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STEPPING INTO A NEW STRUGGLE: LOW-SES DIVORCED SINGLE  
MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO FAMILY RESOURCES  
AND SOCIAL POLICIES IN TURKEY

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AND SOCIAL POLICIES IN TURKEY

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **STEPPING INTO A NEW STRUGGLE: LOW-SES DIVORCED SINGLE MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO FAMILY RESOURCES AND SOCIAL POLICIES IN TURKEY**

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As they are consistently defined as one of the most vulnerable social groups, this study aimed to explore low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers' pre- and post-divorce cultural, social and financial family resources to understand whether Turkey's social policies based on gender egalitarian norms and whether they encourage women to form and maintain an autonomous household. In line with these objectives, by using a qualitative research design, twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with low income divorced single mothers who have at least one dependent child and living in Ankara. Mothers' answers to semi-structured interview questions revealed that Turkey's social policies are highly inadequate even for the most vulnerable social group to be able to maintain a living in minimum standards. Although mothers stated that they enjoy the freedom in the post-divorce period, want to stand on their own feet and to have their own autonomous households, it is found out that familialist nature of Turkey's social policies prevent them from doing so and make them even more vulnerable. Findings are discussed in

light of the gender analysis of social policy literature and social policy recommendations are made based on participants' own perception of autonomy and the demands for assistance. At the end, social policy recommendations were to provide; (1) informed legal process, (2) guaranteed alimony and compensation payment, (3) safer litigation process, (4) public childcare facilities, (5) income and job security, (6) basic income by targeting divorced single mothers living with dependent children.

**Keywords:** Social Policy, Welfare State, Divorce, Single Mother, Familialism

## ÖZ

### YENİ BİR MÜCADELEYE ATILAN ADIM: DÜŞÜK SOSYO-EKONOMİK SEVİYEDEKİ BOŞANMIŞ BEKÂR ANNELERİN DENEYİMLERİNİN AİLE KAYNAKLARI VE TÜRKİYE’NİN SOSYAL POLİTİKALARI BAKIMINDAN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

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Sosyal politikaların yeterlikleri toplumun en hassas gruplarının temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayıp karşılayamadığı ölçütü üzerinden tespit edilmektedir. Bu çalışma Türkiye’nin sosyal politikalarının toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini mi yoksa eşitlikçi normları mı esas aldığını ve kadınların kendi özerk hanelerini kurup devam ettirmelerini teşvik edip etmediğini tespit etmek adına devamlı olarak toplumun en hassas gruplarından biri olarak tanımlanan düşük eğitim ve düşük gelire sahip boşanmış bekâr annelerin boşanma öncesi ve sonrasında sahip oldukları kültürel, sosyal ve finansal aile kaynaklarını keşfetmeyi hedeflemiştir. Bu hedef doğrultusunda niteliksel araştırma dizaynını kullanarak Ankara’da ikamet eden ve kendilerine bağımlı en az bir çocuklarıyla beraber yaşayan yirmi boşanmış bekâr anne ile derinlemesine mülakatlar yürütülmüştür. Annelerin yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakat sorularına verdikleri cevaplar Türkiye’nin sosyal politikalarının en hassas sosyal grubun bile asgari geçim şartlarını sürdürebilmesi için son derece yetersiz



kaldığını göstermiştir. Annelerin boşanma sonrası dönemde özgürlüğün tadını çıkardıklarını ifade etmelerine, kendi ayakları üzerinde durmayı tercih ettiklerini belirtmelerine ve kendi özerk hanelerine sahip olmayı istemelerine rağmen bu çalışma Türkiye'nin ailecilik temelinde şekillenen sosyal politikalarının anneleri bunları gerçekleştirmekten alıkoyduğunu ve daha da hassas bir durumda olmalarına yol açtığını göstermiştir. Bu bulgular toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden ele alınmış sosyal politika yazınına temel alarak tartışılmış, annelerin kendi özerklik algısı ve destek talepleri doğrultusunda sosyal politika önerilerinde bulunulmuştur. Bu öneriler; (1) yasal süreci daha bilgi verici hale getirme, (2) nafaka ve tazminat ödemelerini zorunlu kılma, (3) boşanma sürecinde kadının ve çocuğun güvenliğini sağlama, (4) kamu kreşleri açma, (5) gelir ve iş imkânları sağlama, (6) ve temel gelir ana başlıklarında ele alınmış, boşanmış bekâr anneler ve çocukların hedef grup olarak belirlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Politika, Refah Devleti, Boşanma, Bekâr Anne, Ailecilik

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Emergence of the Discussions about Single Mothers**

Family is a concept in rapid transformation and it is defined neither solely as a classic nuclear family which consist of father, mother and the children or an extended family which consists of grandparents and/or sister- or brother-in law in addition to nuclear family members. This universal transformation brings different family formations with the increasing rates of unmarried, divorced and separated couples. The number of households compromised of single mothers and at least one dependent child under the age of 18 and if still studying under the age of 25 in the United States, for instance, is declared as almost 10 million while approximately 3 million of these households comprised of divorced single mothers and the remaining are either unwed, separated or widowed (Single Mother Statistics, 2018). It means that the number of households headed by women living at least one dependent child is three times higher than the number of households headed by men living at least one dependent child which is declared as almost 3 million. Besides, when the number of households with at least one dependent children is compared, it is seen that the number of households headed by women which is almost 10 million corresponds to one third of the number of households headed by married couples which is given as 28 million (US Census Bureau, 2017).

In the European Union member states, on the other hand, the number of single mother households with at least one dependent child(ren) under the age of 25 is indicated nearly as 8.5 million which approximately corresponds to one fifth of the households headed by married couples which is given as 56 million (Eurostat, 2017; Heine, 2016). When the households with dependent children are compared, it is seen that the number of single father households is almost 1.5 million whereas the

number of single mother households is nearly 8.5 million. It means the number of single mother households is almost six times higher than the number of single father households in the EU wide. Furthermore, according to Turkish Statistical Institute (2018), the number of households which is formed by single mothers and their dependent children was calculated as 1.5 million in 2017. When this number is compared with the number of single father households with at least one dependent child, it is seen that they only constitute a small amount of population with almost 400 thousand households. This means the number of single mother households is higher more than three times of the number of single father households. Besides, the number of households composed of married couples and their dependent children in Turkey is indicated as 9.5 million and it means that the number of single mother households is more than one tenth of the number of households with married couples and dependent children.

As it can be seen from the above-mentioned statistics, the number of households consisting of single mothers and their dependent children began to constitute a considerable amount of population in the United States and in the EU member states. At that time, the issue had started to be discussed beginning from 1990s in the US and the EU while it took a longer time by scholars and policy makers of Turkey to speak of the issue at the beginning of 2010s and with a very limited scope. In the US context, studies mostly focused on both gender and race dimension of discrimination against single mothers who are regarded as “welfare mothers” due to their high rates of poverty and dependency on state benefits (Ali & Avison, 1997; Brandwein, Brown, & Fox, 1974; Christopher, 2005; Edin & Lein, 1997; Gordon, 1994; Harris, 1993; McLanahan & Booth, 1989). The issue was approached by the policy makers by encouraging employment among single mothers and thus they caused this group to take place within the group of working poor (Gordon, 1990). In the EU context, on the other hand, the group of single mothers and their dependent children were approached as one of the fundamental parts of gender mainstreaming (Hantrais, 2007) and social investment (Esping-Andersen, 2002) projects mainly because of the newly emerging social risks (Jenson, 2006) and the encouragement for the dual-earner model (Lewis, 2006). Although the themes and objectives of these discussions in the literature regarding single mothers



varied from context to context, they had one common departure point; single mothers living with their dependent children was regarded as the most vulnerable social group (Bennett, 2006; Lewis, 2006; Orloff, 1993) whose living conditions and social position within society are determined by social policies and welfare regime of a given country. Vice versa, single mothers' and their children's level of well-being determines the extent to which welfare regime and social policies are sufficient for individuals to maintain their lives without a classic family affiliation (Orloff, 2009) which means a family form composed of married couples and their children. This is because a welfare regime's capability to provide its citizens with sufficient policies and benefits is evaluated based on its degree of competence for the most vulnerable social groups (Winkler, 1998) of which the most important is divorced single mothers living with their dependent children as an extremely poor part of any given society (Lewis, 2006). Similarly, a welfare regime's characteristics can be determined by looking at two important aspects of it; (1) women's participation to paid labor force and (2) women's capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household (Orloff, 1993). This study had the latter as its departure point with the curiosity of whether single mothers who live in the Altındağ and Yenimahalle provinces of the capital city of Turkey, Ankara have the capability to form and maintain an autonomous household.

## **1.2. Single Mothers within the Gendered Division of Labor**

In every society, women are primarily seen not as breadwinners but as caregivers as a result of gendered division of labor (Chodorow, 1979) and they mostly remain in the unpaid domestic labor. In this sense, feminist analysts of welfare regimes and social policies have one primary concern which is abolishing the institutionalized sexual division of labor (Hartsock, 1983) through gender equal policies. This is because when women maintain their lives in accordance with the gendered division of labor, they are only able to reach out to cultural, social and financial resources within the boundaries of marriage by becoming isolated from the outside opportunities. Thus, divorced and separated mothers become automatically deprived of all the social and financial resources they acquired during the relationship at the time of divorce or separation contrary to widowed women who

have always been supported by the state and society (Lewis, 2006). This is also true for the case of Turkey since it has familialist social policies which prioritize the institution of marriage and recognize women's eligibility to get social assistance or social security benefits as long as women stay within the safe space –family (Buğra & Keyder, 2006; Dedeoğlu, 2012; Kılıç, 2008; Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2013). Familialism “prescribe that the family is of premium importance in the society” (Aycan & Eskin, 2005, p. 467) and even though social policies are constantly tried to be revised in accordance with the principle of gender equality, they still assume that particular services –i.e. childcare– should be provided within the sphere of family and thus mostly by women (Ecevit, 2013). When social policies designed by prioritizing the institution of family and taking women's domestic roles as granted, widowed and divorced women, are treated in a discriminative way by both the society and the state (Gedik, 2015). Although it is a fact that widowed and divorced women face with deep poverty when they lose their husband (Özar, Yakut-Çakar, Yılmaz, Orhon, & Gümüş, 2011), there is a difference at the state level that widowed women are automatically entitled the benefits and the accumulated wealth at the time of their husbands' death while divorced women are not. This is the main cause for this study to focus only on divorced single mothers living with their dependent children since they are the most vulnerable group which do not have any pre-determined entitlements or state benefits upon divorce. Although gender analysts of Turkey's welfare regime have discussed how familialist social policies treat women primarily as mothers and caregivers and thus exacerbate the existing gendered division of labor within society (Ağartan, 2012; Dedeoğlu, 2012; Soyseçkin, 2015), only few studies (Gedik, 2015; General Directorate of Family and Social Research, 2011; Çakır, 2010; Öztürk & Boylu, 2015; Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2013) focused on social policies in relation to single mothers or single parents. And yet none of these studies focused on low-educated and low-income single mothers who are already destitute of cultural, social and financial resources prior to divorce and become more deprived of them upon it. Thus, I realized that there is a serious gap in the literature of Turkey about these mothers' and their dependent children's living conditions as well as the policy aspect of the issue.

### **1.3. Main Objectives and the Research Questions of the Study**

This study first departed from Orloff's criterion that in order to evaluate the extent to which a state has egalitarian and gender equal welfare regime and social policies, one needs to investigate women's "capability to form and maintain an autonomous household" (1993, p. 319). Then it wondered if Turkey's welfare regime and social policies provide the most vulnerable group of women, divorced single mothers, with the necessary means and benefits for them to establish an independent way of living. One of the main objectives of this study is to understand and explore the pre- and post-divorce experiences of low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers living with at least one dependent children in relation to cultural, social and financial resources. Second, this study aims to learn the way in which single mothers would prefer to meet their needs to overcome the challenges they experience through this process. In other words, this study aims to understand low-SES divorced single mothers' own point of views about being independent and autonomous in an implicit way by asking through which mechanisms or actors –the state, the family or the self– they would like to have a support to maintain their living. Furthermore, as distinct from the previous studies of the interdisciplinary field of Social Policy, this study aimed to learn these mothers' own policy suggestions by directly asking what could have been done for them and their children to better cope with the experienced challenges in relation to divorce. Eventually, this study aims to develop feasible and practical policy recommendations in line with the participants' own suggestions and real-life experiences for primarily making these women to have necessary means to form and maintain an autonomous way of living based on their preferences of support mechanisms. Finally, this study aims to develop gender equal social policies which will not treat women as a beneficiary only within the safe space of family.

In accordance with the anticipated aims, this study will ask and try to find answers to following research questions; What constitute of low-SES divorced single mothers and their dependent children's cultural, social and financial resources? What were the main challenges these mothers faced during pre- and post-divorce period due to lack of which resources? Through which way(s) single mothers would like to maintain their living –with the assistance of state, support

from family, by using their own resources? Based on participants' suggestions, what kind of social policies Turkey is need of in order not to define women within the territory of family and specifically to enable divorced single mothers to have an independent way of living?

#### **1.4. Main Arguments about Single Mothers' Resources and Preferences**

This study argues that divorced single mothers who have low levels of education and income have serious constraints in terms of cultural, social and financial resources they have both during pre- and post-divorce period. Besides, it is not only the resources which cause and also are caused by major challenges in these mothers' lives. Rather, this study argues that it is the welfare regime and social policies which make undeniable impact over family resources. Thus, it is anticipated that the main reason for divorced single mothers to be called as the most vulnerable social group is the lack of social policies based on individuality. Besides, the heavy presence of familialist social policies in Turkey's welfare regime implementations is another major reason for their vulnerability. As argued above, familialist social policies are designed in accordance with the gendered division of labor within the society and extensively based on women's unpaid domestic labor at home and thus their dependency on the mostly employed family member: the husband. By taking this as a departure point, I expect to find that it is highly likely for the participants of this study to become dependent on their families when they get divorce and yet I anticipate that this might not be a voluntary dependency. In other words, by asking both explicit and implicit semi-structured interview questions to the participants, I expect to find out if they would like to have an independent and autonomous household without having to rely on their families or other support mechanisms in the post-divorce period. Based on the findings on whether they would like to have an autonomous way of living or not, I will make policy recommendations accordingly. In this sense, I expect familialist social policies put these mothers into a highly vulnerable situation considering that they already have low levels of education and either unemployed or employed in informal and low-paid jobs. Thus they do not have access to state support unless they remain within the spheres of marriage and primarily for this reason I expect to suggest policy makers to adopt not

a familialist but a rights-based and individual approach to social policy making. It means that individuals have access to state support and social assistance programs not only because they have an affiliation with the institution of family or family members but because they are the individuals who have a right to maintain a decent living not falling under the minimum living standards outside of patriarchal family (O'Connor, 2013). Furthermore, I expect to find pre- and post-divorce challenges originating from existing and missing family resources to be able to suggest compensating policies.

### **1.5. Significance of This Study for Divorced Single Mothers**

As indicated above, this study is the first in the fields of both Sociology and Social Policy in Turkey. First, it will investigate the pre- and post-divorce experiences of single mothers in terms of the family resources they have. In this sense, this study will ask the same and similar questions in relation to pre- and post-divorce periods to be able to see women's status in relation to cultural, social and financial resources they had during pre-divorce period and they have in the post-divorce period. At this point, it is important here to note that it is the very first study in Turkey which only focuses on low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers living with their dependent children. In addition, this study will make a unique contribution to the literature of both disciplines with its interdisciplinary nature by investigating family resources and, at the same time, exploring their experiences with social policies in an interrelated way. Namely, it will not only ask its participants which resources they have and which ones they would like to have but it also asks about their relationship with the potential providers of these resources such as family, state, non-state institutions and, as an addition for the post-divorce period, the husband. This is also unique since there is only one study (General Directorate of Family and Social Research, 2011) which asked divorced mothers' experiences with alimony but it is not a deeply focused issue in this report either. Besides, this study will also be the first in terms of demonstrating the divorced mothers' experiences with state social assistance programs. This is because previous studies (Kutlu, 2015; Metin, 2011) revealed that social assistance programs are gendered and disadvantage women but they have never focused only on divorced

single women by excluding the others. Last but not least, this study will make policy recommendations at the end by primarily taking participants' own suggestions and demands into consideration. Namely, participants' preferences for support mechanisms and their real life experiences will be significant in determining what type of social policies they are in need in order to live the life they wish for by providing at least the minimum living standards. Overall, this study will help feminist analysts of welfare regimes and family sociologists of Turkey to further delve into the issue of divorced single mothers. Eventually and ultimately, this study will pave the way for policy makers to take necessary actions for divorced single mothers not to be mentioned the as the most vulnerable social group any more.

#### **1.6. Accessing and Conducting Interviews with the Low-SES Divorced Single Mothers**

In order to fully realize its objectives and to find accurate answers to its research questions, this study will use qualitative research methodology by preparing semi-structured interview questions and conducting face-to-face in-depth interviews with divorced single mothers who have low levels of education and low levels of income. The anticipated number of participants is 20 and when answers reach to the saturation point at the end of 20 interviews, then the interview sessions will be over. If not, I will continue to search for and conduct interviews with the new participants. I aim to reach out to the respondents through my mother's and aunt's connections and established networks since both are members of the municipality's women's club in Altındağ and Yenimahalle provinces of Ankara. When the first-hand contacts are over, I will follow the snowballing method by asking each respondent if she can possibly connect me with another possible respondent. Through this way, this study will have interviewees from similar socio-economic statuses and yet it will explore distinct stories in relation to their pre- and post-divorce experiences to be able to come up with wide range of policy recommendations. Besides, these mothers will be connected first by the phone call and if they accept to take part in this study then they will be asked to provide time and place which best work for their schedules. In this way, I will be able to make observations of their daily social environments which in return will contribute to the accurate description of their living conditions.

Since my aim is not to get superficial but detailed and intimate answers to the questions, I will ask semi-structured and open-ended questions to the interviewees. Participating into the study will be completely voluntary and I will inform the participants about the main aims of the study beforehand. So, single mothers will be informed that as a researcher I will conduct an interview with them because they are divorced and living with at least one dependent children. I will let them know that if any of the questions create any disturbances they might not answer it or simply quit the interview. Besides, I will record all the in-depth interviews with the consent of the respondents and I will make the verbatim transcriptions after each interview session. After explaining all these procedures of the study, I will kindly request the interviewees to sign the voluntary participation form before initiating the interview session.

### **1.7. The Structure of the Study**

This study will begin with the explanation and analysis of the existing literature. It will first define who the single mother is and what this study means by single mothers. Then, since this is a study which combines welfare regime, social policy, divorce and family resources under the same topic of single mothers, it will explain the gender analysts' approaches for existing welfare regimes and why they criticized the previous categorizations and criteria for evaluating the welfare regimes' efficiencies. At the same time, it will explain why there is a need to investigate the experiences of single mothers from a social policy perspective. Besides, the reasons for these mothers to be called as the most vulnerable social group will be explained and analyzed along with the discussions around social citizenship rights and how they are related to single mothers' current vulnerable situation. At this point, literature on family resources and their relation with single mothers will be elaborated. Furthermore, welfare regime, single mothers and divorce literature in Turkey will be explained in detail.

Later, chapter three will describe the chosen methodology including research questions, design and methods, ethical considerations, access to respondents and conduct of interviews, key characteristics of the respondents, data analysis as well as the strengths and limitations. Chapter four will include the main findings of this

study by categorizing them under the subheadings of cultural, social and financial resources. In this chapter, respondents' striking and important answers will be provided as direct quotations and will be elaborated and analyzed in accordance with the main objectives of this study. Besides, pre- and post-divorce comparisons will be made in this chapter when it is deemed necessary. Following chapter will recommend social policies based on the findings and analysis in the chapter four. Social policy recommendations will be divided into the subchapters and will include direct quotations for reflecting the participants' own ideas, needs, suggestions and demands to be able to make useful, feasible and practical policy recommendations for these women to have independent households as well as for Turkey's social policies to have more egalitarian and gender equal characteristics. Last chapter will be a conclusion part in which main findings and analysis of the study is summarized in relation to the aforementioned literature on family resources, welfare regimes and single mothers.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Single Mothers and the Welfare State**

Feminist scholars of social policy have always fought for having gender equal and egalitarian social policies under the different welfare regimes. To be able to do this, they approached the issue by considering the living conditions of the most vulnerable social groups to be able to test the competence of social policies. While doing so, they investigated the reasons for and the potential solutions to the experienced challenges by the vulnerable social groups one of which is referred as single mothers living with at least one dependent child. In order to thoroughly understand the findings, analysis and policy suggestions of this study, one needs to have a good command of the literature of and the relation among welfare state, social citizenship and the vulnerable condition of single mothers.

##### **2.1.1. Definition of single mother**

Single mothers are universally categorized as the group of women who never married, separated or divorced and live with their dependent children in the absence of father. Lewis defined single mothers as “women with children and without men” (2006, p. 8). Previous studies included single mothers within groups of ‘lone-parent families’ and ‘single-parent families’ (Kallinikaki, 2010; Lichter, 1997; Olk, 2010). However, as it can be understood, these groups include not only mothers but also fathers so that this study does not use these classifications. Besides, this group is also referred as ‘lone mothers’, ‘solo mothers’, ‘mother-only families’ and ‘female-headed households’ in the previous studies (Daly & Lewis, 2000; Duncan & Edwards, 1997; Hobson, 1994; Kilkey & Bredshaw, 1999; Lewis, 2006; Sainsbury, 1994;). However, this study takes ‘single mother’ as the appropriate naming for its focus group since the above-mentioned designations do not completely reflect the

participants of this study. This is mainly because not all the participants live ‘alone’ in only ‘female-headed’ households but they also live together with their children and families. Furthermore, single mothers in this study do not include separated individuals. This is because they may not be legally married prior to separation or even if they were married they do not officially divorce but only separate. So, this study does not include never-married or separated mothers under the category of ‘single mother’ but refers only to divorced mothers living with at least one of their dependent children either within their own independent household or in their own family’s household.

The concept of ‘single mother’ is treated quite differently in different social and cultural contexts. Namely, its perception in the United States is not the same either with the one in Europe or in Turkey. While it mostly involves the never-married mothers with children in the United States, it mostly refers to the separated or divorced mothers in the European and Turkey contexts. In order to understand the discussions around single mothers both at the social and policy level in these different contexts, this study will give place to the previous American and European literatures in a nutshell. This is particularly necessary to be able to make a clear differentiation among states’ mentalities towards their vulnerable citizens in light of the welfare regime discussions, citizenship debates and social policy implementations. When these aforementioned issues are elaborated in relation to the vulnerable situation of single mothers living in different countries, it will be well understood that the reasons of and the solutions to this vulnerability show differences from context to context and thus it needs country-specific social policies. In order to elaborate on social policy implementations in different contexts, one first needs to know the initial welfare regime theories as well as the criticisms towards them made by feminist scholars. This is because feminist scholars wanted to eradicate gendered social policies by delving into the building blocks of the welfare regimes, particularly the approaches they adopted about citizenship.

### **2.1.2. Gender analysis of welfare regimes**

The different types of welfare state regimes and the social policy implementations under these regimes have been discussed from a feminist

standpoint beginning from late 1970s. In this sense, gender analysts of social policy elaborated on and criticized for the existing welfare regime theories to eventually have egalitarian social policies. With this way, they did not only aim to have gender equality but they also aimed to emancipate women from patriarchal oppression and institutionalized sexual division of labor (Hartsock, 1983) they face both in the family and the market. Nevertheless, feminist scholars did not follow exactly the same path in seeking equality and emancipation through policy making. They differed in their methods to achieve this equality. While doing so they made different criticisms towards the existing categorizations of welfare state regimes. In very close relation to these criticisms, they also approached the issue of citizenship on the basis of state provisions and mentality behind them. In other words, feminist social policy scholars criticized the existing social policy implementations –like social assistance schemes– in light of the citizenship debates because it is directly related to the state’s perception of and treatment towards its citizens when they are in need. Namely, different welfare state regimes also adopted different approaches towards citizenship and thus different treatments to the needy and vulnerable social groups. Orloff (2009), for instance, asserted that citizenship rights are very important in shaping the living conditions of single mothers. Therefore, it is essential to first thoroughly understand how social policies became highly influential over vulnerable groups like divorced single mothers to be able to develop more egalitarian ones. For this reason, one needs to have a sufficient knowledge of theories and following discussions around welfare state regimes, feminist approaches, citizenship debates and social policies.

In his famous *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Esping-Andersen (1990) elaborates welfare state regimes under three main categories. According to his typology there are (1) liberal welfare regimes in which social assistance is based on a means-test and need, universal transfers and social insurance plans are modest and benefits target the low-income; (2) corporatist welfare regimes in which rights are attached to class and status and the principle of ‘subsidiarity’ is adopted; and (3) social democratic welfare regimes in which both universalism and decommodification is prevalent in state benefits along with the policies for full-employment and policy of emancipation. As Esping-Andersen also indicated that

these are not the pure and strict categories to define the welfare regimes and yet they are useful to interpret the different types of social policies adopted by different states. In his classification, liberal welfare regimes best fit the policies in the United States and Australia while corporatist welfare regimes can be exemplified by the welfare states of Austria, France, and Germany. For the social democratic welfare regimes, Esping-Andersen gives the Scandinavian welfare states such as Sweden as the best examples. He selected two dimensions for his welfare regime classification; decommodification and stratification. Decommodification, in its simplest meaning, refers to the independence from the market. Therefore, one criterion for assessing in which categories a welfare regime falls into is to evaluate to what extent it is able to “maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market” (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 21-22). Stratification dimension, on the other hand, assesses to what extent the given welfare state causes segregation within the society due to its provisions and the way in which these provisions are distributed. To give an example,

Esping-Andersen (1990) argues that liberal welfare regimes have the lowest degree of decommodification and the highest level of stratification due to means-tested and targeted state benefits. He, on the other hand, discusses that social democratic welfare regimes have the highest degree of decommodification and the lowest levels of stratification mainly due to rights-based approach and universal benefits. The universal vs. targeted benefits debate will be discussed later in this chapter. Esping-Andersen’s welfare regime typology has been later extended to explore other welfare regimes which do not fit into the above-mentioned three categories. Arts and Gelissen (2002), for instance, indicated that the real world includes hybrid forms of welfare states which do not directly fit into Esping-Andersen’s initial categorization such as the Mediterranean types of welfare regimes. They argued that countries which have an inherited Catholic tradition and a strong familism such as Spain, Portugal and Greece are not covered under the first categorization. This category is called as the ‘Latin Rim’ or ‘Southern model’ (Arts & Gelissen, 2002, p. 142) as well as the Mediterranean welfare regime (Gal, 2010, p. 78). Not only for excluding the different cultures and traditions of Western European countries but also being gender-blind was one of the most essential points among the many others that Esping-Andersen was criticized by feminist scholars.

