meet the expectations of funders (Cuthbert & Irving, 2001, as cited in McMillan, 2007). Moreover, McMillan (2007) suggested that shelter and crisis work is seen by some women, as requiring a greater level of professionalism and expertise, than it was regarded before, in the 1970s. In particular, the participants in their study indicated that they felt they had a particular expertise due to their professional occupation, not simply due to their position as a woman helping other women. However, none of the respondents claimed that they were better qualified than women, who did not work, as professionals, in the field.

However, despite the dominance of professionalism, there exist some limitations in the field. Roberts and Burman (1998) carried out a research about the treatment models used at shelters. The findings revealed that the majority of staff (68%) did not demonstrate competence in analyzing a practice theory, model or treatment strategy. In this respect, the researchers suggested that for women suffering from mental effects of battering, leaving the batterer permanently requires the provision of effective treatment and, thus, the competence of professionals in the field (Roberts & Burman, 1998).

Likewise, while the professionalization in shelter work seems to be appreciated in theory, by the governmental structures, it is often problematic due to its limitations in practice, in Turkey. For instance, clinical assessments and therapy, which are defined among the basic duties of the psychologist, in regulations of shelters, are areas of specialization of conduct, by a clinical psychologist. However, I observed that there are limited number of specialized staffs, in this field, employed as full-time employees, in shelters, run either by the central government, or the municipal authorities, in Turkey. In addition, due to a range of reasons, such as underestimation of shelter work and financial cuts, many of these shelters have no agreement with any expert specialized in this area, outside, or with a hospital. On the other hand,

social workers employed in the shelters run by municipalities are likely to be either new graduates, or retired, since they tend to choose the SSCPI for employment. Due to difficulties in finding social workers and psychologists, for employment, in shelters run by municipalities; sociologists, who are not defined in the norm personnel, in the regulations, have begun to be employed at these women's shelters, as in the case of the Shelter A.

As in some cases of battered women, *politicization* may also mean taking personal risks for shelter staff. The findings of Schechter (2005) highlighted that many women in early battered women's groups experienced loss of friends, divorce and disruptions in relationships with their children, when they joined the movement. However, through close friendship networks in the movement, the women came to believe that they were helping to change the world, and got over their despair, as they witnessed the empowerment, and participation of residents to the movement (Schechter, 2005, p.215).

Regarding the motivations of women's involvement in shelter work, the results of the study carried out by McMillan (2007) highlighted that women were seeking not just a work setting, but also an experience of *sisterhood* with other women, who aimed at the same political goals. The researcher found that *altruistic reasons*, that is the will to help others, and *psychic benefits*, that is feeling good about oneself as a result of helping others, were strong motivations for the women working in shelters and crisis centers, in Sweden and the UK. *Political motivations* were also found strong among the women. Thus, the researcher suggested that there is inconsiderable support for the claim that shelter and crisis work has been influenced, and is now done, by apolitical women (McMillan, 2007, p.86). The women's altruism was found to be strongly linked to their feminist politics in that they felt the need to help women, who were subjected to gender-based violence. The results also highlighted differences in the motivations of those working in shelters and crisis centers, in the UK and

Sweden. While the women in UK organizations referred to more explicitly feminist motivations, the workers in Sweden cited predominantly philanthropic motivations. The researcher found no marked differences in terms of the extent of a philanthropic approach between the staff working in shelters of SKR, which was assumed to be 'liberal', and those working in the shelters of ROKS, which was assumed to be 'radical'. Thus, she suggested that the distinctions between groups, in terms of being more or less feminist, are neither empirically nor theoretically sound. The researcher also indicated that feminism had no specified, separate meaning for women working in these shelters and crisis centers.

In line with the results of McMillan's (2007) study, Hague and Mullender (2005) concluded that the professionals, who are also survivors of DV whether revealed or not, contributed to the field significantly. However, they noted that their contributions have often been overlooked to date.

#### **4.1.5.1. Staff of Shelter A**

Although the issue of professionalization is predominant in the field, the reality does not match with this claim completely, in cases of many women's shelters in Turkey, as for the Shelter A. In particular, in almost first two-years-of-service, there were eight staff; five of them were security personnel. There was one director (also psychologist), one office staff; and one associate staff. The office staff, who used to work in another department of the municipality for several years, was a professional in a different area, and was driven to the shelter with 'political reasons'. On the contrary, the associate staff was employed at the shelter through 'political channels'. On the whole, none of the staff members had an experience in shelter work before their employment at the Shelter A.

Regarding the daily routine for the staff, if not interrupted by emergency situations, there used to be a cross-over in the mornings and afternoons, during shifts. During these cross-overs, the staff used to exchange information regarding that day, and the previous and potential residents of the shelter. However, due to the unpredictable nature of the daily routine of the shelter, there were no daily plans made with rigid time-schedules. However, there was a task sheet, which the staff updated regularly, regarding the needs of the shelter and residents. On the conditions, in which a cross-over was not possible, the staff used to communicate either by written notes, or phone calls.

In line with the requirements of the shelter guideline defined by the SSCPI and the municipality administration, a file was created for each resident. The file included interview reports, and other documents required by the shelter regulations.

During the internal administration meetings among the shelter staff, there were issues detected, in which the staff felt ambivalent about. Thus, an inquiry about the obligatory practices, in the context of the shelter regulations, was conducted as below. The transcripts of these meetings and my hands-on-practice in the field were featured in the analysis. The inquiry covered the procedures on the admission of the battered women to the shelter. In particular, issues regarding women's identity card, health report, conduct sheet, residence address, out-of-city transference and intake interview came into prominence, as discussed below.

*Identity card:* Since a planned leave was not at issue in every woman's case, some women came to the shelter without their identity cards and/or health reports. In order to register for a new card, the approval of the concerned manager in the institution, that is the director of the management responsible for the shelter, was required. At this point, problems emerged for the shelter staff and women, in some situations. That is, the manager stated that he did not want to take responsibility, since he did

not know about what the woman did with her prior identity card, implying that she could have committed a crime.

In addition, the staff often came across with the problem of money, which was required to pay for a renewal of the identity card. In this regard, one staff told that in the shelter she had worked before, they -as the shelter staffs- had found a 'crack' in the application procedure, and benefited from it in such situations, for free. That is, she told, they had taught the women to express their demand in that way, so that they would not have been charged for the process.

*Health report:* As a requirement of the shelter's regulations, women should bring a health report, an x-ray film of their livers and a report of their blood test on contagious illnesses. Regarding the content of the blood test and its possible results in case any contagious illness was detected, some of the staff was ignorant, seeming as performing the task for the sake of its fulfillment. One staff stated that she used to tell the applicant woman; 'take your report, then come', in order to 'measure her determination' for leaving the abusive relationship and coming to shelter. Another staff told that, in the woman's shelter she had worked before, she witnessed that one woman was sent from the shelter, since a contagious illness, which was transmitted by blood or sexual contact, was noted in her report. On the other hand, another staff told that, in her own experience, when a similar case was at issue, the woman was not sent from the shelter, but rather the required precautions were taken at the shelter, such as separation of her own dishes and bathroom.

*Conduct sheet:* Some of the staff had partial information as regards to the content of a conduct sheet. In general, the applicant women had openly revealed any situation about their criminal records to the shelter staff. However, in one case of a woman, who had been transferred from a shelter in another city, the staff had asked her to take a conduct sheet, as a requirement of the procedure. Nevertheless, she had not. In addition, no detailed information was received, about her, from the staff of the

sending shelter, since they had sent the woman without making an intake interview. Later, the staff of the women's counseling center of another municipality, which the woman had gone for a few times, had revealed the shelter director that, since 'they were suspicious about the woman', they had contacted with the police, and found out that the woman had been prostituting, and she had come to the shelter 'with the intention of pulling some women for prostitution'.

*Out-of-city transference:* In the majority of the situations, out-of-city transferences were made with other women's shelters run by municipalities. In order to accelerate the process of women's transference from another city in alarming situations, the staff declared that they might skip some of the procedures. In some cases, this resulted in further problems with the sending institution after the women had arrived at the Shelter A. That is, in some situations the staff of the Shelter A realized that the staff of the sending shelter had not made even an intake interview with the women. However, because these staffs 'perceive the woman as *problematic*', they wanted to immediately send her to another shelter. In addition, the staff also noted that there were some staff in these shelters acting as a psychologist, but who were 'NLP experts', in fact.

*Intake Interview:* Regarding intake interview, the staff told that they took a record of the demographic information and life stories of each woman, in terms of her experience of violence, her relationship to the perpetrator(s), the institutions she applied before shelter, her previous shelter experience if applicable, and personal resources. One staff told that, during the talk with the women, she felt hesitant about going into detail regarding the women's experience of violence. In particular, she elaborated that she did not write women's experiences of sexual violence in detail. On the contrary, another told that she used to ask detailed questions about violence, and write 'the own sentences of the women'. She explained that there was less chance to talk, and often the talks were interrupted, after the woman arrived at the

shelter. At the end of the interview, the staff used to give information about the regulations of shelter and the rights/alternatives of the woman during her shelter stay.

The staff compromised on not pushing the women concerning the time limitation at the shelter, as one stated; 'We do not settle once and for all by just telling, the length of your stay is three months.'. Another point, some staff told that they doubted about was, whether asking about past suicide attempts or not, in intake interview. At this juncture, one staff implied that she was for asking, but she responded; 'I do not know how to ask about it.' On the other hand, another staff told that she had avoided asking it, and stated; 'After a while, you see the women began to often pronounce it; as if it would have never come to their minds, if you did not ask about it!'

Regarding risk assessment, some staff told that, asking the women whether the perpetrator had a gun had never come to their mind, and that if it had, they would have asked about it. However, they added that they used to ask the women, if they had ever been threatened with a knife by the perpetrator. One staff also told that she asked the women for a photograph of the perpetrator, elaborating that; 'It is better sometimes, if the security staffs know about him.'

The intake interview reports were written by the professional staff on the admission of the women to the shelter. The reports were sent to; the shelter director, director of the concerned management, deputy mayor, and mayor, for approval. As regards to the language used in these reports, one staff stated; 'The language issue is troublesome for me, in fact. I do not know how to write it.'. At this point, the staffs commented that they did not think that the interview reports had been ever read by the top administration. One staff claimed that, mostly, shelter staffs were writing the reports 'for themselves', that is, in case an event took place, and a third party got involved for an inquiry, regarding their responsibility. In addition, she added that in one case, in which a woman had committed a suicide, the social worker of the

sending institution had not written any information in the report, regarding the woman's three suicide attempts on the day she had made the intake interview; thus, her neglect in the case had been uncovered in the inquiry.

The staff felt squeezed between the cracks in the system, especially in the context of a law in act, which assigned them the responsibility of informing the legal system, as public servants, upon knowing about an act of violence. In this regard, the staff felt anxious about declaring information in the report about some events the women told them in the intake interview. This was because of the dilemma that; while acting for this law may mean disregarding the self-determination of woman and further potential risks for her, not acting might mean going through inquiries and even being fined, as a public servant. At this juncture, as a way out, the staff compromised on the idea that information regarding the situations, in which they had to take action, could be explained at the beginning of the interview to the women. However, at this point, the staffs explained their concerns that women could avoid talking, and perceive them 'like a policeman'.

Regarding the information women shared in intake interviews, inconsistent perspectives emerged among the staff. One staff told that she used to tell the women that, if the information they gave in the intake interview was proved to be wrong, their exit from the shelter would be done. On the contrary, another staff questioned the meaning of such practice. She suggested that any woman could tell missing or wrong information, for the sake of her admission to a safe place, after an experience of violence.

*Residence address:* In the context of their relationships with other agencies, the women confronted with the problem of declaration of their residence address. Since cooperation with the muhtar could not be achieved; through negotiations with the related institutions, the staff found an 'alternative way' to resolve the issue. That is,

without uncovering the address of the shelter, an official writing from the municipality was given to the woman declaring that her residence was the shelter of municipality. However, when the woman did not want a third party to have information about her residence at the shelter, and if she also came from out-of-the-city; had no acquaintance in the city that they could give the address of, and experienced an extreme fear to be pursued by the abuser, the issue was left unresolved again. At this point, the women turned to the shelter staff for consultancy. In this respect, some staffs -without internalizing completely- suggested that, working with the woman, regarding her reasons for refusing to declare her residence at the shelter, could be an alternative. Herein, they suggested that some women might feel like 'a widow in the neighborhood; desolate and all alone'. That is, perceiving it as a threat, the woman might be reluctant to declare that she lived in a women's shelter. Some staffs also asserted that the expression of 'shelter house' might evoke a feeling of disempowerment for the residents.

Apart from the inquiries about institutional practices, the staff also brought about some issues related to their presence, as staff, at the shelter. Among these issues; self-care and setting boundaries, their personal experience of violence and their relationship with feminism became salient. They were elaborated as below.

*Self-care and setting boundaries:* In line with the literature, the staff shared the idea that their testimony of violence -whether in their relationships within their intimate networks or with the residents- affected their personal lives in general. One staff depicted her situation as below;

...It [testimony of violence] also affects your point of view for life. It can cause you to fear and approach cautiously and paranoiac, if you will live a relationship with a person. It has its effects on you, is it ok? That's why, at that point, while interfering such situations, one should act somewhat by protecting herself. Well, that person is important, but you're also important. As long as you are not fine, you can't help her,

too. And, sometimes a situation occurs like this. If you know about the nature of that relationship, well, regardless of how hard you try to interfere, sometimes she cannot work it out. That should be accepted. It is often the situation we live in the shelter house. You tell a lot; the woman is exposed to violence, but she returns back to her husband, then. In a situation like that, you should act, protecting yourself a bit, and putting a border in between...It is required to be related by taking into account that, in the end, they may make peace and begin the relationship again.

Regarding self-care, the staffs also discussed the issue of 'setting boundaries' between the residents and themselves. Having declared about personal experiences of violence, some staff also questioned about their position, as professional women staffs working at the shelter. One staff asked;

...When a friend was at issue and lived it, you can share your experiences with her. But what about, for instance, the women, who come to the shelter house? That is I don't know which words to use, when this is your profession, your job, I mean, when you begin to do this professionally, when you do trauma-work or work with people who were exposed to trauma...Namely, for instance, we are talking about our own experiences now, but suppose a woman came, and she is telling. Am I going to tell her; 'Do you know; recently something happened to me like this, etc.?'. How will that relationship be settled?

Another staff told that she used to ask the women what they thought and never commented that they needed to get divorced. In addition, she told that she used to tell about 'violence wheel', and at that point the women often told her their intention to return to their partner or to get divorced immediately. She further told that some women with the intention of separation first, sometimes changed their mind in the course of time. In one similar case, she told about her confusion as follows;

...She would sue a divorce case, she was guided to the lawyer etc., I do not know, everything...And we do not have a distant relationship with the woman, but, of course, it is not the way we are talking here. But, then while she was about to move a house, I was panicked due to the purple spots on her face. Is it okay? When I asked 'What happened to your face?'. She hid this from me...She said, 'I had waxed, it

turned purple because of that'. It was on this part of her chin. Whereas the man had come and beaten her, but she does not tell me, in case I do something...For instance, I felt terrible about it since it happened that way, did you understand? Her concealment from me, that is, I wonder what I did for her concealment. That is, what kind of relationship did I settle up with her, and she did not tell me about it?

Although she told afterwards that the woman could have acted in this way, not just in relation to her, but also some other factors could have been at issue. She kept questioning her responsibility in the situation, as follows;

At that point, I felt sad about that; how this woman came to the point of not telling me after she lived this? Why did she feel the need to lie to me? This is terribly painful for me, for instance.

Furthermore, she elaborated that she also experienced the same feeling in her relationship with her younger sister, who had been in an abusive relationship. At that point, she questioned her position as below;

...This could be related with the position; in one of them, I am the elder sister, and in the other, I am the woman with whom she had interviews at the institution, did you get me? Thus, I am not a person as in the same level with them like a friend, is it ok? After all, you can challenge a friend by telling 'I am meeting him again, what can I do, mine is that way...Do not listen to me by then...'. However, the woman cannot tell such a thing to you at that point, while you are about to provide furniture to her house. Or, your younger sister -while an older sister-sister relationship had already been settled up, and while you have already envisioned the possible happenings and she had already experienced- may not say 'I'm meeting him anyway.'... stemming from the position.

In this regard, referring to the situations, in which some women had turned back to the perpetrators, she made an emphasis on self-care, as she depicted below;

...In that kind of situation, the most critical point about the women at the shelter is- it's truly that way in a friend's relationship-protecting

yourself. That is, you have already known that process...regardless of how close the woman is about to gain her own power...Even if she has began to realize her power; she can return, she may want to give one more chance, you know. She may have several excuses for returning anyway. She can do this, but in a situation like that, telling 'I got failed here. We had talked a lot; all of them blew up in the air. Look, she has gone again, she had been beaten.'...that is, it is required not to bring the issue in that way, not to turn round the issue to yourself. Rather, it is required to look at the situation in terms of the process.

Reflecting on the remarks of the member of staff told above, another commented on the position the staff in general, in some situations, as follows;

...Here, turning the issue to yourself is undoubtedly related with that; it's because an oppressor-oppressed relationship has been settled up from the very beginning. She has been a victim, and you are positioning yourself as 'the one who has helped'; 'the one who helped-the one who received help', is it ok? Therefore, you tell; 'I had talked with her a lot, I had struggled a lot, how could you go?'. You know, she goes, and she goes...Here, it is necessary to accept this from the very beginning. You should truly be, I don't know, be near her in any decision she will give...That is, I don't know, at least, I did it that way with my friends.

She continued by telling that, even if the staff were aware of the power issue, they could act for it, in some situations unconsciously, as follows;

...That is, even if you understand this, you know this; even if we talk about it for hours at this table that, oppressor-oppressed relationship is such widespread that it is everywhere, and at any moment, is it ok? You immediately become the person who is powerful, healthy, etc., I do not know, a person, who has not lived such things ever, because she [the battered woman] gives you this mission. That is, slave-master dialectic is something similar to that besides. Then, you immediately make that sentence at ease; 'I told, I did, what you are doing?'. Here, I think, this is the most handicapped, the unhealthiest point in testimony...

In this respect, two other staffs commented that, regardless of their efforts to talk with the women in terms of ‘raising consciousness’, the women may return to their partners, because they might have developed ‘dependent’ and ‘traumatic’ bond to the perpetrators.

**Personal experience of violence:** Some staff members shared their past personal experiences of violence. One told about how she felt in response to the attitude in her social network, as below;

...For instance, the acts of friends towards me, in that way, create another trauma in another meaning. As the person, who had already lived that violence, I lose my self-esteem, I lose anything, I get lonely, etc...When the person, who I thought I took refuge behind, acts like that, I experience another trauma there. I mean, what are you doing? Look, s/he did these to me, and now you are proud of yourself regarding your help to me, but then you threaten me by leaving me! What are you doing? I had already lived a similar thing; there...Therefore, I think this is the worst, the most offending point of the testimony.

Referring to violence experiences of some residents, another staff reflected on her prior situation. She elaborated how her response against her first experience of violence became a determining factor in her situation then, and resulted in further violence, as below;

...If I had stayed here, after this, you know, in that kind of situation I cannot go, besides. If I had gone, I needed to have gone in that situation. Now, this is a smaller thing compared to that, I cannot go now...You begin to think like this foolishly, and you are in a situation in which your self-respect is almost zero...

**Their relationship with feminism:** The staff also reflected on their position in relation to the feminist thought and activism. While one staff did not comment on any point during the discussion, two of the three staff members told that they were

‘reactive’ against defining themselves as ‘feminist’. They explained that it was due to their personal experiences in relationships with some women, who used to define themselves as being ‘feminist’. On the other hand, one staff declared that she was ‘feminist’.

One staff elaborated why she has avoided from defining herself as *feminist*. She referred to her personal experiences in two different contexts; that is, one, in a friend’s group; and, the other, at her previous workplace, as follows;

...She [a woman in her friend’s group] was perceived as ‘the castle of feminism’ in the group, is it ok? That is to say, she was such a woman. However, she was so dominant; she was so used to settle up relationships of tyranny [...] This woman is a woman who tells that ‘I’m feminist’, and I expect her to ‘see’ me. I expect her to understand me. But, this woman, at the point that she should sit and see the issue with me... Even though I told like ‘Hey friends, look! You, too, are abusing me like this, and that, you’re isolating me like this, you’re othering me like that’; instead of saying ‘Okay, do you think in that way?’, they have never given up what they had known already, is it ok? They kept on relating artificially, and I continued to stand on the border then...

In addition, she referred to her perception of tension between the women, who had practical experience in the field, and who did not. In this regard, while positioning herself on the ‘experienced’ women’s side, she positioned her director at her previous workplace -which was again a woman’s shelter run by a municipality- on the other side. In particular, she told about her previous director, who had a degree in Gender and Women’s Studies, and defined herself as ‘feminist’, as below;

You can say this had been in that way and theorize it, but this knowledge brings about a hierarchy, unfortunately, particularly if you are deprived of the practice. Concerning the practice, none of these women I told about here had either a field experience, or an idea of what our mothers do and the like, did you understand? The feminist movement in their minds is intellectual, etc... That is, the urban woman who tries to generate herself, could I express? She does not

know about even my mother's struggle of existence! However, in anything, in any sentence I made about my burn-out I had experienced in the shelter house, she could criticize me, by saying 'Hmm..Do you mean *the women*?'. Because, she does not know what I lived! When I say *the women* there, she could poke me implying 'Hmm, be careful. Do you mean *the women*?'. ...as if I had referred the women as the source of problem and blamed them.

Besides, she told that, after her personal experiences, she felt like being at the point of telling that she did not want to call herself as *feminist*, 'if the feminism and the feminist women were in that way'. On the other hand, she commented that the emergence of feminism, as a result of women's practical experiences, was quite meaningful for her. In this regard, she noted that she found herself 'close to feminism'. However, she elaborated that she knew she had some stuff about herself that she had not resolved yet. Thus, she told that she did not want to define herself as 'feminist' then, since it would be in contradiction with her perception of feminism. She stated that she wanted people 'define' herself as 'feminist', if she could manage it in her practical experience.

Another staff member, who also declared that she did not define herself as 'feminist', criticized feminist women for their attitude against the women, who did not define themselves as being feminist. She commented on the situation, in relation to her personal experience in a local network of feminist women in the city she came from, as below;

Because you do not call yourself 'feminist', she thinks that you do not deserve that position [employment at a women's shelter]; the one who deserves the position is her! For instance, when I came here, in the early days that I began to work, I received such responses from that women -by the way, they congratulate me, but I heard this one-to-one- 'Oh! She is not even feminist'. That is, in order to do this work, namely in order to do some work related with women's studies, as if putting your right hand to work at the beginning, you are obliged to say 'I am feminist'!

Besides, she criticized the lack of specificity in the definitions of the feminist women she had known. She implied that these women might have defined themselves as ‘feminist’, before they had adequate information about feminism in theory. She told, as below;

When people tell ‘I’m feminist’, very sincerely I asked them to tell about their own feminist practices; the point where and how they settled up feminism. Thus, for instance I asked Ayşe ‘You are telling that you are socialist-feminist, but what kind of a thing it is?’. That is, what kind of thing is it for you? Because people used to pass by just saying ‘I’m feminist’. There, it is expected that something will be formed in my mind, but it does not, my friend! You tell me first; what does feminism mean for you, or what are your feminist practices? From which point do you position yourself? Because, I think, the number of feminist practices, or feminisms can be as the number of women that exist. I do not limit like; radical feminism, eco-feminism, and the like. Of course, you can read the theory, and say ‘This is appropriate for me’, but what kind of thing you live?

Moreover, she told that she felt alienated and lonely in her experience of being in the local feminist women network in the city she came. She doubted that whether the feminist women would act with solidarity, and follow her case, just because she was a woman but not a ‘feminist’, if she was raped and sued for it. On the other hand, she commented on the discomfort she felt for talking in that feminist group, as below;

...For instance, when people ask me ‘Why aren’t you a feminist, even though you are a woman?’, I cannot ask them why they are feminist, because the culture of lynching is at issue immediately... You also tell what kind of thing it is! And, if it is something that is inclusive, and you care about gaining me as a woman, your attitude should not be that offensive.

At that point, another staff also criticized the attitude of feminist women she had known, and referred to her personal experience, as follows;

...Besides, you can’t talk about these, because there is an already prejudice against feminism and women’s solidarity outside; you are

obstructed consciously, and so on. However, you cannot talk about these, because you do not want to serve to feed them [the prejudices] on the one side; but also the situation you are in makes you feel uncomfortable...There is a dilemma like that. For instance, I often got the wounds from the violence of women, who call themselves 'feminist'. Well, she was the person, who I thought would understand me; she was the one whom I found the closest to myself. You know, she is a *woman* in the end! You say, we have passed through similar experiences, I do not know, such and such...However, when you see a stroke from there, you cannot speak out it, because 'Where is the *women's solidarity?*' then?

In this regard, another staff cautioned about going to generalizations. She commented that although she partially agreed with what they thought, in general, she felt happy about defining herself as 'feminist' and knowing the majority of feminist women she had met until then. On the other hand, she referred to the specificities of the feminist groups and reflected her own observations about a local women's platform, which defined itself as *feminist*. She told that although she valued the actions of the platform, she felt 'uncomfortable', particularly, because of the 'distant, alienating' language they used; their talks that were often deprived of practical work; and the precise resemblance among them. On the other hand, she told that she experienced a feeling of 'wholeness' in the presence of the feminist women in shelter work (whether in; an women's NGO, a municipality, or in the central government), and felt satisfied about sharing with feminist friends and instructors at the university.

Another staff emphasized the importance of interaction in the field. She commended that as long as the women, with practical experience in the field, stayed away from the women, who defined themselves as *feminist* but have less/no practical experience in the field, everything would stay as they were, without being transformed. At this point, another staff emphasized the importance of the localization/adaptation of some widely accepted routes by the feminist movement in Europe, in the context of local resources, as below;

...There is one more thing; the things used to be repeated such as; 'Let just the horizontal organizations be; no more hierarchical organizations', and so on...Well, maybe it could not be that way. That is, they used to say, for instance, foresight like this- basically in the issue of shelter work- 'Municipalities do not run, but they finance; let an NGO run..'. However, when you say 'Okay, let's do it like that!', how many NGOs you can find? For instance, you are the NGO suggested that route, do you believe that you can manage it? Well, for me, it is a memorized statement. What is this then? This is their statement that; this work had been done in Sweden, in UK like that, so it should be in that way also here...However, when you're telling this, is there anything existing here that can currently fill its underneath? Is there a baseline? Or, for instance, it is often thought that horizontal organization, in which there is no hierarchy, works well. But, may be in your model it will not...Because, the perception of *NGO* here, is not the same, as the one in France, for instance.

As discussed below, through the narratives of staff, the following issues became salient; the lack of institutionalization and professionalization in the system results in shelter staff's ambivalence in conduct of some procedures; there are contradictory practices to the feminist principles in the practice of shelter work and different practices among women's shelters at the national level; there is the issue of secondary victimization of the battered women due to shelter staff's lack of information in some situations; some unqualified staff are employed at women's shelters; there is a need to support shelter staff in terms of supervision; and the shelter staff have concerns about their relationships with the residents and *feminist* women in the field.

#### **4.2. Battered Women as Subjects of the Shelter A**

In this section, the women, who had stayed at Shelter A between the years 2007 and 2009, were studied as the subjects of the shelter. In this respect, an analysis was made under two titles. Namely, they were the *gender category* and the *difference focus*. Under the category of *gender*, the basic characteristics of the women were

described and discussed, with a brief introduction to the types of violence mostly defined in literature. On the other hand, the specific characteristics of the women were discussed with the *difference* focus, in relation to the women's subjective experience of violence and shelter stay. In particular, the sources of violence and the women's previous ways of challenging violence were analyzed in relation to their subjective violence experiences. The women's specificities, and their perceptions of the shelter staff and other residents were studied in relation to their shelter stay.

#### **4.2.1. Basic Characteristics of the Women As Gender Category**

Many studies suggested that, regardless of its type, all acts of DV against women have the abuser's concerns for power and control over the women, as the core aspects. The abusers use a variety of strategies depending on the changing context. On the basis of *gendered violence* against women in the domestic sphere, the literature predominantly categorizes types of violence as; physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. The types of violence were shortly introduced below.

*Physical violence* against women includes hitting, slapping, punching, choking, pushing, burning and other types of contact that can result in physical injury. It can also include behavior such as, denying the women of medical care when needed, depriving the woman of sleep or other basic needs, forcing the woman for in drug/alcohol use, directing physical violence onto other targets, such as children, in order to cause psychological harm to the woman.

Dobash & Dobash (2005, p.169) discussed that the lack of specificity for the term 'physical violence' makes the reader doubt about the nature of the phenomenon and generalizations made. They suggested that there was considerable variation in the social meaning and physical results of the forced acts between the spouses. They categorized these variations under three titles. Namely, they are; periodic slapping or pushing and shoving, which rarely escalates in intensity, and does not aim at serious injury; repeated punching and kicking that aims at doing injury, and severely

terrorize the victim; and violence with the intention to kill (Dobash & Dobash, 2005, p.169). The researchers claimed that these acts of physical violence differ in terms of motivations, aims and coerciveness and should not be seen in any case as cumulative or escalating.

Despite the relatively more visible position of the physical violence compared to other forms of violence, as Dobosh & Dobosh (2005) suggested, it used to provoke little response against the abusive men, unless it was beyond the invisible limits set by the society. Besides, it may not provoke any responses in some situations, even it is in life-threatening forms, as in some cases of the women analyzed in this study.

*Psychological abuse* was often perceived as the worst kind of abuse, by the women, in this study. It occurs when those trusted to provide one with care, love and protection act in a way that makes one feel terrible about herself (Burks, 2006, p.15). Despite the widespread notion that psychological abuse is the most harmful form of relationship violence, it is still the most underestimated form in the context of the courts against the abuser men, and is the most difficult one to identify and prove (Burks, 2006, p.15).