There are two main criticisms raised by feminist scholars. First, they argue that Esping-Andersen takes state-market relations in terms of paid labor and thus ignores domestic and unpaid work of women outside the paid work (Lewis, 1997). He was criticized for not considering the role of family and women's unpaid work in welfare state provisions as well as for not taking the gender inequality into consideration in elaborating states' social policies (Arts & Gelissen, 2002). Second, they claim that he ignores the relationship between gender-based inequalities and social policies and thus treats men and women unequally in the labor market (Lewis, 1997; Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2013). In close relation to this criticism, O'Connor argues that "decommodification is associated with a focus on entitlements and social rights which protect individuals, irrespective of gender" but this "concept does not take into account the fact that not all demographic groups are equally commodified and that this may be source of inequality" (1993, p. 513). In other words, O'Connor criticized Esping-Andersen's principle of decommodification by reminding that in order to be free from the market dependency, people first need to be already involved in the market. When women's low rate of participation to paid labor force is taken into consideration, it can clearly be said that they are not in the above-mentioned equally commodified group within the society. O'Connor further states that "central element of insulation from dependence is the extent to which public services are available as citizenship rights as opposed to a dependence-enhancing income and/or means-tested basis" (1993, p. 512). Therefore, similar to what Orloff suggested, O'Connor also indicates that "the concept of decommodification must be supplemented by the concept of personal autonomy or insulation from dependence, both personal dependence on family members and/or public dependence on the state agencies" (1993, p. 514). This is because when women's low participation to paid labor force is not being considered while demanding for the decommodification of labor for all the citizens, women are under the threat of being purely associated with the caring work at home. Thus, this kind of a decommodification would not eliminate but deteriorate the gender inequalities especially in terms of the private/public distinction. Orloff (1993) adds two new criteria in order to understand the nature of states' welfare regimes. She says that Esping-Andersen's state-market nexus needs to be adjusted as state-market-family relations since family

is right in the center of welfare provision. She indicates that “provision of welfare ‘counts’ only when it occurs through the state or the market, while women’s unpaid work in the home is ignored” (Orloff, 1993, p. 310). Thus for the stratification dimension, Orloff argues that “states reinforce the gender hierarchy” (1993, p. 314) by privileging paid work and sustaining sexual division of labor in the domestic place; however, unpaid work also needs to be considered. Furthermore, she puts an emphasis on gender dimension of decommodification and defines her own criterion for the gender analysis of a welfare regime as “the extent to which states guarantee women access to paid employment and services that enable them to balance home and work responsibilities” (Orloff, 1993, p. 317). Therefore, as one of the most important inspiration points of this study, Orloff adds two more criteria in order to understand states’ attitudes towards women; “access to paid work and the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household” (1993, p. 319). The latter is highly important for understanding to what extent states provide women an environment “to survive and support their children without having to marry to gain access to breadwinners’ income” (Orloff, 1993, p. 319). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, this criterion was one of the most important departure points of this study since investigating whether state provides sufficient social policies to enable women to sustain their lives with the children was only possible by conducting a research with women who have no male breadwinner, have dependent children and insufficient family resources so that they are heavily dependent on the state’s support mechanisms. Thus, the main objective of this study was to explore and demonstrate whether divorced single mothers who have low levels of education and have income way below the poverty line are able to form and maintain their autonomous lives with the children without having to rely on any other patriarchal mechanism.

Moreover, in addition to what Orloff (1993) and O’Connor (1993) argued against Esping-Andersen’s concept of decommodification, Lewis and Ostner (1994) focused more on increasing women’s participation in the labor market – commodification– than on securing economic independence from the labor market – decommodification– (Christensen, 2005). They put emphasis on the concept of “male-breadwinner model” as a reaction to Esping-Andersen and criticized him for

focusing on state and market by ignoring unpaid work. They categorized welfare regimes in accordance with their reliance on strong, moderate and weak male-breadwinner system. The more households have strong male-breadwinner tradition, the more women become dependent to those patriarchal households which in return makes women more vulnerable to any losses of male-breadwinner. This is especially true in the case of single mothers who were heavily dependent on their husbands' income prior to divorce. It is essential here to remind that this study will interview with the participants who have low-income and low-education so that their levels of commodification will possibly not be high enough to be susceptible to a possible decommodification as suggested by Esping-Andersen. Thus, this study agrees with the feminist criticisms toward decommodification and claim that these mothers will first need to be commodified through targeted social policies which will enable them to enter into paid labor market. Although it is different from what Orloff suggested before, Lewis and Ostner (1994) presented two different dimensions for women's individualization; economic independence and independence from family obligations. As it can be seen, they did not define individuality and emancipation in terms of women's ability to form and maintain a household; rather they indicated that women need to be freed from their domestic roles within household. Thus, Lewis and Ostner (1994) evaluated decommodification and independence from the market as gendered concepts. For them, these are not necessarily positive for women because decommodification, they argued, will increase the burden of unpaid work. Therefore, they consider commodification as primary concern for liberation and emancipation of women, not decommodification. Although the emphasis put on commodification of women can have emancipatory impacts for many contexts, this study assumes that for the case of low-SES divorced single mothers it will be possibly not on the top of the agenda. This is mainly because they have inadequate resources and it is highly unlikely for them to receive paid caring services outside. So, unless they have other emotional and social support mechanisms for looking after their children aftermath of the divorce, their participation to paid labor force is almost impossible. In other words, this study anticipates that unless the state provides public child care, low-SES divorced single mothers will hardly be seen as participating into the paid labor force; so, their commodification in the way towards

an emancipation as recommended by Lewis and Ostner (1994) is very difficult.

In light of the above-mentioned feminist criticisms, Esping-Andersen did not disregard the need to elaborate more on welfare states and social policies with a gender glass and he later wrote his piece *A New Gender Contract* in which he indicated that “gender equality becomes... a ‘societal affair’... Gender equality is one of the key ingredients that must go into our blueprints for a workable new welfare architecture” (2002, p. 69). He proposed the ‘social investment’ idea which put great emphasis on policies such as affordable child care, paid leave for both parents, and provisions for absence at work due to child’s illness (Esping-Andersen, 2002). This idea of social investment is adopted by many European countries as it will be seen in the following sections.

### **2.1.3. Why studying single mothers from a social policy perspective**

As Orloff indicated in another piece by referring to the previous ideas of Lewis (1997) and Hobson (1990), “[s]olo mothers have served as a ‘test case’ of the extent to which welfare states address women’s economic vulnerabilities” (2009, p. 327). Thus investigating divorced single mothers’ experiences is essential in evaluating to what extent a given country’s social policies are egalitarian. “[T]he adequacy of universal social policy must be judged according to its adequacy for the most vulnerable” (Winkler, 1998, p. 155). In this sense, this study aims to see if Turkey’s social policies are adequate to not put the most vulnerable in a very precarious situation. With this main objective, this study had two essential departure points in investigating the single mothers’ vulnerable conditions in relation to social policies and family resources. The most inspiring departure point for this study was Ann S. Orloff’s (1993) famous criteria put forward both as a criticism and an addition to Gøsta Esping-Andersen’s (1990) well-known decommodification and stratification –which will be explained in detail in this chapter– in evaluating the welfare regimes. Orloff suggested two more criteria to understand welfare regimes’ attitude towards women; “access to paid work and the capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household” (1993, p. 319). In order to make an accurate gender analysis of Turkey’s welfare regime and social policies, this study took Orloff’s latter point as its fundamental evaluation criterion. To be able to understand whether



Turkey's social policies take gender equality as one of its fundamental principles, this study decided to investigate the case of low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers. This is mainly because their post-divorce condition –with the absence of male-breadwinner and insufficient family resources– is suitable for the assessment and evaluation of the impact of social policies by investigating to what extent they are able to form and maintain an autonomous household. Therefore, this study investigates the family resources of single mothers during both pre- and post-divorce period (1) to be able to see the difference after transition from a married to a single mother and (2) to see whether social policies in Turkey are sufficient to enable these mothers to form and maintain an autonomous household.

Namely, lack of social policies for single mothers and their dependent children to maintain their minimum living standards is extremely influential in determining their social and financial situation. Although it has been one of the most prominent issues both at the academic and policy level in the United States and in Europe since 1980s, it was hardly an issue to discuss neither at the academic nor at the policy level in Turkey. In this sense, this study makes a unique contribution to the Sociology discipline because it aims to deeply explain the vulnerable and disadvantaged social situation of divorced single mothers in terms of the family resources they had during pre- and post-divorce period. Eventually, it does not only ask which resources these women had but it also deeply investigates the reasons behind their deprivation of the above mentioned family resources. By examining these reasons in detail and by asking single mothers what kind of resources would they like to have and through which mechanisms to better cope with the divorce, this study aims to make feasible policy recommendations based on its participants' real-life experiences. In this sense, it also makes a unique contribution to the interdisciplinary field of Social Policy since single mothers' pre- and post-divorce experiences in relation to existing and missing social policies have never been discussed in an interrelated way in the Turkey context.

As it has been stated before welfare regimes and the social policies they adopted are undeniably influential in women's lives especially for the ones who have limited cultural, social and financial resources. These women, in this study low-SES divorced single mothers, do not only have limited resources to maintain

their lives in an autonomous way and but they are also entitled their basic rights, like social insurance, not through their citizenship status but either through their fathers' or husbands' premiums paid through labor market participation. This is an automatic reflection of gendered division of labor within the patriarchal social order in which women's mothering taken for granted as a central point in society's organization of gender (Chodorow, 1979). Since women are not expected to participate into paid labor force they eventually remain within the unpaid domestic labor at home. When this kind of a male-breadwinner-based benefit scheme is adopted by the state, it is almost impossible to talk about "a woman's ability to parent outside a traditional family form" (Young, 2010, p. 253) and this is why this was one of the primary concerns of this study. Lack of universal social policies and individual citizenship rights creates a male-breadwinner-based insurance system. This in return, puts women into a more and more vulnerable position. O'Connor stated "the key issue is the extent to which social citizenship rights for adults are individualized as oppose to derived through another family member's entitlements" (2013, p. 148). In this sense, welfare regimes which entitle women their rights only through premium-based insurance system automatically eliminate women from the social insurance schemes. This is mainly because men are accepted as the primary breadwinners and women as the caregivers and "[t]raditional patterns of social provision in welfare state assumed the existence of a particular kind of family form" (Lewis, 2006, p. 4). At this point, the only way for unemployed women to have access to social insurance is via the working male member of a family; first her father and later her husband. This kind of a social security system puts women in a really disadvantaged position both within the family and the society because they become subordinate but not independent members of each unit. Naturally, when they get divorced they are deprived of the previously-earned benefits through the ex-husband. At that point, if the father had already insurance it automatically entitles his divorced women for social insurance. However, if the father also did not have any social insurance then the divorced women have no chance of being insured unless she is formally employed and self-insured. Therefore, one of the most well-known objectives of feminist rethinking of social policies and welfare states is to change the system of entitlement. In other words, they argue that social security schemes and state

benefits, including social assistance programs, must be designed in a way that does not take family involvement into the center when determining the conditions of eligibility but should only be based on one's citizenship status.

Moreover, these women and their children are regarded as 'disproportionately poor' because widows are able to derive many benefits through their husbands' social insurance but other single mothers are not (Lewis, 2006). While the same social security system allows widowed women to continue to receive social insurance and benefits through the deceased husband, divorced women who live with their dependent children cannot receive any pre-determined benefits through their ex-husband. Namely, widowed women become automatically eligible to receive the accumulated wealth, a part of the salary –if the widow is alone and unemployed this part is 75%– and social insurance benefits through the deceased husband while divorced women can only be entitled to social insurance through her own family –usually the father. This ongoing discrepancy between policy implementations towards widowed and divorced women is a result of a patriarchal welfare state mentality which put 'strong family' at the center of society. To explain in more detail, divorced women are perceived as the deal breaker since they intentionally leave the institution of marriage and therefore damage the core of the society. On the other hand, widowed women are not seen as deal breakers since they do not voluntarily leave the marriage. Therefore, the state has a penalizing attitude towards divorced women. Even if these women have custody of their dependent children, they are left all alone by the state and its policies. This attitude is another critical reason for single mothers to fall into a vulnerable condition following divorce. Since this study aims not only to explore but also to find durable solutions via social policy recommendations for the eradication of low-SES single mothers' disadvantaged and vulnerable situation, it will take the above-mentioned feminist criticisms to the existing social policies and welfare regimes as its reference point.

#### **2.1.4. Single mothers and social citizenship rights**

If one wants to accurately and deeply understand the relationship between social policy and single mothers' vulnerability, she/he must first have knowledge

about the state's perception of citizenship. T.H. Marshall categorized citizenship rights in accordance with their emergence based on England's historical context in 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He argued that people first obtained civil, then political and lastly social citizenship rights. The categorization matters for this study is social citizenship rights which were explained by Marshall himself in his famous *Citizenship and Social Class* first published in 1950 "from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society" (2009, p. 149). He said social citizenship rights are closely related to the social services provided by the state and thus lack of these rights is one of the main causes of social inequalities and poverty especially for the most vulnerable social groups. However, he continued, it is the social citizenship rights themselves which had the greatest potential to bring egalitarian perspective into the citizenship by first eradicating poverty and then consolidating equality within a given society. In this sense, social citizenship rights are central to the welfare state debates (O'Connor, 2013). Işın and Turner (2002) explained this relationship by referring to the Esping-Andersen's (1990) welfare regime typologies and their citizenship perceptions. They indicated that in liberal welfare regimes such as the United States, Switzerland and Australia "the state relies on markets to allocate social rights and emphasizes civil and political rights" while in the corporatist welfare regimes such as Austria, France, Germany and Italy, "social rights are accorded a greater role but are not available universally" (Işın & Turner, 2002, p. 3). On the contrary, "social rights are given the highest priority and the state provides universal benefits in social democratic welfare regimes such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands" (Işın & Turner, 2002, p. 3). Citizenship debates and social citizenship rights are not only central to the welfare state debates (O'Connor, 2013) but they are also essential for gender analysis. As Lister indicated in her piece *Citizenship and Gender*:

[c]itizenship has always been gendered in the sense that women and men have stood in a different relationship to it, to the disadvantage of women... Today, as feminist theorists have stripped away this veil, the challenge is to reconceptualize citizenship in gendered terms in the image of women as well as men. (2012, p. 373)

In this sense, she called the struggle given by feminist scholars to have egalitarian citizenship rights as “regendering of citizenship” (Lister, 2012, p. 373). However, as it can be seen in the following discussion around individualization of social citizenship rights and the debates on universal vs. targeted benefits, there is not a particular way for regendering of citizenship. Scholars who are in favor of egalitarian social citizenship rights argue that benefits and social policies should be designed in accordance with the principle of individuality but not ‘subsidiarity’ which means the state only interferes when the family, the market and other providers of support are not adequate to provide care or services. It is defined in another study as “reliance on the smallest possible unit that can perform a given social function effectively” (Hassim & Razavi, 2006, p. 25). Feminist scholars believed that the “the key issue is the extent to which social citizenship rights for adults are individualized as oppose to derived through another family member’s entitlements” (O’Connor, 2013, p. 148). Thus, one of the most primary objectives of gender analysts of welfare regime is to achieve ‘defamilialization’ and ‘individualization’ for social citizenship rights so that individuals will be less dependent on their family members but more self-reliant in receiving and managing the resources. While McLaughlin and Glendinning defined defamilialization as “the extent to which they [individuals] can uphold an acceptable standard of living independently of (patriarchal) ‘family’ participation” (as cited in O’Connor, 2013, p. 148), Lister gave it a broader meaning as “socially acceptable standard of living, independently of family relationships, either through paid work or through social security provisions and either inside or outside of a couple relationship” (2003, p. 172). Lister also supported the idea of defamilialization rather than decommodification (1997). Furthermore, defamilialization was not only suggested by feminist scholars in order for women to have individualized social citizenship rights but also for the “defamilialization of care” which means care work becomes paid in the public arena, whether in the state or market sector” (Björnberg, 2006, p. 103). This is a striking point for the focus group of this study since it is expected that low-SES divorced single mothers who have at least one dependent child experience serious difficulties in raising and caring for their children following divorce in the absence of father at home.

As it can clearly be seen from these statements, defamilialization of social citizenship rights and caring services require the reorganization of social policies. The discussion around defamilialization and individualization is essential in terms of its potential to transform women's heavy dependency on patriarchal family structure. For this reason, feminist scholars have always fought for a welfare state in which individuals, especially women, can stand on their own feet to not to be subordinate to the patriarchal oppression both within the house and society. It is important here to indicate that this objective of defamilialization is essential in the case of divorced single mothers since previous studies revealed that they become heavily dependent on their families following divorce both in terms of social and financial resources and state benefits such as social insurance and orphan's pensions. In very close relation to the debates around citizenship and individualization of social citizenship rights, it is important to acknowledge that gender analysts of social policy discussed two different approaches to eradicate poverty and inequality: universal vs. targeted benefits (Korpi & Palme, 1998). Targeted social policies are designed to reach out to the needy people while universal social policies are based on citizenship and include all individuals regardless of the income or labor market participation (Korpi & Palme, 1998). While targeted benefits allocate more resources to the people who are in need, it has been discussed in the literature that universal benefit systems are superior in reducing poverty (Bennett, 2006; Van Lancker, Ghysels, & Cantillon, 2015). Targeted benefits were mostly criticized beginning from the 1980s but also continuously implemented by the policy makers especially in the example of the United States (Korpi & Palme, 1998). There are many studies which associate equality with universal social policies and the logic of redistribution rather than targeted and means-tested state provisions (Harrington Meyer, 1996; Hobson, 1990; O'Connor, 1993).

Nevertheless, there is an argument from the side of feminist scholars that universal benefits tend to disadvantage women because they do not take the needs of vulnerable groups like single mothers into consideration (Hobson, 1990; O'Connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993). They argue that targeting can be a good option because it does not necessarily stand for the conditional transfers based on means-test but it can refer to an implementation in which specific group of people are focused to

eliminate the conditions make them so vulnerable and at risk of poverty such as single mothers (Bennett, 2006). When there are neither universal benefits nor targeted benefits aimed at preventing vulnerable groups such as single mothers, both the mother and the children fall into a more precarious situation.

## **2.2. Single Mothers and the Family Resources**

As it has been indicated in the previous sections of this study, one of the most important reasons for single mothers to be called as the most vulnerable social group is the lack of family resources they acquired throughout their lives. It is important here to reiterate that there is a sexual division of labor in every society (Chodorow, 1979; Hartmann, 1976) and women are expected to perform unpaid domestic labor while men are expected to earn money for maintenance of the family. When this gendered division of labor is combined with the low-educated and unskilled profile of women, the possibility for them to participate in paid labor force decreases as well. Besides, even if they want to find a job they usually end up with low-income, part-time, and flexible jobs which are not adequate to maintain the minimum living standards. Such resources are not only essential during the pre-divorce period but also highly important in determining each spouse's ability for divorce adjustment (Plummer & Koch-Hattem, 1986). Considering that the participants of this study are from a low-SES segment of the society, it is anticipated that they are deprived of considerable amount of cultural, social and financial family resources both during pre- and post-divorce period. Thus, it is highly likely for these mothers to have serious difficulties in divorce adjustment process.

Family resources or capital has been mostly referred within the studies which discuss children's educational success in relation to family background (Akukwe & Schroeders, 2016; De Graaf, 1986; De Graaf, 1988; Judson, 1998). "But there is not merely a single 'family background'; family background is analytically separable into at least three different components: financial capital, human capital, and social capital" (Coleman, 1988, p. 109). Bourdieu evaluates cultural capital as educational credentials and cultural goods; social capital as connections with social groups and established networks; and economic capital as financial wealth (Peillon, 1998). Cultural resources are also referred as human capital/cultural capital in the literature

(Coleman, 1988; Judson, 1998). According to Bourdieu (1986), accumulation of cultural resources depends on the period, the society, and the social class. Cultural resources cover educational credentials and cultural goods (Peillon, 1998) and are highly influential in determining one's social and economic resources because they are the primary qualifications in achieving other resources one needs throughout the life. Cultural resources in this sense can be evaluated as education and its potential contribution to the person's cultural accumulation while it can also refer to "a more comprehensive array of investments that contribute to human well-being and productivity" (Judson, 1998, p. 356). Nevertheless, education is the primary cultural resource which determines the other investments contributing to human's well-being throughout the life course. Age, for instance, is one of the most important factors in determining one's cultural resources since years through which education, training and experience gained are transmitted to financial gaining in the paid labor market (Simmons, Braun, Wright & Miller, 2007). If a person makes an investment in knowledge, skills and attitude (Simmons et al., 2007), she/he can see its benefits in finding high-salary decent jobs with a good position which are also the benefits one can achieve through a good education (Coleman, 1988). In this sense, education is the primary determinant in one's accumulation of cultural or human capital while age is also an important component of this process since it demonstrates how a person used passing years to accumulate above-mentioned cultural resources.

Social resources are the combination of networks people acquire through different times, places and connections. It can be influenced by one's existing and potential social mobilization from school to work environment and from family to social class (Bourdieu, 1986). "Broadly, social capital concerns the values that people hold and the resources that they can access, which both result in, and are the result of, collective and socially negotiated ties and relationships" (Edwards, 2004, p. 1). These relationships and social support mechanisms, on the other hand, do not only base on one's ability to have/form social networks but they are also shaped by the time passed over divorce, household setting and time allocation. Namely, time passed over divorce is important in one's divorce adjustment or recovery process (Coleman, 1988; Judson, 1998). Although "[p]eople may differ in their ability to return to normal levels of functioning following divorce" (Booth & Amato, 1991, p.



398), previous studies showed that 2 years is an important time frame for divorced persons to recover and adjust themselves to their new living arrangements. Chase-Lansdale and Hetherington (1990) argued that both children and adults experience emotional problems along with declines in family functioning during the immediate 2 years following divorce, namely “the crisis period”. When this crisis period was over and the first 2-3 years passed, they said that “the majority of families have made significant adjustments” (p. 105). Time itself, though, is not enough for individuals to recover following divorce; resources such as strong social support networks are likely to facilitate divorce adjustment (Booth & Amato, 1991). Furthermore, household setting is important in receiving social support –from one’s family for instance (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998). When the term ‘single’ mother is used it can automatically come to the minds that these mothers live only with their children but they also live with their relatives (London, 2000). It is demonstrated that low-SES single mothers have higher levels of the feeling of adequacy for coping with the difficulties divorce brought in and higher levels of financial resources since they have other people in their lives to provide in-kind or in-cash assistance (Simmons et al., 2007). Individuals’ living arrangements is found to be influential in determining their accumulation of other cultural and social resources (Folk, 1996). Thus, living arrangements influence one’s access to other resources such as social network. Time allocation, on the other hand, is an important component of one’s social resources since the decision power of women increases open divorce and thus they can decide how to use their time on labor market and housework as well as for children and the leisure (Rangel, 2006). Social resources were focused by the policy makers primarily due to its potential to eradicate the deficiencies within a given society mainly due to the reciprocity they based such as mutual trust. In other words, it is believed that investing in social resources might prevent people from perceived threats such as alienation and individualization (Edwards, Franklin, & Holland, 2003). Nevertheless, it is discussed primarily by the sociology of family scholars that social resources reduce during marriage mainly because it requires couples invest more time and effort to their own relationship rather than their relations with the third parties (Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006). When couples consume all their emotional and social resources during marriage due to

high expectations not only from partners themselves but also from the society as a whole, they automatically become deprived of these resources upon divorce (Gibson-Davis, Edin, & McLanahan, 2005). In this sense, social resources, both during pre- and post-divorce period, would be highly dependent not only on individuals' own accumulation of network but also on other social support mechanisms such as family and friends especially when they are in need of social and emotional support in childrearing (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998). That is mainly because "the personal experience of individuals is closely bound up with larger-scale aspects of social structure" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1377) and single mothers mostly combine these larger aspects of non-economic forms of social and emotional support with economic support (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998), in other words, financial resources for this study.

Lastly, financial resources are measured in accordance with the household's overall income and assets (Coleman, 1988). Indeed, cultural and social resources are believed as accumulated eventually to have more of financial resources (Bourdieu, 1986) and having adequate financial resources influence the cultural and social resources too. Nevertheless, for single mothers it is not very easy to have extended financial resources (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998). It is discussed in the literature for many times that single mothers are in a very disadvantaged position when compared to married couples because they have significantly lower levels of financial resources (McLanahan, 1999). "The low employment rate and low educational attainment of single mothers both have a profound impact on their prospects for self-sufficiency and are therefore issues of great scholarly and public policy concern" (Hao & Brinton, 1997, p. 1306). Due to their limited access to paid labor market and thus to a higher levels of regular monthly income, there are mainly two mechanisms for single mothers to have financial resources; one is through state social assistance and the other is through social support mechanisms such as relatives or family (Hao & Brinton, 1997). Besides, there is another type of financial resource as important as the state and family financial assistance particularly for divorced single mothers: alimony. Alimony empowers women's opportunities to enhance their welfare as well as it increases their bargaining power in their compulsory relationships (Rangel, 2006) –i.e., Ex-husband. Thus, for divorced single mothers, there are three potential

mechanisms that they can derive financial resources from: social network which is mostly compromised of their own families; state social assistance which consist of in-cash and in-kind benefits; and alimony which is a right obtained upon divorce to be paid by the ex-spouse.