Similar to the case of physical violence, the mechanisms of psychological abuse are countless and divergent. In an attempt to clarify its complexity, Burks (2006) made a categorization as 'overt' and 'covert' mechanisms. According to Burks (2006, pp. 16,17), the *overt* mechanisms of psychological abuse includes; belittling, yelling, name-calling, criticizing, ordering around, sulking, withholding affection, ignoring, isolating, monitoring time and/or activities, attempting to restrict resources (finances, telephone), interfering with opportunities, accusing the victim of engaging in repeated and/or purposively hurtful behaviors, throwing objects, not necessarily at the victim, slamming of objects or doors, ridiculing the victim, expressing disgust toward the victim, threatening to abandon (physically or emotionally), expressing excessive jealousy, threatening life, pets, property, and/or family; exposing the

victim to abuse of her children, pets, or parents, coercing the victim into illegal activity, and provoking the victim into helpless failing. On the other hand, Burks (2006, p.17,18) suggested that the *covert* mechanisms of psychological abuse includes; discounting, negation, projection/accusation, denial of abuse by the abuser, negative labeling, subtle threats of physical and/or emotional abandonment or actual physical and/or emotional abandonment.

On the other hand, *sexual abuse* is defined by World Health Organization (2002), as below;

any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work (p.149).

Regarding the laws regarding sexual violence in Turkey, there had been amendments made for improving the situation of women, in 2004. In particular, the Turkish Penal Code; accounted for the protection of sexual and bodily rights of the women; criminalized marital rape, and increased the sentences for sexual crimes. However, the improvements in laws do not seem to reflect in many women's lives, as in the situation of many residents of the Shelter A. In particular, the women told about their experiences of sexual violence, but stated that they were reluctant to sue, due to their distrust and lack of belief in the existing legal system.

On the other part, *economic abuse* against woman may primarily involve; preventing the women from finding employment and working, and limiting, monitoring and exploiting her economic resources. As in situations of many women at the Shelter A, there is no limit for the range of the acts an abuser can attempt in order to exert economic violence. It can range from the abuser's withholding physical resources (e.g. medications) to making the woman beg for money, or charging her with debts without her consent.

Similar to the other forms of violence told above, again it had been far from easy for the battered women (at Shelter A) to sue for a court case for economic abuse. The facts that, the abusers were often the husbands/partners and there existed the pattern of 'joint budget' in the family context, can be suggested as the reasons.

Besides, depending on the narratives of the women in this study, it can be concluded that, for the abusers, economic violence is a remarkably effective 'tool', which constrained the women within the boundaries of their home for long. In this regard, many of the women told about their entrapment in marriage with children due to their partner's economic abuse. Even, some told that, they had borrowed from neighbors in order to take a way to the municipality for their shelter application.

Rather than operating separately, in the majority of women's situations, different combinations of violence forms were present. Besides, even when similar combinations of violence were at work in many women's situations, their perceptions often fell apart on a spectrum depending on their specificities.

To begin with the basic characteristics of women as a *gender* category, the majority of the women were; citizens of Turkish Republic, applicants from the city (almost one third of the women were out-of-city applicants), primary school graduates, under the age of 45, suffering from deterioration of physical and psychological health, unemployed upon shelter application, and were economically trapped in marriage with children. In addition, the majority of women did not have profession, property, regular income, work experience outside the home; and had not taken legal action against the perpetrators, before their shelter application. In addition, the majority had married (legally) once, and by arranged marriage. Most of the women had children; and among them, the majority had one child, and had their children within legal marriages. Moreover, the majority left the perpetrator at least once. Likewise, the majority had no physical disability; no independent social insurance (had social insurance either from the husband or the father); no previous conviction; no alcohol

and/or illegal drug abuse, but had worn-out relationships in their social networks. Similarly, most of the women applied to shelter due to immediate experience of violence of a current male partner; and came to the shelter through the direct contact of other institutions, and had their first shelter experience at the Shelter A.

The women represented all of the geographical regions of the country in terms of their birth places. In addition, upon arrival at the shelter; almost half of the women were between the ages of 26 and 35; more than one third of the women had all of their children with them and almost one third of the women had none of their children with them; more than half of the women were married, and almost one third of the women were divorced. Among the women, who had work experience outside the home, the majority had worked in part-time, uninsured jobs (e.g. dish washing at restaurants/hotels and ill/elderly care), either before the marriage or after the end of marriage. One third of the women did not apply for the shelter upon an experience of an immediate present/ex partner violence. While the length of marriage of women ranged from 3 months to 28 years, the age of the women's children at the shelter ranged from 2 months-old to 23 years old. Among the support mechanisms the women asked for in the aftermath of violent experience; family members, relatives, acquaintances, neighbors, friends, family and/or relatives/acquaintances of the abusive partner, the police, strangers met in the street upon departure from the home, gendarme, municipalities, administrative district, governorship, attorney generalship, the SSCPI, and NGOs had existed. In terms of their prospects of shelter stay, the majority of women expressed their will for getting employed and divorced, and renting a house, where they could live with their children.

Regarding the family profile of the women, the majority of the women had families, which were in socio-economically low status. Some women; had parental loses (either mother or father, or both) in childhood; were grown up in orphanages, or in relatives' houses; and were given to a family, as a foster child, due to divorce or death of parents. In addition, some women did not even know/remember about their

parents, due to an early abandonment, divorce, or death of their parents, particularly their fathers, in childhood. At this point, a few number of women told about having lost their fathers, due to a murder committed by ‘enemies’ or one family member. On the other hand, some women told that they had distant/no relationships with their parents. The reasons stated by the women often focused on; the intervention/dislike of the partner and/or partner’s family; parents’ response against a run-away marriage against the consent of them; parents’ fear from the perpetrator; violence in the family; a forced-marriage by the parents; and the negative attitude/intervention of step mother/father or siblings. On the other part, regarding siblings, while some women had told about having no siblings, some had told about having siblings up to the number of 12. Some stated that they had lost the trace of some of their siblings, because they had been given to another family as a foster child, or due to the divorce of their parents early in childhood. Some of them had several step-siblings due to the second/third marriage of the mother and/or father. Some had psychiatrically ill and mentally defective siblings, while some had lost their siblings early in youth. A few number of women told that they had distant relationships with their siblings due to their experience of sexual harassment/assault in childhood/youth. On the other hand, some told that their relationships had deteriorated with their siblings, after the death of their parents, due to inheritance issues. The effect of negative parental reflection on the relationship with siblings; approval of violence by the siblings; stigmatization as ‘bad woman’ by the siblings after the divorce from partner, and the siblings’ previous convictions were also among the reasons told by some women, for having loose relationships with their siblings. The authority and pressure of father on the siblings was among the reasons women told for the nonexistence/retraction of sibling support upon their departure from the abusive partner. The siblings’ low socio-economic situation, fear from the perpetrator, younger age, and loss of belief in the woman’s decisiveness in ending abusive relationship with her partner were among the other reasons women told, in the context of siblings’ passive position in their situation.

The majority of men, who were the current male partner/husband of the women at the Shelter A, did not have professions, and were self-employed. Very few number of abuser men were alcohol/thinner/hashish addicts. Likewise, exceedingly few men had; gambling addiction (or had been hospitalized due to an addiction); physical and/or mental disabilities, and present/previous convictions, or delayed sentence. Similarly, very few of the men had been diagnosed with a mental illness, such as anti-social personality disorder or psychosis.

Regarding their physical and psychological state, the majority of women complained about, at least, one health problem. Among them were; hand-trembling, heartache, dorsal pain, sudden nervous attacks, respiration problems, amnesia, nervousness, headache, slipped disk, exhaustion, hepatitis B, significant vision loss in both eyes, hormonal disorders, tension disorder, loss of one kidney, ulcer, liver problems, gallbladder, skull split, the brain tumor, cyst in the spinal cord, innate physical disabilities in hand and in one leg, sleep disorders, eating disorders, suicidal ideations, de-personalization, nasal pains, loss of hair, alcohol-abuse and alike. In addition, some women told that they had been diagnosed with depression before. On the other hand, some had told that, due to their experience of violence, they had gone under surgery in terms of brain, spinal cord, eye, broken-nose, gangrene finger, and varicose vein. Moreover, some women told that they had attempted suicide(s), and had been hospitalized in psychiatric departments, due to their experience of violence.

Concerning their economic status, almost all of the women told that they were in poor situations. Among them, some told about having been dependent on social welfare, or third party individuals (often neighbors), before their shelter application. On the other hand, with regard to education levels, more than half of the women were primary school graduates. Likewise, almost all of the women had permanently quitted their education, that is, only two of the women were attending school at the upon their shelter application.

The women's experiences of violence in the family were not limited to physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, as well as economic violence. Within the family, violence occurred in diverse contexts, in relation to several variables, such as, reflexivity, contingency and constrain. The survivors represented a multitude of positions and situations. In addition, they were diverse in terms of socio-economic status, level of education, culture, ethnicity and the like. Similarly, the perpetrators were as diverse as the survivors themselves. They were partners, family members, strangers, acquaintances, neighbors or representatives of the government. Some social groups of women such as, refugees and women with disabilities are often defined as being vulnerable for violence. In addition, certain forms of violence are defined as a categorization based on 'gender'. However, grounding my framework on FST, in this study, I claimed that these attempts were not adequate for understanding the complexity of the women's realities.

#### **4.2.2. Specific Characteristics of the Women**

In this part of the study, the women's characteristics -which have already been portrayed, in the frame of a general picture, in the previous part of the study- were discussed in the context of their subjective experiences of violence and shelter stay, by a specific focus on *difference*.

##### **4.2.2.1. The Women's Subjective Experiences of Violence**

Basically, the women's subjective experiences of violence were elaborated in the context of the sources of violence, and the women's ways of challenging violence. In particular, the sources of violence were categorized under three titles. Namely, they were; *male partner or husband violence*; *family violence*; and the *violence of the third parties*.

#### **4.2.2.1.1. Partner Violence**

This part of the study focused on violence the subjects experienced in heterosexual relationships, since none of the women had told about a female partner in the context of their subjective experiences of violence. The women's experiences of partner violence were discussed in reference to the women's position, situation, reflexivity and constrains. In particular, the women's being a lover/partner without a legal marriage, asylum seeker, and member of a tribe were discussed, as salient factors influencing the ways they had experienced violence. In addition, the subjective experiences of the women were elaborated under the types of violence, which were introduced in the previous part of the study. By the same token, the existence of children in the context of a violent home was discussed. At this point, the children's perceived position, by the women, was analyzed, as a source of either a facilitator, or a constrain, in the woman's decision to leave the abusive partner. The context, in which the women had children out of marriage, was also debated, as a factor influencing their experience.

To begin with, while *legal marriage* is used to be perceived as a protective shield under the laws in Turkey, some residents told that their experience of violence had taught them the opposite. In this regard, as different from the majority of the residents, one 39-year-old woman told that, since the divorce process had been too energy-consuming for her, due to the unwillingness and constant address change of her abusive ex-husband, she had refused to have a legal marriage in her second relationship. Thus, she had been living with a religious act for ten years with her partner. In addition, she told that she benefited from this situation by; telling her partner that she was free to leave him any time and she could 'pull the door and leave the house one day immediately'. Moreover, she told about threatening her partner that she could also take their 7-year-old daughter with her and he could not claim a right for the child, and find her through legal procedures, since she was not legally defined as his 'wife'.

*Being a refugee* was an effective situation that influenced the women's experience of intimate partner violence. The case of a 31-year-old refugee woman was a clear example in this sense. She had married with a man, who was also a refugee from her country, upon her arrival to Turkey. While she was working uninsured as a shelf personnel in a firm, in the city she had been given residence by Security General Directorate, she had been pressured to come to another city by her husband. Having been unable to cope with his pressure, she had gone to that city, with the legal permission of the Foreign Agency Office, for the duration of 15 days. However, at the end of that 15 days, her husband had deceived her that if they went back to that city, they would be deported to their country together, because he had already gone beyond the legal permission of leave. In addition, he had also told that he had annihilated the hiring contract of their house in that city, that is, if she went back, there would be no place to stay. Thus, she told, she had not gone back approximately for 2 years; until the time she got divorced from him, and was informed by UNHCR that she had been accepted by a third country. Since the Foreign Agency Office had brought a suit against her due to her misconduct, she had to go through several hearings, in order to prove that she had been cheated by her ex-husband, and coerced into this illegal activity.

Likewise, *being a tribe member* was another dimension that complicated women's experiences of partner/husband violence. In this respect, the following situational features became salient in the women's narratives; the number of perpetrators was more than one; there was always a threat of death and the approval of *death sentence* by a large number of the family members; an arranged marriage with a relative was at issue in the past or in the prospect, and there was the woman's past testimony of the act of custom in their environment. In this respect, one 18-year-old woman told that she had a sexual relationship with her lover, thinking that they would marry soon. However, she told that her boy-friend had left her 3 months after the sexual intercourse. Then, she had run away from home, since her family wanted her to

marry off with her uncle's son. That is, the family would learn that she had 'lost her virginity', if the marriage came true. She commented on her situation in reference to her perception of the family's response, as follows;

I cannot meet with my family before I get married; they kill me without leaving any trace... My father forgives me after I get married, but my brother does not... This is how the custom is...He used to tell me; 'Even if you are a family woman, I kill you, if you run away'.

She also told that a few years ago, in her hometown, a young girl and her lover had been killed by the girl's family because of 'custom' and the family had covered the murder up as an 'accident'. Another 29-year-old woman, who had an arranged marriage with her cousin for 14 years, and had run away from the violence of her husband, his family, and her parents, also mentioned 'custom' and 'sentence of death', as follows;

...and now my family could be hating me, because in contravention of the custom, I had run away. There is also custom...Here, if there is the custom, there is the sentence of death...

Likewise, she noted that she had also witnessed similar cases in her immediate environment. She told about one woman's case and pointed at her own specific position and situation in despair, but also challenged it somehow, as quoted below;

There was a lady that is to say, she went. She went; she was also in such position. However, her family made a claim to her; her family made a claim to her by coming against the custom. Yet, my family could not come against... Her mother, father made a claim to her; they said 'no', 'we do not do the stuff to our daughter'. They saved their daughter by going after their daughter. They would send her to abroad; she was staying in a shelter house in *City D*. And taking her, they left *City B*...Ours...However, my family are very crowded, quite many. And also there is the tribe. God damn it! I am the daughter of a tribe. Both the tribe and the custom... I mean, I came here by risking everything, but death

does not make me afraid. But the yearning of my son is worse than even the death...

At this point, a 22-year-old woman, who had an arranged marriage by bride price, with an older man, who had been forcing her to prostitution, told that she had changed the city she used to live, and had come to the Shelter A; since she thought that her family and her husband would find her there. She told that her husband, her brothers, her maternal uncles and her mother would not let her live any more, if they found her. Similar to the other women told above, she also noted that she had witnessed the murder of a young woman, in which her maternal uncle had also taken part, the previous year.

*Migration* was another effective situation on women's experiences of violence, as told by some residents. A woman, who had also suffered from the impact of the migration of her family from the Eastern Anatolia to one of the metropolitan cities in the country, stated that, at least, her younger sister benefited from the situation. She elaborated that her sister had the freedom 'to work and to go out a bit' and she was 'still unmarried'. In reference to her specific position in the situation, she questioned about her individuality and her marriage as depicted below;

... In the last 6 years, my life turned into a mess my Hodja. That is to say, everlastingly one house- my husband and his brothers in laws came to *City C*, they hired a house there, did some stuff, in order to work, in theory... And, I have become a *puppet* now, my Hodja... From *City B* to *City C*, from *City C* to *City B*... Consistently now, no peace, no home, no order that belongs to me any more... they were not any more, in short... And, my son is in *City C*. That is to say, I was going to *City B* when my son was staying in *City C*; I was staying in *City B* for 7-8 months. My husband, you know, did not even make a phone call, to say 'I wonder, that is, if you died or not, how are you?'. Everlastingly, that is, only, you know, he was a partner of me on paper; only his name was on me. Only my father-in-law and my mother-in-law were bossing our lives. And he, they told so, their son was too much depending on them, that is, if they told throw away Ayşe from the fifth floor, he would not ask, but why? He would come

and throw away me taking by my hand, you know...At the last moment, in short, I was terribly fed up with my life...

The *intensity of violence* was another factor, which became salient through the narratives of the women, as affecting their subjective experiences of partner/husband violence. Regarding intensity, beginning time of violence was often brought to the scene by the women. They told about different points in time regarding the start of their partner's violence. While some women told that their partners had begun from the very beginning of the relationship, some told that violence had begun after some years. In addition, some women told that their husband had begun beating them even before marriage. In this regard, one 35-year-old woman, who was in an arranged marriage at the age of 13, depicted the case as follows;

When I was engaged to be married, that is, in the period of engagement, everlastingly, my partner used to come to us. Generally, he was staying at us, that is, he was staying at us regularly. Here, we had an argument with him, but I do not know the meaning of the quarrel; what it was about, why we did so... He beat up me pretty much, exactly when engaged...

Some women told that their partners had begun beating them from the early months of their first pregnancy. One 33-year-old woman told that her partner had beaten her first time, when she had been pregnant for their first baby. She told that she had forgiven him since he had regretted acting so, and had been drunk then. However, she noted that he had continued after then. At this point, some told about life-threatening, severe consequences, such as giving birth to premature babies.

The diversity of the women's subjective experiences of partner/husband violence brought about the discussion of types of violence -which are often categorized as *physical, psychological, sexual* and *economic* in the literature- in relation to the narratives of the women in this study, as follows.

*Psychological/emotional abuse* had been often told as the worst kind of abuse by some women, and had been often referred as ‘tongue wound’. Among the types of psychological violence, the women told about the partner’s neglect of their presence at home; or in some women’s words; ‘using the home like a hotel’. In addition, the partner’s ; verbal abuse, when asked about where he had been for some definite time; prevention of the woman from calling a person for help; play around the woman, particularly, in the presence of others; accuse of the woman of being ‘immoral’, and hold of the woman at gun point were among the forms it took in the women’s situations

Since psychological abuse is the most difficult kind of abuse to identify and prove, some women had stated that their partners had made use of it. In this regard, a 24-year-old woman told that her husband –who used to; cheat on her with other women; abuse her verbally, and force her to ask money from her own family- had kept telling her; ‘You cannot get out from this door; there is no reason.’, after his episodes of verbal abuse. That is, the man used to benefit from psychological abuse, in that he reached his aims by terrorizing the woman psychologically, without leaving any visible marks. Depending on some women’s narratives, it can be suggested that, in the absence of current marks of physical violence, the women found it hard to seek help in their social networks and also to press violence charges in the legal system.

In the context of *psychological violence*, some situations became salient in the narratives of the women. Basically, they were; the presence of ‘other women’ in the relationship, stigmatization as ‘mentally ill’ by the partner, the exercise of harsh control and the expression of disgust by the partner, the partner’s denial of violence and ‘cooperation’ with the woman’s family, and the presence of threats. These situational variables were discussed as below.

To begin with, the presence of an ‘other woman’, which was told as a facilitator in some women’s termination of the relationship, was among the sources of psychological abuse, often told by the residents. While some told that they had terrific, loving relationships with their partners for years, till the approach of ‘another woman’, some told that the partner’s infidelity was the last straw that broke the camel’s back, after years of tolerance, to his violence.

Women’s responses in the aftermath of learning about the presence of ‘other woman’ were diverse. While some women immediately left the house just after learning about the men’s infidelity, some did not, till a violent attack of the partner occurred. Among the second group of women, some told that they sustained the relationship for some time, since they believed that the partner’s relationship with the ‘other woman’ had been over. Herein, some told about terminating sexual contact with their partners upon learning about infidelity. One 39-year-old woman told that, since then, she had felt nausea for sexual intercourse, and had not slept in the same room with her partner for almost one-and-a-half year. The only thing she had been concerned about thenceforth was his outlook, since she did want other people to appreciate her and say; ‘How well she cares for her partner!’. However, through her one talk, she seemed to feel, as if she would tolerate his controlling and violent behavior, if he had not cheated on her. While telling that even for the weekly bazaar she had 20 minutes; she tried to legitimize it by telling that, ‘He is jealous; I accept it.’.

Likewise, another 43-year-old woman who had made a love marriage, told that she had learnt about her husband’s infidelity 3 years ago; but later she had learnt that her husband had a religious marriage with that woman for six years, and had ‘opened a house for her’. She commended on the effects of her husband’s infidelity in comparison to her experiences of violence through their marriage, as follows;

He used to have this angry temperament all the times; he used to own a bat. I gave a premature birth to my 6, 5-months-old infant because

he had beaten me, for instance. I had undergone three surgical operations of my eyes, because of being battered. But, umm, especially when children are at issue, such things could be born. The situation of children was at issue, then. But, this betrayal of him is not that bearable [...]. This betrayal incident feels like killing me psychologically... Believe me, it feels like being killed. It's unbearable... We, as women, can breast everything... us, as women... However, we cannot bear betrayal. Being betrayed feels terribly different [...] I left home... the power to bear with it... I mean, either he or I would be a murderer...

Among them, while the majority of the women told that they had learnt about the situation by themselves, some told that their partner had confessed it immediately afterwards, as in the case of another 43 year-old woman. She left the house immediately the day after learning about it; 'Immediately after he came in, he said 'Fatma, I did a wrong to you'. He had also talked it in his sleep...'

While some women told about the presence of one definite woman for a relatively long time, some other told about her partner's relationships with many other women for short periods of time. Likewise, while the majority of the women stated that the 'other woman' was a stranger for them, some told that *she* was not. In this regard, one 32-year-old woman depicted her specific situation as below;

...We have never lived on ourselves as two or three of us; there have always been some other people... He was living it very openly... the last time with a friend of mine. They kept betraying me for 1,5 years... She was coming to our house, they had been together... She had even got pregnant, and so on... many stupid things... She was our neighbor. I realized 3-4 months before the divorce case. Then it turned out to be extremely bad... I don't know so to speak, I don't feel good about it... I told about it to everyone, I never shut up! I told everything to everyone [...] They know; my mother, my father... It feels as if it was a game... They constantly tell me he loves me, but nothing else. But he tells as such, he makes them believe as such...

In this respect, her situation, not only differs from the other women's experience in that the 'other woman' was an intimate, but also in that there was the issue of the other woman's pregnancy from the husband. While the majority of the women kept their partner's infidelity secret for some time, some women told about it to other people immediately upon learning about it, as in her case. The position of the 'other woman', as an *intimate*, could be suggested as influential in some women's reveal of the situation to the third parties.

Even some women, who had not come to the Shelter A due to their partners' infidelity, told that they had also experiences of infidelity in the past. One 35-year-old woman told that two residents talked about infidelity at the shelter, and commented that she also experienced infidelity, but 'not like the way the other talked about'. She commended on her situation then, as she depicted below;

I have also seen the betrayal, not with my eyes though; in the way he behaves and acts, his mannerisms... a lady... my first husband... and there was a village obstetrician, everyone was telling that she was not a moral one... even my sister-in-law and so on... It was my first husband, I used to be fragile then. She was coming for visiting us, I saw them making nonverbal signs to one another. However, since I did not see anything directly, I could not make a narration out of it in my mind... They start to think that I don't care about it at all. I was pregnant to Ayşe then... Meanwhile I gave birth to Ayşe, I was knitting tiny waistcoats to her. I was capable of knitting one tiny waistcoat in a day; tiny baby waistcoats knitting for my baby. They kept making signs to each other, as I raise my head up from knitting I see them making signs to each other, what can I do? What was I capable of doing? I could not do anything, ok , but I was deeply resent them... And at the end of that event, I was in my mother's house. My husband came and said "We danced with mukhtar and the belly dancers, because of the mukhtar's son circumcision feast". And I told him I will not come back home, but my mother also forced me to go there, she forced me a lot... And, we even went back with my husband, then the neighbors told me very quickly that Ali [her husband] had danced with the beautiful belly dancer, not with the uglier one... you know, it doesn't matter for me, if he had danced with this or that one...

In the situation of the woman quoted above, as different from the other women, who had told about their experience of infidelity, she had not told about her ex-husband's sexual relationship with an 'other woman'. As different from the majority, she perceived infidelity in term of her ex-husband's 'attitudes and acts', and tried to terminate the relationship, in the absence of 'concrete clues', by going to her mother's house. However, her mother had forced her to continue her marriage. Regarding her feelings in the aftermath of her perception of her husband's infidelity, she described her condition, as below;

I feel sick of this person, I mean of my husband... Well, it was extraordinarily remorseful. My heart was beating as if it would go out of my chest, my hands and feet have broken down. Even, my husband had said at that moment, "She will die; who will take care of my children?". He was worrying about of this, you know, I deeply felt down when I heard it, these words... I could not defend myself at that times, I was keeping all inside of me, I lived terribly distressing days.

On the other hand, some women told about challenging the 'other woman' by the presence of their children. In this regard, one 39-year-old woman told that she called the 'other woman', and told her that she could take his partner, if she could manage to look after his four children. Similar to the attitude of the husband in the case of the woman told above, she told that, on the phone, she heard her partner telling the woman; 'She cares for my children; she has no harm to you.' about herself. In relation to this, she told how she had felt 'inferior', as being in the position of 'just a woman who cares for his children'.

In situations of some women, the approach of another woman became an issue not under the title of 'infidelity', but a 'fellow wife'. As one 29-year-old woman told below, before her departure from the house, her husband's attempt for bringing a fellow wife in the household, accompanied by his sexually distant attitude towards her for some time, was effective on her departure from the house;

...Whatever, he made a phone call to his mother, 'You sent Emine, I let you know, I will bring a fellow wife over Emine and Emine is going to be our housekeeper; mine and my brothers' house keeper.' Himm, I said, you mean a housekeeper... I was mad with that, I shouted a lot... And, I was subjected to violence in front of my son... I said, you'll see... a housekeeper... I also said, sorry Hodja, but my husband was not even a guy who was accomplishing his manhood duties, do you know? We were sleeping in separate beds for one week. Because, he didn't even want to come near me... condescending... Whatever, I was trying to be gentle; I said it was no importance... Using phone was already forbidden.

However, even if she told that she had tried to underestimate the situation, she could not. She had left the house after one week, followed by her husband's violent attack, in the presence of their 12-year-old son.

In the context of reflectivity, the women told about the negative effects of their partner's infidelity, in terms of their psychological and physical well-being. One 21 year-old woman, who 'chose' to tolerate her husband's infidelity, and applied the Shelter A, due to her father's violence against her, commended on her situation, as follows;

My disease had become chronic in the last one year. I still don't feel any better. The way I speak had changed... I used to go to hairdresser a lot, before. I used to care myself a lot. I don't even brush my hair now. I gave up... I don't feel like doing anything... I feel well for the last month; before that I used to beat Özge [her daughter]. I became acutely fragile after the betrayal... I can't put my thoughts together; I can't even read a book. I battered myself a lot... Hepatitis indicators keep showing 4 times more than the expected levels...

On the whole, regardless of women's being in a legal or religious marriage, none of the women, who had told about infidelity, had told that their partner wanted to end their relationship with them. At most, in situations of some women, the partners told them to 'accept this life as it is, or get out', without provision of any talk that showed a concrete, 'realist' intention of separation or divorce. Overall, the women told about

their partners' intentions to 'keep' them within the relationship, either in the position of 'the woman who looks after the children', or 'the woman who does the domestic labor'. This seemed to be the most hurting aspect of the situation for the women.

On the other hand, some women told about their partner's *stigmatization* of them as 'mentally ill'. Herein, some told that the partner used to tell so 'reactively', when they suggested going to a doctor or a psychologist, 'as a way to end violence' in their relationships. On the contrary, some other women referred to any contingencies, telling that, it was often repeated by the partner anytime, without rhyme or reason. In this respect, while some women took their husband's words seriously, and tried to make sense of it through their talks with me, some told that they knew that the partner was acting such, intentionally, in order to terrorize their psychological state.

One 33-year-old woman, who was in an extramarital relationship with a married man, told that her partner began to stigmatize her as 'psychologically ill', after his wife learnt about the relationship, and denied the divorce. She told that she had an innate physical illness that had no medication as a cure; that is, some of the vessels at the back of her neck were blocked, and particularly when she got tired, she suffered from numbness in her hands and arms. She told that although her partner was near her, when the doctor had told about her case, she complained that he accused her of malingering, telling her that she felt so, because she was 'mentally ill'. However, she perceived his behavior as 'a tactic to distance himself' from the relationship.

Since this study depends my four year-of-experience in the position of a psychologist, an interactive process had been at issue, regarding the researcher-subjects relationships. In particular, due to my position as a *psychologist*, in some of the interviews the women had asked me to reflect on their situation and position. They often asked whether they were 'psychologically/mentally ill', as told by their partners. Some women had also asked if their partners were mentally ill. Having

been told by a psychologist that they were not ‘mentally ill’, after several verbal abuse of the partners, telling that they were, seemed to be empowering for women.

On the other part, the majority of the women told that their acts were subject to *control of the partners*. In particular, they told about the partner’s monitoring of time, their activities and social relationships. While some told that they had been ‘permitted’ for limited time for shopping in the bazaar, picking up the children from the school, or medical checks of the children; some told that they did not have even such ‘opportunities’. A 30-year-old woman told that she even could not have gone to the funeral of her mother ten years ago, because of her husband’s exercise of control on her. On the whole, all the women told about certain specific ‘punishments’ of their partners, in return for their ‘disobedience’ against their rules.

Some women told about the partners’ exercise of control in the company of harsh verbal attacks. One 33-year-old woman told how her husband had prevented her from wearing as she liked, for 12 years, as follows; ‘I had solicitude for wearing trousers. ‘Are you a prostitute, you will wear jeans?’, he said’. On the other hand, laughing, a 28 year-old woman told that her husband, who was in a semi-closed prison at the time of her arrival at the shelter, had not permitted her to read a book, listen to music and watch television ‘when it was dark’. However, she told that she used to ‘relax automatically’ against his ‘awkward’ acts, when he called her ‘my baby’.

Some women told about the situations, in which their partners’ exercised control over them, in the company of not only verbal attacks, but also severe beatings to the death. In this regard, a 22-year-old woman’s case was a clear example. One morning, she had gone to a hospital to take her daughter’s test results, but while waiting for them on a seat at the garden, she had fainted, because of hunger. Since she had leaned on the table, no one had realized that she had fainted. After a few hours, she came round, afraid. She asked from a staff at the hospital to make a phone call to her

husband to explain her 'excuse' for being late for home. She had to ask for a free call, because her husband used to give her no 'extra' money, apart from the money for the bus ticket to the home, as he had done on that day. When she got home, her husband had beaten her to death, while yelling; 'where are you till this time?' and 'for whom are you wearing these?', tearing her underwear into pieces.