To sum up, “[w]hereas economic capital is in people’s bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships” (Portes, 1998, p. 7). Considering all the above-mentioned resources the combination of people’s bank accounts, capital inside their heads and the relationships they gained would be highly influential in making a decision to continue or end their marriage as well as to maintain their living in the post-divorce period. Especially if one has many responsibilities but not the adequate resources to meet with them, then the possibility of making a decision for getting divorce increases as well (Amato, 2010). It is not the aim of this study to discuss to what extent the presence or absence of cultural, social and financial resources led divorce. The main objective of this study is to explore and investigate single mothers’ pre- and post-divorce experiences in relation to these family resources primarily and fundamentally to interpret their perception of autonomy and independence in light of the existing or missing social policies. Thus, it aims to make an interrelated exploration in between existing/missing social policies and present/absent family resources by examining the most vulnerable group of low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers who are living with at least one dependent child. The ultimate aim is to develop feasible and practical social policies for them not to be called as “the most vulnerable” any more in line with their own perception of and desire for an autonomous and independent way of living.

## **2.3. Single Mothers, Divorce And Welfare State In Turkey**

### **2.3.1. Social security and social assistance**

Turkey is classified among the Mediterranean welfare regimes (Buğra, 2012; Gough, 2006; Kılıç, 2010) in which family plays a significant role in welfare provision (Buğra & Keyder, 2006; Dedeoğlu, 2012; Kılıç, 2008; Metin, 2011; Rittersberger-Tılıç & Kalaycıoğlu, 2012; Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2013). The common characteristics of Mediterranean welfare regimes in relation to women’s position

within the society can be exemplified as; women are over employed in the low-paid, irregular and informal jobs, their participation to paid labor force is very limited and families heavily rely on male-breadwinner model with women providing care at home and men earning money (Soyseçkin, 2015). Turkey's welfare regime includes every one of these characteristics as well as a social security mentality in which individuals are not entitled rights and social insurance through their citizenship status but through formal employment and paid premiums. Women's employment rate has always been very low in Turkey (Toksöz, 2012). In 2016, women's (15-64) employment rate was 28% while it was 65.1% for men in Turkey. For the same year, the average employment rate of women (15-64) in the OECD was 48.5% and Turkey had the lowest employment rate of women among both OECD and non-OECD economies such as Russia, China, Brazil (OECD, 2018). When women's very low employment rate is taken into consideration, it can clearly be interpreted that in a formal-employment- and premium-based-social security system, women are deprived even of their basic social insurance rights and compulsorily dependent to a male family member as mothers, daughters and wives (Şahin, 2012). Besides, Turkish Statistical Institute indicated that women's part-time work tripled that of men's and women worked mostly in low-paid service work as of 2017 (Turkstat, 2018). Thus, their labor in part-time, informal and low-paid jobs was totally excluded from premium-based social security system (Ağartan, 2012).

In these circumstances, when low-SES and unemployed women get divorced, they automatically lose all the entitlements they previously received thanks to their husbands' premiums. This is one of the primary reasons of low-SES divorced single mothers' poor and precarious situation in Turkey. Similar to the social security regime, social assistance policies of Turkey do not take individuality and universality as fundamental principles but rather they are mostly based on the charity and waqf mentality dates back to Ottoman period (Buğra, 2007). Social assistance provided by both state and non-state institutions are means-tested and distributed in accordance with the need. This kind of a charity- and means-test-based social assistance is directly related to Turkey's involvement of neo-liberal context beginning from 1980s. One of the areas in which neo-liberal transformation

showed its strong influence was social policy (Koray, 2007). With this neo-liberal transition the policies which aimed at the rapid development of the economy pave the way for a greater informal economy that shows itself throughout the country with decreasing wages and increasing cheap labor and thus, with increasing poverty rates (Ecevit, 1998; Toksöz, 2012). One of the most important developments of 1980s in relation to the social assistance is the establishment of The Fund for the Encouragement of Social Cooperation and Solidarity –Social Solidarity Fund– in 1986. Although fighting against poverty (Buğra, 2012) at European level as well as “the need for a systematic approach to poverty alleviation through redistributive channels [were] acknowledged” (Buğra & Candaş, 2011, p. 521), traditional forms of social protection provision have always been preferred to developing redistributive and universal social policies. Strong family structure and family-oriented policies were prioritized. Discourse of Islamic philanthropy gained prominence and the role of voluntary organizations was promoted in dealing with poverty (Buğra & Candaş, 2011; Buğra & Keyder, 2006; Kutlu, 2015). Nevertheless, this system has many flaws in providing equal treatment to all citizens at both the state and non-state level. This is mainly because irregular and informal distributing mechanisms caused clientelism to be dominant in seeking benefits for the people in need (Kutlu, 2015; Metin, 2011). This clientelism, on the other hand, caused benefits to be entitled not as a basic human and citizenship right but as a benevolence from the state institutions and other actors so that beneficiaries feel gratitude to the ones who provide them social assistance. When this is the case, women are the most vulnerable to such a social assistance system. This is mainly because not men but women ask for assistance since it is expected from men to work and maintain the livelihood of their households. When men cannot provide what was expected from them they are eventually convinced for their women ask for assistance as a last resort. Therefore, women automatically become the main addressee of social assistance schemes since they themselves go and ask for assistance, try to convince the authorities/charity organizations that they are in need and even they are the ones who are inspected at home if there is an investigation process (Kutlu, 2015). Social assistance system does not only put women under difficult situation for the above-mentioned reasons but also because

[it] leaves out the possibility of the breakdown of the family unit. In cases of familial crises, such as divorce... subsistence of women and their children are mostly limited to the support they receive from relatives and to ad-hoc provisions of social assistance programs or charity organizations, none of which offering a decent and regular source of livelihood. (Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2013, p. 25)

As indicated above, in the case of a family breakdown women have to rely on other social support mechanisms because almost all social assistance programs are defined and implemented within the sphere of family. Therefore, women are again expected to maintain their gender roles in order to take place within Turkey's social assistance and social security systems because they have access to above-mentioned benefits only if they remain their position within the safe space, namely family. Because of this reason, Turkey's welfare regime and its social assistance policies do not eradicate the inequalities within society; on the contrary, they perpetuate the existing gender inequalities by reinforcing the normative family model (Akgül, 2006; Dedeoğlu, 2012; Kutlu, 2015; Metin, 2011). As one can expect, within such a normative family model divorced single mothers' experiences with social assistance programs would be highly challenging. Moreover, current poverty rates also proved that social assistance is far behind providing sufficient resources to the people who are in need. OECD defines poverty rate as "the ratio of the number of people (in a given age group) whose income falls below the poverty line; taken as half the median household income of the total population" (OECD, 2018). In Turkey, the mean annual equalized household disposable income is indicated as 19 thousand 139 Turkish Lira (approximately \$1,300 when calculated with then Turkish Lira and the US Dollar exchange rate). With this regard, Turkish Statistical Institute set poverty threshold at 50% of median equalized household disposable income and declared poverty rate as 14.3% as end of 2016 (Turkstat, 2017). This rate is indeed alarming because it is calculated by taking only the half (50%) of median income into consideration and it means almost 11 million and 500 thousand citizens live in poverty in Turkey. In order to understand the severity of the situation one can also look at Turkstat's calculation made by setting not 50% but 60% of median equalized household disposable income as its threshold. According to the result of this calculation, poverty rate is declared as 21.2% and it means 17 million citizens live in

poverty as of 2016. Even worse than that 20.9% of the households composed of one parent and at least one dependent children fall under the poverty threshold. This means every one out of five single parent families with at least one dependent children experience severe poverty. And it is again important here to reiterate that this poverty threshold is calculated by only taking 50% of total household income into consideration. When the income percentage is increased, the picture gets worse. It is important here to note that the poverty rate of single parents with dependent children is measured by taking not individual but household as a unit which, in return, hides women's serious poverty rates under their membership to the household (Dayıoğlu & Başlevent, 2012). Along with the lack of poverty rates on an individual basis, there was also lack of gender-related data and it was also hiding women's unpaid, undervalued and uncommodified domestic labor at home (Ecevit, 2013).

In short, poverty statistics –even though they are not directly giving us the single mothers' precarious situation– once again demonstrated that social assistance programs are extremely inadequate in providing individuals enough support to maintain their lives in decent conditions. Lastly, it is very predictable that under these conditions the mostly affected group would be the most vulnerable social group which is single parents composed overwhelmingly by single mothers.

### **2.3.2. Single mothers in Turkey: what do we know so far?**

Previous studies in relation to divorce and single mothers in Turkey mostly focused on three aspects of the issue. First, there are numerous studies conducted in relation to the children's psychology and educational success following the divorce of their parents (Öngider, 2013; Şirvanlı, 1999; Türkarslan, 2007; Usaklı, 2013). Second, there are many studies focused on the social and psychological aspect of the issue. These studies generally address post-divorce experiences of single parents in relation to society's perception of divorce, social stigmatization and exclusion and psycho-social well-being of divorced individuals (Boylu & Öztop, 2013; Bulut & Gündüz, 2016; Demir & Çelebi, 2017; Kavas, 2010; Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2012; Uğur, 2014). Lastly, the economic dimension is discussed in only few studies in terms of the issues of poverty and spending patterns of single parents (Boylu &

Öztop, 2013; Öztürk & Boylu, 2015). These studies are important in terms of demonstrating the vulnerable conditions of single mothers and especially their dependent children. And yet, the following studies include the most relevant literature in relation to single mothers living in Turkey. These studies have been highly influential and enlightening in determining the scope and content of this thesis. In this sense, one of the most important and comprehensive studies in this area is the Single Parent Families (2011) published by the General Directorate of Family and Social Research (GDFSR) and conducted under the supervision of Prof. F. Umut Beşpınar and Prof. Ümran Korkmazlar. This study argued that single motherhood is a major cause of a potential decrease in the welfare of the household. Although it is indicated that single mothers apply for and receive more institutional/social assistance compared to single fathers, they experience more difficulties than single fathers in paying the rent and meeting the household expenses. It is demonstrated that single parents mostly get the social assistance from the district governorates and General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity operates under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. However, these assistance programs are very limited and means-tested which means if their income does not fall under the 1/3 of net minimum income; if they receive any payment like orphan's pension; and if they have social insurance, they cannot get benefit from majority of the social assistance schemes (Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2018). In very relation to lack of state or non-state social assistance, majority of single mothers who consider marrying again due to economic reasons are indicated as low-SES groups. It was also found out that single mothers experience challenges in raising their children alone in social life or in dealing with the daily problems. One of the major reasons for divorced women to feel lonely is indicated as the lacking social support mechanisms. This makes single mothers even more vulnerable because even if they are eligible to get benefit from the social assistance programs, the amounts are really inadequate in meeting the expenses of a household with dependent children. This study demonstrated that single mothers expect state to guarantee their children's economic and social welfare as well as financial support for their households. (General Directorate of Family and Social Research, 2011). Last but not least, this study included low-, middle-, and high-SES single parents



and found out that overall the number of single mothers who receive alimony is more than double of the number of mothers who cannot. However, it is indicated that the possibility for receiving alimony decreases for the low-SES single mothers. It is found out that about half of single mothers who are not receiving alimony did not even make a legal demand for it in the court or aftermath of the divorce within one-year application period because of three main reasons; the ex-husband has not sufficient income to meet the alimony amount; the ex-husband threatened single mother by having the custody of children or making difficulties in the divorce process; or the ex-husband was already willing to pay for the expenses of children.

To explore the economic activities of single parents working at Hacettepe University in Ankara, a study was conducted with 119 participants and the results were evaluated via quantitative analysis (Öztürk & Boylu, 2015). Respondents indicated that alimony has not been regularly paid by the husband and even if the single mother begins to work, she experiences a severe decrease in household income due to both expenses and loss of husband's salary (Öztürk & Boylu, 2015). In some cases, the husband never pays the alimony or he interferes with the lives of their ex-wives as long as they pay alimony (Gedik, 2015). Considering the state's in cash or in kind benefits for the single mothers, "financial aid is provided by foundations that are affiliated to the Prime Ministry General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity. But this assistance can only be received in case not being employed or receiving any income from social security organizations" (Öztürk & Boylu, 2015, p. 95). Even though there are also student aid, dry food, bread, fuel, meals from food banks and clothing aid alongside the financial aid they are very limited and do not prevent single mothers to fall into the category of working poor or even the poorest of the poor. This study is useful in order to show the severity of vulnerable situation of single parents even for group of a university staff who have particular level of regular monthly salary. However, it is not useful in showing the situation of low-SES divorce individuals.

There is a pilot study in which 25 divorced single mothers living in a middle class neighborhood of Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, were asked about stress-producing experiences and perceived sources of support by semi-structured questions using telephone interview (Çakır, 2010). Out of 25 interviewees, 18 have

the education at the level of high school or below while the remaining 7 have the education at the level of university or above. This study demonstrated that the family is the mostly referred support mechanism along with the friends and the major problem is stated as financial constraints (Çakır, 2010). Although this study is important in terms of framing the challenges divorced single mothers face and showing the significance of social solidarity mechanisms, it has particular flaws in drawing the entire picture of the situation. One of the reasons of it interviews were not conducted face-to-face so that the detailed stories of the interviewees in relation to stress-producing experiences and perceived social support mechanisms. The second reason is that the interviewees have not the similar or same levels of education so that their access to resources must have been different. In that case, their experiences in relation to stress-producing situations would be different as well. Furthermore, Research Project for the Development of a Cash Transfer Program for Widowed Women (Özar et al., 2011) was conducted in order to develop a social assistance scheme for the women who lost their husbands and during the research process, researchers realized that it is not so possible to focus only on widowed women without taking divorced and separated women into consideration. Thus, this study asked divorced, separated and widowed women if their household income meets the basic requirements such as food, fuel, clothing, shelter/rent, furniture and education of their children. According to the results of this in-depth study, only about one fourth of divorced and widowed women indicated that their household income can meet their basic needs. Besides, among the periodical social assistance programs the most common one is revealed as fuel allowance since one fifth of divorced and widowed women indicated that they get benefit from it. However, for the other indicators, divorced and widowed women who are in need of assistance receive very small amount of them (1.9 -9.3%). Besides, it was expressed by women that they may receive informal assistance from their family, neighbors and relatives. Although these informal social solidarity mechanisms are helpful to some extent, they are also quite inadequate for the maintenance of the lives of women and their children. Therefore, Özar et al. (2011) argued that none of the basic needs are met with the help of these formal or informal assistance mechanisms. They also indicated that although it was not a primary aim of the study

during in-depth interviews, they realized that large number of women faced violence from their husbands, own families or husbands' families. This was one of the most important motivations behind their decision to divorce. Another important finding of the study is that considerable number of divorced and widowed women who do not have social security work as house cleaner. Although it is now obligatory for people who employ house cleaners to make their social security payments, great numbers of women work in this sector informally. Other than house cleaning, women who do not have social security mostly do handcraft or work as sales clerk. In the study it is emphasized that none of these works are regular and provide regular income for those women. While these studies clearly demonstrated the vulnerable conditions which were experienced by divorced single mothers, another study revealed that divorced single mothers were double-discriminated against when compared to widowed mothers.

Gedik (2015) wrote her PhD thesis on widowed and divorced women and one of her main arguments is both experience serious economic and social difficulties but in different ways. As Gedik (2015) indicated, divorce is taken as an anomaly (Brandwein et al., 1974) to the structured and established norms of the society and thus divorced women are approached more cautiously when compared to the women who lost their husbands. Besides, from a social policies perspective, family has not a substitute but a genuine role in providing welfare to individuals. So, divorce is both seen as an anomaly to societal beliefs and traditions as well as to state's regulation of social policies in accordance with the family union. When it is reconsidered that employment rate of women living in Turkey is the lowest in OECD countries and non-OECD economies and women are expected to stay at home and perform their care duties, it becomes a major question what happens to care duties when mothers have to join paid employment either regularly or irregularly. As emphasized by Gedik (2015), an important aspect of the gender division of labor in Turkey is the lack of the public provision of care (Ecevit, 2012). This becomes a major challenge for the single-mothers since they do not generally have access to regularly-paid employment prior to divorce and when they enter into work force without a proper education and a related professional experience, they become highly dependent on the irregular and informal economy's underpaid and

low-skilled jobs (Toksöz, 2012). This means that it is almost impossible for a working single mother to afford private child care outside the home given the fact that the state does not provide affordable and reliable kindergarten or day care facilities. According to Family Structure Research in Turkey of 2016, day care for children is provided 86% by mothers and 7.4% by grandmothers whereas it is provided only 2.8% by nurseries and kindergartens (Turkstat, 2017).

Another major point regarding the social policies not prior to but aftermath of the divorce, as Gedik also put great emphasis in her thesis that “the family based social policies implicitly leave out single mothers and mostly focus on married or widow women” (2015, p. 95). Not only at the level of state social policies but also at the level of society, friends, and relatives divorced women are regarded as a threat to public order and accepted as deal breaker regardless of the situation or different reasons behind the case of divorce. As Kavas and Gündüz-Hoşgör pointed out rightly, “most of the literature views single parenting as a social problem contributing to societal ills such as delinquency, poverty and income insecurity” (2013, p. 56). Therefore, when the lack of social policies especially regarding the child care facilities and the society’s attitude towards divorced women are considered together, single-mothers who cannot afford privately provided child care services had to depend on their relatives or own family for the care of her children. This puts single-mothers even more vulnerable position because they have to expect a “favor” either from the state or the family which are both patriarchal in their structure and operation.

The family and the marriage are interpreted as protective of women, limiting their job’s choices and also encouraging them to bear and rear children. However, this means that once marriage ends, former wives are left outside the facilities provided within the marriage. (Gedik, 2015, p. 125)

This includes all kinds of support mechanisms from both the state and the society and thus, single-mothers who have already been excluded from the labor market for years have to cope with both informal, irregular and underpaid employment as well as child rearing. Thus, in Turkish culture it is not acceptable for women to set up their own households, working in the paid employment and looking after their children in the case of divorce (Kavas & Gündüz-Hoşgör, 2013). Therefore, as it was indicated before for this thesis it is essential to be able to come up with policy

recommendations in which single mothers will be emancipated from the patriarchal dependence to form autonomous households.

In conclusion, when it comes to the issue of divorce generally the mostly focused topics were post-divorce impacts over the psychological condition and educational success of children as well as the psycho-social well-being of divorced individuals. In addition, there were some studies conducted by focusing on the economic situation and income patterns of single parent families. On the other hand, the most relevant studies to this thesis were conducted in relation to single mothers and social policies. These studies mostly tried to understand the living conditions of divorced single parents and their dependent children as well as their needs in the post-divorce period. Previous studies generally referred single mothers as the combination of the widowed, divorced and separated individuals for two main reasons. One is that these studies wanted not to discriminate any one based on the reason of being a single parent. Second they also wanted to make a differentiation in between widowed and divorced women in order not to categorize them as different social groups but to demonstrate that state social policies lead to this discrepancy between these two. The previous studies conducted with single mothers either did not narrow their respondents in accordance with their education and socio-economic-status or they only focused on middle-class as well as high-income single mothers. This study will fill an important gap in the single mother literature in Turkey because; (1) it only focuses on low-SES divorced single mothers to draw the most accurate picture of their situation as much as possible; (2) it adopted in-depth interview as its method to get answers as much detailed as possible; (3) and it directly asks possible policy recommendations to the respondents to be able to make policy recommendations based on their real-life experiences and needs.

### **2.3.3. Divorce in Turkey**

As it is documented in the entire literature review of the previous studies, family is the center to Turkish society and the state. Its existence and maintenance was taken under the protection with the Article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey;

[f]amily is the foundation of the Turkish society and based on the equality between the spouses. The State shall take the necessary measures and

establish the necessary organization to protect peace and welfare of the family, especially mother and children, and to ensure the instruction of family planning and its practice. (Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2018)

Although family has such an important place in Turkish society, it has been in a transformation just like the United States and the EU countries. Turkey's Family Structure Research of 2016 showed that there is a decrease in crude marriage rate and an increase in crude divorce rate. Namely crude marriage rate was 8.35% in 2001 while it decreased to 7.5% in 2016. So, there is a 10.18% decrease in crude marriage rate in fifteen years. On the other hand, crude divorce rate was 1.41% in 2001 while it increased to 1.59% in 2016. Thus, crude divorce rate 12.77% increased within the same period (Turkstat, 2017). When it is considered that these serious changes occurred only within fifteen years, it can clearly be said that similar to the global trends in marriage and divorce, Turkey has also been facing a rapid change in its family structure. As a proof to this transformation, latest statistics demonstrated that households composed of single parent with children constitute the 8.2% of all the households in Turkey. While the ratio of single fathers with children is 1.7% the remaining 6.5% is the ratio of single mothers living with at least one dependent child (Turkstat, 2017). The potential reasons for divorce are explained in the Turkish Civil Code Law No. 4721. According to the different articles of this law the reasons of divorce are indicated as the following;

- "If one of the spouses commits adultery" (Article No. 161);
- "If any of the spouses deliberately attempts to kill the other, maltreats the other, or severely humiliates the other" (Article No. 162);
- "If one of the spouses commits a humiliating crime or unreasonable behavior and the other spouse can no longer be expected to continue to live together with the faulty spouse" (Article No. 163);
- "If one of the spouses has deserted the other in order to refrain from his/her matrimonial obligations or due to an unjustified reason and has not come back for minimum six months, the separation is still going on, and the legal notice sent by the court to the deserter spouse upon an application by the other spouse remains unanswered" (Article No. 164);

- “If one of the spouses suffers a mental disease, the marriage becomes intolerable to the other spouse due to such disease, and the medical committee of a public hospital issues a report to confirm that the said mental disease is incurable” (Article No. 165);
- “If the marriage has broken down in an irretrievable way so that the spouses cannot be expected to continue their marriage” (Article No. 165) a divorce case can be filed. (Akkaş Law Firm, 2018)<sup>1</sup>

Turkey’s Family Structure Research of 2016 explained the primary reasons of divorce by sex. For this study it is essential to know the major reasons on the side of women so that the reasons of divorce for men will not be given a place in this section. The mostly stated divorce reasons of women are indicated as;

1. Irresponsibility and indifference against family (61.5%)
2. Not being able to provide the economic livelihood of the household (42.6%)
3. Violence/maltreatment (36.4%)
4. Committing adultery (32.2%)
5. Irrespective behavior against women’s own family (24.6%)
6. Alcoholism (23%)
7. Interference from husband’s family into family matters (20.8%).

Based on these reasons, a divorce can be both uncontested and contested depending on an agreement between spouses. “In every family law case, there are 5 main issues which need to be resolved either through the Courts or through agreements. Those are: property and debt division, spousal support, child support, child custody and divorce” (Akkaş Law Firm, 2018). Unless spouses come to an agreement in the above-mentioned issues, they cannot usually get divorce at the court. These issues need to be solved either through mutual agreement between parties or, if that is not possible, apply to family courts to solve these issues for them. The process continues until parties come to an agreement. If, on the other hand, spouses are able to come to an agreement in all the above-mentioned issues,

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of the articles from Turkish to English is deliberately not made by the researcher to have the official translation of law terms so that the translated articles are taken from the website of Akkaş Law Firm (<http://akkaslaw.com/turkish-legal-grounds-for-divorce-in-turkey.html>)

the divorce can be quite easy with its uncontested nature. In this sense, for this study it is important to interpret the nature of divorce since the type of divorce is expected to have an impact over post-divorce social and financial resources of divorced single mothers and their children particularly in relation to the issue of alimony.

If the faultless or less faulty partner's existing or expected interests are damaged by dissolution of marriage, that partner will be entitled to claim an appropriate material compensation from the other partner. If the personality of one of the partners has been assaulted due to the events which led to dissolution of marriage, that partner will be entitled to claim an appropriate moral compensation from the other partner. (Article 174 as qtd. from Akkaş Law Firm, 2018)

In this sense, it is essential to understand the dynamics in receiving and not receiving alimony. According to the Turkey's Judiciary Statistics (Ministry of Justice General Directorate of Criminal Records and Statistics, 2017), there is an 11% increase in filing a petition for divorce in between the years of 2010 and 2017. However, it is not possible to see the same increasing pattern in the case of alimony such that filing a petition to demand for alimony decreased as 9.5% in between the years of 2010 and 2017. Besides, the same statistics revealed that 45.2% of the filed petitions for divorce in 2017 were uncontested due to "the irretrievable breakdown of marriage" (Women for Women's Human Rights [WWHR], 2002). It is important here to note that in both contested and uncontested divorce cases there can be a demand for alimony from the spouses. The difference is in the uncontested case, both sides agree whether there will be an alimony payment and if there will be a payment then what will be the amount of it. Thus, it is interesting to see that even though there is an increase in the filing petition for divorce, there is a decrease in filing petition for alimony. A very recent development regarding the alimony payments may be explanatory at this point. After the statement from the Ministry of Family and Social Policies as "ex-spouse should never be seen as a social security institution", the headlines of the upcoming regulation regarding alimony payment has been recently released (Cumhuriyet, 2018). According to the anticipated regulation, the period for paying the alimony will be determined by taking five conditions into consideration. These conditions are: the duration of marriage, having children, the age, income and "faultiness" of women. In case the one who receives the payment is woman, her "faultiness" will be considered. If woman's faultiness is



payment will be maximum one year. If there are children, the duration of the alimony payment will be either decided as 3 or maximum as 5 years. If the vulnerable situation continues at the end of the fifth year, then the state will create a separate fund to compensate it (Hürriyet, 2018). Women's associations, on the other hand, have protested against the anticipated regulation and said that this is only an attempt to deter women from divorcing. Canan Güllü, head of Federation of Women Associations of Turkey, indicated that

this step has been taken totally to prevent divorce and it is a reflection of the government's problematic outlook about women. This is telling women 'do not get divorce, otherwise I will not give you alimony!'. We do not have the luxury to say 'I do not care about your alimony'. This is imprisoning women into a marriage in a country in which everyday women are murdered after they file a divorce case or soon after the divorce. Last year 328 women were murdered. What is the government doing? Telling women 'do not get divorce'. We do not accept this. Enough!. (Cumhuriyet, 2018)

This regulation is also being criticized for not giving women any voice to raise during the preparation of the draft as well as for the male-dominant language of the media which heralded this as good news to men by saying "the end of lifelong alimony!" (Sönmez, 2018). Besides, it is reminded that lifelong poverty alimony has a very tiny percentage among all the other alimony types but the government twisted the numbers by referring court decisions made for all types of alimony. Although the ministry has the responsibility for empowering women's situation, it does exactly the reverse (Sönmez, 2018). With this regard, this study was already very important since it includes questions which investigate participants' stories on alimony. However, it gained much more importance with the introduction of such a regulation about alimony because it aims to demonstrate what kind of place alimony has among the financial resources of low-SES divorced single mothers with dependent children.