Herein, some women also told about their partner's exercise of control, in the form of an expression of 'excessive jealousy'. In general, the women told about their entrapment at home; some, in terms of losing their jobs; and, some, in terms of isolating themselves from any social relationships, and the like. On the other hand, for some women, the physical borders of their house constituted the rigid boundaries their husbands had set for them. In this regard, one 30-year-old woman told about how her husband had forced her for withholding her basic human needs. That is, she told that they used to live with her husband's family in a squatter's house; and that her husband was jealous of her 'even from his own brother'. She told that, even she could not go to toilet, which was outside the house, till the noon, when her husband came to the house for lunch, due the presence of her husband's brother at home. The situation depicted below, by another woman, who was 32-year-old, also can give signs of the double-standard positions created by an abusive man, who had legitimized his entrapment of his wife to the home, as 'jealousy';

...He was extremely jealous. He does many unexpected things; sometimes he tells things that I get suspicious about myself... We could not go out at all together, but he was having fun and wandering around with ladies... on the trot all day... But I was prohibited from going out, he kept me in... He had enclosed me to home. He didn't want me to do anything... Anything about me was making him feel annoyed. When I told him, he was telling me that he was jealous, in love with me... Of course, I didn't believe in what he said; it's impossible. He was fighting all the times... with anyone... We have gone through extremely unpleasant situations with him... It was the same from the beginning...

On the other hand, some women perceived the isolating and controlling acts of the partner, as a sign of ‘concern’, due to their experiences of the partner’s withholding affection, as a painful experience. That is, for some women the relationships with the partners swing between two extreme points; namely, they were; the presence of partner’s constant control versus his withdrawal of any contact. One 33-year-old woman told that she could not make sense of her partner’s attitude towards her for the last two months, while referring to his exercise of control as a sign of ‘care and love’, as follows;

...Usually, he was an extremely jealous person. I mean, my phone was used to be under his control all the times. I could not give my phone number to anyone... I mean I could not even go and visit a friend. Neither I could go, nor could I invite someone ever... but the last two months... He used to investigate even the people I greeted. But the last two months, he became another man.

On the other hand, some women told about the partner’s expression of disgust toward them. Some used the metaphor of ‘animal’, while describing the way they had felt in the relationship. Herein, a 40 year-old woman told that her ex-husband - who had a physical disability and with whom she had continued living together ‘for the sake of children’ after getting divorce- used to humiliate her, referring to her physical outlook. She stated that; ‘I feel myself as if I was an animal... He does not regard me as a suitable wife for himself. He tells, ‘you look like a rat’...’.

On the other part, some women told about the partner’s denial of violence and also ‘cooperation’ with their own family. At this juncture, some told that their partners used to tell that they could not leave the house, because ‘there was no reason’, denying their acts of violence towards them. A 24-year-old woman told that, after his verbal attacks, her husband used to respond in that way. Besides, her husband often told her that she could not leave him; also because she ‘had a brother’. In this regard, it could be suggested that, some men ‘made benefit’ of the use of psychological abuse against their partners due to its ‘invisible marks’ and even increased the

intensity of their abuse, depending on their perceived/actual cooperation with some male members in the women's family.

While some women depicted a portrayal of a partner, who was indifferent and could 'make one go crazy with his calmness', some other women draw a quite different profile of the abusive men. The majority of the women told about their partner's acts of violence, which had resulted in their isolation from their family and any kind of social networks. Some also told about the partner's use of threats in order to maintain their isolated position. At this point, some women told that they had kept the abusive relationship going for long, in order to protect their own lives and the lives of the people they cared. In this regard, a 28-year-old woman, who had 90% sight loss and had been married with a 55-year-old man, for five years, told that her husband had prevented her from leaving, by beatings, from the very beginning; and used to threaten her by telling her; 'I make you go into a coma! I break every piece of you!'

On the contrary, some women told that their partners used to tell them to do whatever they want, in the absence of any threats. However, this situation can be suggested, as the men's intentions of provoking a helpless failing, on the side of the women. In this regard, the situation of a 34-year-old woman, who made a forced marriage at the age of 14, with court permission, with the son of the family she was adopted at the age of 11, could be a clear example. In specific, she told that she had tried to terminate the relationship several times, before her arrival at the Shelter A, and, except one of them, he had not threatened her. However, she told that she had turned to home, because she had missed her children. She elaborated the situation as follows; 'He was not threatening me; he was using the children. He was abusing me emotionally. Because I had no one apart from the children.'. In this regard, telling that she had no one in life apart from her children, she made an emphasis on her specific position as an 'adopted child'. However, her narrative also revealed how some abusive partners' acts were contingent upon some aspects of the context. That

is, she told that, in one occasion she had left home, she moved to the house of her husband's cousin, began to work, and also sued for divorce. Correspondingly, her husband had threatened her to take her divorce petition back. Besides, he had told her that he would sue his cousin for his 'forceful detention' of his 'wife at his home', and provide him to get a sentence. Thus, she told that, she had returned home that time, for the sake of his husband's cousin and his family. In this regard, it could be suggested that the absence of utterance of threats, by the abusive partners, did not make a difference for some women, regarding their entrapment to the home. In particular, she told that although her husband had threatened her once in her life, she had never made a complaint about him through her 20-years-of marriage, neither to the police, nor the attorney generalship. She explained that she was afraid of her husband; thus, she could not even go out; if she 'dared', without taking permission from him, her husband used to beat her, in return.

Some women told about their partners' threats with some tools. Herein, a 25-year-old woman told that her husband used to threaten her by attacking with a drawn knife, even by waking her up from her sleep. Besides, she told that he had threatened her with death and also with killing of her father, who used to support her in her past-decisions to get divorced from him, by paying for a lawyer.

Besides, some women told about their ex-partners' threats, which continued in the aftermath of their divorce. A 44-year-old woman, who had got divorced from her ex-husband four years ago, had told that she had just moved to her third house after the divorce, when her 51-year-old ex-husband had found her address and attacked her, with a drawn knife, in the street, two weeks ago, before her arrival at the Shelter A.

While the majority of the women told about their partner's threats regarding their possible departure from the home and/or reveal of their violence to a third party, some told about different situations. One 31 year-old-woman, who had a forced

marriage at the age of 12 due to the coercion of her father and step-brother, told that, for 4-5 months, there had been several men coming to their house that she had never known before. She told that, when they had quarrels, her husband used to tell her; 'they are coming for you'. Later, she told that she had learnt about the situation; her husband had been prostituting himself to these men. Thus, her husband had been threatening her with death for telling about it neither to his brothers, nor to her brother and the police.

Apart from the psychological violence, the women also told about their subjective experiences of *physical violence*. The physical violence of the partners took quite different forms, depending on the specific features the women had, in their context. The partners' physical violence; in the presence of a third party, during pregnancy, in the accompany of a threat of knife/gun, and in the form of a systematic violence were among the mentioned forms of physical violence by the women. The expulsion from the home and detention at home were also among the types of physical violence, told by some women. In this regard, a 21-year-old woman told that her husband had detained herself at home, by locking the doors on her, for two weeks, just before they had married.

While some women told about their partners' physical violence in the privacy of their home, in the absence of no one, some told about physical attacks in the presence of a third party. The children and/or any member of the women's/men's family constituted the third party in some contexts, while, in others, it became the neighbors, any acquaintance, or people the women had never known before. In this regard, like some other women, a 24-year-old married woman with a one-year-old baby told that they were living with her husband's family and his family was such indifferent that her husband had beaten her, even in the presence of them. In particular, she made a reference to her specific situation that she had escaped to marry with her husband, without the approval of her family. She elaborated that her husband had benefited of

this situation since he had also known that her family would not support her, for divorce, by telling her that, it was her choice.

As in the case of some, one 35-year-old woman told that she had not revealed her ex-husband's first beating, which she described as 'bad in short', to anyone. Likewise, in many other women's situation, after the partner's first violent attack, his violence escalated and repeated, after short time. She told that his second beating occurred, this time, in the presence of her mother, who had approved of his violence towards her. She commended on her situation then, as below;

...And I never could forgive my mother's mannerisms then... My mother had said, 'Beat son', I mean, she had approved of my husband's beating me... She was obsessed with the son-in-law extremely... When she had acted such, he would take care of her daughter... there is no such thing! I think they even became sassier, and think that he is indispensable then. I have lived this also, certainly, it is not pleasant...

Regarding the 'reason' of his second violent attack, she referred to her situation of 'being young' while explaining it, as follows;

The reason is; he had wanted to go to the village. We were out of the village. I said 'why do you want to go, it is no need?' and he said 'should I grant your permission for what I want to do?'. I don't know, the ages were also small then... It was out of such a little thing...

On the contrary, some women told about having been beaten by their husbands in the presence of a member of their own family, who did not approve of violence, as in the situation of a 28-year-old woman, who noted the presence of her younger sister. However, she referred to her sister's situation of 'being young', in the context of her failure, in the intervention of her husband's violence. In this regard, some women told that the other people, who were present during their partners' physical attacks towards them, had also become the subjects of the men's violence. One 44-year-old woman told that her mother, to whom she used to run away for help, had also been

beaten by him several times. Likewise, many women told about their partners' violence in the presence of their children. While in some situations, the children were the witnesses, in others, they were also the subjects of the men's violence. In this regard, while many women told about their partners' physical violence towards their children, who were under the age of 18; some told about their children, who were older than 18. A 43 year-old woman told that her 23-year-old daughter, who was a university- graduate and employed at a hospital, had also been beaten by her father.

On the other part, some women told about their arranged decision with their partners in the aftermath of the men's one of physical attacks towards them, in the presence of other people. In this regard, a 28-year-old woman told about a quite rare situation, in which she had divorced from her ex-husband with an agreed upon decision, in the aftermath of his first violent attack, in the presence of other people, in a hospital. Referring to a similar context, a 22-year-old woman told that her husband punched at the back of her head at a hospital, with the excuse of her being late at home. However, she told that he had continued to beat her in the street in the presence of many other people, one-month before her arrival at the Shelter A. In her situation, although her husband had declared that he also wanted to get divorced in the aftermath of his beating, he had told her that this was contingent upon his 'delivery' of her to her family. In this regard, she reflected that her husband wanted to 'deliver' her to her family upon divorce, because he did not want her to do anything on her own. Herein, she referred to her family's possible cooperation with her husband, upon her prospective divorce from her husband, as follows;

They will talk about it. a small place...there would be rumors and gossips. I could not work there, I could not do anything for my two children. I would feel myself like a dog... you know, a dog also gives birth...

Thus, it could be suggested that, in some situations, the partners 'provided' the women with the option of divorce, with some definite contingencies, in the aftermath

of their severe physical violence; but with the intention of provoking helpless failings, in fact.

On the other hand, some women told about their partners' physical violence directed not only to them and their children, but also to the female members of their own family. One 36-year-old woman told about her husband's physical violence attacks in the form of a serial of systematic violence. She told that, on the day of her departure from home with her 16-year-old daughter, her husband had; slapped his own mother on the face; beaten one of the little sons on his back; hanged down the youngest son from the balcony of their house, which was on the 6th floor; punched at the heart of the 16-year-old daughter, who had undergone an open heart surgery before; and forced the two older daughters to slap each other on the face. In addition, she told that after his practice of violence, he had told 'You have been beaten up session by session. In the first session, Can was beaten; in the second session, Özge and Ayşe slapped each other on the face; in the third session, I hang down Ömer from the balcony; and in the fourth session, everyone will die!'. Moreover, she told that, afterwards, he had pressured her to pour the hot oil in the fryer on the children respectively.

At this juncture, some women told about running away from home during their partners' violent attack and the intervention of a third party afterwards. Herein, one 34-year-old woman told that, at once, she had run away from home, naked, to a neighbor's home nearby, when husband had beaten her, tearing all the clothes on her.

While the majority of the women told about their partners' physical violence, which had resulted in no permanent physical function loses, unfortunately, some told that they had. A 36-year-old woman told that due to her husband's severe physical violence, her right hand forefinger had been mortified and cut by an operation. In addition, there were broken and lost teeth in her mouth; her nose bone was broken

and there were stroke scars on her legs and cigarette burns on her arms. In this respect, some women told about their partners' physical violence, which had not resulted in a permanent physical loss, but, in fact, which were 'severe'. A 44-year-old woman told that her ex-husband had inserted in her legs, by a knife, and cut her ears. Likewise, a 35-year-old woman told that her husband had burnt her legs with a flaming iron; a 24-year-old woman told that her husband had attempted to strangulate her, and a 22-year-old woman told that her husband had thrown her arm a wood, which had resulted in pains for weeks.

Some women underlined specific situations, in which their partners had beaten them. In this regard, some referred to their partner's alcohol addiction. Among them, some told that, even if, their partners had been drinking alcohol from the very beginning of their relationships, they had been suffering from their costs for some time. A 34-year-old woman told that even if alcohol had been present in their lives for twenty years, she had been suffering from its adverse effects for 12-13 years. On the contrary, another woman, who was 25 years old, told that, from the very beginning of their marriage, her husband used to drink alcohol and come against her with a drawn knife every single day. On the other part, a 29-year-old woman told that her husband did not drink alcohol every single day, but when he drank, he became a 'monster' and, often, his violent attacks resulted in her expulsion from home by him.

On the other hand, some women drew attention their partner's *reactions in the aftermath of the physical attacks*. A 21 year-old woman, who told that her husband had begun to be violent against her after three-years of marriage, told that he had not even felt regret, after he had broken the beer bottles in her head. However, through the majority of the women's narratives, it could be suggested that, most of the violent men's begging pardon of their violence, had been contingent upon the women's location anywhere outside the home. That is, the majority of women told

that, even if their partners had demonstrated no sign of regret or had apologized, they had done so; if they had not been in the privacy of their homes.

On the whole, *isolation* was apparent in almost all of the women's narratives; the majority of the women told that they had no friends, neighbors or anyone to support them. Even if, not on a constant continuum, depending on the specificities of their context, many women told about being under the close scrutiny of their partners, either currently, or in the past. Some also told about their partners' use of 'jealousy' and/or 'male privilege' to justify their acts. In this respect, while some women told about their partners' direct declaration of prohibition against their contact with anyone, some told about their *auto-control*, in the absence of the men's verbal expressions. A 43-year-old woman told how her husband's rude treatment towards people had made her 'sacrifice' relationships with the neighbors, as below;

He was terribly rude, extremely rude... Because of him, I can't be close with any neighbor, can't go to visit anyone... He was exceedingly touchy about anything. He became enemy to my neighbors.

Many of the women also told about their partner's *accusation for the abuse*. While some told that their partners had shifted the responsibility for violence from the very beginning of their relationships, some told about it was very beginning recently, depending on some contingencies. In this regard, a 32-year-old woman, who had learnt about her husband's infidelity with one of her friends recently, told how her husband's behavior had changed depending on the changing context, as follows;

...and he started blaming me after a couple of months. He didn't do it before. Then he said, 'You made me what I have become...'. You did this and that... He had once hit his hand to glass, five veins were cut... His head was damaged from here... He caused the mark on my forehead, pushed me down the ground, he did this. He was fighting so severely a lot, as I got silent, he was coming over me, he was beating me, I do not know... doing terribly unpleasant things...

Besides, some women told about the partner's *induced debility*. A 36-year-old woman told that, neither her daughters, nor she did have any health insurance, for almost two years. She told that her husband had burnt their health insurance card in the stove, after he had beaten her, in order to prevent her from getting medical treatment, as cited below;

I don't have anything... I used to have health insurance, he burned my health reports in flames, I mean.. 'You won't have any medical check-ups die, die like a dog!' he said. He was such ignorant that you cannot even imagine... He did not even apply for identity cards for the kids...

On the other hand, the women also told about their subjective experiences of *economic violence*. Regarding the economic constrains in their situation, the majority of the women told about their partners' preventing them employment and access to family income. A minority of women, who had been given the limited 'opportunity' by their partners, told about their partner's giving them an allowance and preventing them from keeping their jobs. In addition, some told about their partners' not; paying for rent and bills of the house and supplying the needs of the house and the children. On the whole, a significant number of the women told that their partners had self-employment, which often meant flexible working hours, no need for a definite level of education, and no insurance.

A 33-year-old woman, who told that her husband used to change jobs constantly, told that there had been times, throughout her marriage, when she could not have found, even, a half packet macaroni for her children. Likewise, a 35-year-old woman told that her husband used to ask for money, as a debt, from other people, and tell them that she would pay them back. Similar to the situation of some other women, she told that, since her husband used to pay for alcohol, when he found some money, for a few months their neighbors had been supporting her with the children.

On the other hand, a few women told about leaving their jobs due to the intervention of their partners. A 40-year-old woman told that she could have worked for, only, one-year in a textile factory during her marriage, since her husband prevented her from working, by telling her explicitly that ‘If the woman works, her feet stand on the ground steady and she leaves the man’. She also added that, in the aftermath of her leave from the job, due to her husband’s usurious loans, they had moved several times. In this regard, another woman, who was 32 years old, told about the context she had quitted her job referring to specific constrains, as below;

I worked... last time... there was a confection in our neighborhood. I worked there. I gave birth to Ömer. It was with social security; I was working in the confection. I was a master craftsperson, besides. In the other workplaces I used to work, they had not paid my social security. They were unfair to me. But then, here they provided me with social security. It’s either 4 or 5 years, I don’t exactly know... Then I gave birth, I could not go... Additionally, my husband was acting weird. He was angry, telling me not to have contact with the men around. No male masters, no male boss...these were his requests (laughing)... He was following me when I was going to work. He was fighting with people in the street, asking why they had looked in that way... All of a sudden I used to realize that I was in the middle of a fight...

She also described the context she had found herself in the aftermath of her loss of job. In particular, she told about the situation, in which she had left the house, with her 6-year-old son, and had gone to her sister. She told that he had sold the furniture at home, and brought an unrealistic amount of money to her, for supplying the child’s needs, as follows;

He came and told me that he sold our goods, house staff.. He told that he gave 20 liras to his father. He gave 5 liras to me. Does your father look after the kid? What can I do with 5 liras? He gave 20 liras to his father, 5 liras to me... wondering he once said to me that his father was rich... There was some house goods at home. He sold those, because the contractor was going to demolish our house. The day after, I came here. Whatever he says is a lie already... I don’t trust him at all, I mean..

Some women told about their partner's sale of furniture at their home, as constituting a facilitating condition, for their departure from the home. On the other hand, some told about it as a *regular* situation, as in the case of a 23-year-old woman. She told that her husband, who was an alcohol and gambling addict, used to sell the furniture at home, 'if he could not find the money'.

A 29-year-old woman -who had worked, for four years, with her husband in factory, in the early years of their marriage- told that her husband had not paid for the rent of the house for three months. She noted that the owner of the house had come recently and verbally abused her, while her husband was not at home. She also told that the electric fire had been levied a distraint due to his debts; and, thus, she had stayed in cold, at home, with her two children, who were aged 5 and 1 before her arrival at the Shelter A. In this regard, she told about how the economic constrains her husband had created, facilitated her departure from home, as below;

He has a shop... complicated stuff... I do not know what he does. He has cheated all around... He does not listen me. He never talks; he never lets me ask about the count of his money. He does not like working. I always do self-sacrifices... If such is the case, I could also do so, on my own...

In a similar context, a 30-year-old woman, who learnt that her husband had run debts, in the name of her, when a notice of enforcement had come, had described the condition she left the house, with her two children, as follows;

He is working without insurance. He does not bring what he earns to home... He used to say 'I cannot earn, I cannot get any'... I do not care what he does now. I am trying to plan my life and my children's lives...

In addition, she told that, when she had recently asked her husband about caring for children before her application to the Shelter A, her husband told her; 'Sell yourself; look after them'. In this regard, some women depicted their departure from home, as if it had been contingent upon their partner's economic supply of basic needs,

without making any direct reference. On the other hand, some expressed the contingency openly, as in the case of a 22-year-old married woman with two children. She told; 'If he had been with social insurance, I would stand him. Six years of my life had already fallen into despair.'. She also made a contingency between their current situation and her husband's not letting her to work. She told; 'I have always wanted to work; my husband had not allowed me ever. If he had permitted me to work, may be these would not have ever happened.'.

While the partners' supplies of household needs were not even at issue in some women' situations; in others, they were, in limited amounts. A 32-year-old woman described her situation as follows;

He was doing his own work; repairing motorcycle, bike, doing sales... I mean, he was not doing... lacking of work-discipline... With the money he earned, he was used to supply the house needs, but he supplied his own needs more. He was caring himself a lot; clothes, smoking... but, no drugs and alcohol... offering meals to other women, being dependent on other people...

Likewise, a 34-year-old woman told that, her elder son, who was currently a 15-year-old high school student then, used to save his pocket money and work outside in holidays, in order to supply for the school requirements of his two younger brothers, since he was a primary school boy. She told that her husband's spending money had been contingent upon the issue; he did not pay for the children's school expenses, while supplying their other basic needs, since he did not want them to go to school.

At this juncture, some women told about situations, in which they solely depended on themselves, in order to provide the needs of children and themselves, regardless of their partner's employment status. A 34-year-old woman told that although her husband had a considerable amount of revenue and also two houses, she had been depended on her own handcraft. In this regard, she referred her position of 'not being

a woman of that kind’, implying ‘a woman who asks for money from her husband’, as follows;

I have been married for 14 years, believe me, my husband has not given me even 50 pennies... I am not the type of woman who asks for money, unless provided; never... I have been married for 14 years, he did not even buy me socks, not even a chewing gum... I was on my own all the times. The God is my witness, the whole family was witness, too... I was doing hand crafts, buying myself and my son’s clothes.

On the other hand, the women also told about their subjective experiences of *sexual violence*. They told about their partner’s; pressure for sexual intercourse in situations and in forms that they did not want to; accusation that the children were not from them; play around that they were not *woman*; stigmatization as being infertile, and pressure for prostitution.

Some women referred to specific contexts, in which their partners had begun being sexually abusive towards them. One 39-year-old woman had referred to the time she had learnt about her partner’s infidelity, as the facilitator condition, for his sexual abuse, in the company of verbal and physical abuse. She told that she had not been sleeping in the same room with her partner for almost two years; and that her partner used to tell her; ‘You are not a woman to me. If you cannot accept, here is the door’, getting nervous and sometimes throwing and breaking the things around into pieces. In this regard, a 23-year-old woman pointed at her first night with her ex-husband. She told that she asked for some time from him to adapt, before sexual intercourse. However, she told that, her husband revealed the situation to her family, complaining about her that ‘she was not fulfilling her womanhood duties’. She noted that also her relatives had accused her of ‘not being a woman’, and had humiliated her.

In addition, some women made a specific emphasis to their partners’ sexual violence, in the aftermath, or in the company of, physical violence. In this regard, a 28-year-

old woman, who had been married to a 55-year-old man, told that her husband had attempted to make her 'a wife to himself forcefully', and prevented her from leaving him, by beatings. Besides, a 44-year-old woman told that she had her four children, due to her ex-husband's forced sexual relationships, in the company of beatings. Referring to how she felt, a 22-year-old woman, who told that she could not stand even the touch of her husband any more, stated;

He is f.cking me after beating me... I feel myself like a prostitute in that house... I cannot be an inferior person. I had even thought of it [prostitution] for the sake of getting rid of my husband...

Likewise, some women told that even the approach of their partners had provoked disgust for long, before their arrival at the Shelter A. A 34-year-old woman, who had realized the sexual harassment of her husband towards her two daughters, a few months before her arrival at the shelter, told that she had felt nausea when she had seen him.

On the other hand, some women told about the sexual abuse of their ex-husbands, which had increased in intensity, in the aftermath of the divorce. In this regard, the women also told about the verbal abuse of their ex-husbands, which had focused on their perceived 'immorality'. Another woman, who got divorced from her husband four years ago, told that he had attacked her with a drawn knife in the street, telling her 'You grew old! You are still looking for men!'. Besides, some women told about their experiences of ex-husbands' sexual abuse in the privacy of their home. A 40-year-old woman told that although she had been divorced from her ex-husband for three years, she had continued to live in the same house, due to his manipulation of this condition, as 'for the sake of the children'. She told that she had accepted his offer on the contingency that he would not touch her. However, she told that, after a while, her ex-husband had begun to force her for sex; justifying the situation by telling that he was 'a healthy man'.

Moreover, some women referred to the situations in which their husbands had forced them to prostitute. In this regard, during one intake interview, a 22-year-old woman, unexpectedly, revealed that her husband had sold her to men, in response to an unrelated question. That is, I had asked, if she had any work experience; and while she had been responding that once she had worked in elderly-care, she had stopped and asked me; ‘By work, do you tell it in the meaning of being sold?’.

On the other part, some women told about being stigmatized, as being infertile, by the partners. Among them, while some women told that their ex-husband’s abuse had resulted in divorce, some told that they had given to an unwanted birth of a baby, in order to get rid of their partners’ abuse. A 24-year-old woman, who had made her first forced marriage at the age of 13 and her second arranged marriage at the age of 21, told that due to his ex-husband’s abuse towards her infertility, they had divorced after one-year-of marriage.

Even if discussed under separate types of violence through the narratives of the women above, almost all of the women experienced different types of violence in interconnection.

#### **4.2.1.1.1. Children**

The women had told different narratives in relation to the existence of their children in the context of a violent home. Although many of them had perceived sustaining the relationship as essential ‘for the sake of children’, for long, regardless of how painful it was for them; most of them had realized that it was not, upon their decision to come to the Shelter A.

A considerable number of women had perceived the presence of their children as a ‘barrier’ for leaving the abusive relationship. Regarding their previous concerns,

some women referred to factors, such as; their economic constrains, their perception of the ‘essentiality of the family context and a father figure’, and the anxiety-provoking social insistence of single parenthood for them. A 34-year-old woman depicted the context, in which she had endured her husband’ violence, as follows;

I told, may be my husband could change. My husband, I mean my Hodja, no love, no concern, no affection, nothing...Only his aspersion against me...indifference...Last, I mean, for the last 1-2 years, his severe violence began, increased. I do not know...I used to say, it will get better, I endured for my son, I mean...

She told that she had attempted to terminate the abusive relationship before, by going to a women’s shelter run by the SSCPI. However, she told that she had to return to home, because of the staff’s attitude. After this event, she told that her husband had intensified his violence, and begun to beat her in front of their 13-year-old son. However, she told that since she had been with her son, she had tried to endure.

On the other hand, some women told about their children’s position not only as ‘witness’, but also as ‘victim’. In this regard, a 43-year-old woman depicted the context in, which her elder daughter had taken these positions, as below;

The day before, he had beaten me, look here is a mark of it... Look here, it’s better now. I cannot still move my this arm now... This mark became while saving my daughter, she was protecting me... He beat my daughter severely. We both got the bat...[...]Last night, Monday was my birthday, the night... My daughter had bought biscuits, brewed tea, neighbors came over, and we played okay. It’s mere insignificant...When you think of it at a glance, it’s very simple. He got terribly angry out of no reason; why she had called them, it had been his tea, his sugar, and so on... When my daughter came against him, he had beaten her... I was also beaten while trying to separate them.

As told by some other women, she also told about the abusive partner’s discriminatory behavior towards the children in the same context, being contingent

on the positions they took. In specific, while she depicted a context in which her husband had beaten her older 23-year-old daughter severely, due to 'her safeguard' towards her; she described the position of her 16-year-old daughter often as a silent witness, who had been sad about the situation, but had not acted; thus, positively discriminated by the father in the same context. Likewise, regarding the relationship of her husband with her 5-year-old daughter and 4-year-old son, a 25-year-old woman stated; 'He loves his daughter; he does not love his son. He beats him a lot, because he takes sides with me.'

On the other part, some women told about their partner's conditional violence towards the children. A 32-year-old woman told that her husband had not ever directed violence against their child, except the situation, in which she had left the house and their son, after one of his violent attacks. She elaborated as below;

I was staying at my mother's. Leave, he said, the kid, he said. Something happened, and such like. Leave, he said. He drove me away from the house. I said, let's leave, I said, what could be all in all, he is his father, I mean. I left, he stayed there that night. The following day, he came. He had come with a knife, telling that 'I will cut the child'. He threatened as such... Then, I had gone to the house that day. Ömer knew this; he had been cross with his father. He had not spoken with his father for 15 days at all. He used to tell, my father would cut me... When was this? Was he 4 or 5? Maybe he still remembers, but I have never asked. Ömer knows about quite many... I mean, he has witnessed everything that we had lived; he knows about everything.

While some women told about their partner's abuse of the children on the condition that they intervened the beating, and took active roles; some did not mention this contingency. In this regard, one 35-year-old woman told about her husband's violence directed at her five children and her, in a systematic form, and regardless of any 'trouble caused by them'.

In this respect, remarkably few women depicted a context, in which the father was caring, loving, sensitive towards the needs of the children and willing to take responsibility of them. While one 22-year-old woman told about her husband's severe beatings, harsh verbal abuses and rapes against her, regarding his relationship with their two daughters, who were 2,5 and 5 years old, she stated; 'He is a marvelous father. He holds the children above everything.'

In situations of some women, the children had taken the position of the *basic facilitator* for departure from home. In some, the children 'persuaded' the women by means of verbal efforts. One 34-year-old woman told that her oldest son, who was a 15-year-old high school student attending to a boarding school with the government's scholarship, had been influential in her decision to leave home. She told that her son told her that, if she could not leave his father, he would kill him, and be a murderer, in the end, because of his violence. Therefore, she had left home and moved to another city, with her two younger children, to seek help from a relative, and, then, the Shelter A. On the other hand, some women told about situations, in which the children had acted beyond verbal persuasion attempts. One 36-year-old woman depicted the context, in which her 16-year-old daughter had gone to the police to complain about her father, as below;

They were working; they were going to cleaning at women's houses. They did cleaning; they cleaned carpets, they did cleaning... Even when they brought 20-25 liras each time, my husband used to take it from them and go to have drugs. He did not buy even bread to them. You cannot know what a jerk he was... My kids went to the police station to save me. My husband did these to my mouth, my eye... I said, Lady Elmas [the director of the previous shelter], it is like this, I mean my mouth, my eye was even worse... My kids made a complaint. May God bless them, I mean they saved me, my daughters, they saved me. Because if the kids didn't complain, he could have killed me...

In some other cases, the women's observation for the deterioration of children's health and school performance was effective in their decision to leave. Regarding the

situation of her four children, who were aged 11, 9, 7, and 5 then, one 35-year-old woman told;

He [her husband] forces the children to swear. He wakes up the kid for massage of his feet... His [the oldest kid's] teacher was getting angry, telling him, 'Get your sleep well the next time'.

Likewise, another woman, who had three children aged 3, 13, and 17, told;

He [her husband] makes himself up in the kitchen washstand... He wanders around naked at home; he used to move around with pants near the daughter [the eldest daughter]. We had never slept at nights...Argy bargy till the morning namaz...

Referring to a specific condition, in which she had left the house and her 6-year-old son with his father, a 32-year-old woman told that her son had begun to lie to her, as her husband used to do. She commended on her son's deterioration as a facilitator for her departure from home, as cited below;

Afterwards, he took the kid for 5 days and looked after. He also brought the woman [her husband's lover] to the house. He told Ömer that, 'she needs us, she has nowhere to go, and she will stay with us. Don't tell to your mother'. He used the kid for his own benefit; Ömer did not tell me anything... Somehow I learned about it. Later Ömer verified. I was angry with his father. He had said 'no'; he never told lies before. But at the end, his father was influencing him... He was teaching him to lie... at the end... I am afraid my son will be like him if he stays with him. I don't want him to be like that.

However, even if the majority of the women told that they had endured the abusive relationships, for long, depending on the presence of their children; some told that they had given up, referring to the intensity of their partner's violence. A 29-year-old woman depicted the process, in which she had 'sacrificed' her son, by the time her husband's violence escalated, as follows;

By the time I was in *City C*, I had been powerless to stand for.. I did not even care about my son, my son that I love a lot... I was helpless... I was exposed to violence that day, the day I escaped... in front of my son... even my son intervened saying ‘father, don’t do it!’...

While she told that she had to leave her 13-year-old son, due to the structural constrains of the shelter in the city, another 32-year-old woman told that she had decided to accept to leave her 6-year-old son to her husband, due to his conditional agreement of divorce. That is, she told that she had accepted to give the parental right of her son, for the sake of terminating the abusive relationship.

**Having a child out of marriage:** Depending on the narratives of the women, the conditions of women, in which they had their children, can also be suggested as reflecting on their experiences of partner violence. The situation of having a child in/out of (legal) marriage had different effects on the women’s situations. In this part, having a child out of marriage was the focus. The situation and social position of the men can also be suggested as influential on women’s experiences. In particular, the men’s situation of being either ‘married’ or ‘single’ became salient as an effective variable in the women’s situations, as discussed below.

**From a married lover: being in the position of ‘the second woman’** While many women told about presence of ‘other woman’ in the context of their husband’s extramarital relationships, some women told about their own positions as ‘the second/other woman’. In this respect, the case of a 33-year-old single woman, with a one-year-old baby, would be the focus. She had a relationship with a married man for 3 years and had lived with him for one year. As different from all cases of women, her partner was a retired police officer. She told that he had deceived her at the beginning of the relationship, by telling that he was single and was living with his mother. However, after she got pregnant, he revealed that he was married; but this time, telling that he would get divorced, when their son came from the military service. Under his compulsion, three months before her application for the Shelter A,

she had declared the relationship to his wife on the phone, since he had told her that this would help for divorce. However, she elaborated her victimization with her one-year-old child, in the aftermath of this event, as follows;

...After that... he changed dramatically at that time. The child was sticking to him, he was not giving care at all; he didn't care at all... And then, his wife started bothering. She would come constantly; she would come every two days... and 2-3 times, we ended up in the police station; I had to call the police because she came and kept banging on the door. Police report was issued, too. It was all the same during Ramadan. And, then, I guess he was considering to turn back home. Now, me... whatever you do... I will not look after you, and you will give the child, too... that was what the other party wanted... the heritage would be spoiled, he would say. But he was not rich at all; he owned one house all in all. What heritage he could have? I don't understand him... that was how the household forced him to do. 'I had cross-cousin marriage, they won't let me live, I have to go there', he said, which he finally did. And I am hungry, the child ate nothing at all this morning, nor did I...

Therefore, after 3 years of relationship, she told that the man returned to his wife, referring to his specific position that his wife and himself had been relatives; and that, if he got divorced from her, her family would not let him live anymore. She told that he had continued his coercion then. Different from all the cases, her partner had brought her to the SSCPI, for the women's shelter application, as she told below;

...And on Friday, we went there together. He said, 'Why don't you go and stay at the women's shelter?'. He wants to give the child for adoption and wants me to marry. There should be someone undoubtedly, I mean someone with registered marriage... hmm, that was how his family wanted...[...]Nope, he doesn't believe me... We even talked with the psychologist there, when we were not allowed in. She [the psychologist] closed the door, naturally, as they do the interviews in private. He said, why they didn't take me in, what did you talk [with the psychologist]? This is a women's shelter, and the other woman said, it's nothing I can decide; to take you in or not. What did you talk? That was the cause of the quarrel... You went in and talked with the psychologist, and upon that they didn't take you in, he says, I have to deal with you now... This is the subject of the quarrel... I mean he doesn't believe me when I was not accepted... I sent him in again, but he says... you made a deal with

them, he says. She was the same psychologist I talked, 6 years ago, when I stayed there. He says you know her in person, that's why she... she did as you told her, he says... You told her that you didn't want to stay, he says...I will not be coming again, he said... and he actually didn't come on Friday...

In this regard, she told not only about the partner's coercion, but also his wife's constant pursuits and abuse, as cited below;

His wife is there all day, she comes every day... and, of course, she waits for me outside... and I have to change ways every day. Well, I have a hard time to take the child to the park; I take the back route. She [her lover's wife] sends me others... She keeps saying inheritor... However, he is not a rich man at all. All he has is a house... I mean he says 'you came to eat my money'... It's okay, if he was a rich man. He would then say I went there to eat his money. There is only one house; I mean he is not a man of fortune...

In addition, she told that the intensity of his wife's harassment increased by time. Similar to the abusive men's collaboration with the women's family in some cases, she told that the wife had collaborated with her family. She told that, at once, they had come to her house, with the intention of taking her child and giving him to a family for adoption. Moreover, she told that her partner had also stopped supporting her economically, after the separation. However, she told that her partner was keeping on providing her 'with alter alternatives', as cited below;

... This month's rent was not paid; we were supposed to pay it on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month... there's no money, he didn't give any. This, he does to make me go... 'I find you husband, but you don't go', he says to me. Many candidates... He found one retired jailor and a retired post office clerk... He says, I should certainly be under official wedlock, that's how I want, that's how they want... The family of his wife harass constantly...

Referring the specificities in her situation, she told that she wanted to work and to 'stand on her feet', but, that she needed some support this time. In particular, she told

that, she could manage on her own somehow before; she used to earn living by house cleaning, patient care and child care, by reference of some acquaintance. In this regard, she pointed at the effect of her family's migration from Greece to Turkey as the reason for her small social network to support her. Moreover, she referred to her situation of having a child in an extramarital relationship, as a constrain against her employment, as below;

But when the child was born, it happened that, well... And it was the first child... Everybody gives a dirty look when it's extramarital relationship... And everybody thinks that when she does it once, she would do it with everybody... I mean... But, up to 30 years of age, I mean... I didn't have any sexual relationship with my boyfriend; it was just normal dating out. My first relationship is with the father of the child, and I waited for one year even for that... I mean... after one year it was already... I slept with him... Everybody gives a dirty look, when I say we lived together without marriage bond; they think 'would she entice my husband, too... I can't tell this to the people; people have distrust... I mean living together without marriage bond is ill-considered by people. I mean having a relationship with a married man is ill-considered by people... This is so, and they may be right, I do not object...

While she was complaining about the negative attitude of people towards her situation, at the same time, she acknowledged the people to be right, referring to society's consideration for the 'morality' of a woman, who had a child in an extramarital relationship with an unmarried man.

**From a single lover:** On the on the other hand, some women told about giving birth to a child in the context of a flirting relationship, in which the partner had also been single. In this regard, the case of a 23-year-old woman, who had a 2-months-old baby upon her arrival at the Shelter A, was a clear example in terms of highlighting the social and structural constrains, in the context of a woman who attempts to end her pregnancy in an extramarital situation. The woman told that after 3 months of relationship, her lover had cheated her to have a sexual relationship, 'with the promise of marriage'. After a while, she got pregnant, but she could not discover it

immediately due to a specific health problem in her hormonal system. She told that she had lost the lover's trace, after the day she had told him about pregnancy; he had changed his telephone number and quitted his work. Afterwards, she had gone to a public hospital for abortion, in which she had been told that the signature of the baby's father had been required for the procedure. Hereupon, she had gone to a private doctor, but, this time, the doctor had asked for a definite amount of money, and she had no means. In the meantime, she had to move from the house of her coworker, since she had done 'something disgraceful' by getting pregnant out of marriage. Whereupon, she had gone to the district's foundation for social assistance, and had talked with the Kaimakam, who had helped for her entrance to a women's shelter in that city. She described the context, in which she had tried to quit her pregnancy, in despair, as below;

... I had requested money from the District Governorship by my own efforts. I mean I had done a research for the abortion. However, because I had no financial means... the private doctors wanted 1 billion, 2 billion lira... and because I didn't have that budget, I had to ask help from the District Governorship. They directed me as such... then I told my situation, as it is, to the District Governor, in our private meeting, and he told me about the women's shelters in *City G*. At Lady Oya's [the shelter director], I stayed at the women's shelter there and it was there that I made my delivery, and we came here [Shelter A] after that... [Me: Does this mean that you could have an abortion at that time?] Yes, I could... but there was the *Hospital A* there, Head Doctor, there, said the signature of the child's father was needed, because it was the first pregnancy... and I couldn't reach him [her boyfriend] at the time, so the doctor didn't allow for the abortion... I was thinking to have the abortion at the private doctor, but they asked for much money. And I couldn't have the abortion, because I didn't have that sum. I tried extremely hard, I went to doctors frequently, I explained the situation to them, they didn't do the abortion; none of them was helpful... I couldn't manage to have the abortion...

She told that she had given birth to her baby, and had almost stayed, for 8 months, in the first shelter, in which the shelter staff had attempted to 'marry' her 'with good intentions'. After her delivery, she told that she had attempted to give her baby to the

SSCPI, for being adopted, since she had not been in a favorable economic situation. However, she told that she could have not, since the father's signature had been a must for the procedure.

As depicted in her case, when constrains in the women's situations unite with the institutional limitations, women could be entrapped in situations difficult to escape, and suffer from painful consequences for years.

#### **4.2.2.1.2. Family Violence**

While some women told about solely partner violence, some told about violence in the context of their own families, and, the others, told about both of them, as factors that had constituted the ground for their application to the Shelter A. Among the women who told about family violence, while some described their experiences of violence in a nuclear family context, some told about it in the context of a wider family cycle. Likewise, while some mentioned one perpetrator, the others pointed at more than one abuser. Similarly, some women portrayed a male as an abuser; some did a female; and others did portray abusers of both sex.

Regarding the position of the perpetrator, the women told about; fathers, mothers, brothers/sisters, children, grand-fathers/mothers, aunts, maternal/paternal uncles, wives of brothers/uncles and the step-mothers/fathers/siblings. Likewise, concerning the type of violence, the women told about physical, psychological, economical and sexual violence; which took different forms in their subjective experiences, as discussed below. In addition, some women told about their experience of family violence, as the basic factor that prepared the ground for an unwanted marriage.

Regarding *physical violence*, some women told about their situations in the context of the nuclear family. The three women, who were siblings, and were aged 21, 24, 25

respectively, told about the physical violence of their older brother, in the company of psychological violence, entrapment in the home, and threats. They underlined the death of their father, as the factor, which had constituted the appropriate conditions for his violence, seven years ago, as they had once said; ‘Since there was no father, he used to do everything he likes.’. Besides, they perceived the death of their father, also, as a constraining factor in their context. That is, they had no kinship relationships left that they could depend on after then. They also commended on their situation in relation to other people’s; their brother had not ever practiced violence to his wife, but he had against them. In addition, they noted they had witnessed violence in their environment, but theirs had been the severest among all.

Likewise, another 26-year-old woman told about her brother’s physical violence in the company of harsh verbal abuse, threats of death, pursuits, dismissal from home and economical violence. She also pointed at the death of her parents, eight years ago, as the condition that had prepared the ground for his violence. In addition, she referred to the presence of inheritance left from the parents; the violence of her brother’s wife, and the sexual harassment of her brother just after the deaths of the parents, by telling her ‘haven’t your mother and father taught you about sexuality?!’, as factors that had been intensified his brother’s violence, in her situation.

On the other hand, some women made an emphasis on their experience of violence, which had been directed at them by their mothers. Referring to her position of ‘being the only girl in the family’, a 22-year-old woman told about her mother’s physical violence, as follows;

...I was the only child of my family, the only daughter. When you look at the people around you, you see people showing love to their daughter, hugging and caressing them. I have never seen such behavior from my mother. I have been continuously exposed to violence from my mother... I got beaten up under cold water with a hose... thick woods got broken over my head... my hands, my arms burned... I had sutures in my

mouth. I mean I had neither a decent childhood, nor a decent youth... I mean my childhood was miserable, and my youth was depressive... I had neither a youth nor a childhood...

In her situation, there were more than one perpetrator and the violence was not limited to the context of nuclear family. That is, the physical violence of her mother, father, brother and uncles were at issue. Among them, she seemed to 'tolerate' her father's violence, referring to his position in the family and the context he had beaten her. She indicated the 'plausible' context of her father's beatings. In addition, she referred to his 'powerless' position in the family, compared to the powerful position of her mother, who was 'Azerbaijani and Kurdish' and a 'daughter of a tribe', as quoted below;

My relationship with my father was nice... but my older brother, I mean... there was nothing to do but, he was leaving in the morning, getting back in the evening... how many times he, sometimes I mean, he used to beat me down, as well... but for no reason... but yes, I had mistakes too, but... I don't ever remember him [her father] beating me down for no reason... Okay, violence is not acceptable, but I don't know, I mean... My dad used to take me away when he saw me like that, he would raise me in his arms, he would walk me around... I mean it wasn't enough, he wasn't strong enough... against my brother, against my uncles...[...]my parents... my dad couldn't get anything done. My mum was Azeri, Kurdish, I mean, the daughter of a tribe. My dad had no say... In their [her mother's] family, the uncle from mother's side would have a say in the bride, I mean in the marriage, before the wedding... My dad had no say on that matter. I also had a brother, my uncle from dad's side passed away. As the only man in the family, who could he [her father] cope with? For many times, my dad said, 'My daughter, what can I do, you can't throw her [her mother] away, you can't sell her away, how can I leave after all this time?'. Well, once my dad had tried to leave my mother, my uncles had beaten him up...

As in some situations of the women, she was likely to perceive 'justified' physical violence, with a 'reason', more tolerable. Besides, as some women, she thought that she deserved to be beaten up since she 'had mistakes too'. Further, she portrayed a

different situation from the general, in the context of the relationships of her parents, in which the mother was quite powerful than the father.

On the other hand, one 28-year-old woman referred to a different condition, when she told about the physical violence of her older brother, in combination with the psychological abuse of her mother and the 'silent witness' position of the father. She indicated the psychiatric illness of her older brother, and also commended on her situation (bipolar disorder) as a consequence of the family context, as quoted below;

They [her mother and two brothers] are quarrelsome. I left them and I came here. I have two mentally depressed older brothers. For instance, they were ordering everybody around, beating and attacking... mentally depressed... I got rid of them...[...]They are continuously being treated in Bakırköy and returning home. One of them is oppressed; he does whatever you say him. I mean, for lack of a better word. For example, you have to command him; he doesn't know how to have a bath, doesn't know anything at all, I mean... And the other one, on the contrary, is severe. I mean he always wants to rule the roost. After all, they are both on psychiatric medicine. They are having on injection and so on. While I was living with them, I also had been badly affected. I mean I also got mentally depressed. My mother is alive; she is vociferous, aggressive, I mean a kind of bad person... My father is not alive. My father was inoffensive. He was a very good person, what a pity...poor man...

Similar to the situation of the previously told woman, she also referred to the violence of her mother, while depicting her father as an 'inoffensive' man, in a relatively powerless position compared to the mother's.

On the other part, some women told about the violence, solely, in the second domestic cycle. In this regard, a 23-year-old woman elaborated a context, in which her father had been a 'silent and indifferent witness' of her abuse by the relatives, as follows;

We were in very good terms with my father; he wouldn't interfere with our anything. He was a quiet person... My aunts beat me, for instance, at the village, he wouldn't say anything. This was because we were entrusted to them... He would just work, going to work in the morning and came back at night, so he wouldn't concern about us. It was always our grandfather, aunts and uncles, who would deal with us. All my father did was to give money to them to provide our needs. That's how it was... I mean my father would interfere with nothing... Even in my leaving the house, he said 'you know', when they told him about it... that way... He would never get involved with anything, a quiet person...

As for some other women, she also seemed to be 'tolerant' for her father's irresponsiveness against the violence directed at her by the relatives. In this respect, it is noteworthy that she referred his position as 'quietness', rather than 'irresponsiveness'.

Regarding *psychological violence*, the women told about its different forms, such as; harsh verbal abuse, discrimination among siblings, stigmatization as 'mentally ill', threats of death, and the like. However, in majority of the women's situations, all forms of violence were depicted interconnected. A 26-year-old woman, who ran away from the house almost 6 years ago and went to a women's shelter, told about her mother's harsh verbal abuse, withdrawal from the school when she was a child and beatings. In reference to her physical situation, namely her hunchback, she emphasized her mother's coercion for her begging, as the main facilitator for her run-away from the home. Besides, she told that she used to feel 'excluded' and scared at home and keep quiet. Likewise, another a 22-year-old woman told about her mother's harsh verbal abuse, in relation to the constrains of location, as quoted below;

A girl is of no significance in our town; in such she is not even allowed to go to school! My mother told, 'What will you do by studying? Do fancywork; it is enough'... My mother says, 'You have been harming us from the day you were born'...

As some other women, she made a particular emphasis to her mother's negative attitude and behavior, while expressing no negative emotion against the other members of the family, who also had similar attitudes and behavior patterns.

On the other hand, some women told about the denial of care by their fathers in the aftermath of divorce, or the death of their mothers; and their placement in an orphanage run by the SSCPI. Therefore, some told about 'feeling distant' in relationships with the family, while some told about feeling 'utmost hate' against them. In addition, the majority of them emphasized the 'bad treatment' in the orphanage, commending on the situation that they would never give their own children to an orphanage, regardless of how poor conditions they would have.

Some women referred to the psychological abuse of one parent, while blaming the other for his/her silent witness position in the context. One 32-year-old woman told; 'I used to hate my father; repulsive, distant, never kissing and loving, limiting... my mother; she is quite, good. She had never supported us against my father...'.

On the other part, some women told about their stigmatization as 'mentally ill' in the family. The case of a 33-year-old woman is a clear example of how the institutional applications and laws can work against the battered women easily in some situations. In her situation, not only there was the stigmatization, but also a forced and manipulated hospitalization was at issue. She told about learning that the man she used to know as her father was her step-father, when she was 22, during a quarrel. Afterwards, her relations in the family deteriorated. As different from the cases of all women, she had been sent to a mental hospital by her family, although it was against her will, and she had not been diagnosed with any psychological disorder. Referring to structural constrains, she depicted the context, in which her family had benefited from a new law, and asked for her admission to a mental hospital in another city, as below;

The household... a new law was introduced. I don't know, that's what they said... When a family complained, well, to the governorate, I guess, I don't know, there was a something at the Governorship, when you complain, they take the person away. The household [complained] saying she is fighting with us... I had quarreled with my father, this is after that, our middle brother is a bit of... you know... He investigated and found out. I was supposed to be treated here... But I was treated neither at the insurance hospital, nor at the State Hospital, nor at the Medical Faculty. They made me talk directly there [Bakırköy Psychiatric Hospital]... I went to Bakırköy. And it was my family, who phoned there... The, well, the psychiatrist there told me that, why they do not come to pick you... They were saying, let her come by herself... My doctor there wanted to talk with my family. My 'dear father' didn't come, my brother came.[...] They [her family] were insisting on the doctor, asking him to give me medication... But, he didn't. He said 'No need for the medicine'. I mean, we did it without medication and went out. I didn't understand how I had gone there, how it had happened... such as an imagination. I had stayed there for 10 days, I mean 5 days of extra. They [hospital staff] were calling them [her family] to come and pick me up. But they were not... They [her family] presented me such a... I stayed there together with the severe mental patients for 3 days... For 3 days, I stayed together with the severe mental patients, then you know... The doctor, the psychiatrist examined. He [her doctor] took me up to the other side. They examined me there for 1-2 days more. Then they started to call my family. My family, my brother didn't come for 5 days, I mean he [her brother] came 5 days later... You may go there when they complain, when your family complains, or if 4 signatures are taken from the neighbors; I mean you may be accepted by the psychiatry service. Go and ask to my brother (laughing)... When you go to the governor's office, they do some... Our fellows heard from the cops... It was January 2006. It happened after January 2006. The cops said 'This is the new law'.

As it was in her case, in some situations, the perpetrators can make use of some laws and poor practices in the field, against women. In this respect, a second victimization of the women, after their experience of DV, becomes at issue, as a challenging situation.

On the other hand, some women told about *sexual violence* in the family. At this point, some women indicated the sexual assault of a family member in the context of the nuclear family. One 40-year-old woman pointed at her brother's sexual assault,

when she was attending primary school. Referring to her situation then, as being ‘unenlightened and unable to understand’, she told that she had revealed the assault to her mother, telling ‘my brother is doing something to me.’. She told that her mother and sister had responded to the situation by beating her brother severely, and sending him to the military service in order to cover up the situation. Regarding her relationship with the brother, she commented on the situation as follows; ‘You always have to meet [him]... I cannot sleep thinking that he will do the same things to my daughter... the things he had done to me before.’.

While some women told about being subjects/witness of violence in their family context, some made no reference and only told about their experience of violence in an intimate partner relationship context. One 35-year-old woman, who had been subjected to severe violence in her marriages, told that her mother had not liked her father any more, but he had been a ‘simple-hearted person’ and had never beaten her mother and her. However, she told that she had witnessed her older sister’s experience of severe violence in her marriage. She told that, when her brother-in-law had told her to ‘keep silent whatever he [her husband] would tell, either the truth or a lie’ in the aftermath of one of her husband’s severe beatings, she had recalled of the violence her brother-in-law had exercised against her sister. In this regard, she reflected on her situation, in relations to her sister’s situation, who had made a forced marriage in the context of a heritance issue, as quoted below;

... My elder sister is worst, tormented; pregnant for 9 months, it remains only 10 days for her baby... My brother-in-law, by hitting on her waist, with a belt, he is hitting with the men’s belt on his waist, baby is aborted; they, what they lived through, of course worse than mine, that I cannot stand, I mean injustice... an excessive injustice... this much... What I have been to is as much as half of the violence that they have been subjected, but they... I cannot stand. If I cannot stand this much, I can never stand that...[...] And then my elder sister is tormented more, moreover my brother-in-law has been in love with another girl. The parent-in-law of my elder sister was butting in all the time. Her life was terrible; she was cutting beets in the daytime, have you ever heard? She

was cutting beets and without sitting. For instance, we were cutting that this much in a sitting position; my elder sister was cutting all day long, there is nobody else, and my brother-in-law was giving that job to her. Furthermore, one winter I have also gone; she is cutting like this while standing. Then again, she comes from there, two rolled thin sheets of dough... you see, thin breads are being rolled like this... She was rolling flatbread before thin sheet of dough, kneading it. My elder sister was as such both sleeping and waking up, I have seen these clearly. I was younger by age in those days, I was old as much as Oya [her second daughter]. She [her sister] was both sleeping, stuffing the vine leaves at once, when she revived, and on the one hand she was cooking that. She was dishing up for both her mother-in-law and us, to eat in the field...

As quoted below, she underlined the specificities in her sister's context; her forced marriage by the family at a young age, her husband's 'excessive' physical violence towards her, life in a small village with limited access to resources, the pressure of her husband's family, and excessive responsibilities both at home and outside home. However, she implied the mainstream idea that women might also be 'faulty' in the context of violence, while she did not approve the *extent* of violence her brother-in-law exercised, as she reflected on her sister's situation, as below;

....and one day, well, when she was going to her mother-in-law, I don't know if my elder sister has forgotten to sheet or been unable to spare the sheeting... Sometimes my elder sister also had *mistakes*, but not much, I mean extremely rarely, her mistake is small. Her mother-in-law says, the sheeting. Not sure, if my elder sister forgets to give it at the moment, or she is unable to spare cause it is new sheeting... but I have not seen with my own eyes. When I opened the door, my brother-in-law was slugging like this, I do not know how to say, as if hitting a sack, or a non-living thing... He was striking these parts of her body by chance...

On the other hand, some women told about witnessing violence in the context of their parents' relationship. Referring to her father's situation, one 21-year-old woman made a particular emphasis on her father's economic violence against her mother. However, she took a position on the side of her abusive father, as she told below;

They [her parents] were divorced two years ago, but they are separated since I could remember. It is because of my grandmother... My mother has been working and giving money to my father. And my father would spend that money on gambling, and buy alcoholic drinks. I find my mother guilty... I consider that she made the mistake. She would go for sanitation until midnight; she was doing cleaning at the hospital. She was a cancer patient, skin cancer... She had a treatment, it cleared up. We were in very remarkably decent in the days, when my father has been working...

Besides, some women told about severe violence in the family context, which had resulted in the murder of one family member. A 43-year-old woman told about the murder of her father by her older brother, and commented on the situation, as below;

My brother has had a quarrel with my father, and had thrown him to water; he has killed him... For that reason, I want to meet neither my elder brother nor my brother... I have gone three times to where he had thrown my father, but I failed [to commit a suicide]...

As mentioned above, she referred to her father's murder not only a spiritual loss, but also as the basic reason for deterioration of her relationships in the family and, thus, her depressive mood.

Besides, some women told about their experience of violence in the family in relation to their route to marriage. They told about running-away and/or forced/arranged marriages, which had different specificities in their situations. Referring to her family's prevention of her marriage with a man she had loved, one 32-year-old woman described the context she had run to marry her present husband, as below;

We loved each other, thus we ran away, I ran away with him, more precisely, he made me running away... He insisted on running away together and convinced me... There was another one, I loved another man. He had asked for me in marriage, but my family refused him. My family said that we were easterner, but he was from İzmir. So my family refused him. Then I met with my husband. I mean, how can I say, it was a spontaneous decision and I ran away for marriage. I mean, I did not ask

anything from him. Because it had happened once and I thought my family would refuse him also... He said, I love you, let's run away together and so on... It was weird the way that I ran away...

In that regard, a 24-year-old divorced woman, who had made two forced marriages at the age of 13 and 21, reflected her situation in relation to her mother's violence, as quoted below;

My mum was like that towards my elder sisters as well... She is scared of my older brother. There is, I mean, some hatred, some grudge... I mean we all have it inside... because none of them [her sisters] is with the people they wanted to be in their marriages, I mean the people they have married... They [marriages of her sisters and her] have been like, 'Let's get married and be done with it, let's have our own homes' kind of marriages...

While some women indicated making forced-marriages as told above, some told that they had just avoided recently, by applying for the Shelter A. In this regard, a 33-year-old single woman, who had run away from home during a quarrel about marriage, and arrived at the Shelter A, by the help of the police, described the family context. She told that, she was the only one, who was a primary school graduate among her two siblings. She described herself as a victim of harsh circumstances, which included living with severe verbal abuse and discrimination among her siblings by her parents. Besides, she did not like talking about her family; she described them as 'distant and indifferent'. Likewise, another 24-year-old woman told that her family had arranged a marriage for her with a man from the neighborhood, to whom she used to call 'brother'; but she had run away to marry with her present husband, who was abusive towards her. As different from the others, a 19-year-old woman, who had resisted against an arranged marriage and married to the man she loved, referred to the presence of 'bride price' and a possible 'homicide' in her own situation, as below;

My father had sold me like an animal...My maternal uncle would shoot my father by coming to here. I prevented; otherwise, my brother would be desolate like me. They want me to go to the bad...

However, some women told about forced marriages, which they could not have resisted. One 30-year-old woman, who was a schizophrenic patient, and was in the process of divorce in her second marriage, referred to her illness as a result of her family's forced marriage, as quoted below;

My family ruined my life... My illness is because of them. They forcibly married me with a man I did not want. He [her first husband] was a person I loved, but was widowed at the age of 18... I am not ill, in fact, I have nothing. I am a hardy woman.

On the other hand, some women elaborated making 'unwanted' marriages due to their 'perceived' constraints in their situation. Referring to her specific position as an adopted child, one 34-year-old woman told that she had not resisted marrying the son of the step-family at the age of 14, since she had no place to go. She also indicated a structural constraint, which had opened the way for her underage marriage legally. Referring to her physical situation at the age of 14, she told that the court had not allowed for marriage due to her age, but the judge had approved, when he had seen her and had concluded that she had been physically mature enough to marry.

Likewise, her outward appearance brought about her under-age marriage for another 35-year-old woman, at the age of 13. However, as different from the others, she had been forced to marry by her own family and by a religious marriage, rather than a legal one. In addition, as differently, her family had married her in return for some land. She drew attention to her mother's facilitating position in the context. Differently, she also told that, she had got pregnant in the first year of her marriage and had given 'a very difficult birth' at home; but had lost her baby on his 40<sup>th</sup> day. Commenting on her baby's death, she told that he had died, because she could not look after him; the basic mistake was hers. While she was describing the context

then, she referred to her physically immature situation and the constraints in the situation, as follows;

Because, according to my experiences, I think that it was because I could not take care of him/her... If I would have tried to nurse, I wasn't lactating; I even didn't have breasts this times... I don't know... There wasn't someone to teach me how to do it. It was something stupid, but it was very very agonizing...

Another 22-year-old woman, who had made a forced-legal marriage at the age of 17 with an older man, told that she had been sold by her father to her husband. She reflected on her relationship with her father, as below;

We don't usually talk with my father. It has been five years; I mean obviously, we are not on good terms with my father. Not so good... We were before, but now... When you have money, a purchasing issue, this distantness continues...

On the other hand, some women told about making marriages in order to get rid of the violence they had been exposed for long in the family. A 23-year-old woman told that her parents got divorced when she was a child. She had been given to her grandfather by her father for care. During the time she used to live with her relatives, she had been exposed to violence constantly. As different from the majority of the women's cases, the main perpetrators were women, in specific, her affinal aunts. She described the context she had accepted to make an arranged marriage by her grandfather, at the age of 18 with a 28-year-old man, as follows;

... We are an unusually big family. There were a lot of dishes, farm works and housework... from the general clean up of the village, to the house clean up... And as it was a very large family, I was getting beat up, when I wasn't able to finish all the works... Each time when I did not go to the farm, or I was sick, they [her affinal aunts] were telling me that I was lying and beating me, so I got tired of them... They were severely ill-treating me, that's why I accepted getting married. I did not want to getting married at all, but to get rid of them, I accepted getting married...