As indicated many times in this study, divorce is seen as a threat and anomaly to the existing order of the society and family structure by the state of Turkey. For this reason, divorce is not approached as an issue to focus its consequences creating vulnerable conditions for women and children. On the contrary, it is always tried to be prevented at the policy level. In order to take more

effective precautions to divorce, the state, specifically the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MFSP), mostly focused on and investigated the reasons of divorce in detail. Research on family structure and the reasons of divorce have been periodically conducted by the MFSP and Turkstat. Furthermore, not only the reasons of divorce have been actively and very willingly investigated in detail but also the divorce rates were followed in every city. For instance, the top 12 cities in which the divorce rate was highest among all other cities of Turkey within the first five years of marriage were given a special attention by the MFSP. It is decided that the pre-marriage trainings in these cities will become more widespread in order to prevent the increase in divorce rates (Sputnik, 2017).

In order to prevent divorce, a parliamentary investigation committee has been formed and they came up with a report with almost five hundred pages which shortly says the family is the most important element and we need to maintain it in every means possible. One of the most hotly debated issues raised in this report (Grand National Assembly of Turkey, 2016) was initiating a project that will make it compulsory for every couple who wants to divorce to see “mediators” when they begin the legal process of divorce. It is said that seeing mediators will only not be compulsory if the case involves violence against women. However, the same report also expressed that if the victim of violence asks for it, the victim and the spouse who engaged in violence can be brought close together by taking the victim’s meeting demands into consideration in the cases of basic and non-repetitive complaints in order to protect the institution of family and to provide family integrity (Tahaoğlu, 2016). The Minister of Family and Social Policies Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya defended the report and indicated that “we believe that strong Turkey requires strong families. Of course there will be legal and administrative precautions to strengthen the institution of family” (Evrensel, 2017).

Women’s rights defenders, on the other hand, declared that they do not recognize this report and the regulation of intermediary mainly because it has a potential to imprison women within the violent marriage. Besides, they argue that in order to use the intermediary, parties must be equal in every condition but women in Turkey are never equal to men in domestic and public spheres. Furthermore, the report only takes sexual and physical violence into consideration while there are

many other violence types such as economic and psychological violence. They indicate that women are already extensively exposed to such violence on the way to make a divorce decision and these kinds of legal and administrative obstacles make the situation worse for them (Karaca, 2017).

As it can be seen in the above-mentioned steps taken by the government, divorce is already tried to be suppressed and reduced let alone developing support mechanisms for divorced single mothers and their children. Even the Directorate General of Social Assistance operates under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies which reminds the fact that one can be eligible for social assistance programs within the boundaries of the institution of family. One of the most obvious outcomes of this approach is not having any social assistance program designed only for the benefit of divorced women. Social assistance programs are categorized under six different headings: family assistance, education assistance, assistance for the disabled, special assistance in case of a disaster and emergency, health assistance and assistance for foreigners. Under the heading of family assistance, there is a social assistance program which targets only widowed women. According to this program, widowed women who meet the eligibility requirements are entitled to the bimonthly payment of 550 Turkish Lira (MFSP, n.d.). Although this amount is not adequate to meet the basic needs, it symbolizes an important differentiation made by the state in between divorced and widowed women. Thus, this study will also make a meaningful contribution to the issue of social assistance by asking its low-SES participants if they ever get benefited from any of the state benefits before and after divorce. It does not only seek for Yes or No answer to this question though. It aims to reveal divorced single mothers' experiences with state institutions in asking, receiving or not receiving the social assistance. In this way it aims to understand to what extent state social policies are sufficient to help one of the most vulnerable group of low-SES divorced single mothers and their children. Although there are few studies (Gedik, 2015; Özar et al., 2011; Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2012) which discussed that there is a need for considering divorced women's needs along with the widowed women's, there is not any study conducted with only low-SES divorced single mothers to focus their pre- and post-divorce experiences in relation to the family resources they have and social policies the state provides/does not

provide. Thus, this study will make a unique contribution by making policy suggestions after hearing the detailed real-life experiences of such a vulnerable group through not only focusing state social policies but also through reflecting their vulnerability in terms of the family resources they have.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In order to understand and explore divorced single mothers' pre- and post-divorce cultural, social and financial family resources as well as their relationship to existing/missing social policies of Turkey, this study is designed in a way for asking policy recommendations from the single mothers themselves. This chapter provides detailed explanation regarding the justification of methods used, processes of accessing to the interviewees and conducting interviews, the main characteristics of the respondents along with the ways of data analysis and methodological limitations of the study.

#### **3.1. Research Questions**

This study was decided to be conducted primarily due to lack of literature and research on divorced single mothers living in Turkey and their cultural, social and financial resources. In order to explore and understand divorced single mothers' perception of pre- and post-divorce family resources such as employment and insurance status; economic situation; time allocation; social, financial and emotional support from family; in-kind and in-cash assistance by the state and non-state actors. In relation to this objective, this study aimed to make policy recommendations by directly asking respondents' own thoughts and suggestions to better cope with the lack of resources during and after divorce. Moreover, this research particularly aimed to understand single mothers' preferences for social, emotional and financial support mechanisms; either from the state, the family or themselves to make an inference about their understanding of individuality and having an autonomous way of living. Although the specific aims and research questions were explained in detail at the introduction part of the thesis, they can be summarized as such:

- What are the financial, social and cultural resources of low-SES, low educated and low-skilled divorced single mothers?

- What kind of difficulties did single mothers experience in the pre- and post-divorce period due to lack of resources?
- Through which mechanisms –through the state assistance, with the family’s support, by acquiring and using their own resources– do single mothers prefer to receive economic, social, and cultural resources?
- What are the policy recommendations in line with the single mothers’ own preferences for support mechanisms and perception of autonomy?

### **3.2. Design and Methods**

In line with the research questions and main aims of this study, feminist research approach has been adopted as theoretical framework since one of its primary objectives is being “transformative” (Creswell, 1998, p. 83). In this study, single mothers who have custody of their dependent child(ren) are the main focus because they are exposed to multiple inequalities due to divorce, lack of resources and gendered social policies. This study is in line with the feminist research’s aim of “correcting both the invisibility and the distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal social position” (Lather, 1991, p. 71). Therefore, current study aimed to transform both single mothers’ unequal situation and gendered social policies by directly referring these women’s own experiences and suggestions.

As reiterated at the beginning of this part, first and foremost aim of this study was to explore single mother’s pre-divorce and post-divorce family resources in relation to existing/missing social policies. It also aimed to hear single mothers’ own policy recommendations to be able to better cope with the divorce and post-divorce period. After identifying the main aim and target group of the study, as Creswell (1998, p. 124) indicated, the next procedure was determining “what type of interview is practical and will net the most useful information to answer research questions”. In order to explore single mothers’ understanding of social, cultural and financial resources and hear their own preferences of support mechanisms, most accurate method was using semi-structured in-depth interviews as one of “the fundamental methods relied on by qualitative researchers” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 78). Since divorce is a highly subjective and complicated process, it was

essential to get every interviewee's own perception and experience with open-ended but not strictly structured questions. In this way, this qualitative study aimed to receive more comprehensive answers from the respondents as well as for me to have a chance to make observations in the field. In addition, one of the most important characteristics of semi-structured questionnaire is giving researcher the opportunity to kindly interrupt and clarify the points respondents raised (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 81). Furthermore, semi-structured interview questions are predetermined. So every interviewee answers the same questions which, in return, make it suitable for comparison during data analysis process.

### **3.3. Ethical Considerations**

As an essential ethical consideration for every research being conducted, "permissions need to be sought from a human subjects review board, a process in which a campus committee reviews research studies for their potential harmful impact on subjects (or participants)" (Creswell, 1998, p. 115). In line with this procedure, the required permission was asked to the Middle East Technical University Human Subjects Ethics Committee. In the application form, the data collection processes as well as the characteristics of interviewees were explained in detail. In addition, number of interviewees and the time frame for conducting interviews were declared. Furthermore, an informed consent form which will be read and signed by the participants of the study was prepared and also presented to the committee. After reviewing of all the materials, the conduct of study was approved by the committee on 12.02.2018.

### **3.4. Access to Respondents and Conduct of Interviews**

In accordance with the procedure (Creswell, 1998, p. 124) that needs to be followed by the researcher for one-on-one in-depth interviews, first the interview protocol was designed with the semi-structured questionnaire. In order to see if prepared questions are useful and practical to be able to answer the research questions, two pilot study were conducted. So it was assured that the responses given to the semi-structured questionnaire are able to answer the research questions and feed the study well, it was decided to use it without making any revisions.

Therefore, the data collection period started on 15.02.2018 and ended on 31.03.2018.

Since this study aimed to reach out to low-educated, low-income and low-skilled divorced single mothers who are living with at least one of their dependent children, I needed to use a reliable gatekeeper in order to get consent from the respondents for the interviews. In this sense, my mother was the first and main gatekeeper since she was a member of a municipality's women's club located in one of the most low-income, low-educated and conservative neighborhoods of Altındağ province in Ankara. She explained the main aims of the study to potential interviewees and tried to get their consent to participate into the study. At the first stage of reaching out to the respondents, majority of the women gave consent to participate because they already knew the gatekeeper and trusted her. When the firsthand contacts of the first gatekeeper were over, my aunt became the second gatekeeper since she was a member of another municipality's women's club located in a relatively less conservative but still low-income and low-educated neighborhood of Yenimahalle province in Ankara. At this point, it is essential to note that remaining respondents who have no direct and personal contact with both gatekeepers were found by using snowball sampling method through asking respondents if they could connect me with a potential participant. Furthermore, there were only few women who did not want to participate because they avoided talking about their divorce experiences. When women accepted to participate into the study, they were contacted by phone and explained the overall aim of the study along with the estimated duration of the interview which is 30 minutes. After they gave their final consent to conduct an interview, the interviewees were asked to provide time and place which they find most suitable for their schedule and convenient for easy speaking. The interviews were conducted in the abovementioned women's club in Altındağ, at respondents' own houses, at their workplace or in the cafés they wanted to meet up with me. It is important here to note that all these places were highly familiar to the respondents so that I was able to make close observations of their social environment and, if the meeting place was their own house, living conditions. When I met the interviewees, I read them the informed consent form or asked them to read themselves. All twenty interviewees –



including the two pilot studies— read and signed the consent form by indicating that they voluntarily participated into the study. They were also informed through the consent form that I will be recording the interview and treating it confidentially. As Marshall and Rossman (1995) indicated combining the literature review, previous data and the researcher's transcription of the current data greatly increase the efficiency of data analysis. In this sense, while the data collection process was continuing I made verbatim transcriptions of every interview conducted. At the end of each interview, I thanked the participants for spending time and sharing their life stories and gave them a little gift to be used at home.

### **3.5. Key Characteristics of the Respondents**

One of the most important characteristics of qualitative research and in-depth interviewing is not to have a predetermined number of interviews but to achieve to the saturation point. This kind of flexibility is seen not as a weakness but rather as strength of a qualitative research since it enables researcher to explore and discover more (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). In this sense, the number of interviews is only a means for a researcher to achieve the desired amount of information and to explore more on the experiences of individuals. Specifically speaking for this study, number of divorced single mothers was estimated around 20 individuals prior to data collection. When the I started to transcribe the recordings synchronously with the ongoing data collection process, I understood that 20 was adequate as estimated; no more new themes and patterns will emerge and the study reached its saturation point.

The target group of this study was divorced single mothers who live together with their at least one dependent child. This group was particularly and purposefully narrowed down to reach out to women whose socio-economic status and education level is low. This is primarily because low-SES, low-education and unskilled divorced women are anticipated as one of the most vulnerable group of women mainly due to lack of family resources and adequate social policies. Namely, the highest education level of the participants was associate degree, the majority of the mothers were primary school and high school graduates and none of them were illiterate. Although the economic situation was categorized into two sections,

monthly income –the combination of all incomes such as salary, orphan’s pension and alimony– of all mothers fall under the May 2018 poverty line of 5,492 Turkish Lira (Türk-İş, 2018). This categorization was made in order to show the number of mothers whose income is even below the minimum net income of 2018, 1,603 Turkish Lira (Turkish Labor Law, 2018). The average income of the respondents was 1,653.5 TL and it ranged from 0 to 4,000 TL. Out of 34 children, 29 were still dependent to their mothers –meaning they are still studying. It is worth to reiterate here that every mother has at least one dependent child she lives together. In addition, all respondents were living in Ankara and specifically residing within the poor to middle income neighborhoods of Altındağ and Yenimahalle provinces. The average age of the respondents was 43.6 and it ranged from 33 to 61. Moreover, the time passed over divorce varied in between 2 to 19 years –which provided a wide period of experience.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

I organized the recorded and transcribed data in terms of mothers’ cultural, social and financial resources. In addition, I rearranged the data in accordance with these mothers’ family resources in pre- and post-divorce periods. Later, these organizations of data assisted me to determine and interpret the particular themes and patterns. In order to better determine the themes and to make a thorough deduction for relations and patterns between these themes, I first conducted descriptive analysis by using SPSS. For the patterns I observed during SPSS analysis and for the questions which had descriptive answers, I did fundamental analysis through reading the material in detail and discussed these analyses by relating them with the above-mentioned literature. In presenting the results of the analysis, I mostly demonstrated the findings by referring or directly making use of the verbatim quotes of the interviewees.

### **3.7. Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

“Interviews involve personal interaction; cooperation is essential” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 81). In this sense, I established mutual cooperation and trust with the respondents so that in-depth interviews resulted with large and varied amount of information. This is one of the most important strengths of a qualitative

research since it provided me with a detailed picture of the situation. In addition, the method of snowballing enabled me to reach out to participants from similar socio-economic backgrounds and neighborhoods. Despite these similarities, interviewees were highly diverse in their divorce experiences. To clarify this point, it is important here to note that this study did not only learn from women whether they are receiving alimony but also learnt the backstory of having/not having alimony. To raise another point, this study did not only ask single mothers whether they are receiving state's social assistance but also investigated and found out the story behind it. Thus, obtaining such an insight and getting previously undiscovered data from a similar group of individuals was another strength of this study. Although semi-structured in-depth interviews have their own strengths, there are also numbers of limitations. Number of interviews was not high enough to make generalizable assumptions about the experiences of divorced single mothers in relation to family resources and social policies. Besides, due to snowballing method I adopted for this study, the respondents were belong to the same or similar socio-economic group which in return might have prevented this study to have very diverse pre- and post-divorce experiences. However, the study was important in terms of exploring and understanding mothers' experiences, perspectives and recommendations to be able to find relationships in between their vulnerable conditions and existing or missing family resources as well as social policies. The first and foremost objective of this study was this exploration given the fact that there is no previous study which relates and tries to find connections in between divorce, family resources and social policies from a feminist theoretical framework. Further quantitative research can be conducted upon this explorative study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SINGLE MOTHERS' FAMILY RESOURCES AND THE PERCEPTION OF AUTONOMY IN THE PRE- AND POST-DIVORCE PERIOD**

In this study, I asked the respondents questions regarding their cultural, social and financial resources for both pre- and post-divorce periods. In this sense, pre-divorce period is a highly subjective timeframe. When I asked respondents about their pre-divorce experiences, every woman referred to her own memories remained from their marriage experience so that every interviewee had her own perception of pre-divorce period. Nevertheless, it is important to note that majority of the respondents talked about the most depressing and recent periods of their marriage as pre-divorce experiences. This study revealed that the reasons put divorced single mothers into a vulnerable and difficult situation are multifaceted. As it was indicated in the introduction chapter and will be handled in detail in the next chapter, existing and missing social policies have an undeniable impact over the resources of low-SES divorced single mothers and their children. Thus, if there are other factors influential as much as social policies they are the resources these mothers have or do not have. Semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with twenty divorced single mothers clearly demonstrated that cultural, social and financial resources they have are extremely influential in their experiences before and after divorce. Although these resources were elaborated under different subheadings they were interrelated and deeply influenced each other.

#### **4.1 Cultural Resources**

Cultural resources refer to the whole of acquired human capital primarily through one's level of education. For this reason the level of education also determines other type of resources to be accumulated through one's educational and vocational qualifications. Lacking high levels of education and job experiences

cause employment in low-paid and irregular jobs. That is why one's employment status is evaluated primarily under the cultural resources not as the main source and indicator of monthly income or financial resources but as a fundamental determinant of one's capability to achieve and acquire knowledge and/or human capital. In addition to one's education level, on the other hand, age is also treated as one of the influential factors in participants' employment status since it affects individuals' accumulated human capital as well as prior vocational experience. These will be elaborated in detail in light of the respondents' answers below.

#### **4.1.1. Pre-divorce experiences in relation to cultural resources**

One of the most salient problems these mothers faced in relation to cultural resources was their low levels of education. Except the two mothers whose highest education was associate degree –means a degree given after two years of college study following high school– the highest education level was high school. Eleven respondents were high school graduates and the remaining seven were primary school graduates. Having a low education highly affected the respondents' experiences during pre- and post-divorce periods. This was quite salient in their statements since majority of women indicated that if they had received higher levels of education, everything would have been different in their experiences with employment, marriage and divorce. There are many reasons for them to think that their experiences would have been different.

*I had actually wished to continue my education but my ex-husband did not support this idea much. This is because if a smart woman had been educated more, she would have been smarter and he would not want it. He was saying I am the breadwinner and this is my money. He tried to dominate in this way. Men do not like smart women. (N., 52)*

*Before we [herself and the children] were asking permission even for doing shopping at the market. Apparently I had to ask for his permission like 'can we buy this' or 'can we do that'. (Ş., 42)*

As it can be seen from their statements, respondents believed that having low levels of education mostly due to their parents' reluctance for sending them to higher education institutions is one of the main reasons of their dependency and financial incapability. Majority of the respondents did not have any jobs and only a few respondents had their own social insurance prior to divorce. Thus, they were highly

dependent to their ex-husband culturally, socially and financially since not having a personal income also affected their capability to make contributions their human capital and social network. Many respondents indicated that their husbands did not let them to continue their education, to work or simply to learn more and become cultured. Moreover, interviewees also added that their husbands financially restricted them that they even could not do shopping at the market for their very basic needs without asking permission of their husbands let alone spending money on any activity for personal development such as receiving vocational treatment, taking language course, or simply going out with the friends and having a social network. Based on the participants' answers with regard to cultural resources they had during the pre-divorce period, it is interpreted that they were not feeling independent and autonomous at all. It is understood that being dependent on their husbands and not being able to develop themselves due to the above-mentioned restrictions made them very upset and regretful about the past. This gives a very clear clue about the participants' perception of autonomy; they did not normalize this patriarchal oppression but they saw it as the primary reason of their limited accumulation of cultural resources.

#### **4.1.2. Post-divorce experiences in relation to cultural resources**

Having low level of education and human capital was not only influential in respondents' pre-divorce experiences but also in the post-divorce experiences. This is mainly because one of the most serious challenges following divorce was not being able to find regular, formal and well-paid jobs with low level of education and almost no prior experience. Being only able to find jobs such as housekeeping, cleaning, caregiving, and serving is one of the primary reasons for divorced single mothers and their children to live in difficult conditions and become so vulnerable in the post-divorce period.

*I wish I could have a job with a higher income so that I would not in need of help from anyone and would handle it [divorce] more easily. (T., 52)*

*I wish I could have a very good job. Then I would have handled all these [challenges brought by divorce] by myself. I wish my job and salary would have been better. We missed that opportunity. (S., 52)*

As it can clearly be seen from the respondents' own statements, having low level of education and thus not being able to find regular job were undeniable influential for their dependency to outside sources of support. They indicated that if they would have a regular job they would not be dependent on anyone but they would become self-sufficient. This is an important indicator regarding their perception of having independent and autonomous living conditions following divorce since almost all of the respondents said that they would like to stand on their own feet. In addition to challenges in finding regular job, respondents also indicated that due to lack of high level of education and human capital they were "ignorant" and did not aware of their legal rights at the time of and after divorce. Namely, they either did not have any information or they were misinformed. This caused them to not to claim their rights at the court or later in other public institutions such as workplace. Besides, respondents indicated that they were not aware of the rights and opportunities that they could benefit from such as social assistance programs or potential scholarships for their children. This clearly demonstrates that being oppressed during the pre-divorce period and thus not being able to accumulate adequate knowledge and capital undeniably affected participants' post-divorce experiences.

*I thought that if I had claimed an alimony or compensation payment, the court might have decided that I did not have enough means to support my child and thus given the custody to the father. (H., 35)*

*If I would be formally employed and insured, my social assistance will be cut along with my alimony. I heard that if I have insurance the state will cut my alimony. I do not know whether this is true or not but my workplace says the same and does not arrange insurance for me. (H., 39)*

*We were not aware as today's youth. We did not know where to apply [for social assistance following divorce]... The state could have supported our children in their education, it might have provided social projects to guide them because we were 'ignorant' and did not know much because I became a mother at the very young age. (S., 52)*

*May be I can call it 'ignorance' but there was also not any guidance [regarding social assistance from private organizations]. (E., 52)*

Respondents' answers clearly demonstrated that their low level of education and unawareness caused them to have incomplete or incorrect information about their rights or the programs they could benefit from. One of the respondents thought, for instance, if she could have asked for alimony then the court could have not given the

custody of her daughter to herself but could decide it to be given to her husband. Another respondent's boss at the workplace told the respondent that if she would have social security than her alimony will be cut by the state. This mother did not aware that her boss was lying for not paying her insurance premiums and she did not have the necessary level of awareness to realize it. Also, it is apparent that the respondents were deprived of potential benefits for both themselves and their children in the post-divorce period so that their vulnerable situation has been worsened. This proves that the male oppression caused by lack of cultural resources during the pre-divorce period continued during the post-divorce period as a different form of oppression. In other words, divorced single mothers were oppressed by their husbands during the pre-divorce period primarily because they were highly dependent to their husbands. This was because they lacked high levels of education and adequate accumulation of human capital to provide them with decent job to make a living without being dependent to anyone else. This oppression, on the other hand, does not come to an end upon marriage. This study revealed that this male oppression continued during the post-divorce period in three different forms; (1) by the ex-husband due to lack of information about having the custody of children; (2) by the state due to lack of information about the social assistance programs or benefits; (3) by the market through the male boss figure due to lack of information about rights as an employee. Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that divorced single mothers who lack cultural resources are one way or another oppressed during the post-divorce period by different but mutually patriarchal mechanisms.

Furthermore, this study revealed that mothers who did not have any job experience prior to divorce experienced difficulties in finding regular and formal jobs. Although education was one of the most important causes of this struggle, another very influential factor was the age of divorce. The average divorce age of the respondents was 35.8 which is higher than the age of 34 after which women's possibility to be employed shows a decreasing pattern in Turkey (Dayıoğlu & Kırdar, 2010). Similarly, the number of women who consult with the Turkish Employment Agency (İş-Kur) to find job decreases after the age of 35 (Turkish Employment Agency & Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2015). After this age and with little to no experience on a particular occupation, divorced single mothers



have almost no means to achieve a decent job with regular work hours and social insurance. The researcher, on the other hand, observed that even if the interviewees have been aware of the possible ways to compensate lacking cultural resources, they also need to have other social and financial resources. One of the respondents, for instance, indicated that even if she is a graduate of high school, she is still trying to finish the university through distance learning, reading books a lot and trying to develop herself as much as possible. Another respondent said a similar thing that lacking cultural or other resources cannot be considered separately from the financial resources since it is essential in determining one's capability to be able to allocate time and money for personal development to make contribution to cultural resources.

*Most things are directly related to financial well-being. If I have money, I would not waste even a minute and fill it with an activity... Being aware but not being able to do is worse than not being aware at all. In this situation it would have been better not being aware. At least I would not suffer and feel guilty. So, this awareness is not adequate all the time; other resources and opportunities are also needed in our lives. (E., 38)*

*When there is a financial independence, your own house and a good income for maintaining your monthly expenses, all [cultural and social resources] can be obtained. If you have these you can already handle the rest one way or another. (N., 39)*

As declared, one of the respondents indicated that although she has the awareness and personal will to make more contribution to her human capital and educate herself as much as possible, she does not have necessary financial resources and opportunities to put her further plans into practice while the other respondent clearly said that without being able to meet the monthly expenses and maintaining a particular standard of living it is highly difficult for one to focus on accumulating other possible resources. Thus, it is important to once again express that cultural, social and financial resources cannot be approached as if they are completely different from each other. On the contrary, they are highly related to each other and one's presence affects the other undoubtedly. Finally, it is not only the lack of cultural resources or human capital that exacerbates divorced single mothers' and their children's vulnerable condition but it is also lack of state support mechanisms. Namely, it is quite obvious that there is not sufficient state assistance to enable

citizens an access to true information regarding their legal rights as well as social assistance schemes. Similarly, it is apparent that these mothers do not have adequate state support not only for fully meeting everything they are in need but even as supplementary means for compensating the missing ones.

## **4.2. Social Resources**

Social resources refer to social network, social and emotional support mechanisms and social activities. There are other factors, though, which influence the accumulation of such resources in both pre- and post-divorce periods such as household setting, time allocation and time passed over divorce.

### **4.2.1. Pre-divorce experiences in relation to social resources**

In-depth interviews demonstrated that respondents were not able to have a wide social network in pre-divorce period mostly due to jealous and suppressive behavior of the husband and/or his family but also because of the gendered division of labor and excessive time allocation for the unpaid domestic labor. Majority of the respondents indicated that they only saw family –either husband’s or her family– and few respondents asserted that they saw both family and friends.