However, as in some other women's situations, the marriage, which she had seen as an escape way from the family violence, had not been as she had expected. Thus, she had made an arranged divorce with her ex-husband. After the divorce, she had almost ended relationships with her family. She elaborated the context she had ended her relationships with the family, as below;

I don't see them since I divorced. In fact, I don't want to see them... because they always beat me and make fun of me... After getting married; I couldn't have sex with my husband. I said my husband that I couldn't get used to him, and said it was a matter of time... He didn't help me, and err, said all my older family members that their daughter, I, wasn't able to do my duty as a woman... And as they were all the time making fun of me, they started telling me stuff like; 'you are not a woman', or 'why you are not doing your duty against your husband as a woman'... and my aunt and her family made fun of me all the time... That's why I took a dislike to them. And as they were also beating me all the time. I did not want to meet with them. I mean, I did not want to go to see them... They were all the time looking down on me, making fun with everything I do... They were telling me stuff like; 'what would you expect from the daughter of such mother?'... they were accusing me like that...so I never go to see them...

Similar to the situations of some women, an issue of 'womanhood', within a gender category, was made a point of humiliation in her case, by the women relatives, who had been socially higher in rank in the family, due to their age and position.

On the other hand, some women told about their family's denial of them after the divorce of a forced/arranged marriage. In this regard, a 24-year-old woman told that she had made a forced-religious marriage at the age of 13 and another legal one at the age of 21. She told that, after the separation of her first religious marriage, she had been 'stigmatized as prostitute' by her family. As some other women, she noted that she had regretted making another arranged marriage after the end of her first marriage. She told that no women should make another marriage after ending their first marriages, in which they were exposed to the partner's violence.

#### 4.2.2.1.3. Violence of the Third Parties

Apart from their subjective experiences of violence in the context of the domestic sphere, some women also told about being subjected to violence by the third parties. In the narratives of the women, while, in some, the perpetrator was a stranger; in others, it is an acquaintance, or someone, who was in the position of authority in the government. In this respect, the contexts were home, street, or the workplace; and the forms of violence were *sexual harassment/assault* or *rape*, as elaborated below.

Regarding *sexual assault*, a 24-year-old woman told about sexual assault at the workplace, which had resulted in her loss of job. In addition, she told that since she had been working as a hostess in a bus cooperation, and staying at the company's hostess houses, her loss of job had also resulted in her homelessness. Referring to the position of me, she described her psychological situation after her experiences of forced marriages and family violence, as quoted below;

...Certainly, by the way, you are a psychologist, I mean there is no problem in my telling. I am severely in depression... I am exhausted to tolerate anything... Anyhow, I mean, Lady Doctor, I am tired... for being pushed from there, for being shoved from there... I have 6 siblings, but I can't stay with them, with any of them! At most, they care for me 3-4 months. This is because they take the money I had by working from my hand...

On the other hand, some women indicated *rape*. Depending on the narratives of women, although it could be suggested that *rape* was present in many cases of women through; arranged/forced/under-aged marriages, forced prostitution of the intimates, incest, and in some 'regular' marriage context; the number of women, who told about *stranger rape* was relatively less. That is, it was three women out of 78. The context and the subjective experiences of all of the three women were different, as detailed below.

A 21-year-old woman told that she had married at the age of 13, with a man she had loved, in the absence of the approval of her family. She had divorced at the age of 19, due to her husband's severe violence, with the encouragement of her neighbors, who had witnessed her situation. After the divorce, she had gone to her family's house. However, her father had told her 'The girl, who got married and then divorced, cannot be our daughter' and had beaten her severely. Upon his dismissal of her from home that night, she told that, a group of men in the street had attacked her with a drawn knife and had raped her. In the aftermath of injure and rape, a patrolman had found her and had taken her to the hospital, in which she had stayed for three days.

On the other had a 26-year-old woman told about a totally different context. She had run away from home almost 6 years ago, due to her mother's severe violence towards her, and had gone to a women's shelter run by the SSCPI. She told that, during her shelter stay, she had gone through a backbone surgery; thus, there had been platinum in her back, when she had been asked to leave the shelter. She explained that due to structural constrains regarding time limitations in shelters, she had been obliged to leave after 3 months of stay. On her departure, she had been with another former resident, who had told her that she could call a friend in another city to provide her with an accommodation. Referring to her state of mind then, she told; 'I had nothing in my mind. The only thing I thought about was a place to stay..'. She told, when she had arrived to the house, she had realized that there had been no 'family' living at the house, as the woman from the shelter had told her. That day had been the beginning of the detainment and rape, which had lasted almost two weeks, in extreme fear and horror, as she elaborated below;

He was locking me in... I fought him... He was going and then coming... I don't know what he was doing... I had been exposed as much as I would have headed for a fall... He was pushing me and threatening when I resisted. I would lose my mind... get paralyzed... constantly there was a knife in view. I suggested that he would wound

me. 'Where do you think you will go, this enormous city takes you down', he was saying. Now, there is always a fear inside me...

She told that, during the period of her detainment by the rapist, once she could manage to run away from the house, since he had forgotten to lock the door. Then, she had gone to a police station and asked for help, but the police had not dealt with her case seriously, and had not taken action. Referring to the 'response' of the police, she told; 'The police could at least send me to a shelter house... My arms were all purple all over because of forcing, five fingers...'. Thus, referring to the constraints she had faced; she told that, she had returned back to the rapist, since she had no place to go. She stated that the rapist man had also been extremely surprised at her return. She depicted the context she had managed to run away, as below;

The landowner saved; he happened to be in the apartment, I didn't know at all. The landowner came upon my screams...He [the rapist man] destroyed everything in the house, he had a knife in his hand... I dashed out when the door was opened... Municipal police found me almost frozen...

In her situation, there was not only detainment for long, but also several rapes and her physical deterioration, due to the formation of a permanent disability in the aftermath of rape. That is, she had just gone through a backbone surgery when she had left the shelter and the rape had occurred. Referring to her physically disabled condition, she explained that it was because of the rape. Besides, in her situation there was also pregnancy, which she could not have been able to end then. Therefore, when she had arrived at the Shelter A, she was with her 4-year-old son.

The last was the case of a 31-year-old woman. Different from the other two women told above, she was an asylum seeker. Referring to her poor economic condition after the divorce, she told she had begun to live near a woman, with whom she had met through her ex-husband. She told that the woman had been a drug addict; working in a casino as a dancer; and used to have some 'customers' at home; 'but' had a positive attitude towards her. She told that she had been raped by a man, who she had never

known before. Different from the other two women told about above, she told about being raped in the presence of a woman. However, since the woman had been under the influence of the narcotic, she could not help her to resist. She had not revealed the rape in anywhere, as a points of claim, afterwards. She also told about staying at a bus terminal in the aftermath of rape, since she had no place to go. She told that she had written a letter to Genève and UNCHR's office in Ankara, explaining her situation and asking a place for residence. However, she told that, she had not received any response for a long time. In addition, as in the situation of the woman told above, she indicated pregnancy. However, her situation of being a refugee woman had brought about a different context in the aftermath of pregnancy. She had been sent to a refugee camp in a far away city, in the escort of two police men. She also told that, during her travel, there had been the sexual harassment of one person, who had been in an authority position in detective forces of the State. She told that she had taken action against this man through the aid of UNHCR, but it had not resulted in any penalty. She had been sent to a refugee camp, in which there had been almost two-hundred men and no women for almost two months. Meanwhile, she told that, she had been still pregnant and still had not been given the opportunity of a sanitary control, by the detective forces. Being under utmost stress, she told, she had begun bleeding and had learnt that the baby had died at the hospital. In addition, she noted that she could not even be able to have a bath in the refugee camp for almost forty days, due to her psychological state after the rape and the sexual harassment. On the whole, she commended on her situation, referring to the institutional irresponsiveness, as below;

I had written to them at the very beginning. United Nations didn't do anything... None of these would happen to me if they had supported me, I mean if they had provided a lodging to me... There was an address that man [a refugee man from her country] gave me... many times, to that own address of United Nations, to that address I sent 4-5 letters in Persian. I posted the letters by my own hand, saying I had no place...

As detailed in the cases above, even when the women had experienced same form of violence when categorized, the way they had experienced and perceived the violence, and had suffered from it was different. In this respect, the consideration of the women's subjectivities and the specificities of their context is essential for a sound understanding of their experience. In addition, it became salient that, when the constraints in the women's situations were jointed with the negative institutional practices in the aftermath of their violence experience, the subjective experiences of women even got more oppressive.

#### **4.2.2.1.4. Challenging Violence: Seeking Support Mechanisms**

In the context of seeking support mechanisms in the aftermath of violence experience, the narratives of the women indicated their excessive dependency on own individual sources till asking for support of a third party, as a last resort. In terms of an individual cope mechanism, a 43-year-old woman reflected the situation she had 'treated herself', as follows;

I am treating myself... how I am treating myself... [...] I haven't been to any psychologist by now and I never used any medicines. What did I do? I treated myself by crying abundantly... When it didn't work, I took a shower... and other that, it was my neighbor's advice. I wrote down everything in my mind. Excuse me, but I wrote 'cat', if it's the one that came to my mind; and I wrote 'dog' or 'flower', if they were in my mind at the moment... I made an effort to teach and busy myself with things from time to time. My previous psychological disorder is gone for now; I used to have fits of shaking, and he [her husband] would say I was acting...

On the other hand, as some other women did, a 32-year-old woman referred to 'auto-control' to cope with her experience of violence, as she elaborated below;

At times, I avoided going out as best as possible. He [her husband] wouldn't let me, either. There was a park opposite to our house... to that park... but I was taking his leave even as I went there. I was asking him if I could go to the park. I would go if he said 'okay', and not go if he said

‘no’...(laughing). I wouldn’t find it funny, I was crying a lot... because my child... I would sometimes see people outside... You know people take their dogs out for walking... but I was inside... I am quite hurt indeed, but I am just laughing... (crying)

Furthermore, as mentioned before, some women indicated depending on their children emotionally, in order to lessen the pain of their subjective experiences. However, when their situations got tougher, beyond the limits they could stand, the women told about asking support from; either the family of their own or the partner, or the third party individuals and institutions, as discussed below. The institutions told by the women were; detective forces, attorney generalship, the SSCPI, hospital emergency line 112, previous shelters they had stayed, municipalities and NGOs. On the other hand, some women told about situations, in which they could not find a way ‘in’, and had stayed out in streets for some time.

**The family of the women/men:** On the condition that individual sources of women could not cover the costs of being in an abusive relationship, many women told about seeking help from the families; either their own, or the partner’s, in the first place. However, through the narratives of the women, the families were not depicted as being in the position of giving unconditional and constant support. In addition, all the family members were not responding in the same way in the same context; they were taking different positions. In this regard, the women told about; support or negative intervention of some family members, the withdrawal of support depending on some contingencies, different types of supports provided, conditional support and the mediating role of the families.

Some women pointed at the negative intervention of some family members, which resulted in the withdrawal of the support of other members. In particular, among them, the position that some ‘step-mothers’ had taken became salient. A 23-year-old told that, after she got divorced from her abusive partner, her father intended to support her economically. However, she told that, her step-mother had forced him to

make a choice between herself and her. In this respect, she pointed at her step-mother's attitude as the factor that led to the end of her relationship with her father. Likewise, a 34-year-old woman told that, due to the position her step-mother had taken, she had an average relationship with her father, who had not declared a promise of support regarding her divorce decision. Besides, a 46-year-old woman told that apart from asking support from her father, she could not even go to visit her father at his home because of the interruption of the step-mother; she used to meet him in the coffee house of the town.

On the other hand, some women told that their families used to support them, but they had later withdrawn their physical support, due to their loss of belief in their determination to leave the abusive partner. One 36-year-old woman, who used to have intimate relations with her family in the past, noted that her relations had been damaged because of her husband. She explained that her family did not accept her and her children anymore, since they thought that she would return him soon again, by referring to her previous 'failed' attempts. She detailed the situation, as follows;

My Sister, I went to my father's 3-4 times before... What happened was that I just felt sad for my father. He would say, they [her family] would take care of me and it would be better... But my children were left there, at my husband's house. So I was saying, I would just go back, and... also came back all the same. So my father was also tired of this... here, she comes again... Now, they do not accept me... by no means, they accept me... I mean my own family doesn't accept me back. I mean my brothers, my father and my mother don't accept me. None of them accepts me... They think she would go back to her husband again and they don't accept me...

Likewise, a 25-year-old woman told that her father, who used to support her by paying for a lawyer in her previous divorce attempts, told; 'My father said, do whatever you like! Therefore, I can't go to that house again.'. Another woman, who was 32-years-old, described a context, in which her relationships with her family had deteriorated recently, due to her husband's harassment against her family. However,

she drew attention to the difference between ‘supporting’ and ‘being in discharge of their support’, referring to her family’s attitude in the past, as below;

They [her family] don’t rather want it [her coming to their house upon separation from her husband] now, to speak the truth. We had problems. I am cross with them too; I’m offended right now... because they didn’t support. Nobody knows I am here [at the shelter] now... You know, they were supporting, but they didn’t protect me, I mean they didn’t stand behind me...

Some women told about the presence of psychological support of some family members despite the constraints in their situation. In particular, many told that there was no one to support them economically from the family, since all of their family members were in disadvantaged situations. A 29-year-old woman told that if her sister had not lived with her husband’s family, she believed she would have told her to come. One 36-year-old woman told that particularly her brothers, as different from the majority of cases, supported her psychologically, by telling her; ‘you saved yourself, never go back to your husband’. However, she noted that they could not support her, with her four children, economically, due to their poor economical situation. A 29-year-old woman told that although she was pleased about the psychological support of her siblings, she was disappointed with her mother’s attitude since she responded her calls for help referring to her concerns of ‘what the other people would tell’ if she got divorced. In this respect, some women told about the provision of conditional support by their families. Among them, many told that their families’ support was contingent on their leaving the children. One 19-year-old woman, who had a three-months-old baby upon her arrival at the Shelter A told; ‘No one accepts with a kid... They used to tell me, sell the kid, give it and survive.’

On the contrary, some women pointed at the direct denial of support by the family. In this regard, some referred to different contextual aspects such as; a relative marriage, a running away marriage in the absence of the family’s acceptance, and the family’s approval of violence. A 29-year-old woman told that she had begged for empathy

and support from her family, particularly from her mother, several times; but she had not got any. She explained that she was ‘the daughter of a tribe’ and married to a relative; thus there was the pressure of *custom*, which was socially-constructed as being against divorce by their tribe. She also drew attention to specific situations she had asked help from her mother. That is, she told that, even in the aftermath of her husband’s violence she had witnessed one-to-one, her mother had told her to ‘stand’ since ‘divorce is impossible’ in their tribe.

In this respect, some women indicated the absence of the family’s approval in the context of their family’s denial of support. A 23-year-old woman, who had run away to marry when she was 13, commented on her family’s response as follows;

Eight years later, we met once. I said ‘Let me come. I would work and take care of the kids’. They said, come alone. But I can’t leave them [her children]... They say; ‘It’s your own fault, so you will bear the consequences.’. It turned out to be an opportunity to my husband as nobody supported. If they had supported, I wouldn’t have come may be.

Besides, a 22-year-old woman, who had run away with her lover when she was 16, told that her family had not only denied her calls for support, but also her position as their daughter.

Regarding the responses of families, some women pointed at the *mediating role* of their families. On the whole, depending on the narratives of women, *mediation* could be suggested as a source of further violence for the women. One 35-year-old woman elaborated her family’s unresponsiveness to her call for help during one of her husband’s violent attacks and their mediating attempts afterwards, as below;

...At that moment, I am sending him [her brother] collect call, but I can’t get through. In the meanwhile, I reached my nephew; I said ‘Do something, tell your uncles to come and pick me up. Ahmet most probably broke my rib, or may be my waist, but most of the time my waist hurts more.’. But again nobody calls back, nobody asks... I think

they all wanted to overlook at this, you know. And, they did so after they reunited us... Then they made us reunite. They saw Ahmet as right and considered me wrong... warnings, advices, old women counseling... they continued. And I withdrew my case from the police, I said 'I am withdrawing my case.'. Then I went to *City H*. After I came back, he [her husband] treated me quite nicely and such... We are again overlooking, you know. Again, I tried to overlook. We went and withdrew the case. We just withdrew the case, and shortly after that, at most two months, say one and a half months, say three months and Ahmet was at home, I escaped. He came, humiliating Ayşe [her eldest daughter from her previous marriage]...

As indicated below, her family's mediating role had resulted in not only her husband's further violence against her, but also her two daughters. In particular, his sexual abuse against the daughters had prepared the ground for her departure from home and application for the Shelter A. Likewise, a 32-year-old woman told how her family's mediating attempts had resulted in her loss of belief in her family, referring to the manipulative role of her husband, as quoted below;

You see, my husband is deceiving them, saying 'I love her intensely much, I love her very much'. He deceives everybody like this. He always hides behind love, but there is nothing like that, you know... I don't have any strength left Lady Miray... I will hide to the point I can, I have no strength for anything else...

Regarding the position of the partners' families, while some women pointed at their support for them, some indicated their approval of violence. One 36-year-old woman told that one of her brothers-in-law had been supporting her 17-year-old son, since the regulations of the women's shelter in her hometown had not allowed accommodation of sons older than 12 years old. She drew out the attitude of her husband's family, as follows;

...I mean, he [one of her brothers-in-law] is so happy... how much he doesn't love his brother as he [her husband] constantly beats me... My sister-in-law is also good. 'You're the one, who is nasty'; he [one of her

brothers-in-law] used to tell him [her husband]. I mean my mother-in-law, them; I mean there is nothing from my mother-in-law, my brothers-in-law... It is only my husband...

In this respect, some women told that the partner's family had tried hard 'to discipline' the partner in several ways, but they could not have 'taken a grip on him' and, thus, nothing had changed. In majority of the cases, the emphasis was often on the families' attempts to 'persuade' the partner not to repeat the violence again. However, some women pointed at the direct physical intervention of the partner's family, as in the case of a 21-old-woman, who told that her ex-husband's father used to respond her husband's violence, by beating him in return.

On the other hand, some women drew attention to the changing response of their partner's family, on the basis of the context. One 34-year-old woman told that her husband's family had used to take a position on her side, in order to courage her to sustain the abusive relationship with their son, until recently. However, she told that, as the violence of her husband had taken different forms and had escalated in severity, particularly, her father-in-law had begun to intervene. She elaborated that he had lodged a complaint against his son to the police, just before her arrival at the Shelter A.

**The third parties:** On the condition that, the women could not have received effective responses from their intimate social network, they had sought help from the third parties. The sources of support the women had applied before their arrival at the Shelter A were detailed under two categories as; *individuals* and *institutions*.

**Individuals:** Depending on the specificities of their context, the women told about seeking help from; neighbors, distant relatives, ex-husbands, or strangers they met coincidentally. Similar to the family context discussed above, women's calls for help had not welcome by the third party-individuals, in every condition. One 24-year-old

woman described how her call for support, in the aftermath of the divorce, from a distant relative had been returned, as quoted below;

...[She is] the daughter of my aunt, her son's wife... I have gone to her and said 'Sister İrem, please help me, I rent a house, oh please, I don't ask so much things, only the house ware that not in use.' And she said me 'I cannot hurt myself by telling my husband that my aunt's daughter wants my house ware not in use.'. She is married to one of the few wealthy men in *City G*... She said that and sent me back again without entering in, Lady Doctor. Other than that the others [people she does not know]...

In this regard, one 35-year-old woman told about the unresponsiveness of the neighbors against her call for help, and elaborated the context they had sided with her husband, as below;

It was terrible vomiting, vomiting... I was terrible. There were strange pounding noises. I reached out to the neighbor; I pushed the slider of the adjacent neighbor's door open. I said to them, Ali has done this damage to me. I said to them, please do something, contact my brothers, reach my mother so that someone can come and save me. Neither the police comes to my mind at that moment, nor ambulance... I only want to get out of the house, save myself from that house. The neighbor said, Ali went to work, I spoke to Ali. I don't know what kind of a crappy lie Ali told him; the neighbor didn't budge at all, he didn't care. They [the neighbors] shut their eyes on this... Even your neighbor in your surrounding shuts their eyes and that neighbor hears the screams, he hears it, his son hears the screams; they should hear it so that he could brag about it. They do nothing about it you see, they don't give a darn, it's such a weird thing, indeed everybody to each other...

In addition, she commented on the response of the neighbors in reference to her position as 'being a second wife', as follows;

...there is such thing at the *District A*; when you buy this house, for instance, I am the second wife, therefore I do not have much importance... He [her husband] bought this house, this is more valuable, so he is considered more; the problem comes from such things... There is

something like this, I mean he has this in the neighborhood, it's like the cooperation in the villages, that place has an atmosphere like that...

Moreover, as different from all cases, she told about seeking help from her ex-husband, with whom she had not contacted for almost 14 years after the divorce. She explained that she had noticed her husband's sexual harassment towards her two older daughters, and thought that 'they would be safe near their biological father'. Thus, she had asked her ex-husband to take care of the daughters, for a few months, till her situation would improve. However, this had prepared the ground for the ex-husband's rape against her eldest daughter.

On the other hand, some women had told about seeking help from individuals that they had not known before. One 28-year-old woman, who had separated from her partner due to his violence, told about the context she had met a woman in the street, just after the separation, as below;

...I met a foreign woman, and we talked. I told her about my trouble, that I had no place to go to stay. She said, we could manage, we can find some way. Thus, we went together with her to her house. And then, you know, she offered me help. She said, I will feed you, let me take you to my house, she said.

However, she had just left the house because of the negative attitude of the woman's husband, before her application for the Shelter A. In a similar context, a 44-year-old woman, who had run away from her ex-husband's violence, told about asking money from the police and security guards, in order to travel to the emergency service of the university hospital, where she would have acted as if she was a patient's acquaintance and spend the nights safe. She had met a woman at the hospital, who had directed her to some people for 'help'. However, they had attempted to marry her to an imam, by covering the attempt as 'help'. She commented on her situation as follows; 'I sincerely considered them as siblings. You should never trust people... I

am running away from the man [her ex-husband], they are finding me a man... Did I come here for searching a man?!’.

***Institutions:*** As already mentioned before, none of the women told that they had applied for support to an institution immediately after their first experiences of DV. Besides, some women described situations of severe violence, which had resulted in a loss of a physical function, but they had not sought help from any institutional mechanism. The case of a 36-year-old woman was a clear example in this regard. She elaborated her husband’s severe violence against her, and pointed at her medical reports, which she had not used against him till the twentieth year of her marriage, as ‘concrete proofs’ of his violence, as below;

He [her husband] hit me with a stick here, stick... like this... with the stick... it swelled like this. I had a three-month-old child, pardon me, I was pregnant. He beat me everywhere, my head, my legs, here, there everywhere he used to smear... They put me to hospital. I didn’t make any complaint.. I said, I have children... I told the doctors that I fell when working... and hence... and that day I stayed at the hospital. That’s what I told the doctor. And I turned out to be this way. Look; there, here are all marks by the serum... look.. I have pain... a lot... these are all cigarettes... He used to smoke and smoke, and then put it off on me... This finger is because of him; he hit my hand with the stick...then it turned gangrenous, and the doctor cut it off in the operation in the *Town A*... I mean you can’t imagine, you can’t imagine...[...] I mean I have a plenty of reports in hand. I have a lot of reports. They are not with me, but a lot at the *Prosecution A*... If you call them I have such a report, that you can’t imagine... I have a report (crying), I mean from my back to my legs, to my arms, to my face I have a report. I mean I have a lot of reports... I don’t have them with me... (crying)

Besides, as quoted above, she noted that her husband would have probably killed her, if her children had not gone to the police to complain about their fathers. In her case, using medical reports to apply for support from an institution had been contingent upon her husband’s receiving a penalty of imprisonment.

Regarding the institutionalized mechanisms they had applied before the Shelter A, the women mentioned; the police, gendarme, social assistance associations within governorship/districts, the SSCPI, NGOs, attorney generalship, emergency lines of hospitals, previous shelters and municipalities, as detailed below.

*Police/ Gendarme:* Some women pointed at harsh and blaming attitudes, while some told about 'life-saving' interventions, regarding the response of the police. The majority mentioned either a family member's call to the police or themselves, concerning the way the police had intervened. In other words, none of the women underlined the response of third party individuals such as neighbors, in terms of calling the police. Among all, only one 23-year-old woman told that her neighbors had called gendarme in order to save her from the violence of her step-mother, who had forced her for prostitution.

In this regard, one 35-year-old woman reflected on her experience in reference to the lately improvements in laws, and services by the government, in Turkey. She elaborated her secondary victimization by the police, in the aftermath of one of the violent attacks of her ex-husband, 13 years ago, and compared her experience with the current situation she perceived, as below;

...well, we went to the police before, um, the police, I was beaten again. When I get beaten, my skin doesn't get purple bruises, my skin gets the hit from the inside. One day later or so, I can't move out of the bed... And then later, he [the police] looked at me and all, held tight my neck, did like this, and like that, checked the places he hit me and said, 'There is nothing'... 'Go home girl'; the police told me then... Then, we [women in general] don't matter at all, not at all... We weren't taken care of, we weren't registered... They [the police] took us out with my sister; he said 'It is nothing, go home girl'. I said; 'I didn't see with my own eyes, but I hear him cheat on me, from the people around us, my husband is cheating on me.'. 'We also cheat, be a woman and don't get cheated', they told me then. The police told it to me!

On the contrary to the reference made by the woman above, a 22-year-old woman, who had been forced to prostitution by her husband, drew attention to a negative conduct of the police, as follows; ‘I had gone to a police station once; because I did not see decent behavior there, I never took steps there again...’.

*Attorney Generalship:* On the subject of seeking help from an attorney generalship, some women told that they had sued for a ‘consensual’ divorce. In all the women’s cases, ‘consensual’ divorce often meant a single session lawsuit, in which they had not only waived their right to speak, but also abandoned a claim to maintenance and to parental right.

On the other hand, some women told about on-going cases upon their arrival at the Shelter A. One 32-year-old woman told that, due to her husband’s violence, she had sued for a divorce case one year before, which was still ongoing since it was a ‘contentious divorce case’. In addition, she noted that she had already sued for his violence and he had drawn jail terms. However, referring to her husband’s manipulative position taking and the attitude of the judge, she told; ‘He [her husband] had decreased it [jail sentence] from 6 months to 4 months. He had told ‘I was drunk when I was practicing violence’; they [the judge] had done penalty deduction...’.

Some told about their attempts, which had failed due to the negative intervention of their family. A 35-year-old woman told that a few months before her arrival at the Shelter A, she had lodged a complaint against her husband to the police and a case had been initiated. She pointed at her husband’s offensive argument in the first session; ‘She is not obeying me. She is not doing the laundry...’. Thus, she told that, the judge had decided to make a second session. However, she noted that, she had barred her action, before the second court session, due to the pressure of her siblings. On the contrary, some women told about their attempts for suing a divorce case

several times, but taking their petitions back, by their own will, in consideration of different constraints in their situations. One 43-year-old woman elaborated her situation as below;

During the divorce trial, there was no court session whatsoever. We filed it immediately, before we filed it, before the court case, I came straight back to home. I couldn't stand my kids crying, weeping...I came back. But he made many promises, he swore for many things; saying it was over and so on, this and that... Also I gave up because of this; so that my children wouldn't later tell me, 'Mum you should have done this and he would protect us; you didn't so he didn't.' I tolerated him knowingly; it was like turkeys voting for an early Christmas. Because my elder sisters tried to make me get a divorce, he would become hostile to my elder sisters. I filed for divorce two times in three years. I have older sisters; I have 5 older sisters. I stopped talking to all of them because of him... There were two lawsuits for divorce. I made material and emotional losses because of him. Now I am not seeing my elder sisters anymore. Nobody from my side of the family sees me because I picked him as a husband. I chose him, because I had kids. I couldn't sacrifice them..

As quoted above, similar to what some other women told, she pointed at the presence of her children as a barrier, for long, against her sustaining decisiveness. Likewise, she underlined the withdrawal of her family's support and her isolation in the course of time. Therefore, as in some women's case, her abandonment of action turned out to be the consequence of the constraints in her situation, rather than her free will.

*SSCPI:* Some women had former shelter experiences before their arrival at the Shelter A. Among them, some, who had stayed in a women's shelter run by the SSCPI, pointed at the staff's pessimistic, negative attitude and mediating attempts to negotiate with the perpetrators. In this respect, the case of a 29-year-old woman was a precise example. She elaborated her experience with the shelter staff, in the aftermath of her address disclosure by the family, as follows;

...Anyway she persuaded me; she persuaded me to go back to my family. She said; no, what will you do outside? You are alone; you might go to the bad. You will do this you will do that... She considerably diverted

me to towards pessimism. She loaded me... She put me into serious pessimism. Honestly, I got scared. I said okay, then, let me try it [sustaining relationship] again... Anyway they [the staff] did something; my family came to the social services and took me. They gave a signature and took me...

As the woman told above mentioned, some other women also pointed at their family's 'delivery of themselves', in return for a signature, from the SSCPI. This practice can be suggested as discouraging and humiliating for women. At this point, she underlined how the mediating attempt of the shelter director had resulted in her further victimization by her husband, as below;

..Sister, than even more torturous days started... I was the guilty one from then on. I couldn't say anything. There was a considerable amount of pressure, I mean insult... My husband didn't know yet, I mean that made it even more, you know? He swept further down upon me and increased the insult and the torment, you know... all that psychological insult, violence; I saw so much violence...[...] Since I got out of that *City B* Women's Association, errr, my husband took the phone from me and he broke it. No, he said. You are talking, your eyes have opened, he said. Don't do anything, he said, don't talk on the phone. He took the phone. The phone was seriously forbidden to me. I couldn't talk over the phone anymore. He took the phone. I said, anyhow nothing happens, I said. It's enough. He took it from me. He said; no, you will stay in *City B*. I said, okay. I stayed in *City B* one more year and he stayed in *City C*. I didn't even hear his voice. He didn't even call his son; neither me nor his son... Anyhow, I said, no worries. So I tied to stand it... It is my uncle's on top of it. Only I know it and God knows it; God is the witness...How much I suffered from my uncle... What an anxiety, what a pressure, what violence, what an insult... terribly much, I mean extremely. I'm sorry but when I went to the toilet I was being followed to see whether I actually went to the toilette or somewhere else. I was constantly under pressure...

Her situation has not only revealed the mediating role of the institution, but also some structural constraints such as, the age limit for male children. After her departure from the shelter, she told that, she had once again written a petition to the

SSCPI, by the guidance of a women's NGO. In this regard, she told how she had been frustrated once more; but, this time due to the age limit for sons, as follows;

... I gave my petition myself. I told them, 'Do my transfer'. I told them, 'I don't want to leave my man and my son by themselves'. I said, 'If I leave my son, I can't live, he is so attached to me and I to him', I said. They [the staff] said okay; then, they have investigated. He [the social worker] said, 'There is an age limit.' They said, 'If he leaves, if you take your son away with you, um, he will go to... they [concerned staff] will give him to the orphanage.'. I said, no, I mean I gave up for my son again, I said, no...

*Hospital emergency line 112:* An extremely few number of women told that they had applied a hospital's emergency line, for support, in the aftermath of an acute physical attack of the abusers. In this respect, one 35-year-old woman told that since her neighbors and family had not responded, she had, ironically, called the emergency line 112 for help in the aftermath of her husband's severe physical violence. She underlined that her husband, who had been in the position of the abuser, ironically, had let her make a call from his handy, since he had 'pitied' her for her helplessness. She commented on the response of the emergency line staff and the police, in comparison to her past experiences with the institutions, and indicated her realization that 'women are valued' then, as quoted below;

...They answered '112', they said, 'What's the matter? Did you fall; did your husband beat you?'. I said 'My husband beat me.' They said, okay, 'We will call the police, and we will be right there.'. They came, they said, 'What's up with you?'. I said, 'Honestly, I am desperate, but don't do... there is no need for a stretcher, I, if one of you holds my arm,' I said, 'I can go slowly, still, but I don't want stretchers,' I said. They asked Ali, 'Who is she to you?'; he said 'My wife'. He said, 'Take her away'. Just like this, with his hand, 'Take, take her away...'. He [the police] asked; 'Who is this kid, whose kid is it?'; I said, 'It is mine.' 'What did you do then?', he [the police] said again, 'My girl, who did this to you?'. I said, 'He [her husband] did it'. In the meantime, the others [112 staff] are taking me. The cops have taken him away. Something like this... But, I mean, it is nice, it is nice to experience something like this. I understood that we [women in general] mattered... In the previous incident, they [the police]

used to say, 'We do it [violence] as well'. This time, they kicked him by force, they took him.

Afterwards, she told that, she had also taken report from the forensic medicine and her husband had been taken to prison for that day. However, as occurred in some other women's situations, she told that, despite the positive institutional response, her family had intervened and forced her to 'make peace' with her husband, by taking a 'mediating' position.

*Previous shelter staff:* Some women, who had former shelter experiences, told about returning to the shelter staff for help. However, while some told about receiving immediate response, some pointed at delayed responses, which had resulted in their further victimization. In this regard, one 35-year-old woman told that till the time she had managed to contact with the shelter director; she had spent their time with her 16-year-old daughter at parks in the day times, and nights at the emergency services of hospitals, for almost two weeks. As in her situation, among the responses of previous shelter staffs, the transference of women to a shelter in another city, became salient as a common practice.

*Municipality:* Some women pointed at their application to other municipalities for help, before their arrival at Shelter A. In this regard, many women pointed out ongoing pursuits and threats of their partners, during their stay at the shelters run by these municipalities. Besides, some drew attention to the threats of their partners against the shelter staff. Thus, many underlined their 'obligatory' arrival at the Shelter A.

*NGOs:* Among all residents, an extremely low number of women told about applying to a women's association. In this respect, the women often indicated the feminist women's NGOs role in the 'compensation' of the poor/inadequate institutional responses in their situations; that is, their attempts to prevent their further victimization.

*No Way 'In': Being out in the streets* Some women told about staying out in the streets, since they could not have the opportunity. One 23-year-old woman told that due to her husband's family's verbal abuse and expulsion of her from home, she had stayed outside; in the bus terminal, train station, in parks and in some acquaintances' houses, for 12 days, before her arrival at the Shelter A. Hereupon, as different from other residents, she indicated that her husband had responded against his family and left home, too. Therefore, together with her husband, she had been out, before her shelter application.

#### **4.2.2.2. The Shelter A**

##### **4.2.2.1. The Shelter on the Whole**

Despite the acceptance of international shelter principles in theory and declaration of them in shelter guidelines; the institutions, which run women's shelters, may act against them, depending on the context. While these misconducts could be due to the 'structural constrains' in some situations; in others, they could be in relation to the 'political will' of the administration, as often, in the case of Shelter A. However, either case could result in the disempowerment of women. Even in some situations, some administrators had reflected on their position taking against some women 'categories'; as once one administrator at the Shelter A had told; 'How segregationist are we! I am telling you [the shelter director] not to take Rumanian citizens!'.

In this regard, the women's specificities on the basis of their position, situation, condition and reflexivity interacted with their subjective experiences at the shelter. In particular; nationality, disability, age, marital status, having children, employment status, health state, economic situation, the presence/absence of an abuser, existence of threats and/or pursuits, the physical location of the perpetrator, motivations for coming to the shelter, expectations from the shelter stay, the route of arriving at the shelter and self-reflectivity on the experience of violence could be suggested as

influential factors on the women's experiences of shelter stay, as discussed below. It should be noted that, although this analysis is richer than the one that could be done under 'gender' category, the information would be more elaborate and reality would be seen more precisely, as these 'categorizations' are more detailed.

**Nationality:** Among all the subjects in this study, apart from the refugee women, there were two women, who had different nationalities. Both of the women commented on their situation in relation to their poor social networks. In particular, they indicated that remarkably few members of their family had migrated to Turkey and that, among the members, who had migrated, most had died due to old age.

On the other hand, there were four women, who had also the position of 'refugee'. As being 'refugee woman from a third world country', who had no legal right to work, and travel regardless of the permission of a governmental agency, they never became insiders. In this regard, they had been in a position that the other women residing at the shelter did not share. Not only their experiences during their shelter stay differed from the other women, but also their route to arrival at the shelter was different in some forms. None of them had made a direct, individual application for the shelter; they had either come through the contact of a governmental agency (the police/social assistance association of the district), or an NGO specialized in the field. In particular, regarding their situations of application, two of them indicated that they had no place since the authorities had recently given their residence to the city. On the contrary, the other two told that they had a place to stay, but they had the fear of physical and sexual assault. In specific, the 46-year-old one told about having a house, but feeling insecure due to the profile of neighborhood. Likewise, the other 33-year-old woman with a 8-year-old daughter, referred to the ethnic war in her country and told about her fear of death, since recently a group of refugee, who were of a different tribe in her country, came to the place where she was living.

Moreover, being a refugee had brought about the problem of language, that is, difficulties in terms of communication in shelter life. While two of the refugee women were able to speak neither Turkish or English; one could speak Turkish a bit; and, the other, differently from the other three, could speak Turkish quite well, which was an advantage for her adaptation to shelter life. In fact, while not knowing Turkish was a specific constrain in these women's situation, it was also a structural constrain since the existing shelter institutionalization disregarded the issue.

For all of them, it was the first time they had ever been to a women's shelter. None of them made any comments to identify themselves, in opposition to the residents, on the basis of their nationalities or refugee positions. However, while three of them did not refer to any biased attitude of the shelter staff or any power differentials in their relationships with the other residents, one 33-year-old woman did. In particular, the shelter life had often evoked distress for her, especially in crowded times, due to the language problem and her psychological state. On the contrary, for the 31-year-old woman, her shelter stay provided her with new opportunities. The restrictions of the shelter life were marginal for her. In addition, regarding the possible consequences of communal life such as, invasion of privacy; she did not mention any problems either with the shelter staff, or the other residents. Besides, she described the shelter as a 'pill' for her problems, and believed that her acquaintance with the shelter director was a milestone in her life, making 'her dream' come true, which was her regaining freedom by going to a third country.

On the whole, the refugee women's reflections regarding the meaning of the shelter could be summarized as; 'a clean and safe place that was free of men, where they felt secure'.

**Disability:** Physical disability constitutes an additional constrain for the women at the Shelter A; both in terms of the daily life at the shelter and the process of their shelter stay regarding issues such as job-seeking. In this respect, while some women

had *visible* physical disabilities, some had *invisible*. Regarding visible disabilities; while some had severe vision sight loses, some had physical deformations on the body. The link between these disabilities and their experiences of violence can be suggested as effective on the women's experience of shelter stay. A 26-year-old woman had an immense hunchback on one side of the body due to being subjected to consecutive rapes of a stranger after her backbone surgery. Her physical disability not only constrained her mobility in the shelter, but also made her feel under stress, when another woman asked about her disability. Thus, she used to have distant relationships at the shelter in order to minimize dialogues.

On the other hand, some women learnt about their disability during their shelter stay. One 29-year-old woman learnt that she had been registered as 'handicapped' in the system due to the dysfunction of one of her innards, when she was enlisted to employment agency in order to find a job. Therefore, due to the employer's attitudes, her disability became a barrier for her employment. At this point, as a temporary support, she got money allowance from the district during her shelter stay.

**Age:** Similar to the issues of nationality and disability, age can also be suggested as a factor influencing the women's subjective experiences of shelter stay. In this regard, *relatively* old age can be suggested as a distressing factor for the women, since they perceived less opportunity in terms of employment. 'What can I do after this age?' is an often asked question by the older women, in despair. Depending on their situations, for some women, being at a women's shelter at an older age also meant; longer experiences of DV; thus, more deterioration in terms of physical and psychological health, and having grown-up children; thus, the unavailability of their support.

On the other hand, for some, old age brought about care and respect in the context of their relationships at the shelter. A 46-year-old woman, who was often called as 'aunt' even by the residents, who were of the same age with her, due to her older

look, seemed to enjoy her shelter stay. Her position of 'being a refugee' was also important to mention in that it meant 'no distress in term of job-seeking', since it was already legally forbidden in her situation.

**Employment:** Employment status on arrival at the shelter is another situation that affected the women's shelter experience. The majority was unemployed on their arrival; and very few women, who were employed, had part-time jobs, or were employed in positions that demanded long-hours of work, but were less-paid. Thus, after a while, some of these women had to leave jobs due to the physical deteriorations in their health, as a consequence of their working conditions.

On the other hand, there were also some women, who got employed during their shelter stay. However, for the most of them, the same employment conditions mentioned above applied to their situations. At the same time, there were also women employed in one of the departments of the municipality, who had benefited the quota set by the administration, after the second year of the shelter service. Thus, they had worked insured and 8 hours-a-day, in relaxing conditions, where there was less human relationship and they dealt with gardening.

For the women, being employed during their shelter stay also meant; traveling in the city, alone and unpressured in the absence of any controlling family member; having social relationships outside the domestic sphere; gaining self-esteem; preparing the ground for planning for future; having an independent social insurance (if the job is insured), and earning a living of own. In particular, for some women, it also meant experiencing all of these for the first time in their lives.

Apart from employment, for women, the process of seeking for a job could also bring about questioning self in relation to their abilities, capabilities and constrains. In this regard, some commended on their situation in despair, expressing that they were 'just housewives'. In line with their position as 'housewives', some expressed

their interest for jobs such as child-care, elderly care and house-cleaning. Among these jobs, there used to be opportunities, often, for elderly-care and patient-care. However, the provided conditions by the employers were often too demanding; with over-night stay, under minimum wage, uninsured and without weekend/annual holidays. In addition, often every single employer had specific demands such as, the women's being middle-aged and without children. Thus, it was often the case that many women went for an interview with the employer, and, for a while, attempted to work as a care-taker, but were obliged to leave the job, due to the working conditions. Therefore, employment was left as a hard issue, due to the narrow scope of job opportunities with better, *humane* conditions.

**The non/existence of own children:** As in the situation of departure from the home, having children was influential in the women's experience of shelter stay. In specific, the presence/absence of children with the women during their shelter stay was a considerable issue. While some women had grown-up children, who were not near them, some had younger children, which they had to leave behind upon coming to the shelter due to their specific conditions. In this regard, the age and sex of the children made another difference. On the whole, having younger children, whether at the shelter with them or in another location, seemed to affect women's shelter experiences relatively more.

Regarding the support of children, while some women pointed at their encouraging attitudes, some indicated the opposite. Thus, they had to cope with the feelings of harsh blaming directed by their children. One 40 year-old-woman, who had a 18-year-old daughter and 20-year-old son, told that her children had been blaming her for 'not being a devoted mother' telling her that, if she had been, she would not have left them and gone away for a shelter stay.

On the other hand, for the women, who had younger children in another place, the shelter experience was often distressful. On the condition that the women had

changed city, due to security risk, in order to arrive at the Shelter A, the situation even got tougher; thus, loss of contact with the children was at issue. In this regard, depending on the specificities of the context, the shelter staff contacted different institutions (often sought for cooperation with the SSCPI), in order to take children to the shelter.

However, for some women with their little children at the shelter, the shelter experience could be distressing, also, due to the structural constraints and/or the relationships with the other residents/staff. In specific, the structural constraints applied particularly to the situations of women, who had children aged under 3-years-old. There were neither specialized staffs employed at the shelter, nor free child care facilities in the city, for the children under the age of 3. On the other part, for some, the presence of their little children contributed to their stress, due to their expression of aspiration for the father and home. However, in some situations of the children, the expression of fear was at issue. One 23-year-old woman, who had three children aged 2, 4 and 5 with her at the shelter, told that her two older children told her; 'Let's return to the home Mummy; if we don't, our father will beat us!'. On the other hand, among some residents, child-care became a battle ground in terms of their 'motherhood capacities'. In this regard, some women reflected on their experiences with their mothers. A 29-year-old woman, who had two children aged 1 and 5, commented as follows;

We [her sister and her] learnt to do laundry when we were 4-5 years old... We never knew what breakfast meant... Taking pills, my mother used to lie down... Thereof, I want to be a conscious mother, I want to look after my children very well...

Reflecting on her relationship with mother and the other residents at the shelter, another 28-year-old woman told;

I do not bother people. I want to be a loving mother; I do want to tolerate him [my son]... I do not feel like loving him. I do not want to affect his psychology negatively...

On the other hand, as in the context of the women's experiences of violence, having a child out of marriage at the shelter could also be suggested as a situational factor on their experiences of shelter stay. In particular, even the marital status of the men could be suggested as influential, as in the situation of a 33-year-old woman, who had a one-year-old child from a married man. Upon her departure, she elaborated her distress, due to her situation among the residents, as the main reason for her will to leave from the Shelter A.

**Motivations for coming to the shelter:** Even if, settling a new life that is free from violence constitutes the basic aim of coming to the shelter, for the majority of the women; when gone into deeper analysis, different motivations aroused in relation to their context. The reluctance to communicate any one from outside; the partner's threat against the individuals they had gone to stay; the will to demonstrate the partner about the other alternatives they had, and the will to make the partner regret for his violence were among the most frequently cited motivations by the women. In this regard, it is also worth mentioning that not all women, who were survivors of partner violence, came to the shelter because there was no alternative support mechanism. In situations of some women, although there was the support of family/relatives, there was the woman's denial; that is, among the other alternatives, coming to the shelter was directly a 'choice' for some women. Among these women, many indicated their perception of the family's potential limitations, in terms of employment and social relationships.

On the other hand, the women, who were survivors of solely family violence, predominantly indicated a sentence of death, 'due to a conduct of custom' and/or forced marriage, and the denial by the family. On the contrary, as a specific group of

women at the shelter, refugee women often expressed ‘finding a safe place to sleep for free’, as the basic motivating factor for their shelter application.

On the whole, however, since in many of the women’s situations, there was the background of family violence and partner violence together; and in some situations of women, there was also the violence of third parties; motivations were complicated in many of the women’s situations. However, it is also possible to tell that, for some women, there was no motivation at issue for coming to the Shelter A. This situation often applied for the ones, who had to change cities and be transferred by another shelter, due to the approach of an immediate threat by the partner and/or family. In this regard, the presence/absence of psychological support of the intimates could also be suggested as an influential factor. One 32-year-old woman elaborated how her mother’s statements had motivated her for her stay at the Shelter A, which was located in a different city from the one she used to live, as below;

...However, my mother finally understood. She had said, let my daughter stay there, don’t let her come here, it’s enough my daughter suffered, she said. She told these to her daughter in law. When I spoke to her, she said, your mother says all this, she doesn’t want you to come back... Then I said, I will leave this place [previous shelter]. Because if I stayed, he would have found me, if I stayed in City G...

On the contrary, another woman indicated her family’s counter position-taking against her shelter stay. She told that she had not contacted with anyone from the family since she had come to the shelter and explained that, it was due to her fear from them, referring to their previous denials of support. She commented on her situations, as follows;

...because I don’t have the courage, do you understand Sister? Even now I want to talk to them so much.. I missed them so much...But I can’t dare. If I call, if I talk to them, if I do something, they give me back the grossest words, without thinking. You left us, you ran away, you bowed our head against everybody, you did this you did that, we won’t forgive

you, we will kill you and so on... I am sure I will hear all these... If they would support me, if they said; yes, you were right, you suffered a lot, and we failed to understand you... I wish they told me such things. However, I don't think they would say them at all, because I made an enormous 'mistake' by rebelling... And, when I make a mistake, they obviously will never forgive...

**Health status:** The physical status of the women was an effective factor on the women's experiences of shelter stay. Their experiences of shelter stay even got tougher in the company of physical symptoms. In some women's situations, their poor physical and psychological status predominated their other needs and became the basic focus of attention during their shelter stay, as in the case of a 39-year-old woman. She used to experience nervous attacks and be hospitalized, till her second month of stay at the shelter. However, in some women's situations, even regular hospitalization during the shelter stay on the daily basis was an inadequate intervention, due to severe depressive symptoms and suicidality; thus, they were immediately hospitalized for a long psychiatric treatment.

Some women also made self-evaluations regarding their health status, in comparison to other residents. Besides, the health status of some also affected their relationships with the others at the shelter. In this regard, some women, who had suffered from poor health, were accused of 'malingering' in order 'not to take responsibility in house chores', by some other residents. This was often at issue when the woman suffered from severe psychological symptoms, which were *invisible* by the other residents.

**Economic status:** Although the economic situation of all the women at the shelter were poor, some had specific situations. While some had children outside to support economically; some had debts, which were increasing by interests on a daily basis, to third-party individuals, or to governmental institutions. In this regard, for some, employment was not at issue to pay the debts, since they had babies to care, or

illnesses/disabilities that prevented them from working. At this point, being a refugee was another influential factor, as in the case of a 31-year-old woman. There was a definite amount of money she was obliged to pay at regular time intervals for her stay in the country. However, since she was a refugee, she was not given the legal right to work in the country. In addition, her debt had increased by time so much that the interests had even reached the amount of capital upon her arrival at the shelter. Due her refugee position, her debt also had meant a constrain against her departure from the country, upon an invitation from a third country. Different from the situation of other women, who had debts, her case had required several negotiations with different governmental institutions, international bodies, and local and national campaigns and had resulted in success in the third month of her shelter stay.

On the contrary, having a property had also influenced some women's shelter stay experiences, as in the case of a 29-year-old woman. She was the only woman among the other residents, who indicated that she 'was given' the land registry of a house by her husband. However, she told that it had been almost an obligation for the husband, because there had been an age limit set by the building cooperative at issue then, and she was registered as five years older in her certificate of birth. In this regard, since that house was the only thing she had and her husband had attempted to get it from her, the issue had become a battleground during her shelter stay. Therefore, the issue resulted in her transference to another women's shelter in the city the house was, so that she would be able to follow the legal procedure.

**The existence of threats and pursuits:** The existence of threats and/or pursuits is another situation, which affected some women's shelter stay experience. Depending on the specificities of the women, the threats took different forms.

The issue of children was the source of threat in some women's situations, as in the case of a 39-year-old woman, who stayed at the shelter with her 7-year-old daughter.

She was anxious that her partner, who was also quite attached to the daughter, would take her daughter back from her. Due to the partner's pursuits of her daughter around the school, she had decided not to send her to the school for some time, through cooperation with the director of the school and the daughter's teacher. In addition, after the first month of her stay at the shelter, her partner sued for the parental right of the daughter, by accusing her of being 'mentally-ill' and also of 'kidnapping' the child. Therefore, she decided to meet with her partner to discuss the issue. In this respect, she was the only one, who had met her partner to challenge his threats and 'bargain' her conditions for considering to sustain the relationship again, among all the residents. At this point, it should be noted that her 7-year-old daughter's continuing her education was the basic motivating factor for her feelings of 'obligation' to meet her partner. However, her contact with the partner had resulted in her return to home.

For some women, the perpetrator's threat regarding the parental right of the children got even tougher due to an institutional constrain in the context, as in the case of a 29-year-old woman. Asking for legal counseling desperately, she indicated that her husband would try his best in order to take her son's parental right. Referring to the shelter regulations, which prevented the admission of boys older than 12, she told that she would be even contented to see her son on definite days the court would decide. In her situation, the main issue of threat was her husband's harsh attitude towards her son in the absence of her.

In some women's situations, the profile of the perpetrator had significantly affected the forms and intensity of threats and pursuits. Even for some, it affected the overall experience of the women's shelter stay, as in the case of a 35-year-old woman. Her husband was a university graduate man and a member of a well-known tribe and a political party. Besides, she indicated that he had a past conviction due to killing her father; and for almost two years, he had been dealing with illegal issues. As in some

cases of the women, she used to feel extreme fear during her stay, although she was in a far away city. Therefore, she seldom went outside the shelter with her daughter. She had attempted to search for a job twice, but since social insurance was a must and she believed that her husband could easily find their place with her social insurance number through his network, she gave up her idea of employment. Likewise, her daughter could not continue her education, since her registration transmission from her former school was required, and her husband had effective relationships with the college administration, and thus, she did not trust the administration of the college regarding the confidentiality of the process. All of their outside activity was their participation to some courses offered in social houses of the municipality, in the accompany of a shelter staff. At the end of the second month of her shelter stay, her place was disclosed by her husband, by the 'help' of the shelter director, who had guided her to the Shelter A. Due to the approach of him nearby the shelter, the shelter staff called the police and the police took him to the station. However, in his statement, he had told that, all he wanted was to talk with the director of the shelter about the situation. He had also noted that he had already had information about the director; from her school to her home address. However, he had told that he did not have an intention to harm anyone. Since he had taken no action against anyone, the police had told that they had to free him then. At this point, it is important to note that, this was one of the practices in the field, which resulted in tension between the shelter staff and the police. Then, as a precaution, the shelter staffs had been given a temporary shuttle car for some time, and the woman had been transferred to another shelter with her daughter.

Besides, in some women's situations, even the perpetrator's being in prison did not prevent him from making threatening claims. A 36-year-old woman was the only one, who had the partner in jail, due to his violent acts towards her, during her shelter stay. Her husband had been in jail for almost 4 months, when she came to the shelter.

Once, during her shelter stay, a letter had come from her husband, since he had learnt the location of her, during the court case. In this regard, the disclosure of a woman's place staying at a women's shelter, in a court context, in the presence of an abusive man, who is already in jail due to his conduct of violence, should be quite thought-provoking and alarming for the whole system, in which the women's shelters are connected.

#### **4.2.2.2.2. Women's Perceptions of the Staff**

Regarding the relationships with the staff at the Shelter A, women told about a range of feelings depending on their subjective experience of shelter stay. They had expressed feelings from trust to distress and sympathy to anger. In particular, some women indicated; feeling secure in the presence of the professional staff; depending on/modeling/idealizing the staff; revealing the unspeakable to the staff and feeling sympathy for the staff. On the contrary, some underlined; their fear and lack of trust for the staff; the staff's 'arbitrary' practices and the 'harsh' enforcement of the rules. While these issues were considered below, there were also points discussed under the titles; '*adverse* appeals from the staff' and the 'search for authority'.

*Feeling secure in the presence of the professional staff:* It could be suggested that due to the *position* of some shelter staff, some women used to depend more on them. Often, the case was that the women predominantly depended on the shelter psychologist. Even some women told that the departure of the psychologist from the shelter on a daily basis had evoked tension for them, since they experienced a feeling of 'loneliness'. However, after a definite period of stay (which depended on their subjective situations), this feeling had often replaced by the feeling of trust and solidarity among the residents, as they began to have the feeling that they were dependent on each other. The situation of 39-year-old woman can be suggested as a precise example, in this regard. She used to have nervous attacks and tell the psychologist that the shelter was 'like a grave' after her departure. However, after her

psychological situation had got better and she had made friends with some residents, she had referred on her experience of shelter stay more positively.

*Fear and lack of trust:* On the other hand, some women told about feeling fear and lack of trust for some staff, while feeling trust for the others. In this regard, one 18-year-old woman, who indicated having a relationship with a married man, described her feelings upon the unethical reveal of some shelter staff to the director of the department, to which the Shelter A had been linked, as below;

Mr. Hasan [manager of directorship] asked; ‘what did you have to do with a married man?’... I could not sleep yesterday night... I have thought of Miss. Nurcan [office staff] and Ms. Neriman [associate staff] were like you; I could not have known that they would tell Mr. Hasan... I feel terribly sorry now... Mr. Hasan got angry a lot...

Besides, her fear from some shelter staffs had led to delay/limitation of her basic needs/acts in situations, in which they were present. Once, she had told that she could not tell the doctor that she had not been virgin due to the presence of one shelter staff. On another situation, having witnessed the verbal abuse of that staff, she told that she was delaying some of her requirements till the departure of that staff from the shelter, as quoted below;

Because I got afraid of Ms. Neriman [associate staff], I do have a bath at nights... On Saturday, before going to diction course, Ms. Neriman got angry a lot with Aunt Fatma because she stayed in the bath for so long...

Her situation demonstrated how the indifferent and inexperienced staff, who were employed at a women’s shelter *recklessly*, could result in further victimization for some women. In this respect, during the times that I had been the only professional staff at the shelter, I used to tell the women that they should not feel themselves obliged to answer any questions asked by either the staff, or the other residents, regarding their personal lives. However, some women responded that, although they

did not want to share all the details of their stories indeed, they felt an urge to tell and could not hold themselves. At this point, the importance of the staff's expertise became salient, again. As it occurred from time to time for the Shelter A, as depicted in the case above, the staff could disclose the information shared by the woman to a third party, or could use the information against her, leading to further victimization of the woman.

*Depending on the staff:* On the whole, the extent of dependency of the women on the professional staff, particularly upon their arrival at the Shelter A, was contingent upon their subjective experiences of violence. One 24-year-old woman- who elaborated the violence of her family, her two forced marriages and sexual assault at the workplace- expressed her dependency for the shelter psychologist, as below;

I need your support very much, Lady Doctor... This is because I need love, a mother's warmth, a sister's warmth so much... I need a little love so much... You know, Lady Doctor, there is a saying; 'do not fall; the one who falls has no friends'... the one who falls has no friends in fact, others kick her once again...

While she asked for support, referring to the profession of the staff, which she named as 'doctor'; some other women asked for support from the same staff, perceiving her in the 'rescuer' position. This approach of the women may pressure individual staff psychologically, in that; the women depend on the conscience of the individual staff, rather than the professionalization of the institution. This can also be demonstrated in the situation of a 36-year-old woman, who asked for support from the staff to get divorced from her husband, as told below;

Please, I throw myself at your feet, please save me from that jerk, I want nothing more... Thank you, may God bless you... God bless your children, if you have any my dear Sister. God bless you, thank you so much...

As quoted below, the thankful attitude of some women for the staff even upon the staff's just promising that she would try her best to improve the situation could be a pressuring factor for the staff, as it was often in my situation.

*Modeling/Idealizing the staff:* Some women also indicated modeling some staff in terms of some attitudes, acts and perspective-taking. In this respect, some women claimed that all the positive effects they were experiencing could not be due to the psychiatric pills, which they were taking for a short time at the shelter. They underlined that tranquility they had observed in the director, during some negative events at the shelter, had been quite effective on them. In addition, some told that, whenever they felt like getting nervous, they tried to visualize her tranquility they had observed at that times.

*Revealing the unspeakable:* For some women, a shelter staff was the first person they had ever been able to talk about the 'unspeakable'. In this regard, the case of a 26-year-old woman can be suggested as a precise example. Upon her arrival at the Shelter A, she had given the psychologist a letter, in which she had written about her life, since she did not want to tell her story in person. She had told the psychologist; 'Everything is written here...'. In the letter, she had told about rape with just one sentence; 'A man forcibly had me.'. After a few months, she had talked about the rape with the psychologist and also mentioned that it was the first time that she could talk one shelter staff in person about the rape, although she had stayed in many women's shelters, for almost five years. Her situation also gave clues regarding the institutional constrains, in terms of responsiveness and empowerment process at the women's shelters in Turkey.

*Sympathy for the staff: 'warning' the staff for 'altruistic acts' for some residents*  
Some women referred to some other residents' future decisions and present acts- particularly regarding their relationships with their partners- as an 'infidelity' against the 'altruistic acts of the some staff'. Thus, they felt the need to 'warn the staff' about

the situation *implicitly*. In this regard, the women's perceived support from the staff could be suggested as effective on their 'taking sides with the staff'. In this respect, one 35-year-old woman told;

Well, Lady Miray, as far as I see, everyone has a target and everyone has gone to that target... excessive comments and excessive worries seem meaningless... This is so for me, and they [some residents] have gone the same way, as I had said before, this and that would go to her husband... Even Özlem [a resident] was saying that -my mother was catching her- that was no true at all. While Özlem talked, it was unfortunate that my mother was standing by the side of the tree; she was talking to her husband. 'What's the meaning of this, my girl? Didn't she tell us that she didn't have a husband?', my mother said; she misunderstood... I said, no mother, he is her husband; he works at some other far place, and so on... I mean we knew it well before she had told everything [intention to leave from the shelter] clearly...

As quoted below, she reminded of her previous 'warnings' to the director about some other residents, about whom she told that they would return to their partners. In my opinion, in this regard, she attempted to prevent me, as a shelter staff, from 'investing for the wrong women' and 'getting disappointed' in the end.

Besides, some other women demonstrated their concern for the health of the some shelter staff by; constantly checking if they had their meal; expressing sadness for their effort upon the departure of a woman from the shelter back to her partner; telling about their worries that they seemed exhausted, and even knitting wool clothes for them. In this respect, as a shelter staff, I had often found myself in a caring, interactive atmosphere, in which I felt valued, loved and experienced women's solidarity.

*'Adverse' appeals from the staff:* Particularly upon their arrival at the Shelter A, some women had expressed some demands, which had been in the opposite line with principles of a 'standard' woman's shelter. In this regard, the women's previous transference from a women's shelter, in which these kinds of appeals had been welcome or even encouraged, could be suggested as a triggering factor.