*I was only seeing my ex-husband’s family. (N., 39)*

*I did not have much social environment because of my ex-husband’s and his family’s pressures. At most I was seeing my few closest friends and occasionally my siblings. I was already working and also had not much time for seeing other people. I was mostly seeing my own family and closest friends. (T., 52)*

*I was not seeing anyone because he believed that if I see people for several times they can teach me something and make me more aware. He did not want my family to visit either. (Y., 61)*

Respondents faced serious restrictions not only from their husbands within their oppressive relationships but also from their husbands’ families. They were not able to go outside and make any friends but only seeing their own families and the husbands’. Even some respondents indicated that they were not seeing their own families much because their husbands did not want them to do so. Respondents were sometimes able to see friends but they were mostly common friends with their husbands. Some respondents were able to see their families without any problem

because they were already relatives with the husband and the families had already known each other. These experiences clearly demonstrated that divorced single mothers of this study were truly under the oppression of patriarchal family structure in which women were dominantly seen as domestic workers and servants of not only the husband and children but also of the extended family of the husband. In this sense, pre-divorce household setting was also an important determinant of their relationship with such oppressive behavior. This is because some of the respondents indicated that they were living together with the husband's extended family and this caused them a lot of stress and overwork while some others indicated that they were living within the same neighborhood and thus they were compulsorily seeing the husband's family all the time.

*I was mostly seeing his mother, father and sisters. This is because we were all living together. (A., 37)*

*I was mostly seeing my mother, father and siblings. I was living in the city of Van [a very conservative Eastern city of Turkey] and we [husband and husband's family] were staying altogether within the same neighborhood. So whether you would like it or not, you had to see your husband's side. (H., 38)*

*I was constantly doing house work because it was a very crowded family. I was like a servant at that home. (N., 39)*

This study revealed that some of the low-SES divorced single mothers did not have their autonomous households at all even during the marriage due to living with or within the same neighborhood with the husband's extended family. Even though they were living in a separate place, the husband's family was still very influential in making the household decisions or simply the husbands have never let the participants of this study to make decisions for their household. Thus, these women had left the house of their family and went to another house managed by another patriarch, the husband. So, they have never experienced the conditions in which they have a voice to raise within the household. As it can be seen in the following section of post-divorce experiences in relation to social resources, this oppression undeniably affected their perception and understanding of individual and autonomous living in the post-divorce period. In addition to pre-divorce household setting, these mothers' pre-divorce time allocation is revealed as one of the most important factors determining one's social network. When asked about their time

allocation patterns on unpaid domestic work including caring and raising of children as well as the time allocated only to themselves during pre-divorce period, all respondents said that they were allocating majority of their time to housework and children that they had no private time on their own at all.

*Children were little so I was allocating majority of my time to children. (N., 44)*

*I could not be able to allocate time for only myself...I was allocating much more time to housework. (M., 49)*

*I was spending the whole day with these, with my child and cleaning. As we have always done so. (H., 39)*

*Since I was not working [in the paid labor market], I was all the time at home. I was spending all my time with housework and the children. (E., 52)*

Since these women were spending all their times with unpaid domestic work at home they did not have any chance to go outside and socialize with different people other than families and relatives. Their whole universe was the inside of house and yet they did not have a say in it. Furthermore, great majority of the participants had little child(ren) in the pre-divorce period so that they had to spare almost all their times to the childrearing and housework duties. Thus, they were not able to allocate leisure time for only themselves to develop more cultural and social resources. It would not be wrong to point out that they had no autonomy over the time they used due to gendered division of labor within the household since they were all expected to perform their cleaning and motherhood duties. This situation, on the other hand, substantially changed following divorce. As it will be elaborated in detail in the following sections, divorced single mothers living with at least one dependent child faced both the advantages and disadvantages of being divorced in terms of having social resources in the form of emotional and social support and social network.

#### **4.2.2. Post-divorce experiences in relation to social resources**

In line with the findings of previous studies (Chase-Lansdale & Hetherington, 1990; Hetherington, 1989; Booth & Amato, 1991), this study revealed that 2-3 years of time frame was important for divorced single mothers to arrange a new household setting and to overcome the crisis period. At the time of face to face

interviews, few mothers were experiencing this period since the time passed over their divorce was equal to or below 3 years.

*When I have problems with the children he gives a support and talks to them. When there is illness or something he also cares. Actually I am one of the “lucky” single mothers. Really. This is because my ex-husband did not withdraw his support and he still says ‘as long as I am alive, I will not withdraw my financial support’. In this sense, I feel lucky. (D., 44)*

As it can be seen from the above-mentioned statement of one of the participants, she and her ex-husband did not cut the ties following divorce and he regularly supports her and the children emotionally and financially whenever they need it. However, the other women who were still in the recovery period were not as “lucky” as her. It was quite clear that in the post-divorce recovery period, the way in which spouses get divorced and the personal dialogue between them outside of the institution of marriage were essential in making this process easier or harder. This is mainly because I was able to easily observe that the other respondents who were still in the first 2-3 years of divorce were highly emotional and their memories in relation to the time of divorce were quite alive compared to majority of the respondents who already passed the first crisis period following divorce. Not only my observations but also the statements of the respondents themselves indicated that they were still in the process of psychological and financial recovery at the time of interviews. These respondents mainly talked about the difficulties in establishing a new order with their dependent children during this transition process.

*Following the very first year of divorce children lived with their father for me to put my life in an order again. My son was mostly staying at the dormitory while my daughter was staying with the father. When I recovered, I took my children back to live together. (Ş., 42)*

*At the time of divorce I stayed at my mother’s place with the children for 3-4 months. She lost her loved ones within a short period of time and was not in a good psychology. Although she was living alone and her house was convenient for all of us to live together, she could not stand. Finding this house, moving our furniture and buying the new ones, and putting this house in order were really difficult. This process caused us great distress. (E., 48)*

Therefore, time passed over divorce is an important factor in determining social resources of single mothers and in this study majority of the respondents were already recovered and established a new household setting. The reason for

emphasizing this point is that majority of the respondents already passed the recovery period which means they were already overcome the considerable amount of divorce-caused distress and were able to form a new household. Thus, when asked about their post-divorce experiences in relation to social support mechanisms, social network and social activities they did not refer to the temporary crisis period but rather shared their ordinary life experiences. This is important because the perception of independent way of living and autonomy over the use of resources were reflecting participants' experiences with an already recovered post-divorce period not the temporary adjustment process.

#### **4.2.2.1. Post-divorce social and emotional support from ex-husband**

This study demonstrated that the dialogue with and the potential support from ex-husband are highly related with the reasons of divorce. Namely, few respondents indicated that they still have support –either financial or emotional– from their ex-husbands and their reasons of divorce were not alcohol, gambling addiction, physical violence, adultery, and other kinds of misbehaving. These respondents' main reasons of divorce were mainly personal reasons originating from one's different personality traits such as not getting along well, selfishness, indifference and irresponsibility, incompatibility, lending money to others, and the arguments they had right before the time of divorce. These women indicated that they did not become like an enemy with their ex-husbands; they are still taking care of the children.

*There is a kind of a relationship in between me and my ex-husband that –of course God knows but– I believe in his sincerity. When he has [money or other resources] he would give us. (E., 38)*

*Since I did not want a prolonged judicial process, I did not ask for alimony and we got an uncontested divorce. This is also because he said he will do his best. Now he regularly pays 700 TL per month. Children see him on weekends. We have no such problems. He all the time calls and takes care of the children on weekends. (Ş., 42)*

*I am comfortable because I did not experience much pressure. We heard that many women are subjected to violence. There was no such experience in our case. (D., 44)*

Except these few respondents, majority of them said their husbands do not take care of children, in most cases they do not see the children at all. Even if they see

children very occasionally, they are not interested in meeting any of the emotional needs.

*The father is absent. He has not seen his son for years. (Y., 61)*

*He visited my child's school only once for many years. Recently, they called from preparation course to talk with the father and he did not even answer the phone. (N., 40)*

This clearly demonstrates that parents' reasons of divorce and post-divorce dialogue highly affect children's relationship with their father in the post-divorce period. Thus, it is not only single mothers' experiences with inadequate emotional and social support in raising children without the other parent but it is also children become deprived of adequate social and emotional support from their fathers in the post-divorce period. Respondents' statements showed that children whose psycho-social well-being were already harmed during the process of divorce became deprived of a very and even the most important emotional and social support mechanism, the father. For this reason, single mothers also fall into a more vulnerable situation because children who are supposed to be under the responsibility of both parents fell under the responsibility of only mother. This caused these mothers to be dependent on other social support mechanisms such as family, friends and neighbors for potential emotional and social support especially in raising children and socializing with others.

#### **4.2.2.2. Post-divorce social and emotional support from family, friends and neighbors**

Although it seems that the majority of respondents were able to form and maintain autonomous households in which they are the sole responsible persons of both home and children after overcoming of the crisis period following divorce, it was revealed that majority of the mothers were able to maintain their lives thanks to the constant or occasional support coming from their families. Great majority of the respondents said that they had social and emotional support from both their families and friends in the post-divorce period.

*My family supported me the most. My child was 6 months old when his father left us. Now he is 10 years old. It was a long time and not easy at all. I was supported by my father. Although very little, he sent money to me. (H., 39)*

*I was supported by my family a lot. Without them I would not be in this condition now. They supported me both psychologically and financially. They supported my child so that he/she would not experience any difficulty. (A., 37)*

*I was supported by my siblings both financially and emotionally. (S., 33)*

Only few respondents said that they did not have any support from either family or friends. One of them said that she is Kurdish and according to her family's tradition she needs to remarry because she got divorced in a young age. She said that she does not have a father and her uncle wants her to give children away to her ex-husband and remarry. That is why she run away from her family in Istanbul to Ankara and she did not take any social or emotional support from her family. She, however, added that her friend in Ankara helped her to move and resettle in here. This experience was highly important for two main reasons. First, it was revealed that discrimination against women has not only gender but also race dimension. This was because this single mother experienced a double-disadvantage due to her Kurdish identity. Second, this example showed that even though she experienced double disadvantage with her three children who were very little at the time of divorce, she did not give up on her independent way of living and did everything to establish an autonomous household in an entirely different city away from her family and their pressures.

*I knew that my family would not let me live comfortably. Because we are a family from the eastern part of Turkey, in our traditions, if a woman gets divorce, she has to stay with her family and remarry within a month. Because I went through a lot, I did not want to [marry again]. I needed to find a place for myself and with the support of my friend I came to Ankara. My family did not want my children. They wanted to give my children to their father and make me marry someone else. When I heard about these [intentions], I took my children and came to Ankara. (L., 37)*

The other respondent who said that she did not receive any support from either family or friends was one of the most self-sufficient single mothers since she had her own house and an income way above the average income of the respondents. So it can easily be said that she was an exception with regard to the social and emotional support taken from the family and friends. Nevertheless, this case demonstrated that when a divorced single mother has her own income and house –even if they are so



moderate– they were able to form and maintain an autonomous household (Orloff, 1993) without being dependent to any of the social support mechanisms. I also observed that this participant had the highest self-esteem among the other respondents thanks to the autonomous way of living she was able to establish on her own. This clearly tells us something quite valuable in terms of the objectives of this study. Namely, it can be said that not feeling dependent on anyone else is one of the most salient factors that make divorced single mothers self-confident which in return undeniably influence their ability to form and maintain an autonomous household.

This is quite striking that great majority of the respondents said they received/are still receiving social and emotional support through their social network. This is also true when it comes to the emotional and caring support for children. When asked about the post-divorce support regarding child caring and raising, majority of the respondents indicated that they had support from their own families. Most common support mechanisms provided by their families were looking after the children while the respondents were at work, psychologically supporting both children and the respondents to show them they are not alone, helping children to meet the school expenses and giving them pocket money occasionally or regularly. Many respondents indicated that they received these kinds of support from their families in the post-divorce period especially when their children were not grown up yet. Moreover, only few respondents said their neighbors occasionally looked after the children when they were at work. These respondents were not the full-time workers but they made housekeeping when there was an opportunity. Some respondents said they did not get any support regarding caring and raising children. Respondents who indicated that they did not take any support and they were self-sufficient in caring of their children following divorce said so mostly because their children were not too little to be in need of constant care. Their children were mostly at school or the elder sisters/brothers looked after the little ones while their mothers were at work.

*[I had support from] my sister. She led the way. When my daughter was in her puberty period, she supported and gave advice to comfort my daughter. (E., 48)*

*When I went to work, my mother and father looked after [the children]. (H., 38)*

*I was leaving my children to my neighbor when I went to cleaning. (L., 37)*

*[I had that kind of support from] my family. My son was staying alone at home. He was already grown up but he was eating his meals there for not being alone at home. These are not that big assistance actually. Because he was older in age. He was waiting for me there. Sometimes he was also staying at our home and sometimes was going there. (H., 40)*

Thus respondents gave diverse answers in terms of the emotional and social support regarding raising and caring of their children. It was revealed that divorced single mothers were mostly in need of such support when their children were too little and in need of constant care of the adults. This is in part obviously related with the lack of emotional support from the ex-husband, as explained in the previous section of the social resources; however this is mostly related with the lack of social policies regulating the public child care for the children under school age. This is quite obvious because many respondents said that they were only able to participate into the paid labor force when children came into the school age because they had no one to leave their children for all day. Moreover, even if the children came into the school age, many single mothers were still in need of emotional and social support from their families because of the missing day care facilities to compensate the after-school hours.

When it comes to the household setting, majority of the respondents indicated that they moved out after divorce while the remaining said they stayed at the same house. Again majority of the respondents indicated that following divorce they had a separate house in which they live with their children. The remaining said that they live together with their own families and the children. However, there is not a direct relationship in between moving out and having a separate house. In other words, not all respondents who moved out rented a house to live with their children; they also moved to their own family's house. Similarly, not all the respondents who stayed at the same house were the owner of the house they continued to live in; they were still the tenants not the owner. Therefore, I did not observe any relation in between home ownership, living together with the family and the moving pattern since the respondents showed variety in their moving reasons and the places they moved in. Nevertheless, majority of the respondents stated that they preferred the neighborhood in which they currently live mostly

because it is close to their family's or relatives' house so that it was easier for them to access the emotional and social support. This could be explained in a way that if respondents had the adequate means to form their own households, they did it. However, they also wanted to keep their potential sources of support close to them by trying to establish an independent way of living.

*Because my family was there and I did not have anywhere else to go. (N., 39)*

*Because it was safe... It is a neighborhood that I have known for a long time... because my two siblings let me to stay here... And also because it was not a financial burden for me. (N., 52)*

*After divorce, because I did not have a job, I came back to the house of my family. Otherwise, my living conditions would have been harder. (E., 52)*

*I would say it was both because my family was [living] there and it was a livable place. Previously, I was living in Mamak. Actually, my life story is a bit interesting. After I got married, I moved to Mamak from Çankaya. I was naive and with good intentions. Now, I returned to where I belonged and moved back to Çankaya [Çankaya is a province of Ankara in which more educated and less-conservative people are the residents]. (Ş., 42)*

It should be noted that majority of the single mothers were not able to perfectly form and maintain their autonomous household right after divorce. As explained in detail at the beginning of this section of social resources, time passed over divorce was highly influential in recovering and forming their own households. In the meantime, they were highly vulnerable and dependent to their own families, especially to their fathers. This is because respondents who were not able to rent a house and who did not have their own house were compulsorily living in the house that is owned by their father. On the other hand, respondents who are not the owner but the tenant of the house they live in said that trying to pay rent along with raising children alone was one of the most difficult things following divorce. Only few respondents indicated that they have their own house. Of these respondents one even said that during the last times of marriage her father bought her a house and in this way, she added, she was able to sell the first house and buy another and better one by adding some money on by herself. This demonstrates that women who were already highly dependent on their husbands in the pre-divorce period one way or another become dependent on their fathers in the post-divorce period. Although

single mothers who experienced such dependency very deeply did not constitute the majority of the respondents, they stated that this dependency made them very upset.

*It does not matter how good a family is, it is hard to come back to them. You always feel that you are dependent to someone. (E., 52)*

*Fortunately my family did not make me to rely on anyone else. However, I myself thought that I was a burden on them, financially. Because as I said until the last 4-5 years I was not able to receive any money from the other side [her ex-husband] and for this reason I had to ask from my family. This was such a huge indignity for me... I wanted to afford my life my by working however social environment was not appropriate and I did not have anyone who could take care of my child. Therefore, I could not work and I was financially dependent to my family. That was upsetting. (N., 39)*

Almost all respondents who received emotional and social support or simply living together in the post-divorce period stated that this made them very upset because of the feeling of dependency. This dependency could also be observed by the researcher in respondents' neighborhood preferences in the post-divorce household setting. That is to say that either the house divorced single mothers moved into was belonged to their own family or it was close to their family's house. The ones who indicated familiarity as the main reason of their neighborhood preference also added that they knew relatives or neighbors beforehand. This tells us a very important point about divorced single mothers' perception of autonomy; even though they wanted and tried to establish an autonomous household in which they live only with their children without being dependent to their families, they still had to rely on either regular or irregular support coming from them and yet they did not mention this as something great. On the contrary, they wished to be totally independent without even relying on their families. This shows that divorced single mothers lack necessary family resources as well as social policies to make them free from all kinds of dependencies.

#### **4.2.2.3. Post-divorce social activities and social network**

In the pre-divorce social resources section it was indicated that participants had no voice over decision-making in their households and they were extremely restricted by the husbands or husbands' families so that they could not even see other people other than the families and relatives. Besides, they were spending almost all of their time with unpaid domestic labor inside the house that they could

not be able to allocate any personal time to become socialize. The respondents, however, drew an entirely different picture of their social network and activities in the post-divorce period. All respondents said that they became “freer” in post-divorce period. They indicated that they have more social activities and they spend more quality time with their children. This is mainly because only they can decide what to spend money and time on but not their husbands.

*Before divorce I had zero social activity. After divorce it is a lot. I have so many friend gatherings. I have more friends and social network. I am participating to the courses and I recovered myself. (N., 44)*

*After divorce I am spending more time with my children, having more fun and going out much. I am having coffee with my friends or taking my children out to play bowling together. I am freer after divorce because I was not even able to go outside of my house. (H., 38)*

*I did not have any social life before divorce. I was really busy with house cleaning, child raising and working outside. I was coming at home in the evening and I did not have any social activity except cooking, washing dishes and doing the laundry. After I moved to Ankara I worked in a women’s branch of a political party, went to the diction course, and participated into many social events and meetings. So, I developed myself in there. (L., 37)*

*I had no social activity before divorce but now there can be friends’ gatherings or political meetings that I participate and make a speech. This, in return, enhances my self-esteem. I am now very confident and trying my best to develop myself as much as possible to speak a word or two with everyone else. (N., 52)*

*After divorce I have more social network and activity. I am spending more time with my friends because I no more have an obligation to come home early to cook for my husband. I can come at home anytime I want, even in the late hours. We go to the cinema with my son once a month. I love watching film or theatre. (T., 52)*

*I could spare time for myself after years. I started to take care of myself after the age of 43. I realized that I am a woman at that time. (L., 37)*

As it can be clearly seen from the respondents’ statements, they become more socialized after divorce by participating into friends’ gatherings, courses, going out with friends and children, watching movies or theater and even taking part in events organized by political parties’ women branches. Almost all respondents indicated that they have a higher self-esteem to speak freely within the public and in front of the crowd. This is mainly because their husbands were constantly and harshly criticizing them when they spoke about something or when they expressed

themselves in a clever way. Another reason for them to be able to socialize in the post-divorce period is that they do not feel obliged to do housework as a duty but rather they do it whenever they wish to do so. In this way, they said they do not feel themselves under a time constraint to do housework in a particular time period but they spend that time for socializing with children and friends. For instance, they do not feel obliged to cook every single day so they can come home late or they simply postpone the cleaning of the dishes so they have much more time to spend with their children. This clearly demonstrates that participants of this study truly experienced what freedom means only in the post-divorce period throughout their entire lives. Even if they still feel somehow dependent to their families, they were not under the oppressive relationship with their husbands and husbands' families any more. This tells us that marriage was highly oppressive institution for these mothers and they were not feeling regretful at all for getting divorced. Therefore, what we need to understand for this study is that divorced single mothers fully enjoy the freedom they have in the post-divorce period and they have very positive perception of autonomy and independence which I eventually want the state to design social policies for.

In addition to the household setting and the neighborhood preference, one of the most important pre- and post-divorce differences in the lives of divorced single mothers was the time allocated to unpaid house work, children and themselves. Majority of the respondents indicated that they allocate less time for unpaid house work after divorce. The reason for this decreasing time allocation varies though. While some of the respondents said that this is because they do not need to do more dishwashing or laundering for the absent husband while others indicated that they are the ultimate decision maker about cleaning of the house. Namely, many respondents indicated that after divorce they do not feel obliged to keep the house perfectly clean every time. It is thus interpreted that women were feeling pressure from their husbands to continuously clean the house and once they got divorced they felt relieved.

*Now my children grew up and I can spare more time to myself. Previously, it was not possible. Housework and children [were taking all my time]. And I also had responsibilities of my spouse. Now, it has been 5 years that my children grew up and I am able to set aside time for myself. (N., 44)*

*I do less housework. Thanks God, I do not iron any shirts. There were more than 100 shirts that we could not even count. [I was sick of] ironing. Now, I do not even want shirts, I prefer clothes that do not require any ironing. For example, [I do] laundry less [than before]. (S., 42)*

When asked about the time allocated to their children in the pre- and post-divorce period, the respondents were split into two parts; half of them stated that they allocate more time to their children while the remaining said that they allocate less. It is interpreted from their statements that the main reason for them to allocate less time to their children is overwork. As explained in detail in the previous section of cultural resources, majority of the respondents were unemployed in the pre-divorce period and they could not find regular jobs in the post-divorce period either. This led them to work longer hours in low-paid jobs when they could be able to find them. In addition to the women who overwork, another group of women who said they allocate less time to children said so because their children were already in school age in post-divorce period. So they said that they were allocating more time while their children were under the school age and in need of an adult's perpetual help. Thus they do not allocate extremely higher times for the caring of their children but they only spend time to socialize together since they are not too little any more.

*Currently, I spend more time with my daughter, we wander around more. We spend one day as mother-daughter day. (D., 44)*

*I am able to spare less time for both of them because I work for long hours. I work for 10 hours [in a day]. (H., 35)*

*Now, I am able to spend more time with my children. I can talk to them, and have fun. I want to be friends, parents, siblings to my children. Am I able to achieve this? According to my children, I am. (L., 37)*

Respondents who said they allocate more time to their children in the post-divorce period, on the other hand, had different reasons. They mostly said that they allocate more time to the children because they are more peaceful and happy. Another very important reason for them to allocate more time to children is having the confidence and happiness to easily talk and joke with their children in the absence of an oppressive husband. Moreover, some divorced single mothers who indicated that they are able to allocate more time to their children correlated this with their decreased unpaid work load at home. At this point, this study provided more and deeper insight in terms of this split on time allocation. If this study would have only

included the numbers and close-ended survey-like questions, it would not reach out to the fact that almost all respondents said they spend more quality and happy time with their children. They indicated that they are doing a lot of activities together on a weekly or monthly basis depending on their financial situation. These activities include but not limited to going to the cinema, having dinner, doing shopping or simply going out. Regardless of the decrease or increase in the time allocation, it is also important to note that interviewees talked about spending quality time with their children in relation to the freedom to decide on how to raise children and how to spend their income.

*Now, I have more time both for myself and my child. Divorce is the best thing [happened to me] in every aspect. (H., 40)*

*After [the divorce], of course, it is better. More and happier times... At least, when my daughter has a little bit of pocket money, we are able to go to cinema together. We were not able to do this when I was with her father. (N., 52)*

When interviewees were asked questions regarding their time allocation only to themselves for self-development and accumulation of cultural and social resources, great majority of the respondents said that it is more. They indicated that they are happier and freer in post-divorce period. Thus, it is important here to reiterate that this study revealed that all respondents were freer and happier in terms of social network they have and social activities they are being involved. On the other hand, they are upset and feel diffidence for being dependent on their families in the post-divorce period.

In addition to the disadvantage of being dependent to their families, participants talked about several other challenges they faced in the post-divorce period in relation to social resources including the perception of social environment and their relationships with children. Namely, they mostly referred to the social pressure and raising children as the most problematic issues to cope with following divorce. They stated that there is still an existing stereotype against divorced women in Turkish society and it caused them to deal with the social pressure after divorce. This pressure emerged in different forms though. While one said she had to pay more attention to her attire, the other said she had to limit her visits to the relatives of friends who are married because they might become jealous about their husbands.



*You know, it is not possible to go everywhere when you are a divorced woman. (S., 52)*

*The [negative] perception towards a divorced woman is a reality in social environments. When you say 'I got divorce', they perceive you differently. They think 'what this woman possibly did so that she got divorce?' I wish they knew... (N., 44)*

Respondents who said that the greatest challenge was raising children alone indicated that they were afraid of the possibility that they might have not been sufficient in the absence of a father. They said that fulfilling the needs of their children both in terms of financial capability and psychological competence was one of the most difficult issues they faced right after divorce. This is mostly due to the imposed gendered division of labor and patriarchal norms of the society which show males as the main component of a family and thus making females to believe that they would not be adequate for the maintenance of their family without the presence of a male breadwinner figure. However, this study proved that this was totally wrong to assume it as such since all participants said that they were more than enough as a parent for their children even if they were not able to provide more of financial resources as it will be discussed in the following section.

*Raising the kids... It is the biggest challenge. (N., 39)*

*I was thinking that I would not be able to support myself. I was afraid that I would not be able to meet my children's needs...But I did. (M., 49)*

*I experienced every difficulty with my child. For example, sometimes, I was not able to provide his/her needs. After I found a job, I was in a better condition and doing everything to make my child live a comfortable life. (A., 37)*

Thus participants talked about two different post-divorce experiences in relation to their social resources. They talked about advantages and disadvantages of being divorced. It is quite obvious that they became the 'lonely' and 'only' parent in the post-divorce period since their husbands were not there anymore. This is not reflected as a disadvantage for the women themselves but referred as a disadvantage for the children since they became psychologically and mostly financially deprived of father's presence as it will be elaborated in detail under the financial resources section. In addition, although they were partly happy with and grateful for their

families' emotional and social support, they felt also unhappy for being dependent on their support. Another disadvantage, as indicated by the respondents, was society's attitudes towards and opinions for divorced women. On the other hand, as one of the most important and advantageous outcomes of divorce, all 20 interviewees in this study said that they feel "freer" since they get socialize more by participating into friends' gatherings, going out with friends and children and going to cinema and theatre. Besides, they stated that another advantage of the post-divorce period was being able to decide how to communicate with their children so that they now have more joyful and quality relationship with them.