Although inconsiderable in numbers, some women had asked for a ‘mediating role’ in order to ‘make peace’ with the perpetrator. Likewise, some had asked the staff to ‘find an appropriate candidate for and arrange a marriage’. In this regard, a 33-year-old man had asked one associate staff, if the shelter director could help her marry or not. In particular, upon her arrival, she had difficulty taking responsibility for her life, since she had not practiced it before in her family. The director commented on the situation, referring to the principles of the shelter that, her request was undoubtedly unethical and impossible. She encouraged the woman to seek for employment. In a few weeks, she had begun to work in a factory, and to her own living, for the first time, in her life.

*Search for ‘authority’:* Some women, who had prior shelter experience, constantly made comparisons among the practices of the previous shelter(s) and the Shelter A. While some women had expressed their pleasure for the ‘comfortable’ atmosphere, some other had ‘searched for authority and discipline’, at the Shelter A. One woman, who had been transferred from a shelter run by the SSCPI, had once blamed me, as the shelter director, with being ‘too permissive’. She had asked angrily, why I did ‘give permission’ to the women to go out any time they wanted. She elaborated that there had been no such practice at the previous shelter; the women could go out by permission only on certain days defined by the administration. Hereupon, I had tried to reflect that I did not ‘give permission’ to the women, but rather the women had ‘informed’ me about their departures, since it was necessary for planning the daily schedule of the shelter. Besides, I tried to detail the principles of a women’s shelter, and my position, as the responsible staff for the shelter’s effective service to the women, rather than being a person to replace the women’s partner or one family member with such controlling behavior.

On the other hand, some women had complained about some other women's being in an authority position. Referring to her situation at the shelter as 'lonely', one 46-year-old refugee woman had once reflect on the situation at the shelter, as follows;

... You are no manager; Gülsüm and Gönül are the managers here! I have nobody, I can do anything here, but I have no power left... All women except Gülsüm and Gönül, are nice here. Sevgi is a modest woman ready to help. Gönül stays awake and keeps laughing loudly until three in the morning, and keeps us awake too. Lady Nurcan [security staff] is remarkably personable, she treats everybody equal, and that's why Gülsüm and Gönül don't want her here...

As cited above, some women expressed their discomfort regarding some other residents' domineering position. It was noteworthy that they implied the idea; there should be one person in charge and she should be authoritarian. Thus, they showed signs of their tolerance for my 'probable' authoritarian position-taking, referring to my position of the shelter director.

*'Harsh' enforcement of the rules:* While some women indicated searching for authority, some complained about the harsh enforcement of rules by some staff. For one 26-year-old woman, some of the staff tried to form a hierarchy and a gap between some of the residents and themselves. Therefore, she portrayed the atmosphere at the shelter sometimes as being alienating and authoritarian. Regarding the staff's enforcement of the rules, she told that she could not make sense of some of the rules. She also complained about the lack of privacy, as regards to the intervention of some of the staff and crowded conditions, which led to forced exposure to women she didn't know. In addition, she told that she sometimes felt neglected, isolated and that she was exposed to insults from the other residents. In particular, she pointed at the negative intervention of some staff and the other residents, regarding the use of the bathroom. However, in fact, each day she was occupying the commonly used bathroom almost for half of the day, by keeping on

washing clothes, having a shower, bathing the child, and cleaning the bathroom. It was also the case for some other women, who had experienced rape. Yet, since she refused to receive treatment and often there were the institutional constrains at issue for a personal bathroom at the shelter, her situation was causing stress for herself, the other women at the shelter and the staff.

*The 'arbitrary practice' or the 'burnout' of staff:* Some women complained about the arbitrary practices of some staff. While some told that some staff acted for positive discrimination of particular residents, some told about the staff's arbitrary practices against almost all the residents. One 23-year-old woman complained about the attitude of one staff, who had recently begun to work at the shelter as a cleaner, as follows;

...I have no problems with here... It's just that; we had requested diapers from Sister Hatice, but she didn't give. 'Do not change diapers too often, it's forbidden to give diapers', she said. I mean, I would go and buy from the market, if I had not deposited our money with you... Let me tell you briefly; we were about to prepare the breakfast. Because I didn't know how things worked out here, I asked Sister Hatice if there was any sugar. She accused me, saying, 'I would have brought it from home, if you called me.'... But I said the same things on Friday, too. She told me not to change the diaper of my child very often, providing diapers is forbidden and problematic, she said... I mean that I said before that... do not change diapers very often, it's forbidden to provide diapers, she said. I had told it at breakfast back on Friday, she said like that... That size is tight now... That size of diapers do not fit now, I asked for the size 7-18 kilogram as these are good at present... I haven't changed yet, but she brought them from her house, Lady Hatice, those diapers fit perfectly now. She has given me now, thanks her, I now have 7-18 size... I am very pleased both for your assistance and for the means available here... I am highly satisfied and thank you... Other than that, well, I have no other problems, thank you.

As quoted above, some staff could misinterpret some of the rules of communal life at the shelter and transfer them to the women in a totally different, degrading way. However, it is noteworthy to have a closer look at the institutional constrains at play,

rather than blaming the staff at the first sight. In the situation told above, the staff was a relatively old woman, who was waiting for the last one year to her retirement and was involuntarily employed at the shelter as an associate personnel, without any training. Thus, she had no motivation for working there. Besides, referring to her low socio-economic status, she was comparing herself with the residents and judging them for not being 'economical' and 'thoughtful'. In this respect, the limited material sources of the shelter and the 'invisible' compulsion of the shelter staff to being obsessed with budgeting, by the administration could be suggested as effective factors at work, in the staff's negative reaction against the provision of the residents' basic needs, in some situations.

#### **4.2.2.2.3. Women's Perception of Other Residents**

Regarding their relationships with the other residents, majority of the women indicated both positive and negative experiences, rather than solely focusing on either positive, or negative experiences. Some women complained about the hierarchical and/or insincere relationships; and the dictation of shelter rules and humiliation by other residents, from time to time. On the other hand, some drew attention to the differences; while others pointed at intimate relationships and emphasized their experience of solidarity, as effective factors on their overall experience of shelter stay, as discussed below.

*Hierarchy as bossing the other women:* On the whole, the women seemed to accept the 'authority' of the shelter staff, due to their pre-assumptions of 'differences' with the staff, in the context. In this respect, the legally defined admission procedure of the shelter could be suggested as effective in the formation of such positions in the women's minds. That is; they were in the position of 'battered women who needed their help', and the shelter staffs were in the position of 'professionals who had the authority for deciding to help them or not and also defined the extent of help'. However, while many of the women had 'expectations of a difference' in terms of

authority in their relationships with the staff, they often did not have such pre-assumptions in the context of their relationships with the other residents. Therefore, while many had found it relatively easier to protest against the bossing of the other women, they often could not, when the pressure of one staff was at issue. This situation also applied, even in a context, in which the shelter director had encouraged the women to do so, if they had felt like.

A situation that took place in the early months of the shelter service can be suggested as a precise example, in terms of one woman's pressure over many others at the shelter. In particular, after the departure of a woman from the shelter, the other residents had complained about her domineering position. They had referred to a specific situation as the one, leading to her escalation of pressure in the last week of her shelter stay; she had a relationship with one of the male security staffs. The women had told that, when they had tried to 'warn' her, she had threatened them not to tell the situation to the shelter director, adding that 'It's none of your business! I want to live my life hereafter. Anyhow, he [her husband] will come and kill me soon...'. Thus, the women told that, they had kept the situation as secret, till the day she had left the shelter, because of their fear from her.

On the other hand, some women complained about the dictation of the shelter rules by the other residents. Besides, some women had told the director that they wanted to discuss the shelter rules *only* with the staff, not with the other residents. At this point, it can be suggested that, while some women perceived a 'room for negotiation regarding some rules' with the staff; they did not, when other residents got involved in the situation. In this regard, some women told about responding to the dictation of the rules by some residents, by over-reacting physiologically. One woman had once expressed that, she had 'made it a problem to till the morning' and had a nervous attack then, when one resident told her that 'it is forbidden to lie in the saloon!', in a harsh way, on a day she had felt ill and lied on the sofa in the saloon.

*Insincere vs. intimate relationships:* While some women predominantly underlined intimate relationships with the other women; for some, their encounter with the other residents had meant confusion and chaos. In this regard, some indicated that they felt like living together with women, who did not function ‘normatively’. In addition, their encounter with the other women’s stories exposed them to anxiety, and evoked their traumatic memories; thus, they often had distant relationships with others.

One 18-year-woman, who escaped from the conduct of custom by her family, reflected on the relationships between the other women and some staff, in the last days of her shelter stay, during which she had felt hopeless. She elaborated that although some of the women had told her that they could support her upon her departure from the shelter, she could not trust them. She also questioned ‘how long could one stay at a women’s shelter?’, and commented on the presence of her lover as ‘the best alternative’ to choose, since ‘at least’ she ‘could be outside’ there, in that city. She interpreted the relationships at the shelter, as quoted below;

The people here are two-faced... Everyone backbites each other, then smiles to each other’s face! There seems to be a contention between Miss Oya [the security staff] and Miss Nurcan [the security staff]... Gönül backbites Miss Neriman [the associate staff] and she acts as if she did not think of her in that way.. Miss Neriman says ‘She has her eyes on my place’ for Miss Oya [the security staff]...[...] Gönül is extremely fragile; she may misunderstand me whatever I say! She gives unkind answers... She doesn’t do any work; I am the one who does the dishes the most, for the sake of not making a fuss...[...] Gönül turns up the music till the last, I sometimes can’t stand! In order not to make a fuss, I always change my tune. Gönül behaves me harshly, undeservedly. She is the issue that I have repressed the most here... That night, Miss Gülsüm [Gönül’s mother] told ‘For my sake, don’t tell anything, otherwise they put out us’... because that night, Gönül behaved in such a way that Sister Oya [the security staff] got angry a lot with Gönül. She said [the security staff] ‘If someone else were in my shoes, she would take a statement down’.

As quoted above, she also referred to her situation of ‘keeping silent for the sake of another woman’s stay at the shelter’. In addition, she described a situation, in which a staff had ‘made a favor for a woman and disregarded her misconduct’ at the shelter. Besides, as in some cases, in her situation, the deterioration of her relationships with some women, to whom she used to depend on psychologically, for some time, at the shelter, could be suggested as effective on her overall experience of shelter stay. At this point, she reacted to the situation by leaving the shelter.

On the other hand, some women indicated intimate relationships; making friends with some other women at the shelter, with whom they felt relaxed and happy. One 34-year-old woman portrayed an extremely harmonious picture of the relationships among the residents. According to her, the women were sincere with each other and they could share their real feelings. She commented that the women expressed their love to each other, and even discuss peacefully.

*Focus on differences:* Many women referred to their specific situations, as they commented on the residents. Referring to the difference among women as a problem for her, one 35-year-old woman had once told that she used to act by focusing on the ‘uniting’ stuff within herself, as below;

...bits and pieces with women, I mean I think everybody is different; their personality, things, what they have seen, their habits can be different. The family discipline, what they saw in life can all be different, in my opinion. Okay, I’m not someone from an educated family that knows about everything. However, I believe I know much well... Perhaps the other women’s ages are younger than me, they are less experienced than me. That’s what I feel. Sometimes such things go through my head like this... I say to myself, it’s their personality; they get offended about anything, sometimes they do cover-up it. [...] Such things come to my mind sometimes, but it’s very nice... I am trying to deal with the uniting things, beautifying things ,which I possess and which I can... However, when I see her [a resident] continuing the same way, then you just accept her as she is and you just carry on like that. You know, I want a house very much, and I undoubtedly have no intention to marry again...

However, we can share a house with one of the agreeable and harmonious women; also for them not to be left all by their own... Because when we rent a house, we can afford it, if I work and if my daughter works, and that woman will do all she can, too. I mean, I am thinking to take with me an agreeable woman... Well, these are things and thoughts I am just considering.

However, drawing attention to the subjective experiences of each woman at the shelter, she indicated that the differences among residents were not an issue of comparison for her, either. In this regard, she told she had tried to act with solidarity with other women as much as possible, as cited below;

I never make comparisons. Everybody is different. It's everybody's own life, I do not make any... I am not at that one lived like that and this one lived like that... I am just trying to, well, to protect... Yesterday came, well Azize came, she told me, such and such, her eyes were full... Did you go down my sister to talk with Miss Miray? Oh sweetie, go down, and you had given money, too. I had an extra card; I gave it to her hand. I am just dealing with such things, Miss Miray. What else can I give them... as I am about to leave soon... I am very much with Deniz; I wish Deniz is with me, when I quit here. I feel such solidarity with her... with Ayten, we don't suite in.

She elaborated told that she had never asked questions to the women regarding their subjective experiences of violence, but inside she believed they had also experienced a lot, as she did. She noted that two of the residents had indicated sexual abuse; she commented that she also had, but 'not like the way' the other women experienced, referring to the specificities in her situation then.

*Perception of 'being humiliated' vs. empathy/solidarity:* Some women told about their experiences of feeling empathy and solidarity for the women at the shelter, while some other depicted an adverse situation. In particular, some women, who had visible and permanent physical marks on their body due to violence, had distant relationships with the other residents. In this regard, one woman with visible physical marks of violence on her body indicated that she felt 'humiliated' in the presence of

other women. She commented that the other residents were not even having meals in the kitchen when she was there, since they were ‘disgusted’ by her physical look.

On the other hand, a 22-year-old woman referred to situation that she enjoyed solidarity with other women at the shelter. In particular, she had to live outside, under unhealthy conditions, for almost two weeks, before her arrival at the shelter. She was requested to use anti-lice shampoo for a few times upon her arrival, as a precaution. However, in her situation, the neglect of a staff resulted in louse epidemic and it almost took two weeks to ensure that it was over. Despite all the stress caused, empathizing with her and considering the specificities in her situation, anyone neither from the residents nor the staff had demonstrated even the slightest negative attitude towards her. Besides, many former residents acted with solidarity for enabling the new comers to have an access to resources; they introduced the shelter life as well as the city and accompanied them when going to institutions such as, the governorship and the bar.

As the discussions in this part of the study highlighted, the women faced with numerous challenges through their subjective experiences of violence and shelter stay. At this point, their experiences became understandable only through the examination of the context; the specificities of them; the shelter, and the shelter network. However, their experiences suggested that this consideration was mostly underestimated in the existing system. It was revealed that the constraints specific to each woman’s case combined with the *rigid* structural practices in the aftermath of violence entrapped many women in situations difficult to escape. In addition, the ‘mediating role’ of the structures and individuals came up as a disempowering practice dominant in the field.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **EMPOWERMENT**

In this part of the study, following a brief review of the literature on women's empowerment at shelters, a discussion was held under two titles; the women's perception of the shelter and their positive experiences; and women's negative experiences during their shelter stay. While under the first title, the women's perception of the shelter was discussed in relation to their first impressions of the shelter; expectations from their stay, and their positive experiences at the shelter; under the second title, their negative experiences were analyzed in consideration to the interplay between the specificities; of them; the shelter, and the shelter system in the broader sense.

Empowerment, in a general sense, often addresses members of groups, who have been marginalized and excluded from decision-making processes through discrimination, on the basis of some specific features. In particular, in the context of women's studies, empowerment is a methodology and an essential process in enabling the battered women to break the cycle of violence (Dutton, 1992).

In the context of the FST, empowerment cannot be suggested as a process of giving the women power. Rather, the theory claims that women already have plenty of power due to their privileged standpoint. The theory is rather for the emergence of this power out by the woman's taking a critical standpoint. In this regard, the theory can be suggested as envisioning the significance of structures in empowerment of women, while making the emphasis primarily on the women, as the subjects. In other words, empowerment is the process of obtaining basic opportunities of the marginalized women, either directly by themselves or through the help of structures, that is, the institutions.

In this regard, as an institutionalization of the result of the feminist movement, women's shelters are the basic focus in this study. In the context of shelters, women's empowerment often have connotations, such as; enabling women to have access to resources (Wood & Middelman, 1992); freeing them of their negative self image (Wood & Middelman, 1992); enhancing self-esteem (Tutty, 1996); overcoming the effects of violence; exercising assertiveness; belief in self-initiated change, and helping women developing new skills (Wood & Middelman, 1992). In other words, empowerment aims at women's improving own conditions in order to gain self-sufficiency; that is, eliminating the future need for either welfare institutions or individuals.

In particular, in the case of the Shelter A, the women lacked self-sufficiency in terms of personal resources and this constituted the basic reason for their arrival at the shelter. Likewise, the majority of the women indicated often being dependent on either other individuals or institutions, before their shelter application. Therefore, many pointed out losing self-esteem for being fully self-supporting. In many of the women's narratives, the focus was not only on the disempowering acts of individuals, but also of the institutions.

Shelter experience can provide women with the opportunity to raise collective consciousness and improve their self-esteem by the discovery that they can be assertive. In that sense, women's shelters may serve an option for learning a new lifestyle based on equality. The women can feel freer at shelters than they felt at home, and find out that they share a lot in common with each other. In addition, they can find the opportunity of meeting with other women with whom they would never met otherwise. In that sense, there is room for close friendships during and after the shelter stay.

In the ideal fiction, the shelter residents are expected to gain political awareness by seeing their experiences of violence, for the first time, in a social framework. They are expected to discover that the violence is neither related with their personal failure in marriage nor with the perpetrator's specific profile. Likewise, as the second step, they are expected to discover the collective action with other women as a way out to address the issues in a political way.

However, as also quoted by Gondolf (2005), women's shelters often remain as a kind of 'black box' that women pass through on their way to safer living arrangements. Johnson, Crowley & Sigler (1992) have shown that 33% of the women return to their abusers after shelter stay. The literature suggested that women often return because of economic dependence or psychological commitment (Strube & Barbour, 1983). In another study, focusing on the differences between women, who return to their violent partners and those, who separate from them, Johnson (1992) found that women, who leave shelters and return to their partners, have lower levels of self-esteem than those who stay.

On the other hand, the limited number of studies on service-related predictors suggested that the extent of shelter service with other interventions, such as obtaining legal assistance or court injunction, is also noteworthy (Gondolf, 2005). In this regard, Gondolf (2005) commented that the tendency to separate is also likely to be influenced through specific interventions, such as legal assistance and calling the police that suggest to the batterer that the woman 'means business'.

It has also been argued that shelters do not succeed in preserving or enhancing those feelings of life satisfaction, since shelter staffs focus more on the women's need for financial and legal support, and for physical protection (Hilbert et al. 1997, cited in Ben-Polat & Itzhaky; Sallan Gül, 2011). In another study, in which the researchers aimed to examine the effect of *personal resources* (self-esteem and empowerment)

and *organizational variables* (participation and commitment) to life satisfaction among residents of women's shelters, a comparison was made between the women, who stayed in the shelter for over 3 months, and those, who left the shelter after less than a month and returned to their partners. Among the women, who stayed in the shelter, *personal resources* (self-esteem and empowerment) and *organizational resources* (participation and commitment) contributed to life satisfaction. However, among the women, who left the shelter, commitment was the only resource that contributed to life satisfaction.

Ben-Porat and Itzhaky (2008) suggested that women do not always arrive at the shelters with the desire of leaving the partner; there are also situations in which they arrive at shelters with the aim of just 'taking a break' in the violent relationship, or to 'take revenge' on their partners. In addition, the researchers claimed that since the woman is not in the situation of leaving the relationship, she will not benefit the shelter stay, as a means to enhance her resources and increase her life satisfaction. In this regard, the significance of the woman's self-determination was highlighted, as the effective factor in her using the shelter as a facilitator.

As Ben-Porat and Itzhaky (2008) also drew attention, there were some studies, which focused on the staff's attitude towards the women, who had ambivalent feelings about leaving the abusive men. Baker (1997, cited in Ben-Porat and Itzhaky, 2008) mentions the problematic relationship between professionals and the women, who leave shelters and return to their partners, or alternatively, who choose to remain in an abusive relationship. According to Baker (1997), the dominant scenario among professionals working in the field is one, in which the battered woman needs to leave the abusive relationship immediately. The woman's choice to stay in that relationship, or return to her partner is not often perceived by professionals as a legitimate one. Therefore, there is tension between this group of women and the professionals. However, it should also be noted that this is always not the case. That

is, the professional staff may adopt the mission of preserving the family, rather than considering the rights of the women. Moreover, they may promote the women's return to home. This may be a practice of a strategy adopted by a governmental body, as almost in the case of the SSCPI, in Turkey (Sallan Gül, 2011).

Dekel & Peled (2000) suggested that the women, who leave the shelter due to ambivalent feelings about leaving their violent partner, may also be afraid of the dominant tendency of professionals to encourage leaving abusive relationships. They claimed that these women; come to the shelter with some resistance to the shelter staff; are reluctant to view the shelter as a facilitating factor; are unable to benefit their shelter stay for improving their personal resources and increasing their life satisfaction; are afraid that the professionals and the other women at the shelter would criticize them for ambivalent feelings about leaving their partners, and are also afraid of disappointing the shelter staff and the other women.

Some studies pointed at the presence of gaps between the staff and the women as a barrier against women's empowerment. While Davidson & Jenkins (as cited in Haj-Yahia, & Cohen, 2009) indicated the social and economic gaps between the staff and the women, Hoff (1990, as cited in Haj-Yahia, & Cohen, 2009) found that it was the professional staff's lack of emotional support, and unstructured, ineffective therapeutic groups.

On the other hand, some studies referred to the woman's shelters as an opportunity to challenge abusive relationship, despite the negative aspects. Bowker (1988) found out that 60% of the women in his study evaluated their shelter stay, as considerably successful in ending the violence, at least temporarily. The women also elaborated that participation in therapeutic groups helped them remarkably to improve their self image, and to become more independent. Likewise, a group of women surveyed by Garza (2002, cited in Haj-Yahia & Cohen, 2009) reported that, after staying at a

shelter, their self-image had improved considerably, they felt empowered, and their feelings of depression had been decreased. Moreover, some studies have revealed that residents felt appreciation to shelters -regardless of the social, organizational, and physical conditions of the shelter- for helping save their lives and leave their violent partners (Agnew 1998, cited in Haj-Yahia & Cohen).

### **5.1. Women's Perception of the Shelter and Positive Experiences**

The women's overall evaluation of their shelter stay experience can be suggested as contingent upon the interaction among three basic variables; their subjective experience of violence, the specificities of the shelter, and the specificities of the system network the shelter was connected. Likewise, the women's attributions for the meaning of 'shelter' changed on the basis of these factors.

Depending on the women's narratives, the core meaning of the shelter for women could be suggested as 'a safe place, where their basic needs are met by a group of professional staff for free'. In addition, it could also be suggested that, as women's expectations from their shelter stay were met, their probability of positive evaluation of the shelter increased; and the perceived meaning of the shelter became more complicated for them.

Regarding the expectations expressed in the intake interviews, the majority of the women had told that they wanted to find a job and rent a house after saving some money at the shelter while working. The women, who had been currently in violent relationships either in the marital or the familial context, had told that they wanted to terminate the abusive relationships. In this regard, some indicated their expectations for; getting divorced, taking the children, sending the children to school, and getting better in terms of physical and psychological state. Thus, the majority made an emphasis on 'setting a new life'.

For some women, the shelter was a place that they had been in search for long. One woman pointed out ‘losing time for nothing’ due to the misguidance of some people in her environment about the shelter, as quoted below;

...I have never known that there were such places. They told me; ‘They are taking your child’, and then I erased it [applying to the shelter] from my mind immediately... I haven’t known that there was one in this city.

In her situation, as in some other women’s, the shelter is the place, in which she had the time to work on herself and develop her insights, to gather strength, and to make decisions, in the absence of her partner. In addition, it was also the place, where she got better physically and psychologically. At the end of the first month, she had no more nervous attacks; and also accepted to receive psychiatric (medical) treatment, having gone through her misperceptions with the shelter psychologist. Similar to some others, she had changed her outlook; she uncovered her head. She elaborated that she was not covering her head due to her religious beliefs as people guessed, but because she had felt discomfort due to her hair loss. To make it clear, she used to tear her hair unconsciously during her nervous attacks. Thus, she had primarily focused, with the shelter staff, on improving her well-being, during her shelter stay. In this frame, she had also worked on the issue of ‘womanhood’ with the psychologist. Overall, she had commented on her situation as ‘being empowered’.

Regarding their experience of shelter life, the women often described negative aspects together with the positive aspects. For some, their experiences of shelter promoted their individual growth and provided them with a totally different viewpoint, from which they began to feel valued again. In addition, the rules regulating the communal life at the shelter were insignificant for them. In this regard, some referred the regulations of the shelter as being ‘the requirements of collective living’ and as ‘for their own benefit’.

On the other hand, in the crowded situations of the shelter, while some women experienced distress, some interpreted the situation positively. A 39-year-old woman, who had complained about her husband's indifference at home, commented that she liked the crowded situation of the shelter since she 'could see some human face', after her isolation at home, with her two children. Likewise, another 39-year-old woman responded positively, but by referring to a different context. She indicated that she was often pleased about this situation since she could 'better cope with the feeling of loneliness' and her nervous attacks at that times.

Concerning their first impressions of the shelter upon their arrival, some women summarized their experience with words such as; fear, anxiety and distress. It could be suggested that several factors such as; their subjective experience of violence; previous shelter experience; the way they had been brought to the shelter, and the physical structure of the shelter were likely to be influential on their first impressions. Some women also pointed out the nonexistence of their children, as the basic negative aspect they had considered, upon their arrival at the shelter.

Some women referred to the differences among the women as a source of problem in some situations, however they evaluated the shelter life positively overall. Besides, some described the shelter as a 'pill' for their problems. One 35-year-old woman believed that the shelter provided her with solutions in many spheres of life. In particular, she referred to the situation she had realized her ex-husband's sexual assault against her oldest daughter, during her shelter stay, as follows;

You know, I had a new marriage. I couldn't fit my daughters into my husband's place, forget about that, their father didn't call or ask of them for years. The children go through... well, you know, I told you about it earlier, the sexual thing situation... so, what could we do now, if we had no place like this? Very hurtful things could have happened, I think... I have been in this city for years, I never knew there was a women's shelter like this and I truly much regret... I spent two years with the girls; if I had known there is a place like this, and comfortable as this much...

It's you in the first place... Then I would have come before, if I had known about it. I would have come without hesitating.

As some other women did, she also positioned some staff differently from the others, as cited above. On the whole, she perceived the shelter as a 'comfortable and beautiful' environment. In addition, she valued the presence of the shelter significantly since she had learnt about the sexual assault of her ex-husband against her eldest daughter through the intervention of the shelter director.

On the other hand, some women evaluated their shelter experience without referring to any negative aspects. A 34-year-old woman remarked on her life at the shelter as highly encouraging; she mentioned the feelings of intimacy, security, and love. She made no reference to any tensions with the other residents or the staff. Rather, she described the professional staff as 'her angels' and called the other residents as 'friends'. She described the atmosphere as hearty, which surprised and impressed her at first. In addition, she indicated that the shelter set no restrictions; rather she pointed out enjoying the freedom the shelter life presented her. She described the shelter as a place giving her strength to 'stand on her own feet'. Besides, she perceived her arrival at the shelter as a turning point in her life.

Some women pointed out their reformation of intimate relationships with some family members or distant relatives. In addition, some indicated receiving their support, and remarked on their support as highly encouraging, during their shelter. Moreover, for some, the positive evaluation of shelter life, by their children, added to their positive perception of their stay. A 36-year-old woman commented on the feelings of her three daughters about the shelter, particularly in reference to their remarks upon their arrival, as below;

They are so happy, because they got free of him [her husband]. You cannot guess how much... 'Mummy, we are seeing the ways of life which we had never seen before', they say... May God bless you all. They eat

and drink, well, God bless you. They are so happy and cheerful... 'Mother, we would kill ourselves, if you turn back to our father', my daughters say. 'Never turn back to father', they say... They say; 'we would kill ourselves by either poison or pills'. They say; 'mother never turn back to that man, or make us turn back...'

As quoted above, like some women, she also pointed at the 'goodness' of some shelter staff, rather than framing the shelter service in an institutional, professional context. On the other hand, some women commented on their shelter stay, in relation to their previous shelter experiences. A 23-year-old woman elaborated that she was pleased with the atmosphere in general, since 'it was more alike a house', as below;

... I am very pleased here, even compared with the other place [previous shelter]. Well, Miss Sermin [the director of the previous shelter], really God bless her, she took care of us exceptionally well. However, despite the good management of that place, here is more of a home; we are treated even better here, well, I mean... We are not feeling like we are in shelter at all... I am highly satisfied here; I mean it's very nice...

In this regard, during a talk with two women activists in the field, another resident described the daily life at the shelter as below;

We [other residents and her] have a normal life during the day. I mean we live even more of a *normal* life. Our [her children's and her] life was restricted previously, I can say... Now we are having even a better life, I mean that we can... Upon our departure from there [her hometown], from now on, I mean... I am looking for a job; I had never worked before. However, I worked here; I started to work after I came to this city. I can't quite know, but I am trying to get over myself, let me see... (laughing) But, I think I can do it with God willing... thinking about renting a new house, to be with my children... thinking on this plan... (laughing)

In addition, she pointed out a process self discovery, and attributed this process to her shelter stay. She elaborated that the staff and the other women helped her satisfy her emotional needs through their support and realize different ways of life.

Moreover, some women referred to their evaluation of 'self' and the 'womanhood' during their shelter stay. In particular, they indicated questioning self in relation to

being; an individual; a woman; a housewife, and a mother. Referring to her situation prior to shelter stay, a 39 years old woman had once told that, apart from feeling like a 'woman', she had not even felt like a 'human being'. In particular, she had pointed out her distress for doing the same stuff -making shakedowns, washing the dishes, doing the laundry and ironing, and the like- every day, in comparison to her partner's position, as quoted below;

... Think about it; I am doing the same stuff in a house every single day... He will [her partner] wander around, I will serve at home? I can't be his slave! I do want to live, too...

Another woman, who was 33-years-old, who had once asked the shelter staff to find 'a suitable candidate to marry', commented on the change in herself, in comparison to her younger sister's situation. After her one-week stay with her sister, who was living with a man by religious act in another city, she remarked that she was disappointed at her sister's 'passive life' under a religious act; and that she had almost no realization about her 'individuality' and rights, although she was of higher education, attending to one of the best universities in the country.

On the other hand, for some women, the shelter was the place, where they found the opportunity to reflect on themselves in relation to their experiences of violence. In this regard, one woman commented that despite all troubles (particularly referring her partner's infidelity), she felt like she was 'the victorious' since she had done nothing immoral; thus, she kept her 'forehead clean'. As in her case, the women felt the need to question themselves with respect to the moral practices imposed by the society. For some women, who evaluated their practices as 'immoral', the shelter stay was more painful, despite the professional staff's and the other residents' taking sides with them. In my opinion, at this point, the significance of a feminist consciousness became salient.