In this sense, all the above mentioned findings can be enlightening in terms of liberation discussions following divorce. It was found out that divorced single mothers are still highly dependent to their families, specifically to their fathers in housing and their mothers in emotional and caring support. And yet single mothers' statements regarding how hard it was to return to family's house or expecting assistance from them was another proof that this is a reluctant and a kind of obligatory dependency. They indicated that if they would have their own houses, even if it was a really small one, everything would have been different because taking a shelter in their family's house was humiliating. This study, thus, obtained very detailed and meaningful information regarding divorced single mothers' perception of autonomy. It was obvious that they were very happy when talking about how freer they became after the divorce while it was also apparent that they were deeply sorry for being in need of emotional and social support in recovering, looking after children and forming a new household setting aftermath of divorce. Based on participants' own statements, the researcher observed and interpreted that they really desired to have their own independent households to maintain a particular level of living standard, even if it would be a very modest one

#### **4.3. Financial Resources**

Financial resources refer to total household income. For this study, it includes individual earnings (i.e. salary), alimony, orphan's pension received through deceased parent (mostly father), financial assistance from family, and social assistance from state or non-state institutions.

### **4.3.1. Pre-divorce experiences in relation to financial resources**

#### **4.3.1.1. Pre-divorce household income**

Majority of the respondents did not have any jobs in the pre-divorce period and had to rely on their husbands' income. Although some respondents indicated that they were employed, they were mostly doing service jobs which did not bring regular income and provide social security. For this reason, of these participants just few had their own social insurance. Majority of the participants who were not employed either did not have any social insurance or they had social insurance through their husbands' formal employment and paid premiums. As discussed under the section of cultural resources, low-educated participants of this study were not able to find decent and regular jobs during both pre- and post-divorce period. However, it was also indicated by the participants that their husbands did not let them to continue their education, receive vocational or educational training or having a job in the paid labor market. One way or another, majority of these mothers were not able to gain their own money prior to divorce and they were heavily dependent on their husbands' income and insurance. This was going to undeniably impact their employment situation and financial resources in the post-divorce period.

#### **4.3.1.2. Pre-divorce family financial assistance**

Majority of the respondents said that they had to receive in-kind and in-cash assistance from their families either regularly or irregularly mostly because they were not working at all or working in low-paid jobs and their husbands were not able to maintain the whole family's living.

*Of course we got support from families, we were able to maintain our living thanks to them. (N., 44)*

*I got support from my mother and father. They were always with me and supported me by providing money for the clothes, school needs, fuel [bill] and every other need I have. (H., 38)*

*My family was assisting me. My uncle was paying my monthly food expenses and all the other needs. My brother/sister was paying rent, electricity and water bills. (L., 37)*

Mothers had no voice in their households so that they were not able to experience what independence and autonomy meant during pre-divorce period. This was also true in terms of financial resources. They mostly had very low levels of income so that they were not financially self-sufficient and inadequate in meeting the expenses of daily needs so that they had to receive support from their families, relatives and the siblings. This support was usually in the form of a grocery shopping, payment for the rent and the bills and pocket money for children to meet their school expenses. The meaning of such family assistance in the pre-divorce period for this study is that participants who were already extremely subordinate to the patriarchal family structure in terms of their cultural and social resources were also very dependent to these mechanisms in terms of financial resources. Thus, it was literally impossible for them to have an autonomous household even with the existence of the father figure mainly because they had a kind of accountability towards their support mechanisms. Even though it was not an explicit obligation to be held accountable for, women had to live in conformity with the patriarchal and traditional norms of the families who enable them to maintain their living. Furthermore, this kind of a financial maintenance of the household led participants to experience a deeper poverty in the post-divorce period as well.

#### **4.3.1.3. Pre-divorce state and non-state financial assistance**

Participants of this study mostly did not receive any social assistance from the state in the pre-divorce period. Few respondents said that they received social assistance and yet none of them talked about the social assistance they received as something beneficial for their living. This demonstrates that state social assistance is highly inadequate and the existing assistance programs do not meet the needs of the individuals as it was aimed so.

*Sometime in the past years I applied to the Municipality's food aid. I took it almost for a year than I quitted. It did not satisfy me, I mean I saw it something unnecessary. I do not believe that they give something very useful. (T., 52)*

*Yes I was receiving [social assistance]. I was receiving coal and food aid back then. I only received it for once and did not take more. This is because my husband did not want us to receive it. (A., 37)*

In addition to the state social assistance, this study demonstrated that respondents did not take any aid from non-state institutions. Some of them were not even familiar with the mentality of non-state institution. This reflects a significant challenge in the design and distribution of both public and private funds because it is quite obvious that they are highly incapable in reaching out to families with poor living conditions. Mainly because of this reason, participants of this study who were already barely maintaining their living with very limited resources in the pre-divorce period had to rely on their families' financial support. This shows that familialist social policies which put not the state but the family into the center of welfare provision do not only exclude individuals living outside of family institution but they create interdependencies among the individuals living inside the family itself. Eventually, it is not very difficult to make an interpretation that such interdependencies prevented the participants of this study from having an autonomous household in the pre-divorce period. As Orloff (1993) argued, women's ability to form and maintain an autonomous way of living is one of the main indicators of the sufficiency of social policies in a given welfare regime. In this sense, this study revealed that Turkey's familialist social policies are far from being sufficient since it does not even allow women to maintain an autonomous living inside their own household within the institution of marriage.

#### **4.3.2. Post-divorce experiences in relation to financial resources**

This study revealed that these women have various income sources in the post-divorce period and yet they either do not receive them regularly or even if they have a regular income, it is a highly insufficient amount for one to maintain a decent living. When the post-divorce financial resources are examined in detail, it is clearly seen that divorced single mothers mostly rely on either their own salary or their deceased father's orphan's pension both of which can be counted as individual incomes. They do not heavily but moderately dependent on the income coming from their family and most of them do not receive alimony at all along with the ones who receive alimony in regular intervals but in very small amounts. This demonstrates that divorced single mothers are deprived of most of the financial support mechanisms during the post-divorce period.

#### **4.3.2.1. Post-divorce household income**

As it was explained in detail in the Methodology chapter under the *key characteristics of the respondents*, this study focused on low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers whose monthly household income was below poverty line of 5,492 TL determined by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türk-İş) as of May 2018. Therefore, financial resources especially a regular monthly income and an alimony payment take on a new meaning for the respondents of this study and it was revealed that the low-SES divorced single mothers experienced, and in fact were still experiencing, serious shortage of the above-mentioned financial resources.

##### **4.3.2.1.1. Salary & orphan's pension**

This study showed that great majority of the respondents were either formally or informally employed at the time of interviews while few were unemployed and retired. Although mostly working in informal and irregular jobs, respondents mostly said they regularly receive their salary on a monthly basis. However, it is worth to reiterate here that these mothers are working in low-paid jobs and the amounts they get are quite inadequate for meeting not only their needs as individuals but also of their children's. Furthermore, there were also respondents who said they can only receive their salary occasionally or they have no jobs and salary at all. Salary is not the only potential regular income for these mothers though. Although majority of the respondents cannot benefit from it, orphan's pension was another regular income for some of the divorced single mothers. This study demonstrated that even the most vulnerable group of women who should be one of the main targets of such implementation cannot properly take advantage of it. To give more detail on orphan's pension, it is regularly paid by the state on a monthly basis through divorced women's deceased fathers. In other words, if a woman is not married to anyone and she does not have a job with social insurance, she becomes eligible to receive portion of her deceased father's salary if he was formally employed as well. This salary is automatically cut when woman gets married or formally employed. This is an automatic outcome of the patriarchal state mentality which assumes that women should be under the protection of the state

unless they are under the protection by their husbands. Again state's social policies try to provide women with benefits within the institution of family. Such a familialist social policy implementation maintains the existing gender inequalities within Turkish society by making divorced single mothers to compulsorily rely on an income coming from another male figure of the family after feeling liberated aftermath of an oppressive relationship within the marriage. Thus, some of the participants of this study were partly dependent to orphan's pension to maintain their living and it would not be wrong to assume that they are restricted by receiving this income in their romantic relationships as well as relationship with the paid labor market.

#### **4.3.2.1.2. Alimony**

Equally important to the lack of regular salary and the orphan's pension, one of the main reasons of this precarious and vulnerable situation of low-SES divorced single mothers was lack of regular or irregular alimony payment. This study revealed that majority of the respondents did not receive alimony from their ex-husbands while the remaining said they receive either regularly or irregularly. Nevertheless, even if the alimony was regularly or irregularly paid it was in very small amounts that neither the mother nor children can get benefit from it without an additional income. Namely, minimum alimony amount expressed by the respondents was 400 TL while the maximum was 1000 TL. The average amount of the alimony-receiving-respondents was only 621 TL which is an amount even less than half of net minimum wage of the year of 2018. Moreover, participants who said they regularly receive their alimony payment stated that they receive it not through direct/face to face interaction with the ex-spouse; the ex-spouse did not previously pay it on a regular basis and the state authorities made them pay through enforcement. This demonstrates that without the necessary state action and intervention at the time of divorce cases it is almost impossible for divorced women to receive the declared amount of alimony. In relation to this, even if women decided to use legal channels to ask for the compensation of the non-paid alimony from the ex-husband, they sometimes do not have the required financial capability to pay the prices for every step of this follow-up.

*Since my ex-husband has gamble addiction and consumes alcohol, he is not aware how he is spending money. He was wasting the money which he supposed to keep for us. (E., 48)*

*Unfortunately, we are not able to get the alimony. The court decided [my husband to pay] 300 TL for each child. I consulted my lawyer and he indicated that we can easily get our alimony. I need to collect some documents for the court and it requires money. I can't afford it right now even if I want to go to court. I have to pay for many legal proceedings every time I go to court. After I put together some money and collect all documents, I plan to sue him. I want this for my children not for myself. (L., 37)*

*Until the last 3 years I was receiving my alimony irregularly. Right now I am receiving it through law enforcement. We waited 3, 5 and then 8 months for alimony then thanks to my lawyer now I getting my alimony from his monthly salary with law enforcement. (N., 39)*

In some cases, though, even the state was not able to force ex-husband to pay because he either works informally so that his monthly income could not be determined by the authorities or he intentionally changes his address to not to be found by the state authorities and being charged the alimony. This shows that there are serious deficiencies in the implementation of alimony payment which in return put single mothers and their children into a more vulnerable position. This is mainly because children who become deprived of father's emotional and social support in the post-divorce period also experience deep financial poverty in the absence of father. At this point, single mothers of this study have to compensate this financial loss only by themselves and this puts a double burden on their shoulders for sure.

*I demanded for alimony but since he can't afford it he did not pay. The case is still continuing. His home was already confiscated by the state. He also changed his address. He was working in a job without insurance on purpose so that his address cannot be found. I gave up and did not search further. (A., 37)*

*He paid it at first times but I cannot receive it any more. Even if I report it there is nothing I can get because there is not any property officially registered to him. (E., 38)*

One may naturally wonder why so many divorced women cannot receive alimony despite their precarious situations. This study found out that the respondents had inside stories in relation to making a request for alimony payment at the time of "uncontested" divorce cases. In other words, although majority of the divorce cases of the participants of this study seem both sides agreed and divorced in peace



(uncontested divorce), in-depth interviews revealed that majority of the women faced with threats and pressures from their husbands in case of any demand for alimony or compensation.

*He said 'if you will not be able to look after my daughter, I will. Otherwise I won't give you any money'. (H., 35)*

*It happened this way because back then I was thinking about getting rid of him as soon as possible. He also accepted the divorce under the condition that not demanding alimony payment at the court. We divorced in a single session. (M., 49)*

*He said 'if you don't demand for alimony, I will accept divorce'. I was going to ask for alimony for my son in the university to get benefit. My lawyer had also suggested me to demand alimony. However, I did not want it to cause a tension between my son and his father. (T., 52)*

*I did not have the courage to get alimony because my husband was instable. If I would ask for it, he would cause trouble. Since he couldn't pay it, he would prevent me [from divorce]. That alimony could have cost me everything. (E., 52)*

According to the Turkish Civil Code;

the court can only make an award for maintenance [alimony] on the request of one of the parties. The request is not required to be made during the divorce proceedings, it can be made after. Spouses can make a claim for spousal maintenance [poverty allowance] at any point during the year after the divorce has been finalized. (Article 178, Civil Code)

So women had to agree not to demand any financial gain or loss to be able to get rid of from their problematic relationships and husbands. As it can be expected they could not be able to demand alimony in the following year after divorce because they mostly called themselves “lucky” for not being beaten or disturbed by their husbands thereafter. Therefore, this study revealed the fact that seemingly *uncontested* divorce cases are actually not that peaceful and it makes an already compelling period a more traumatic experience for both women and children. This is mainly because every year hundreds of women in Turkey were killed by only for asking to get divorce or because they were recently divorced. For this reason, many respondents stated that they see themselves lucky because their ex-husbands did not bother them at the time of or aftermath of divorce. Thus, for not being harassed or simply not to be killed these women even did not ask for what was their right. These serious life-threatening experiences in relation to the demand of alimony at the time

of divorce demonstrated that the state's precautions and regulations are really insufficient in providing the safety and security of women who decided to get divorce. Besides, it is highly obvious that alimony is such an important financial resource for low-SES divorced single mothers and their dependent children and yet the whole process of demanding and receiving the payment is very problematic. At this point, it would not be wrong to say that the state leaves the maintenance of an important source of income at the mercy of ex-spouse by not guaranteeing the alimony payment for such a vulnerable social group. As it was argued before, the main reason for this is state's familialist and patriarchal social policies which do not take women as individuals but as mothers and wives of the family they belong to. Thus, when women leave the institution of family, the state does not take their financial needs into consideration even if they are still mothers and have dependent children. This puts low-SES divorced single mothers and their children into even more vulnerable position. Thus, not only the lack of personal income but also lack of state regulations is one of the most important determinants of this vulnerability.

#### **4.3.2.2. Post-divorce family financial assistance**

This study revealed that majority of the divorced single mothers received considerable amount of assistance in the post-divorce period. They either received in-kind or in-cash benefits or both from their family members. There are also some respondents, though, who said that they did not receive any financial support during the post-divorce period. This may be caused by the fact that majority of the respondents were already over the recovery period following divorce so that they were able to find a way for maintaining their financial status.

*Before divorce when my husband left the house, he did not call or ask even once. At that time my father helped me for two years. (H., 39)*

*I am receiving assistance from my family; from my mother, father and siblings. They support me with everything in every possible way. They help me when I could not be sufficient. (H., 35)*

*Of course, thanks to my mother and elder brother [I maintain living]. They look after me. At least I am staying at my father's house. I don't pay for the rent. (N., 44)*

*They assist me from time to time but not always. They decided to support me although I had no demands from them. (H., 40)*

*For example, they pay for my daughter's school and book expenses. They pay for clothes. (N., 52)*

*I have a sister but I do not have a financial assistance. Just money given to my child. For example while she is buying clothes for herself, she is buying one for my child too. Apart from that, nothing. (N., 40)*

Women have financial assistance from their families in different ways. While some family members directly give money, the others prefer to meet the needs themselves. This could be in the form of regular or irregular assistance. In any case, it is apparent that great majority of the participants have their families as a plan B which will automatically step in when they could not handle the situation. Thus, divorced single mothers who have very low levels of education and income hardly maintain their living without the residual or constant assistance of their families. As it was explained under the social resources chapter, financial dependency also created unhappiness among these mothers. Although some of them indicated that they are happy with their families' support and care, majority of women were not happy with this situation. Thus, as one can immediately guess, these mothers were not living an independent life with autonomous households but were in favor of it since they described families' assistance as depressing. As argued above, this is one of the direct outcomes of state's familialist and patriarchal social policies which do not provide any financial assistance to divorced single mothers by assuming that they will seek for and find help from their families. This is because Turkey's welfare regime is designed by putting family's role at the center for the provision of all kinds of services. Thus, when a family is dissolved through divorce, it is automatically expected that the other family will step in as a substitute. This, for sure, highly limits the capability of divorced single mothers to financially stand on their own feet and to feel the independent way of living for hundred percent.

#### **4.3.2.3. Post-divorce state and non-state financial assistance**

Although the number of women who get assistance from the state institutions were doubled from pre- to post-divorce period, it is still very difficult to say that these social assistance programs really reach out to the people who are in need. One of the mostly stated problems, for instance, was regarding the eligibility for receiving social assistance. Respondents said that they got rejected only for having

a social insurance even though they receive very low levels of income. Another problem, on the other hand, was respondents could not be able to apply for some social assistance programs for not being widowed but for being divorced. The respondent who talked about her experience with the Municipality officer for getting an allowance for her children said that the officer told her that in order to get this assistance your husband must have been dead.

*After I got divorced I had too many struggles. None of the government institutions helped me. Why government did not help? Because I had insurance. (S., 52)*

*After my divorce I went to district governorship. I asked help for my children. Did you know what district governorship told me? "If you hand over your children to child protection institution, we would help". (H., 38)*

As discussed in the literature review chapter, Turkey's social insurance and social assistance policies are designed in accordance with the familialist principles which take the unity and continuity of family as their main departure point and fundamental objective. For this reason, participants of this study were mostly misbehaved or reprimanded by the state authorities only because they wanted to get benefit from the existing social assistance programs. This is quite obvious since some of the participants were told by the officer that they cannot get benefit from these programs because they are not widowed. As argued before, widowed and divorced women are treated differently by the state social policies since the former was seen as a victim and the latter is the guilty. This patriarchal and familialist approach is so strong that even a mother who wanted to get assistance for her children's education expenses were turned down by the state institutions by saying that if she would give her children under the protection of Social Services and Child Protection Agency. This kind of an attitude is an obvious indicator that the state seriously excludes divorced women and even believes that these women should better leave their children under the state supervision rather than looking after and raising themselves. This is a strong proof that the state sees divorced women as an anomaly and thus with this kind of a mentality it becomes almost impossible or at best very challenging for these women to get state assistance. This is also confirmed by another experience of the participants of this study who were denied access to particular social assistance schemes because the state told them to work and they are

still young age. The state wanted them to work and not to meet even their very basic needs through state mechanisms. However, there are not publicly provided childcare or nurseries to enable these women to leave their child safely and go to work every day. Although the respondents informed state authorities that they had little children to look after and for this reason they cannot work until the children reach into the school age, they could not be able to continue to receive whatever benefit they were getting before.

*The Ministry of Family and Social Policies was providing 750 TL monthly. Now they stopped giving anything saying that 'your children grew and you can work now'. (L., 37)*

*I am getting food aid from the municipality. Also I was getting financial aid from the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation but it was cut. They told me that 'you are young and you can work'. (S., 33)*

While some of the respondents indicated that they receive aid regularly, others indicated that they do not regularly receive social assistance but only occasionally get benefit from it. This undoubtedly put them into more vulnerable position because they are already working in low-paid jobs and receive very minimum amounts of alimony payment. These two incomes are certainly not adequate for these participants and yet there is no direct state benefit for being eligible for divorced women and their children.

*At the moment I am just getting coal and food aid regularly. I am getting 2 breads every day from government, except for Sunday. Every year 3-4 times they bring coals at winter. (H., 39)*

*I am not getting a regular support. I did not apply to a governmental institution. A friend of my mine registered me to the office of mufti. I received a card from the office of mufti to shop during Ramadan. For example BİM have a 50 TL card I received 3-4 of them. I shopped with those cards. You shop as much as you want like 100-200 TL worth shopping. We are 2 people so it lasts 2-3 months. Apart from that I don't get any help and I do not have a record on any institutions. (N., 52)*

It is quite obvious that the system of social assistance is very problematic in terms of its structure, benefits and implementation. None of the divorced single mothers said that they see the great benefits state's social assistance. Furthermore, it was interesting to discover that majority of the respondents said they do not receive any social assistance from the state institutions while almost no one received non-state social assistance from private organizations, charitable foundations or

associations. This shows that not only state social policies but also non-state institutions'/organizations' existing programs and main objectives are far from considering divorced single mothers with dependent children as one of the most vulnerable social groups. As it was previously explained in this thesis, one can understand whether the existing social policies are adequate by looking at their capability to reach out to the most vulnerable groups within a given society. Post-divorce state social assistance to divorced women showed that these women are highly in need of financial help and yet they get almost nothing from the state institutions. In this sense, all these findings were highly in line with one of the most prominent arguments of this thesis; lack of social policies puts low-SES divorced single mothers and their children into a really vulnerable situation and makes them heavily dependent on their families or seriously suffer from financial deficiencies. As argued in the previous sections, not only the deficiencies in financial resources but also in cultural and social resources are mostly caused by the lack of necessary social policies. Since one of the most significant aspect and a unique contribution of this thesis was making policy recommendations, as a researcher I asked interviewees their own suggestions for any possible assistance and the ways in which they would like to receive this assistance. Their preferences for the ways –the state, the family, themselves– to receive assistance and the types of potential support primarily determined the social policy recommendations that I will give place in the next chapter of my thesis.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

As indicated before, this study aimed to investigate the experiences of low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers not only for the sake of exploration but also for developing feasible and practical social policies. In this sense, I asked interviewees about their own suggestions in accordance with their life experiences. In this way, I aimed to have not superficially developed social policies based on only my own interpretations as a researcher from the answers given to semi-structured interview questions but also to hear first-hand demands and needs from the ones who are called as the most vulnerable. At the end of all in-depth interviews, I heard abundant recommendations from the participants of this study which could be highly feasible and practical to be implemented by the state institutions. These are recommendations regarding;

- Legal process
- Alimony and Compensation Payment
- Security
- Children
- Employment and Income
- Social Assistance

#### **5.1. Legal Process**

As it is previously explained in this study within the literature review chapter, uncontested divorce cases are easy and quick to come to the conclusion since both parties agree on the conditions of divorce. Although great majority of divorce cases of the participants of this study seem uncontested, it was revealed that there were serious threats behind this pseudo-agreement. So, low-SES participants of this study were lacking of necessary financial resources to meet the expenses of

litigation process and they were also trying to deal with the threats against them. Under these conditions, it was indicated by some of the respondents that they did not have access to lawyer and adequate legal counseling during the litigation process. This was particularly true for the participants whose divorce case was not uncontested but contested because of the disagreements on the issues of child's custody or alimony payment. Although individuals have a right to access to a lawyer through Legal Aid in Turkey, participants' experiences demonstrated that there are particular flaws in the operation of the system. The main aim of Legal Aid system is to overcome the barriers in front of individuals' freedom to seek for their rights and to provide equality in seeking justice. This system enables individuals who are financially incapable to meet the expenses of the whole litigation process to have access to lawyer for free (General Directorate of Legislation Development and Publication, 2004). However, some of the respondents in this study indicated that they could not have access to Legal Aid as it is described in the Legal Aid Regulation.

*I think the state should designate lawyers to victims and divorcing individuals. A lawyer can deeply involve with the case by investigating and making sure that alimony is being paid. (E., 48)*

*There might be lawyer support during the divorce process like consulting. (H., 40)*

As it is indicated by one of the respondents, even though she had access to a lawyer through Legal Aid system, the lawyer demanded money to file an alimony case. However, according to the Legal Aid regulation the whole litigation process needs to be conducted for free for the individuals who are unable to pay the expenses. This demonstrates that the Legal Aid implementation, which is the most important mechanism for vulnerable people to have access to judicial system, does not work as it should be and this exacerbates their vulnerable situation. Furthermore, one of the respondents who passed through a contested divorce process stated that their litigation process took a very long time to arrive at the conclusion.

*Litigation process is extremely slow and tiresome. State should accelerate the litigation process for the cases of divorce, alimony and child's [custody]. Court schedules a day for next trial for 5-6 months later. Either the opposite side does not come to the court or the judge changes. These prolong this process so both mother and child suffer. This process is really troublesome.*



*There are people who have their families to take a refuge in but what about people who do not have a family? (N., 39)*

In addition to the limited access to Legal Aid, prolonged litigation process put divorced single mothers and their children into a more vulnerable position unless they have other support mechanisms such as women's own family. As it was indicated by one of the participants, these obstacles deter women from seeking their rights since they try to cope with lots of challenges at the same time. Moreover, participants pointed out another essential issue in relation to alimony and the legal aspect of demanding it. Interviewees indicated that they did not demand for alimony or compensation payment at the court partly due to the oppression and partly due to conviction by their husbands by saying they will be taking care of the children's financial, emotional and social needs. However, when time passed over single mothers indicated that they regretted for not asking for it during the first litigation process mainly because the ex-husband did not take care of children at all. At this point it is important to indicate that reapplication for an alimony demand is treated differently by the Supreme Court Assembly of Civil Chambers. Namely, it is decided on one of the cases dated 2013 that women who did not demand for a poverty alimony cannot demand it later by saying that her conditions changed and she fell into poverty. However the same institution decided in another case again dated 2013 that child alimony could be demanded even though it was not demanded at the time of divorce since children might have different and changing needs over time (Istanbul Bar Association, 2015). Taking these two decisions into consideration, it is understood by the researcher that mothers were not informed well about their rights since some of them said that they consulted with the lawyer but they were informed that it is no more possible to file an alimony case without telling them about the above-mentioned differentiation in between the poverty –given to the mother due to loss of a financial means– and child alimony –given to the children due to the compulsory sharing of expenses by the parents.