Likewise, another 36-year-old woman reflected on her violence experience in relation to her individual resources. In this respect, she commented on the role of women's education in the context of challenging DV. She remarked on education as a protective factor as long as women would benefit from it for employed. At this point, she elaborated on her own experience as below;

It's not the education, Miss Miray... education... of course, if there is a job, it depends on financials... As I hear, and understand about education, okay we [her two ex-husbands and her] are not educated, but my aunt's children all are; they have some positions. I mean let them be police, or something else... plus the rumor is there is more beating. However, when it comes to financials; neither beauty, nor character, nothing is looked for! When the financial situation of the woman is better, the man flatters her extremely. This is all it's about! This is my issue, when at Oya's [her younger daughter] father, with Ayşe [her older daughter]. My mother's situation was remarkably good. He kept screwing money... and when he couldn't, he was tormenting me; when he could, I was kept in very nicely... I saw all these...

For her, the women, who had higher education and were in employment might also experience violence, but they could successfully manage to end it, before being much burned-out and without the fear of 'being out in the cold'. In this respect, she underlined the difference between the women, who had higher education, and who did not, by calling 'us' and 'them'. She also noted that that the group she identified herself with, less educated women, outnumbered the other. However, she commented that, despite her poor situation, she had never felt like staying in a violent relationship for long; but what kept her for some long time in her current marriage was her concern for other people; their 'Did she separate again?' kind of probable responses. In this regard, she also remarked that the women shelter staff would not live violence either in the family or marriage; but they could experience it out since 'there are lots of bloody-minded people' outside. At that point, she noted that she had never experienced violence outside, on the basis of her sexual identity; but added that 'if she is in a poor state', a woman may experience. She referred to her violence experience with a woman employer, just before her arrival at the shelter; but she did

not regard it as a 'gendered' one. In reference to this experience, she also pointed out her personal transformation through her shelter stay, in that she had adopted a new way of thinking, which was liberating and empowering.

Similarly, another woman commented on the constraints present in other women's situations and referred to her own 'enlightenment' through the support of the local women's association in her hometown, as below;

The woman never has a right... whether she is tortured, whether killed; no one cares what happens to her; like slavery... However, the woman cannot say a word... What happens to me is nothing, Sister. There is a lot around me, that isn't brought up yet, that I see, I witness. So many cases... there is a lot. They can't complain... They can't dare... There are so many women, who don't know what to do, subjected to torture. Very close to me, even in my family, there are a lot of them... [...] Thanks to them; they opened my eyes, *City B Women's Association* did. I mean, when I met them, spoke to them, they said 'no, nothing, you are not obliged to anything... since you are subject to domestic violence, nothing...'

Likewise, one woman elaborated on her realizations regarding her relationship with her husband as follows;

...After I left home, he already doesn't expect such a thing [the divorce case] from me; 'you cannot do this, you cannot do that...' He sees me as nothing! I am someone accepting everything, saying aye aye, according to him. He thinks I would be like fish out of water and I would die, if I'm not with him. I don't accept this, because... He thinks I can't live without him after I get divorced. Actually I have looked around, and I saw that -excuse my language- I had actually been like an animal with blinder on her eyes!

As quoted below, like some other women, she also told that she had felt like 'an animal with blinder on her eyes', emphasizing her weak-willed situation in the relationship with her husband. However, as the other women in the study, she had

challenged her situation by leaving the relationship and coming to the Shelter A, in order to value her self-worth again.

## **5.2. Women's Negative Experiences at the Shelter A**

Despite their principles, goals and services defined with the aim of empowering battered women, women's shelters may not always function perfectly in line with their basis of establishment. In this respect, as mentioned before, I claimed that the interplay between the specificities of; the women; the shelter, and the local and the national system the shelter is connected are determinative, and underestimation of one of these variables will result in an analysis, which falls short of reality and has poor policy-implications.

In my opinion, the concessions given up from the feminist principles and goals of a shelter mean losing from the ground of women's empowerment, in the long run. However, for me, the negative experiences of the women at the shelters may not always stem from institutional constrains; yet the constrains may intensify the trouble experienced, when combined with the women's specificities.

Below, the negative experiences of the women during their shelter stay were discussed briefly, by focusing on the individual cases, under the following titles; re-victimization through the cracks in the system, victimization by another woman at the shelter, the perception of male children as a source of problem, departure from the shelter due to violation of rules, and learning about deaths of the intimates.

*Re-victimization through the cracks in the system:* Despite my testimony for a remarkable number of situations, in which some women were victimized due to certain institutional practices, I will refer to a case of a woman due to space limitations in this study. The case was highlighting in the sense that it demonstrated;

how a neglect of the running institution, in terms of establishing cooperative relations with local supporting mechanisms through binding contracts, and the lack of an independent controlling mechanism in the system could result in re-victimization of some women during their shelter stay.

In the first year of the Shelter A, despite the demand of the shelter staff, there was neither a full/part time lawyer employed for the shelter work, nor an agreement with the Bar. Therefore, by personal effort, the shelter staff contacted with the Women's Rights Commission of the Bar. The chair indicated that the commission would serve kindly. A few months after the contact, one woman lawyer from the commission came to the shelter for legal-aid, and gave a letter to a resident, telling that she knew about neither her case nor her partner; but she got the letter from one client, who knew her partner. The following week, a statement of claim, which was written by the woman lawyer and included antagonizing information about the woman, came to the municipality. Thus, it was revealed that she was the lawyer of the woman's partner in fact. Upon her unethical conduct, the shelter director contacted with the chair. However, despite the well-intentioned promises, none of the parties took action; neither the Bar nor the municipality. Therefore, the shelter's cooperation with the Bar was suspended, for almost one year, till the administration of the Bar changed.

Besides, in the situation of the same woman, just before her departure from the shelter, her place was disclosed by her records at the hospital. When the shelter staff contacted with the local health authority, they were told that the records of the patients were 'confidential' and no information was given to a third party; but a staff might have revealed the information. Later, the woman told the shelter staff that her brother knew the majority of the doctors at that hospital. Similarly, no inquiry was conducted by neither the local health authority nor the hospital.

The woman commented that, the lawyer's incriminating statement of claim, and her brother's arrival at the shelter, after the disclosure of her place, made things difficult for her. However, beyond her anxiety, she pointed out her realization that she was empowered in the sense that she could cope with the consequences of these negative events; and she stated smiling; 'Normally, I would go into a coma; but I did not ...'. At this point, it is also noteworthy to call attention to the results of these negative events on the side of the shelter as a total institution; the shelter administration had grudgingly suspended its relations with the commission of the bar for some time, and acted tentatively in its relations with the hospital. Thus, the shelter lost from its quality of service for definite time in that; the service of legal assistance was withdrawn and the duration of some administrative procedures in each woman's case lengthened.

*Victimization by another woman at the shelter:* Although they can be suggested as inconsiderable when expressed in numbers, there existed situations, in which some women were victimized by other residents during their shelter stay. While verbal abuse and psychological violence by another resident were at issue in some women's situations; in some, burglary came into the picture. In this regard, the case of a 33-year-old woman will be elaborated. It was her seventh month at the shelter, when another woman had run away with all of her savings. In particular, it was exactly when she had just quitted working, after 7 months of hard work, under poor working conditions, in a factory, and money saving. She had been friends with the other woman; thus, she had surrendered her money to the woman. However, she had left the shelter taking all of her money, surprising all the other residents and the staff. Yet, similar to the response of the woman mentioned above, the woman indicated that she was not discouraged. She commented that nothing could make her feel down since she had already achieved to work outside, for the first time in her life, upon her arrival at the shelter; thus, she could work and save again.

*The perception of male children as a source of problem by other women at the shelter:* Apart from the problematic situation of women with their over-12-year-old sons upon shelter admissions, the issue of male children came up in a different context during some women's shelter stay. Some women pointed out the *sex* of the male children as a source of 'discomfort' for themselves. In this regard, one woman pointed out that the presence of another woman's son, who was aged 10, was the most bothersome problem at the shelter. She complained that although she was aware that he was a little child, she could not help herself from feeling extreme discomfort when he was around, because 'in the end he is a male'.

On the other hand, having lived traumatic experiences, some women remarked on their worries regarding sexual abuse of their daughters by male children at the shelter. Besides, some of them even attempted to forbidden their daughters' play with the sons of other residents, which resulted in tensions not only between the women, but also among the children at the shelter.

*Departure from the shelter due to violation of rules:* Considering the constrains specific to each woman's case, violation of *some* rules were 'tolerated' in some situations by the shelter staff. However, there were also some situations which could not be compensated by the intervention of the shelter staff. In this regard, a woman's exercise of violence against another woman/child at the shelter and disclosure of the shelter address were the two situations not to be tolerated. Yet, alternatives were provided to the women upon asking them for departure, as in the case of a 36-year-old woman. Despite accepting the rule of confidentiality on her admission to the shelter, she contacted with her 17-year-old son during her stay at the hospital, and revealed the address of the shelter. In addition, she asked the staff if her son could also stay at the shelter with her. Since her request was inapplicable in the context of the shelter regulations, she was asked to leave the shelter. At this point, she was

provided with the alternative of moving to the house pre-arranged by the staff. However, she decided to go with her son to their hometown, and left the shelter.

*Learning about the deaths of the intimates:* Beyond the traumatic experiences of violence, some women had to cope with other painful situations during their shelter stay. Among these, learning about the death of an intimate person was the situation, which could be suggested as affecting the overall experience of a woman's shelter stay in some cases, as in the situation of a 36-year-old woman. It was her first day at the shelter upon her transference from another shelter, when she learnt that her father had died a few days ago, through her brother's call. Among all the residents, she was the only woman, who could not attend the funeral of a loved one during her shelter stay. In this regard, apart from her loss, having been unable to do her 'last duty for' her father was a 'burden' for her, as once she had expressed. Since she perceived the situation in relation to her decision to leave her husband, it was more oppressive. In addition, the loss of her husband symbolized the loss of the most encouraging source of support in her situation, as she had remarked. She elaborated that it was her father, who had always provided her with the *unconditional* support upon her previous attempts to quit the relationship with her abusive husband.

As discussed above, while the negative experiences of some women during their shelter stay stemmed from the specificities of their own situation, in others the constrains specific to the Shelter A, or to the general system women's shelters are connected to in Turkey were at work. Therefore, studying the women's narratives, regardless of the specificities of the women, the shelter and the whole system that the shelters are linked in Turkey, would be short of reality.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed at the analysis of women's shelters in the context of the FST, by focusing on a case in Turkey. It studied the women's subjective experience of DV and shelter stay, with a focus on their specificities. In addition, an analysis of the structure of a women's shelter and the system the shelters are linked in Turkey, was elaborated from the perspective of FST. The extent of empowerment attainable within existing rigid structures of institutions was questioned through participatory research method. Since I had been employed at the Shelter A, there was also the point of a shelter staff, apart from the perspectives of the women, who were the main subjects of this study.

The findings suggested that the subjective experiences of the women are not wholly understandable under a fixed womanhood categorization of 'gender'. Rather, they are mostly underestimated in the existing system of institutions. In addition, the constraints specific to each woman's case combined with the *rigid* structural practices in the aftermath of violence entrap many women in situations difficult to escape. In this regard, the findings also suggest that the 'mediating role' of the structures and individuals are disempowering for the women.

At this point, the significance of increasing the *flexibility* of structures and, thus, empowering their subjects was highlighted. In this respect, the interventions should focus on a mind shift and an adoption of an empowering strategy, that is; the women should be provided with the services and resources they need. In addition, the specificities of women should be handled in an atmosphere, which will enable these different voices to emerge, so that women's shelters would have no more connotations regarding 'disempowerment', as discussed in this study. However, the

interventions should not be limited to ‘listening’ to different voices of women, but also should create a room for women’s participation in formulating policies and making decisions about the shelter life, during their stay.

With regard to the adoption of FST in this study, the basic reasons were; its critic of the gender concept; its focus on the subjects while not disregarding the role of structures, and its enabling of political action while criticizing the modernist feminist theories, by staying within the modernism. In this respect, my theoretical assumption was that the *gender dualism* cannot explain the complexity and irregularity of the women’s reality; and as there was more room for subjectivities of the women to emerge in the structures, there would be more room for women’s empowerment in the context of women’s shelters.

In order to address the specificities of women in this study, the women’s subjective experiences of violence and shelter stay were addressed, with a specific focus on the *difference*. Besides, to understand the context the women’s specificities were at work, the structure of the Shelter A was also examined. The analysis of the structure and subjects was studied in relation to the concepts -such as; *situation, position, context, contingency, reflexivity, constrain, location, condition* and *relativity*- of the FST.

### **6.1. Limitations of the Study**

The complexity of the women’s realities in relation to their experiences of violence and their shelter stay; the position of the researcher in the study; the nature of qualitative research, as well as the complexity of the Feminist Standpoint Theory posed a range of difficulties and some limitations related to the research method and analysis of the study. In this respect, the limitations of the study were discussed in

relation to the research method, the analysis and the theoretical framework, as follows;

**The research method:** The study was based on a phenomenological perspective. In this respect, my interpretation determined the relative significance and emphases given to the various issues and findings in the study. Therefore, my personal views may have influenced the research process; from the research question formulation to the analysis of the study.

The second source of a potential bias is related with my position, as the researcher. That is, I was in the position of an ‘outsider-within’; I had worked at the Shelter A for more than four years. While this might have provided richness in terms of information for the study; it might have also posed biases, due to my control over the data, either ‘consciously’ or unconsciously. In particular, it could be claimed that my position was a pressuring factor in women’s reveal since I was a ‘staff’ of the shelter, who was in the position of ‘authority’. However, it could also be suggested that my position of being the shelter *psychologist* encouraged the women’s sincere reveal more easily; and it was enriching in that; it provided me with the opportunity to interact with the majority of the subjects several times, and also the opportunity to observe and actively participate to the life at a women’s shelter. Therefore, the dynamic nature of the shelter life was portrayed; rather than making speculative assumptions after one-time data-collection, as it has been done by several studies in the literature.

A third possible limitation is the wide range of information gathered. Since I did not collect the data used in this study, with a specific research question in mind, the organization of the wide range of information was hard to manage. Therefore, there may be a potential bias in the selection of the salient themes for the study.

**The analysis:** Since the data was gathered throughout the normal flow of the shelter work, the study posed no additional emotional burden for the subjects. However, for me, as the researcher, a different situation was at issue. Apart from listening and actively role taking in challenging the painful experiences of the women through the time I had worked at the shelter, I had to go over the tape-scripts, reports, notes, and my own reflections several times for the analysis of the study. Thus, the analysis process was an emotionally tough experience for me since it meant; recall of painful memories; self-criticism, and oppressive feelings for the frustrated times due to the constraints in the context. In this respect, my 'auto-control' in order to prevent going deeper in the analysis could be at issue, as a bias in the study.

**Theoretical framework:** The Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST), which constituted the ground of this study, was criticized by some scholars. Ecevit (2011, p.50) pointed out the main counter-arguments against the theory as follows; the issue that which subjectivities are influential and how they are, is still a methodological and epistemological problem; the researchers' inquiry of what they 'want to find out' and their response to the criticisms by using their own values can lead to orientation in the research; epistemological privilege in knowledge production is problematic; the validity of the claim that the knowledge of people having a standpoint is more realist than that of ordinary people is controversial; the knowledge- which is multiple, partial, conditional, and positional- does not have a theoretical guarantee of reflecting the reality; with whom to act together, who will be empowered and to whom to give an account are not clear; and the relationship between knowledge and power is controversial.

In this respect, while some scholars suggested that these approaches are influenced by the weaknesses of the modernity, some indicated the limitations of the analogy, referring to the Marxist Theory (New, 1998). However, contrary to the critics directed, many other scholars remarked on the theory as worthy of serious

consideration, since it challenges the key presumptions about science, with respect to epistemology and objectivity (Pinnick, 2008). In addition, its argument that women's experiences offer a different and even better perspective of the world - Smith's idea of 'situated knowledges', which are socially and historically located- is among the strengths of the theory (Smith, 1974 as cited in Mauthner, 2000). Likewise, its acceptance and recognition of other 'silenced' standpoints, such as black feminist and lesbian epistemologies is worth of consideration (Stanley & Wise, as cited in Mauthner, 2000).

Examining women's standpoints provides us with the opportunity to see the ways, in which hierarchical power relations work, rather than viewing these relations through the privileged lens of men, or those in power (Martin, 2001). In other words, the theory enabled us to question the existing system of relations and to consider the experiences of the marginalized; thus, it presented a way to recognize both individual and socio-cultural assumptions and biases and prepared the ground for change in the society (Swigonski, 1994). Swigonski (1994) also noted that a standpoint approach is a powerful research tool for one's reality vision and insurance that research does not result in further victimization/oppression of the subjects. Furthermore, Pinnick (2008) indicated that feminist standpoint is another way of expressing the basic idea that women would make prominent and unique contributions to science and to the way we make sense of it.

## **6.2. Salient Themes through the Women's Narratives**

Apart from the limitations that became salient throughout the study, there were also issues that emerged from the narratives of women and attracted my attention, as the researcher. I tried to highlight these issues, as below, under the following titles; *the women's criticisms for the state bodies; the women's perception of positive improvements in the field through the years in Turkey; the problematic relationship*

*between the shelter staff and women in terms of 'authority', and the hoarse voice of women in the existing system.*

*First*, through many of the women's narratives, there was the *criticism for the state bodies*; either it was overt or covert. With regard to the issue, there was an immense paper-work in the field, which focused on the discussion of the governmental bodies' roles in combating DV against women, both at the national and international level. The women's movement realized the significance of the state's role in the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave feminism, envisioning that the state has the power in achieving thorough changes in society through policy-making and amendments in laws, as regards to promoting women's rights (McMillan, 2007). However, the feminist organizations also discovered the contradictory position of the state, that is; its potential position for abusing rights; but also for lessening women's oppression and for funding for women's organizations (McMillan, 2007). In this regard, Charles (2000) suggested that the state was shaped by the social movements, while it provided the political framework from which social movements came into existence. Additionally, in line with the feminist standpoint approach, some scholars drew attention for the heterogeneous situation of the state as a whole institution; referring to the specificities of the governmental bodies and the distinctiveness of the local conditions (Margolis, 1993).

Similar to the situation of the feminist movement before the state, the women at the Shelter A took complex positions in some situations; that is, they attempted to challenge the practices of one state body while staying in another. In this regard, the women's narratives also revealed the issue of 'distrust' for some institutions. In particular, some women, who had previous shelter experiences, elaborated their negative attitudes towards the SSCPI. Among them, while some indicated 'forced mediating attempts' of the shelter staff; some commented that they would prefer to stay out in the streets rather than going there; and, even, some told about leaving the

shelter and staying out in order to cover their tracks, due to their distrust for that institution. Here, it is noteworthy to call attention to the concerns of many of these women upon their arrivals at the Shelter A; they had asked the staff ‘Will you *also* inform my family/partner?’. In addition, some women pointed out the negative attitude and behavior of some shelter staff. In this regard, one 28-year-old woman reflected on her departure from a women’s shelter run by the SSCPI, as follows;

...We couldn’t get along with friends [other residents]... Lady manager was insulting, abusing... I was misunderstood, when I left to look for a job... That place tried to send me away. ‘Ebru, why did you come here?’, they [shelter staff] said.

Likewise, another 32-year-old woman remarked on her departure as below;

No guidance; like slaves... They [the shelter staff] make you do the work there [at the shelter]; everyday at half past six, the garden is cleaned... I surrendered; because I had to, not to be left out on the street... This is unfair...

On the other hand, some women indicated disempowering attempts by the staff in some of the women’s shelters, which were run by the municipalities. In this regard, one 23-year-old woman, who had a 3-months-old baby in a dating relationship, elaborated that the shelter staffs arranged a marriage for her, during her pregnancy at the shelter, in order to ‘solve the problem’. Emphasizing the attempt of the shelter director and the security personnel in particular, she reflected her ‘disappointment’ afterwards, as below;

We had a security, such a sister there. As I didn’t have a place to go, we were chatting with Miss Sermin [the shelter director], as I was always like this... I mean I wanted to marry and have a home, or I wanted to give the child for adoption. And they [the director and the security staff] made me that offer, so that I don’t get separated from my child... And I said, okay, let’s have a look, you know, I would want to marry if it works, I said... I also wanted to have a home, tired of hanging around here and

there... Also because my child was hurt, his needs were not met... Home, home, as I was missing the family environment I accepted such offer. Afterwards, two or three people, you know, I think it was Thursday he [the man the staff found for marriage] came in the afternoon with Miss Sermin. They came and we met at the women's shelter. [...] The following two days, a couple of days, he never called, never answered the phone. He didn't even answer Miss Sermin's call. A couple of days later, he said he was going to come in a couple of days later, that he wanted to come... He took the identity card when he arrived, he said we would start marriage procedures. He came with his brother-in-law. He took the identity card, this time he didn't answer the phones again. He kept texting me saying he had family problems, asked for understanding. I showed all these messages to Miss Sermin. She said this wouldn't work. He didn't call at all the day he took the identity card. To take back the identity card, that security sister of ours texted him, because otherwise he doesn't answer the calls. We even accessed his home address; his phone numbers, his brothers' phone numbers... They sent back the identity card when we said that we would send the police to his house... He sent the identity card with cargo...[...] fancying, loving, liking... this way... As I just said, because I was missing the family environment, and not be separated from my child... That's how I agreed to marry... and also thanks to Miss Sermin, you know, to prevent that I get on the streets, you know to avoid others to hustle, they helped me in this way, but the person turned out irresponsible...

The situation quoted above could be suggested as a precise example of disempowering practices in the field, in Turkey. It provoked many questions with regard to; the professionalism of the shelter staff; the perception and the likelihood of women's empowerment in a shelter; the absence of a controlling mechanism for the practices of shelter staff; the staff's feminist consciousness; the staff's internalization of basic shelter principles such as confidentiality; the staff's ethical responsibilities in their relationships with the women, and the women's perception of the mediating role of the shelter staff. In particular, as Sallan Gül (2011) revealed in her study, such kind of disempowering mediating practices are far from being exceptional in the field of shelter work, in Turkey.

On the other part, referring to their past re-victimizations, some women declared their distrust and reluctance for asking support from the detective forces and the legal system. In this regard, they elaborated the blaming attitudes and lengthy procedures they had experienced before. In addition, upon learning about their legal rights in the process of divorce; even, some of them expressed their concerns for taking care of their husbands if they would have a jail sentence due to the violence against them. It is noteworthy that disbelief in the legal system was also salient through the narratives of many women, who had been interviewed for just psychological support, rather than for the shelter application.

Likewise, the issue of distrust within institutions, in some situations, was also among the remarkable issues that emerged from the women's narratives, as in one case, in which a shelter director sent the documents of a woman to another shelter by fax, from a stationery outside, since she did not trust her colleagues regarding confidentiality.

As *second*, on the contrary to the negative experiences depicted above, some women elaborated their *perceptions of improvements in the field* in the recent years. In this regard, a 35-year-old woman pointed out her appreciation regarding the lately improvements in the field of women's rights and services in Turkey, in comparison with her experiences, as below;

... I even told the Lawyer Lady the other day, thank you, I said. Years ago in my time I said, when I got divorced -ladies had not accepted- they used to write 'widow' on the identity cards. I said, I don't know those, but I saw that thing, I saw a 'miracle' (!) as such; thereafter the woman pays maintenance to the man, again in my time, in the same period, I experienced that! And we went to the lawyer. The lawyer said, you pay the man maintenance; I was only 22 by then. I am going back to my mother's house with three kids; I was to pay maintenance to my husband. It was such a crap what that lawyer said! I would have answered her, if she had told me that at this moment. At that date, I was coy, so I missed it. If the woman is working under social security, and the man does not

work, at that date they said the woman would have to pay maintenance, give property and so. It is rubbish what he said, yes, he said that!

In the case of the woman quoted above, although she was told about paying maintenance for her husband upon the divorce when she was 22; at the age of 36, she had received a significant amount of compensation from her second husband at the end of the divorce lawsuit, which she had opened during her shelter stay. In this respect, the amendments in laws and the mind shifts of practitioners in the field are all significant to ensure better experiences for women before the legal system.

As *third*, there comes the issue of the *problematic relationship between the shelter staff and women in terms of 'authority'*, in some situations. Whether it was due to the authority of the shelter staff as a pressuring factor, or to the women's excessive dependency on the shelter staff; I had observed and experienced that some women had developed perceptions, which sometimes ended with their passivity in the situation. In this respect, regarding the services they had during their previous shelter stays, some women indicated that they acted that way because the shelter manager 'preferred it like that'. When asked whether she had attempted to sue for divorce during her 4-months-of previous shelter stay in her hometown, one woman reflected as below;

We didn't open, really, we never did. I mean I couldn't open... when it turned comfortable, I guess. I stayed there. We tried to open in the women's shelter once. They [shelter staff] didn't mention it either later. Miss Elmas [the shelter director] didn't say, so we didn't open... I indeed want it, I mean immediately. For God's sake, please, you wouldn't believe how happy I would be if I got divorced right this minute, right here... Oh she would say, if we didn't open the case... I told Miss Elmas, told her to open, said to her, let's try it one more time. So, I don't know, if she did open or not. Never, she would have taken me, I guess... Miss Elmas is our manager.

As in the case of the woman quoted above, some women did not know, even, if they had sued for divorce or not during their previous shelter stays. At this juncture, one may speculate that women are reluctant to take responsibility. However, one should be cautious at the point of interpretation, since a victim-blaming attitude could easily be adopted by the ‘knower’, at the first sight. In this respect, studies with a particular focus on the formation of the relationship between the staff and residents, which consider the issue of authority, are needed.

On the other part, the majority of the women, who commented on the services they had benefitted in their previous shelter stays, made an emphasis on individual staff’s goodness, rather than the institution. Besides, they evaluated the services as the individual staff’s ‘favor’, rather than a social right the governmental bodies should provide women with. Likewise, the transference of the women’s problems among the shelters is another issue, which became salient. Here, I can speculate that; the complexity of the problems of the women; the competence of the shelter staff; the specificities of the shelter and the local network system the shelter is connected; and the burn-out of the staff may be at work. Yet, the issue needs to be considered in further studies.

As the *fourth*, the issue of *the ‘hoarse’ voice of women in the shelter system* can be suggested as an alarming issue in Turkey. Within the shelter system, even if the women are portrayed as the ‘subjects’ of the structures in theory; it could be suggested that, they are often disregarded in practice by the governmental bodies in Turkey. As also highlighted by the results of the study carried out by Sallan Gül (2011), the focus was often on the ‘union of the family’, rather than the women’s concerns.

On the way to women’s empowerment within the shelter system in Turkey, the transformation of the shelters run by the governmental bodies, in terms of being more flexible, is of higher significance. Otherwise, the women’s voices would be

often muted by the official milieu. In this regard, participation of the survivor women in the shelter management could be suggested as an alternative way. Despite the 'representation' problem in these committees, as also suggested by Hague and Mullender (2005), the women's 'voices still fill a gap which professionals cannot plug and, arguably, it is unrealistic to expect complete representation' (p.157); and, depending on the specificities of the local conditions, 'there is no one way of consulting and involving DV survivors'.

My practical experience in the field made me suggest that, although the women's shelters are conceptualized as effective in women's politicization regarding feminist principles in theory, most of them are far from, or quite limited, in achieving this goal in practice, in Turkey. In particular, the women's shelters run either by the central government, or the local authorities, seem to be weak in terms of having a feminist character. However, despite their present constraints in practice, each shelter holds a significant position in the society, regarding its potential ground for women's empowerment. In the simplest sense, women's shelters are expected to transform the consciousness of womanhood, which is often limited to the perceptions of *motherhood*, *sexuality* and *domestic labor* in the family context. In this regard, a liberating atmosphere of a shelter can contribute to the enrichment of the concepts of 'being a woman' in the lives of women.

In line with the feminist considerations, the inquiry of 'being a woman' is central for the women's empowerment in the context of shelters. However, most of women in this study elaborated their expectations of empowerment, during their shelter stay, in reference to their expectations of employment. Likewise, the majority pointed out the protective aspect of the shelter. Thus, they primarily perceived the shelter as an institutionalization of the government in terms of social service provision, rather than seeing it as a gain of the feminist movement, for the liberation and empowerment of women. In this respect, there is need for more effective policies, which will build

bridges between the activists, professionals and the researchers, in Turkey. As indicated by Schechter (1988, p.311) researchers, grass roots activists and professionals 'have much to offer each other if trust can be built between them'.

Besides the constraints of each individual shelter in a city and their need for institutionalization in an effective way, the efficacy of the network they are linked at the local level, and the legal baseline at the national level, is also of high significance. Ideally, women's shelters are institutionalizations, which facilitate other institutions to act for the battered women. That is, in almost each woman's case, there are returns to other 'supporting' systems such as the legal system, social assistance system and detective forces. Thus, one can have the opportunity of seeing a whole picture of the system from a position in a women's shelter. However, a picture, which is fragmented in terms of women's empowerment, is often at issue in the context of women's shelters in Turkey. As in the case of this study, there are a variety of issues tried to be handled in women's shelters, in the present system in Turkey. For instance, while the employment of women should be dealt within the system of social policy of the government at a higher level, women's shelters often make intensive efforts to find solutions in each woman's cases. In this respect, women's shelters should be liberated from the responsibilities they have for long been carrying on their shoulders, by adaptation of new regulations by the government; so that there can be a room for doing feminist politics in the context of women's shelters. At this juncture, the employment and sustainable training of staff, who will work with feminist principles, is also of high significance.

The study attempted to highlight that there is need for; development of effective local plans regarding combating DV against women; specialization of shelters (e.g. emergency shelters, transitional shelters, and alike); development of a system for post-shelter services; sustainable and adequately financed services at shelters and advocacy programs in the local networks; free child-care services funded by the local

and central authorities; more awareness-campaigns both at the local and national level; interventions for the compensation of the existing legal loopholes; acknowledgment of continuing good practices, and institutionalization of good practices of individuals in the field; specialized services for refugee women, women with disabilities, lesbians and older women, and institutionalization of an independent, non-governmental, non-profit controlling mechanism in the shelter system, in Turkey.

As indicated by many women in this study, women's shelters save lives. However, once a life is saved, women need sustainable, high-quality, non-judgemental and empowering support on their way to an independent life, that is free from violence.

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