*When I heard [that an alimony case could be opened even after divorce], I tried to file a case. However, my friend told me that I cannot file a case for a second time since I already said no to alimony in the first one. I wish the state would provide us a right for filing a case for the second time. (H., 38)*

*For instance, the state can provide us with an additional time period and at the end of that period we can have another chance to file a case. As far as I know there is no return since I asked the lawyers twice and they said it is not possible. (M., 49)*

Thus it is well understood that even though these mothers are low-educated and belong to a very low-income group of the society, they had attempts to seek for their rights on legal platforms. Nevertheless, partly due to malfunctioning Legal Aid system and partly due to deficiencies in informing mechanisms they could not have access to accurate information. Therefore, in order to make this process less painful for the mother and children this study recommends the following policies;

- Assigning a lawyer free of charge and follow-up if the women have access to all the litigation process for free;
- Providing necessary security precautions and legal sanctions for the sake of being sure that women are not under pressure or threat during the litigation process;
- Accelerating the litigation process for mothers with dependent children in order for them not to consume their limited resources and already harmed psychological well-being at the court for a long time;
- Providing more legal counseling about divorced individuals' rights and how to seek for them at the time of divorce.

## **5.2. Alimony and Compensation Payment**

As it is indicted in the previous chapter there are serious challenges faced by divorced single mothers in receiving the alimony payment from their ex-husbands. They either cannot receive their alimony payment at all or receive a very small amount of payment that it does not meet even the very basic needs of their children. In this sense, when participants of this study were asked what are the areas in which the state could monitor and provide support for, majority of the respondents indicated that it must interfere with the issue of alimony. They either wanted the state to monitor the regularity of payments in accordance with the courts' decision or wanted the state to be the ultimate decision-maker and designate particular amount of alimony to especially mothers who have the custody of their dependent children regardless of the spouses' agreement/disagreement over the issue.

*We were getting divorce in an uncontested way but I think state must have proceeded with compensation case anyway. (M., 49)*

*What would be the state's sanction about it? It would be getting my alimony regularly, the alimony that is decided for my daughter not for myself. (N., 52)*

*State should investigate why a person cannot receive the alimony. If it is caused by the ex-husband, then the state should make sure that he pays. (N., 39)*

*For example there might be something like this: regardless of mother's employment status an alimony must be paid, especially to the mothers who have the custody of their children. A woman can manage to live by herself. However, considering two children's education expenditures, pocket money and clothing expenses, I wish alimony would be compulsory. It can be either alimony or another income which is paid by the father. For instance even it would be an amount like 300 TL I wish it was compulsory, even if it is not demanded. (E., 52)*

*For instance the lawyer might arrange a card for alimony; hence I would not come face to face with my ex-husband. The alimony could be directed from a part of his monthly wage without giving rise to a possible discussion with him. (E., 48)*

*After enforcement I did not have any issues with alimony. At the beginning, alimony was being paid, not paid or was delayed. It was irregular. There were times I didn't get alimony for 2-3 months. I did not know that it will not be paid or will be paid late. There were times I had so much difficulty in maintaining a living. Now, you go to ATM and withdraw it. (Y., 61)*

As it can be clearly seen from the above statements of interviewees, one of the mostly referred problems regarding alimony was irregular or non-payment. With this regard, participants asked the state to regulate the alimony payments so that divorced mothers living with their dependent children would know how much money they will exactly receive every month. They had different opinions on it though. Some wanted state to examine their ex-husbands' bank accounts and assets to make them pay by imposing necessary sanctions while others proposed an idea that the state should not let spouses or the courts to decide the alimony or compensation payment because they were under pressure and threat at the time of divorce. So, they suggested the state to automatically decide for the payment of alimony and compensation without seeking for an agreement between spouses or leaving this issue to the ex-husband's mercy. Indeed, the last of the above statements showed that when alimony is automatically transferred from the ex-husband's to

children's/mother's bank account via execution it abolishes the problems they face with in receiving of alimony. This proves mothers' suggestions right about state's interference in alimony payments. To sum up, this study recommends the following policies in order for low-SES divorced single mothers and their children to have access to alimony payments;

- Orphan's and widow's pension are regularly and monthly paid to children and the widowed wife in case of a death of formally employed and insured spouse. The widow's pension is corresponding to 50% of the salary of deceased spouse while orphan's pension is corresponding to %25 of the salary for each child. If the state acknowledges that the absence of formally employed and insured spouse will put his spouse and children into a vulnerable situation and thus they are automatically entitled to these pensions, then divorced single mothers and their children must also be eligible to receive a pre-determined proportion of the ex-spouse at least until the children become not dependent to their parents anymore;
- In relation to the first point, the state should determine a minimum amount of alimony by taking the ex-husband's salary/income into consideration. This determined amount of alimony should not be reduced but should be increased in direct proportion to the number of dependent children;
- The state should make it compulsory for the ex-spouse to pay the monthly alimony amount not via informal mechanisms but via automatic reductions from the ex-spouse's bank account;
- If the state detects that ex-spouse is unable to pay the determined amount or only able to pay some amount of it, then the state should compensate the remaining amount from a fund that can be created by the state itself (This kind of a policy was first recommended by ex-deputy Ruhsar Demirel in a bill of law dated 23.08.2011 to protect the alimony creditors (Grand National Assembly of Turkey, n.d.). She proposed that the state must form a mutual fund for parents to make contributions during marriage. When one of the parents is unable to pay the alimony upon divorce, then the state should compensate it from this fund. Although this bill of law found a place for

itself in the 24<sup>th</sup> period 3<sup>rd</sup> legislative year activity report of Turkish Grand National Assembly in October 2013, later it has not been legislated as a law).

### 5.3. Security

In Turkey, every year hundreds of women are murdered by their male relatives including husband and one of the most salient reasons of these murders is divorce. Even though they apply for state protection, women are murdered in either pre- or post-divorce period. According to the numbers provided by the “We Will Stop Femicide Platform” (WWSFP), in 2017 409 women were murdered by men (WWSFP, 2018). These are only the numbers which were tried to be followed up by the WWSFP based on the news reports since the state does not keep the statistics of femicide. This study also revealed that women faced serious threats which can easily evolve into a physical violence and even murder. As it is indicated in the alimony section of this chapter, women were threatened by their husbands in case of alimony and they were afraid to demand alimony during the litigation process. Besides, some participants stated that they faced harassment in pre-divorce period because they asked to get divorce.

*Of course security [can be provided] because divorce sometimes creates problems, husbands do not want to divorce and cause trouble. Thus, women's safety can be provided. (H., 40)*

*I wish state could have provided me with useful things when my husband threatened me. Once I went to police station to tell them that my husband comes to door by threatening, they told me to go to the prosecution office. Also they told me “we can only take action at the moment when he comes at your door”. However, the process in which he came to our door was important for me and children. After he came we were feeling a lot of distress and sadness. For instance, when I got divorced due to his alcohol problem, they [the state authorities] should have watched us. Again when I told them that my husband was disturbing me, the state including the police force should have done something different. I expected assurance. My most beautiful days passed with these threats. (E., 52)*

As it can clearly be seen from the above-statements, one of the participants was quite hesitant to explain the harassment she faced in detail but talked about it within only a sentence. Nevertheless, it was obvious that she felt insecure during her divorce process because her husband did not want to get divorce and thus she suggested that the state should ensure women's security. Another participant, on the

other hand, was quite talkative about the threats, violence and harassment faced by herself, children and her family. She clearly indicated that the state and its police forces were not adequate to protect them from such violent behavior and due to this lack of security they spent many years in fear. I closely observed her during this conversation and realized that she was still very anxious about what she experienced in the past. So, it will not be wrong to claim that in the best-case scenario security measures which were not taken by the state's security forces during the divorce process cause women, children and women's family to experience very traumatic moments which will continue for an extended period of time. In the worst-case scenario, on the other hand, these women could have been murdered by their husbands and they are alive by chance since the state did not protect them at all. In this sense, this study has the following policy recommendation in terms of security;

- The "Department for Fighting Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women" which operates under the "Department of Public Order" must seriously listen women's reports about violent and threatening behavior coming from the husband at the time of divorce and take immediate action for these mothers, children and even women's mother and father to not have such traumatic experiences;
- The above-mentioned department should not only seek for a reported violence within the continuing institution of family; rather it must equally approach to all kinds of violence either occurred during marriage or at the time of dissolution of marriage;
- Every woman who wants to get divorce must have a right to demand special security assistance until the whole process is finalized. She must be given high priority in her request of security without being asked to prove the violent and threatening behavior especially in the time periods right before and after the divorce.

#### **5.4. Children**

As the participants of this study were low-SES single mothers who were mostly unemployed prior to divorce, they indicated that after divorce they could not work because they neither had the financial resources for sending children to a

kindergarten or nursery, which are provided in Turkey by the very limited number of facilities, nor had someone reliable to entrust children. Participants of this study explicitly stated that they had to rely on their family for child caring and raising especially to be able to work and to maintain their livelihood. One of the respondents counted herself lucky since she was able to send her 3-year-old child to the child care facility at the district municipality's women's club while she was employed there as a cleaning person while another respondent said that when her child came to the school age and her mother looked after the child after school, she was able to work and everything got better for all of them.

*If there is no one to take care of children, there might be a social support for childcare. (H., 40)*

*I did not work until my child starts studying. After my children began studying my mother started to care of her/him and I started to work. Everything began to go well then. (H., 35)*

*If the state could have helped me in sending my child to the school, it would be a huge support. (N., 39)*

Besides, low-SES divorced single mothers of this study indicated that they experienced serious difficulties in meeting their children's school expenses. They stated that receiving constant support from their family especially in relation to the children's school expenditures would not be their primary choice if the state would have supported their children's education period.

*Even covering children's school expenses would be adequate. A mother or father would like his/her child to get educated. I am not asking for myself but I want my children to receive education. (H., 38)*

*Of course it would be nice if, instead of my family, the state would have supported for my child's school and future. But honestly I do not expect much from the state. A scholarship during school or university period would be useful. (N., 40)*

Furthermore, one of the respondents honestly shared with me that one of her children has drug addiction because they were literally and extremely poor both during and after marriage and her child felt very desperate and hopeless about the future. Later her child even committed a crime and is currently in prison. She openly said that she does not blame any state authority for her child's situation however also reminded that if her child did not live in such a hopeless environment and could

have known that the state is with them and will provide them with a future, then he would not have been so hopeless and been inclined to drug addiction and crime.

*I would expect a support from the state instead of my family because if you don't have anyone to help you, the state is always there but I could not see it [a support] from the state either. My children did not continue their education; I do not blame anyone but this was because what happened to us. They ran away from the school, things happened. State could have helped us financially because my children had to face with so much poverty so they disregarded everything. That is why one my children is a drug addict. I had to leave them alone at home. When you are suffering from poverty children may have a tendency for many things. Not all children but emotional ones might be inclined to crime. (S., 52)*

When the above statements were carefully analyzed, there are three main challenges experienced by low-SES divorced single mothers and their dependent children in caring and raising children in the absence of father. First, mothers who were not working in the pre-divorce period had to work in the post-divorce period but they could not do it because they had to first look after and raise their dependent children at home. Participants indicated that when the children were little, they could not work at all. When children became at a school age, on the other hand, they indicated that the remaining time from the school hours were compensated by either their part-time work or their mothers' and fathers' support by looking after children. Only through this way mothers were able to participate into the paid labor force. Second, participants said that they were inadequate in meeting with the school expenses of children, even the basic ones such as nutrition. In this sense, they wished the state to give financial support to the children of divorced couples because they are already deprived of many financial resources upon divorce. Lastly and in very close relation to the second point, when children are deprived of many resources as well as not being supported by the state mechanisms, they may turn into crime due to experienced poverty and hopelessness. So, this study has the policy recommendations for the well-being of children living with their divorced single mothers as follows;

- There is an urgent need for more egalitarian work-family reconciliation policies such as public child care;
- The number of free public child care facilities and nurseries –especially for children under three-year-old– should be increased and made widespread;



- Single mothers should be given priority to send their children to these facilities for free of charge;
- The state should create a public fund to meet the basic needs of children of divorced parents. This must be done as a responsibility of social welfare state of Turkey since single mothers are giving a great struggle to raise their children in the emotional, social and financial absence of the father;
- Regardless of being children of married or divorced parents, every child studying at the public school must be provided with healthy lunch service by making it compulsory for every school to have a dining hall. This is because the researcher interpreted from the in-depth interviews that one of the issues which participants were deeply sorry was not being able to provide a healthy and adequate lunch box for their children. This kind of a social inequality in providing such a basic need, namely nutrition, primarily affects the most vulnerable group of children in which the children of low-SES divorced single mothers constitute a considerable amount.

## **5.5. Employment and Income**

Participants of this study indicated that one of the most difficult experiences they faced aftermath of divorce was related to finding formal and regular jobs. One of the participants, for instance, indicated that her job is temporary and she does not have social security. She would like state to find her a formal and regular job while another respondent said she suffered a lot due to existing favoritism in hiring for a job. She asked state to give priority for employment of divorced single mothers or even if it does not give priority, she said, at least it should prevent this favoritism in hiring for jobs. Furthermore, one of the respondents clearly demonstrated the importance of family support in this process by saying women become all alone upon divorce and unless her family gives support to her, it becomes a major problem. This is the reason for many women to not be able to give the divorce decision.

*If she [single mother] does not have a job, it might be provided under the state guarantee. Or there might be a shelter. These are possible because woman becomes alone. If her family does not support her, it is a big*

*challenge. That is why many women cannot divorce, they do not have support. (H., 40)*

*For example, my job in here is temporary. I would like a regular job with social security. (H., 39)*

While some participants suggested that the state should assist divorced single mothers to find a regular job with social security, others recommended that the state should provide them and their dependent children a particular amount of regular income. They argued that even if they are able to find a job, these jobs are irregular, informal and thus do not have a future. Besides, as it is also discussed within the previous chapter, it takes 2 to 3 years to recover and settle in the aftermath of divorce. In this sense, participants stated that if they would have a guaranteed income provided by the state even in the smallest amount, it would help them in the recovery process until they find a regular job.

*They might support financially. Financial aid, at least a food aid, for the time period in which women reorganize herself could be provided. A friend of mine receiving food aid and to be honest it does not count much. Financial aid would be better for the child and mother. At least until she finds a job and get organized. (Ş., 42)*

*State should look after woman and her child and must arrange a monthly payment. It should not make them dependent. State shouldn't make me dependent even on my own family let alone the strangers outside. (E., 38)*

*State should support women financially until she finds a job or have a profession. It might even be 500, 100 or 50 TL. It should pile up one way or another. For example there is a school payment [of my children] but I cannot pay it and father says we will not pay it. (Ş., 42)*

As it can clearly be interpreted from the above-statements divorced mothers living with at least one dependent child do not prefer to be dependent on anyone but the state. They honestly said that it is really difficult to be dependent on their own family let alone somebody else and the state should not let single mothers to rely on the support coming from other mechanisms. Although the issue of social assistance will be elaborated in the next section, one of the participants pointed out that food aid, provided by the municipalities instead of in-cash assistance, is inadequate and meaningless in meeting the needs of them and the children. As a researcher I definitely agree with the participants of this study since it was very obvious that in-kind assistance did not make any changes in their living conditions. This is because I

was able to make many observations during the in-depth interviews given that I conducted all the interviews in the participants' own social environment. One of the places in which I made a close observation was some participants' workplaces since they wanted to conduct interviews during their work hours. Thus, I was able to closely observe that jobs in which these mothers employed were mostly informal, irregularly paid or part-time. In line with the participants' requests from the state, this study recommends the following policies in relation to employment and income;

- Divorced single mothers should be provided a temporary recovery income for the following 3 years after divorce;
- The state should prioritize divorced single mothers in employing trainees to the existing vocational training programs under the Turkish Employment Agency (İş-Kur);
- When these mothers are employed in low-paid but formal jobs with social security, the state should compensate the lower income with additional benefits which can be provided to both mothers and children.

## **5.6. Social Assistance**

This study deeply investigated its participants' experiences with social assistance programs as well as with the relevant state institutions. As it was indicated before, Turkey does not have any social assistance program which directly and only targets for the divorced single mothers and their dependent children. Thus, participants talked about their experiences in relation to existing social assistance schemes present for all eligible citizens. Participants mostly indicated that even if they were found eligible to receive social assistance, it was for a short period of time and the state arbitrarily cut their payments. One of the interviewees, for instance, stated that she tried to explain the authorities that she has a little daughter and cannot entrust her to anyone. She said she was already looking for a job and applied to numerous places as well. Although she told the authorities that she does not demand assistance for a long time but only until she finds a regular job with social security, they harshly replied as 'go and work'. I listened many experiences similar to this one during the in-depth interview sessions and it was very obvious that these women were not feeling themselves good while talking about social assistance and their

dialogues with the authorities. Thus, it can clearly be said that this kind of a distribution system of state social assistance, one is begging for it and the other reprimanding in return, put divorced single mothers into more and more vulnerable position by letting them into the mercy of authorities. It would not wrong to claim that because of such a charity-mentality social assistance scheme, many participants implied that the state should help for sure when it is detected that these women have no one, either family or ex-spouse, to support for them. They even did not ask for state to be always there because it was quite obvious that they were reluctant to beg for assistance within this social assistance system. Nevertheless, as also indicated in the employment/income section, when participants were asked about their preference for support mechanisms, they mostly indicated that they do not prefer to receive assistance from their families; rather if they are in need, they believe that the state should not make them dependent on their families or someone else.

*As I said at this point state tells me that I am young, when I applied for a social assistance. I got social assistance for a year. I went there again and told them that I have daughter so I cannot trust anyone to leave her. I applied many times for a job. They say “no, you will work” but nothing else. (S., 33)*

*They [the state] need to investigate people who do not have a family, a place to stay or get any support from their ex-husband, and they should support them well. (N., 39)*

*I would expect help from state but no one else. I think the state should have an aid package for divorced women including rent, food and job opportunity. (E., 38)*

Furthermore, many participants suffered from the means-tested social assistance programs. They indicated even if they have a very little amount of income through either their living or deceased family members, they cannot get any assistance because the state authorities told them that they should have no income at all. Moreover, the same experiences were also true for the participant who works at the service jobs with a salary equal to national minimum income but have three children. The state refused to provide them with social assistance only because she has a social security even though her house was in a very bad condition and even though the authorities came and inspected at that house. Participants' experiences

demonstrated that they have never got benefited from social assistance programs in the way that meet their needs.

*When I went to a district governorate, they told me “you already have 400 TL wage”. (L., 37)*

*Since I live with my family we split the monthly wage to four as my mother, father, would give us thus we could not get any help from state. (N., 39)*

*State might help people who have financial incapability to make a living regardless of their insurance. (S., 52)*

*I wish the state would provide the same services provided in the Social Services and Child Protection Agency of Turkey. Okay, you provide transportation expenses, food and a warm place to stay but there is no motherly love there. (H., 38)*

Moreover, one of the interviewees in this study told researcher about a very interesting dialogue with one of the state authorities while asking for assistance. When she asked for assistance from the district governorate for her children's needs and school expenses, she faced with an answer “if you give your children under the protection of Social Services and Child Protection Agency of Turkey (SSCPA) then we would help”. The same respondent indicated that she went to numerous state institutions including municipality, district governorate and Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation and got refused to receive assistance just because she had a social security. Thus, this respondent came up with very feasible and quickly implementable policy recommendation. She asked the state to give the amount of all the services provided in the SSCPA for the children who have no parents. She emphasized that these children are provided many services but are deeply in need of motherly love and said that if the state would help her in providing other material needs of her children, then she can raise her children well with her motherly love. This study finds this as one of the most important suggestions and totally agrees with the respondent's ideas. Last but not least, one of the mostly stated challenges during the post-divorce period was related to housing. As it was also explained in the previous chapter, divorced single mothers had serious difficulties in forming a post-divorce household setting mostly due to not being able to pay the rent let alone being a home owner. There is a social housing program under the social assistance schemes provided by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies for the individuals

who do not have social security and are in poverty. This social housing program enables individuals to have their own houses by making it easy to pay as installments to be completed within more than twenty years. However, this study revealed that social housing program is such a myth for divorced single mothers since people around them talk about it a lot but whenever they tried to benefit from, they are told by the authorities that there is no such implementation. For this reason, great majority of the low-SES divorced single mothers of this study have never owned a house in their lives and one of their most prominent requests from the state is to make them a house owner by really implementing the above-mentioned social housing project.

*I wish I had a home with one or two rooms. Because living with your family causes problems from time to time. (E., 52)*

*If the state could have given us that house, there would have been a future for children right now. (H., 38)*

*I believe a financial assistance for women who do not have a house to cover their rent would be a huge support. Because people do not receive much wage. It is really difficult while the half of the wage goes to rent, electricity and water bills. State might support in this way. (T., 52)*

As it can clearly be interpreted from the participants' statements, if they would not have their parents' financial support they would not be able to pay their rents and bills. They stated that living with their families or receive financial assistance from them to pay their rents and bills were very difficult. They also pointed out that if they would not have to spend so much money on rent, then they would be able to allocate more financial resources to their children's education. It means that if the state would make these mothers to benefit from the social housing program regardless of their social security condition, their children would be financially and educationally better off. To sum up, in line with the respondents' real life experiences with social assistance programs and the relevant state institutions, this study recommends the following social policies;

-The state should adopt a mix of universal and targeted programs in which all divorced single mothers living with their dependent children and have an income below the poverty rate should be targeted and provided universal basic income (Universal Basic Income [UBI] has been widely discussed in

terms of its potential emancipatory impacts of women by reducing the inequalities between sexes especially within the European context by prominent scholars (McKay, 2000; McKay, 2001; Parker, 1993; Pateman, 2004). In Turkey considerable amount of academics have also been discussing UBI or also known as citizen's income and its potential egalitarian impacts over unequal position of women within the Turkish society (Buğra, 2010; Buğra & Sınmazdemir, 2004; Yakut-Çakar, Erus, & Adaman, 2012). Even a similar social policy was recommended by the Republican People's Party as one of the election promises under the name of Family Insurance Program in which every family was promised a UBI (Özar & Yörük, 2011). However, this proposal was quite patriarchal and traditional since it did not take individual but family as the basis of welfare provision. Besides, none of the above-mentioned studies in Turkey or in European contexts discussed the potential impacts of UBI on divorced single mothers and their children);

- Divorced single mothers whose income is under the poverty rate must be primarily eligible for benefiting from social housing regardless of the social security they have;
- All children whose parents got divorced and who live with the low SES-parent must be entitled all the benefits which are already provided to children staying at the Children Houses of the Social Services and Child Protection Agency of Turkey such as the expenditures with regard to clothing, transportation, health and medicine, education and pocket money (General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection, 2008).

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study will make a unique contribution to the literature in divorce, family resources and social policy in Turkey since previous studies did not focus on low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers living with their dependent children. Numerous studies (Öngider, 2013; Şirvanlı, 1999; Türkarslan, 2007; Usaklı, 2013) elaborated on post-divorce impacts over children's psychological and social well-being and educational success whereas few studies (Kavas, 2010; Kavas & Hoşgör, 2013; Öztürk & Boylu, 2015)) examined the middle- and high-income divorced single mothers' post-divorce experiences but not in relation to the pre-divorce experiences and their family resources. Besides, few studies (Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2012; Özar et al., 2011) underlined the necessity of developing social policies to ameliorate the living conditions of divorced single mothers while actually focusing on the widowed single mothers. In addition, one recent study (Gedik, 2015) investigated the social stigma attached to divorced single mothers by comparing society's attitude towards both divorced and widowed single mothers and concluded that the former is excluded for breaking the family union and harming the structure of the society while the latter is supported by all social solidarity mechanisms since she is accepted as the disadvantaged one for losing her husband without her own will contrary to the divorced one. Furthermore, there is only one study conducted at the state level which is the Single Parent Families report published by the General Directorate of Family and Social Research (2011). Although this study was highly useful in drawing a detailed picture of the single parents' experiences in relation to social, emotional, financial and legal aspects of divorce, it was not that useful in demonstrating the narrower groups' experiences. This was because it investigated low-, middle- and high-SES single parents within the same research and thus could not be able to draw specific pictures in relation to the experiences and needs of



different social and economic groups. In this sense, this current study will fill an important gap in the literature by exploring the family resources of only low-SES divorced single mothers and by investigating their pre- and post-divorce experiences in relation to existing and missing social policies to eventually understand their perception of autonomy and independence and make policy recommendations accordingly. The research queries of this study were;

- What are the family resources of low-SES divorced single mothers and their dependent children?
- What are the mostly experienced challenges during pre- and post-divorce period?
- Which actors –themselves, the family, the state– do these mothers would prefer to receive assistance from?

In light of the answers given to these questions, this study wanted to understand what type of social policies –family-oriented or individualized– are needed in order to enable divorced single mothers to form and maintain their own autonomous households (Orloff, 1993) by primarily taking their own policy recommendations into consideration. Thus, this study is also unique since it has not had a top-down approach to policy making in which only the researcher decides what to recommend; rather it has adopted a way in which policies to be recommended in accordance with the respondents' own suggestions and demands based on their real-life experiences.

Based on its research queries, this study has made an assumption that low-SES divorced single mothers who are living with at least one dependent child constitute one of the most vulnerable social groups and this vulnerability is exacerbated by the existing and missing social policies along with the lack of cultural, social and financial resources. Furthermore, it is argued that social policies which take family into the center rather than individual prevent these women from forming and maintaining their own autonomous households since they automatically exclude women from state assistance only because they are not living within the institution of family anymore. Thus, this study argued that social policies which are provided as a social citizenship right and on an individual basis are required in order for these mothers to be able to have their autonomous households based on their own preferences for the support mechanisms –the self, the family, the state. To be

able to come up with accurate and feasible policy recommendations, this study first needed to deeply explore and understand these mothers' pre- and post-divorce experiences in relation to their cultural, social and financial resources. In this sense, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in one of the most low-income and low-educated neighborhoods of Altındağ and Yenimahalle provinces in Ankara with 20 low-educated and low-income divorced single mothers living with at least one dependent child.

This study has found that, and as it was already expected, interviewees were deprived of cultural resources since they were low-educated. When this kind of a low-educated profile is combined with the gendered division of labor in Turkish society, they were mostly not working in the pre-divorce period or working in low-income and low-qualified jobs. This, in return, created a serious financial dependency and interviewees stated that they could not be able to buy even their basic needs without asking permission of their husbands in the pre-divorce period. This finding contradicts with the statistics provided by the Turkstat (2017) that women had priority on the decisions made for the household order and shopping. The reason for this might be either these statistics only considered the women living within two-parent families and thus single women were automatically excluded or it is because there is no separate statistics among families with different levels of income regarding women's power in decision making. Thus, lack of cultural resources created a huge dependency for these mothers on their husbands in the pre-divorce period and this caused them to experience a deep restriction without any voice and autonomy within their own household. Lack of cultural resources also caused them to be unaware of their legal rights at the time of divorce and in the post-divorce period. This study revealed that when the unawareness caused by the lack of cultural resources is combined with the inadequate legal counseling during the litigation process, both single mothers and their children emotionally and financially suffered at the time of divorce. Similarly, this financial difficulty continued in the post-divorce period since these mothers were unable to find regular jobs with social security due to their low-educated and under-qualified profile. When low level of cultural resources is combined with the gendered division of labor within the society and gendered social policies created in accordance with this patriarchal mentality

which treats women primarily as mothers and caregivers, it became double-challenging for low-SES divorced single mothers to find a job in the post-divorce period. These challenges, therefore, created other types of dependencies for the participants of this study who already put an end to their non-autonomous and oppressive marriages.

When social resources of low-SES divorced single mothers were investigated, it was found that there are two different and somehow contradicting developments took place in their lives. First, they feel emancipated and liberated from their oppressive relationship upon divorce. Second, most of the respondents stated that they feel dependent to their families and this dependency makes them very upset in return. All respondents indicated that they feel absolutely liberated after divorce because they can decide what to spend money on, whom to see, on what time to come home and how to allocate time among housework, care work and for leisure. These respondents indicated that they are more peaceful, taking care of themselves and allocating more time for socialization in the post-divorce period. These findings in relation to social resources were somehow different from the findings of the report *Single Parent Families* (2011) published by the state institution of General Directorate of Family and Social Research in which it is argued that low-income single mothers see themselves different from the married couples and thus they confine themselves into their homes by alienating from the rest of the society. Besides, although the same report also indicated that the number of people who said they feel more peaceful and relieved was very few, the findings of this study contradicted with this and found that all respondents clearly indicated that they feel more peaceful in the post-divorce period. Lastly, the report asked its participants if the time spend with children decreased or increased and found that single mothers spend less time with their children due to increased responsibilities. However, this current study deeply investigated the experiences behind time allocation and revealed that all mothers spend more quality and cheerful time with their children after divorce regardless of the changes in the quantity of the time allocated. These differences might be because of the fact that the report was including parents from all income levels so that low-income individuals' experiences might have not been explored in detail.

On the other hand, primarily due to lack of adequate care policies they were not able to leave their children to go to work and thus they had to rely on emotional and social support mostly coming from their families and friends. Respondents stated that being compulsorily dependent on their family for meeting the living expenses of both themselves and their children make them really sad. Not only the respondents who live together with their families but also the other respondents who have a separate house but still are in need of support from their families said they feel in the same way. This is a quite natural and yet highly damaging effect of familialist social policies in Turkey's welfare regime which take women's mothering and caring roles as granted. This is mainly because the state considers family as the most sacred unit of Turkish society and thus believes that its integrity must be maintained. Mostly because of this mentality, family is seen as the main provider of welfare including care. This study demonstrated that when women become mothers outside of marriage and when they have very low levels of human accumulation, they had to ask for assistance from their families which create a new type of dependency in the post-divorce period. Thus, not only lack of social resources but also lack of adequate state social policies such as providing public child and day care facilities, caused divorced single mothers especially the ones who had little child at the time of divorce to experience serious difficulties in finding a regular job. This caused them to have very limited amounts of financial resources as well.

Last but not least, this study investigated the financial resources of low-SES divorced single mothers living with their dependent children. It found that they are living in a deep poverty since all households' monthly income –which is the combination of salary, orphan's pension, alimony, family, state and non-state financial assistance– are below the poverty line. This study revealed essential experiences of these mothers in relation to financial resources which can be categorized under five sections; employment, alimony, family assistance, state social assistance and non-state institutions' assistance. First, it was demonstrated that since these mothers have low levels of education, very limited human capital and from little to no work experience in the pre-divorce period they were not able to find regular jobs with regular and a decent income. Second, the issue of alimony was

very problematic in the sense that majority of single mothers were not receiving alimony at all while the remaining receive very low amounts of regular or irregular alimony. As also indicated by the Single Parent Families (2011) report, this study demonstrated that majority of the respondents could not be able to even demand alimony at the time of litigation process of divorce since they faced serious threats by their husbands. This is the outcome of state's familialist and patriarchal mentality that women's and children's welfare is not even taken into consideration outside the institution of marriage. For this reason the issue of alimony is almost not controlled at all. This study then suggested that the state should immediately take action for these mothers to get their alimony payments regularly or it should develop social policies to compensate the alimony not paid by the husband. This is especially important for divorced single mothers to be able to form and maintain their autonomous households.

Third, majority of the respondents indicated that they were already receiving financial assistance from their families in the pre-divorce period and again most of them stated that they still receive financial assistance from their families be it either on a regular or irregular basis. However, when asked about their preference of actors –the family, the state, own resources– for meeting their needs, majority of the participants stated that they would like to meet their needs by using both their own resources and receiving assistance from the state. Most of them said that they would prefer the state to help them by finding jobs and providing necessary financial assistance rather than making them dependent on their families or someone else. This is one of the most important indicators of these mothers' perception of autonomy since they clearly indicated that they do not want to be a burden for anyone including their own families. And yet again due to the state's discriminatory attitude towards divorced women, they are deprived of many social assistance programs just because they are not widowed but divorced. For this reason, this study suggested that social assistance programs must not take family affiliation as an eligibility rule but rather must base on the principle of individuality in which everyone is entitled the same benefit through their social citizenship rights.

Fourth, this study revealed that low-SES divorced single mothers receive almost no social assistance. While few respondents indicated that they received

social assistance in the pre-divorce period, some respondents said that they received/are still receiving social assistance in the post-divorce period. However, except the regularly distributed food aid they do not have any regular in-kind or in-cash assistance from the state institutions. This is both because Turkey's familialist social policies do not include any specific programs designed only for divorced single mothers and existing social policies are extremely insufficient. Finally, this study demonstrated that divorced single mothers did not benefit from any non-state or private assistance during the pre-divorce period while only one respondent said she received clothing aid from a private association for once after she got divorced. I observed that most of the respondents were even not familiar with the concept of private or non-state assistance. This shows that civil society organizations or women's associations are extremely insufficient in reaching out divorced single mothers and their dependent children.

The experiences in relation to cultural, social and financial resources of low-SES divorced single mothers living with dependent children demonstrated that the emerged emotional, social and financial dependencies are not solely related to lack of resources. Rather they were the natural consequences of Turkey's patriarchal and familialist social policies designed in accordance with gendered division of labor and societal expectations. This study found that Turkey's social policies are extremely inadequate and highly gendered because it fails to provide even the most basic needs of one of the most vulnerable social groups. Let alone failing in meeting the needs, social policies which have been criticized in the entire thesis treat divorced women as an "anomaly" just because they decided to get rid of their problematic and oppressive relationships. This punitive attitude from the state towards divorced single mothers is clearly a result of its familialist mentality which takes family as a sacred institution which needs to be protected under any circumstances and as a main provider of welfare services so its maintenance is essential for Turkey's socially conservative and economically neoliberal (Buğra, 2012) welfare regime. For future studies, the same study can be conducted from a comparative perspective in light of the family resources and social policies of divorced single mothers from all segments of the society –low, middle, high. Lastly, this kind of a comparison can also be made in between welfare regimes with similar

characteristics such as Greece or Italy in order to see the differences and similarities for all the education and income groups.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Turkish Summary/ Türkçe Özet

#### YENİ BİR MÜCADELEYE ATILAN ADIM: DÜŞÜK SOSYO-EKONOMİK SEVİYEDEKİ BOŞANMIŞ BEKÂR ANNELERİN DENEYİMLERİNİN AİLE KAYNAKLARI VE TÜRKİYE’NİN SOSYAL POLİTİKALARI BAKIMINDAN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

##### Giriş

Bu çalışma boşanmış bekâr anneler ve birlikte yaşadıkları bağımlı çocuklarının sahip oldukları aile kaynaklarını araştırmakta ve buradan hareketle Türkiye’nin sosyal politikalarının ne ölçüde yeterli ve eşitlikçi olduğunu anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bağımlı çocuklar ya 18 yaş altında ya da 25 yaş ve altında ve henüz öğrenim görmeye devam eden bireyler olarak tanımlanmıştır. Dolayısıyla hayatlarını ebeveynlerine bağımlı olarak sürdürmektedirler. Bu çalışmanın temel amaçlarından biri boşanmış bekâr annelerin deneyimlerini anlarken onların özerk bir hane kurmak hakkındaki düşüncelerini anlamaktır. Bir diğer amaç ise kendilerinin hayatlarını devam ettirmek için gerekli gördükleri ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak adına tercih ettikleri yöntemleri –aile yardımı, devlet yardımı, kendi kaynaklarını kullanarak– göz önünde bulundurarak sosyal politika önerilerinde bulunmaktır. Bunlara ek olarak bu çalışma sosyal politikaların ne ölçüde yeterli geldiğini anlamak açısından önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bunun sebebi bekâr annelerin yazındaki en hassas gruplardan biri olarak değerlendirilmesi (Bennett, 2006; Lewis, 2006; Orloff, 1993) ve sosyal politikaların yeterliliğinin de en hassas grupların ihtiyaçlarına ne ölçüde cevap verebildikleri ile ölçülmesidir (Winkler, 1998). Bir diğer deyişle, bu çalışma boşanmış bekâr annelerin aile kaynaklarını sosyal politikalarla ilişkilendirerek araştırmakta ve Türkiye’nin sosyal politikalarının böyle bir hassas grup için ne

derece yeterli olduğunu anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bunun akabinde gerekli olduğu düşünülen noktalarla ilgili olarak sosyal politika önerileri yapılacaktır. Bu amaçlar doğrultusunda bu çalışmanın neden bu konu ve grup üzerine yoğunlaştığı, yazındaki hangi eksiklikler için yararlı olacağı, bu tezde hangi araştırma metotlarının kullanıldığı, araştırma sonuçları doğrultusunda nasıl bulgulara varıldığı ve bu bulgular neticesinde ne tür sosyal politika önerilerinde bulunulduğu aşağıda özetle açıklanmıştır.

### **Yazın taraması**

Aile kavramı son yıllarda oldukça farklı anlamlar kazanmaya başlamıştır. Önceden sadece geniş ya da çekirdek aile olarak tanımlanırken geçirdiği değişimlerle sadece anne ve çocuk ya da sadece baba ve çocuktan oluşan ailelerin sayısı ve görünürlüğü günden güne artmaktadır. Bu artış dünya çapında gözlemlenmekte ve nitekim rakamlar da bunu desteklemektedir. Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde bekâr anneler ve birlikte yaşadıkları bağımlı çocuklarının oluşturduğu hane sayısı bekâr babalar ve birlikte yaşadıkları bağımlı çocuklarının oluşturduğu hane sayısının neredeyse üç katı olarak belirtilmiştir (ABD Nüfus İdaresi, 2017). Avrupa Birliği üye ülkelerinde ise bağımlı çocuğu olan bekâr ebeveynlerin oluşturduğu hane sayıları arasında çok daha fazla bir fark görülmektedir. Bekâr anneler ve bağımlı çocuklarından oluşan hane sayısı bekâr babalar ve çocuklarından oluşan hane sayısının yaklaşık olarak altı kat olarak ifade edilmiştir (Eurostat, 2017; Heine, 2016). Türkiye'de ise Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve AB üye ülkeleri ile benzer rakamlar gözlemlenmektedir. Bekâr anneler ve çocuklarının oluşturduğu hane sayısı bekâr babalar ve çocuklarının oluşturduğu hane sayısının üç katından daha fazladır (Turkstat, 2018). Burada bekâr anne ve babalardan bahsedilirken yalnızca boşanmış ebeveynlerden bahsedilmediği, bekâr anne-baba kavramının dul ve hiç evlenmemiş bireyleri de kapsadığını hatırlatmakta fayda vardır. Ne var ki boşanmış bekâr anne-babalara dair ayrıca tutulmuş istatistikler Türkiye'de mevcut olmadığı ve evlenmeden ebeveyn olmak da yaygın görülmediği için kıyaslama yapabilmek adına her üç örnekte de bekâr ebeveynlerin tamamına yer verilmiştir. Amaç çocuklarıyla beraber yaşayan bekâr annelerden oluşan hane sayısının yine çocuklarıyla beraber yaşayan bekâr babalardan oluşan hane sayısından kat kat fazla olduğunu gözler önüne sermektir.

Bekâr anneler ve onlara bağımlı bir şekilde hayatını sürdürmek durumunda olan çocuklarından oluşan hane sayısının günden güne artması ile bu konu ABD ve AB üye ülkelerde özellikle 1990lı yılların başından itibaren araştırmalara konu olmaya başlamıştır. Bekâr anneler refah devleti hizmetlerinden en fazla yararlanan sosyal gruplardan biri olarak düşünülmüş, bu sebeple ABD’de “refah anneleri” ifadesi ile bir nevi ötekileştirilmiş ve bu ifade en çok da siyahi bekâr anneler için kullanılmıştır (Ali & Avison, 1997; Brandwein, Brown, & Fox, 1974; Christopher, 2005; Edin & Lein, 1997; Gordon, 1994; Harris, 1993; McLanahan & Booth, 1989). Dolayısıyla bekâr anneler hem toplumsal cinsiyet hem de ırk bazında ayrımcılığa maruz kalmış, devamlı olarak ücretli istihdama katılıma teşvik politikalarının odağında olmuş ve bu sebepten hayatlarına çoğunlukla ücretli istihdamda yer alan fakat yoksul olarak yaşamaya devam eden sosyal gruplar olarak devam etmişlerdir (Gordon, 1990). ABD’nin ötekileştiren yaklaşımına karşın, AB üye ülkelerinde bekâr anneler ve onlarla beraber yaşayan bağımlı çocuklarına karşı daha kapsayıcı bir tutum sergilenmiş, “toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifini anaakımlaştırma” ve yeni oluşan “sosyal risk” lere karşı benimsenen “sosyal yatırım” yaklaşımlarının bir parçası olarak değerlendirilmiştir (Esping-Andersen, 2002; Hantrais, 2007; Jenson, 2006). Bu sayede bağımlı çocuklarıyla beraber yaşayan boşanmış bekâr anneler ücretli istihdama teşvik edilirken oluşabilecek risklere karşı refah devleti hizmetlerinden de faydalanmaları sağlanmış ve böylece ABD yazınında bahsi geçen anneler kadar yoksul koşullarda hayatlarını sürdürmek durumunda kalmamışlardır. Sosyal politika ve refah devleti yazınına feminist bakış açısıyla yaklaşan ve alanında iyi tanınan akademisyenler farklı refah rejimleri altında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin ne derece uygulandığını araştırmış, ya var olan politikaları daha eşitlikçi hale getirmeye çabalamış ya da yeni ve eşitlikçi politikaların hayata geçirilmesi için mücadele vermişlerdir. Bu anlamda belirli bir refah rejimi altında uygulanan sosyal politikaların ne derece eşitlikçi olduğuna karar verebilmek ve o doğrultuda iyileştirmeler yapılmasına kapı aralamak adına birtakım ölçütler ortaya koymuşlardır. Bu ölçütlerin en önemlilerinden biri Orloff (1993) tarafından ortaya konmuş ve bu tezin de temel çıkış noktalarından biri olmuştur. Orloff’a göre (1993) bir refah rejiminin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğini gözetten politikalara ne ölçüde yer verdiğini anlamak için devletin iki konudaki teşvikine bakmak esastır. Birincisi

kadınların ücretli istihdama katılımı, ikincisi ise kadınların özerk bir hane kurması ve devamlılığını sağlamasıdır. Dolayısıyla Türkiye’de sosyal politikaların eşitlikçi normları esas alıp almadığını ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine dayalı olup olmadığını anlamanın yollarından biri de kadınların özerk bir hane kurup devam ettirmesinin ne ölçüde mümkün olduğunu araştırmaktır. Önceki yazında da ifade edildiği gibi eğer en hassas sosyal grupların içinde yer alan kadınlar dahi ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabiliyor ve buna ek olarak özerk haneler kurmayı başarabiliyorlarsa orada refah rejiminin ve sosyal politikaların yeterliliğinden söz edebiliriz.

Boşanmış bireylerin hassas gruplar altında değerlendirilmesi esnasında yalnızca refah devleti ve sosyal politika yazını değil sosyoloji yazını bünyesinde aile kaynakları konusu da oldukça etkili olmuştur. Boşanan bireylerin evlilik sırasında bütün aile kaynaklarını hane içerisindeki hayatın devamlılığı için kullandığı ve bu esnada kendi kişisel kültürel, sosyal ve finansal kaynaklarına yapabildikleri yatırımın oldukça kısıtlı olduğu; dolayısıyla bireylerin evlilik kurumunun bitiminde bu kaynakların eksikliğini son derece derinden hissettiği yazında belirtilmiştir (Gibson-Davis, Edin, & McLanahan, 2005). Ne var ki erkekler ve kadınlar evlilik sırasında yapabildikleri ve yapamadıkları birikimler konusunda eşit şartlara sahip değildirler. Bütün toplumlarda var olan toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine dayalı iş bölümü (Chodorow, 1979; Hartmann, 1976) sebebiyle kadınlar ev içi ücretsiz emeğe mahkûm olurken erkekler ücretli iş gücüne katılımları sayesinde çok daha fazla birikim elde etmektedirler. Dolayısıyla boşanma sonrasında sahip olunan kaynakları en kısıtlı olan taraf özellikle de düşük eğitim seviyesine sahip olan ve ücretli istihdamda hemen hemen hiç tecrübesi bulunmayan kadınlardır. Bu da diğer faktörlere ek olarak düşük sosyo-ekonomik seviyede yer alan boşanmış bekâr annelerin ve onlarla birlikte yaşayan çocuklarının çok hassas bir sosyal grup olarak toplumda yer almasına sebep olmaktadır. Bu noktada aile kaynakları önceki çalışmalarda üç ana başlık altında incelenmiştir; Bourdieu kültürel kaynakları eğitim seviyesi ve bu sayede yapılan birikim ile ilişkilendirmiş, sosyal kaynakları kurulmuş sosyal bağlantılar ve sosyal destek mekanizmalarının bütünü olarak nitelemiş ve finansal kaynakları da hanenin geliri ve varlıklarının toplamı olarak ele almıştır (Peillon, 1998). Bu kaynaklar birbirinden ayrı düşünülmemeli, aksine birbirini son derece etkileyen kaynaklar bütünü olarak ele alınmalıdır. Nitekim bu çalışmada da



boşanmış bekâr annelerin düşük eğitim seviyeleri sebebiyle yeterince kültürel birikim yapamadıkları, bu durumun edindikleri sosyal çevre ve destek mekanizmaları ile birlikte hane gelirini ve sahip oldukları finansal kaynakları da doğrudan etkilediğini mülakatlara başlamadan önce öngörmüştüm. Araştırmacı olarak mülakat yaptığım annelerin boşanma öncesi ve sonrasında sahip oldukları aile kaynaklarına dair sorular yönelttim. Bu anlamda kültürel kaynaklar annelerin sahip oldukları eğitim seviyesini ve bu eğitim seviyesi sebebiyle genel olarak bilgi ve tecrübelerine katabildikleri birikimi yansıtmaktadır. Sosyal kaynaklar annelerin boşanma öncesi ve sonrası sahip oldukları sosyal çevre, gerçekleştirdikleri sosyal aktiviteler ile boşanma sonrası gördükleri duygusal ve sosyal destek mekanizmalarını içermektedir. Finansal kaynaklar ise boşanma öncesi dönemde hane geliri ile aile ve devlet yardımlarını; boşanma sonrasında ise bunlara ek olarak nafaka ile varsa yetim maaşını kapsamaktadır.

Bu araştırmanın Türkiye özelinde şekillenmesi ise konuyu ABD ve AB özelinde incelememin ardından Türkiye yazınındaki birtakım eksiklikleri fark etmem neticesinde olmuştur. Nitekim Türkiye’de daha önce boşanma ana başlığı altında pek çok farklı konu araştırmalara konu olmuştur. Türkiye’deki yazına bakıldığında boşanmış ebeveynlerin çocuklarının sosyo-psikolojik durumu ve bu durumun özellikle okul başarısı üzerinden incelendiği çalışmalarla beraber (Öngider, 2013; Şirvanlı, 1999; Türkarlan, 2007; Usaklı, 2013) toplumun boşanmış bireylere bakış açısının ele alındığı ve/veya boşanmış bireylerin sağlık ve mutluluğunu ele alan çalışmalar (Boylu & Öztop, 2013; Bulut & Gündüz, 2016; Demir & Çelebi, 2017; Kavas, 2010; Özar & Yakut-Çakar, 2012; Uğur, 2014) ön plana çıkmaktadır. Diğer çalışmalarda boşanmış bekâr ebeveynlerin harcama alışkanlıkları ve yoksulluk durumları değerlendirilerek ekonomik durumları hakkında bilgi edinmek amaçlanmıştır (Boylu & Öztop, 2013; Öztürk & Boylu, 2015). Bu çalışmalar odaklandıkları spesifik konularda çok kıymetli çalışmalar olmakla birlikte hiçbir boşanma konusunu yalnızca boşanmış bekar anneler bakımından ele almamıştır. Bu noktada bekâr anneler konusunu da içerisinde bulunduran en önemli çalışmalardan biri Tek Ebeveynli Aileler çalışmasıdır. Bu çalışma yalnızca boşanmış değil dul anne-babaları da kapsamaktadır fakat konunun sosyal politikalar temelinde ele alınması açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bahsi geçen çalışmaya ek olarak bekâr anne

ve babaların ekonomik faaliyetlerinin incelendiği (Öztürk & Boylu, 2015); orta sosyo-ekonomik düzeydeki boşanmış bekar annelerin stres kaynaklarına ilişkin telefon mülakatlarının gerçekleştirildiği (Çakır, 2010); öncelikli olarak dul annelere yönelik bir nakit desteği fikriyle yola çıkılıp sonrasında araştırmaya dul annelerin yanı sıra boşanmış ve ayrılmış annelerin de katıldığı ve genel anlamda bu katılımcıların ihtiyaç analizlerinin çıkarıldığı (Özar, Yakut-Çakar, Yılmaz, Orhon, Gümüş, 2011); ve toplumun ve sosyal politikaların boşanmış ve dul anneler arasında yaptığı ayrımcılığın ele alındığı (Gedik, 2015) çalışmalar mevcuttur. Ne var ki bu çalışmalar düşük gelir grubunda bulunan boşanmış bekar annelere spesifik olarak eğilmemekte ve aile kaynakları ile sosyal politika konusunu bağdaştıracak bir araştırma tasarımı sunmamaktadır.

### **Tezin amaçları ve metodolojisi**

Yani bu çalışmanın amaçları; (1) kendilerine bağımlı çocukları ile birlikte yaşamlarını sürdüren boşanmış bekâr annelerin sahip oldukları aile kaynaklarını tespit etmek; (2) bulundukları hassas durumun aile kaynaklarına ek olarak ne ölçüde sosyal politikalar tarafından şekillendiğini anlamak; (3) bu anlamda Türkiye’de sosyal politikaların boşanmış bekâr annelerin özerk bir hane kurmasına ve devam ettirmesine ne ölçüde imkân sağladığını araştırmak ve bu sayede en hassas grupların minimum yaşam standartlarını sürdürmelerine olanak sağlamaya yeterli olup olmadıklarını görmek; (4) ve son olarak düşük gelir grubundan ve düşük eğitim seviyesine sahip boşanmış bekâr annelerin özerk bir hane kurma konusundaki tercihlerinden yola çıkarak uygulanabilir sosyal politika önerilerinde bulunmaktır. Bu amaçlar doğrultusunda araştırma soruları şöyledir; (1) düşük sosyo-ekonomik seviyeden gelen boşanmış bekar anneler ve onlarla birlikte yaşayan bağımlı çocuklarının kültürel, sosyal ve finansal aile kaynakları nelerdir?; (2) hangi kaynakların eksikliği sebebiyle bu anneler boşanma öncesi ve sonrası dönemde ne tür güçlüklerle karşılaşmaktadır? (3) boşanmış bekâr anneler hangi mekanizmalar yolu ile –devlet yardımı, aile desteği, kendi kaynaklarını kullanarak- hayatlarını idame ettirmeyi tercih etmektedirler? (4) bu tercihler doğrultusunda ne tür sosyal politika önerileri yapmak bu annelerin ve birlikte yaşadıkları çocuklarının hayatlarını daha iyi standartlarda yaşamalarına olanak sağlar?

Çalışmanın amacı ilk olarak deneyimleri yakından ve derinlemesine

keşfetmek ve sonrasında bu deneyimleri detaylı bir şekilde analiz ettikten sonra uygun sosyal politika önerilerinde bulunmak olduğu için araştırmacı olarak niteliksel araştırma yöntemini benimsedim ve danışman hocamın rehberliğinde hazırlamış olduğum yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakat sorularını kullanarak yirmi boşanmış bekâr anne ile derinlemesine mülakatlar yürüttüm. Katılımcılara öncelikle Ankara'nın düşük-orta gelirli iki semtinde yer alan ve ilçe belediyelerine bağlı olarak kadınlara yönelik hizmet veren kurs programlarına aktif olarak katılım gösteren annem ve teyzem sayesinde erişim sağladım. Sonrasında ise mülakatların sonunda her bir katılımcıya çalışmaya katılabilecek boşanmış ve kendisine bağımlı yaşayan çocuğu olan başka annelerle beni iletişime geçirmelerinin mümkün olup olmadığını sordum. Böylece annem ve teyzemin ilk elden tanıdığı boşanmış anneler tükenince kartopu metodu sayesinde benzer sosyo-ekonomik çevrelerden katılımcılara ulaşmaya devam edebildim. Katılımcılara önce telefon yoluyla ulaştım ve çalışmanın amacını açıkça belirttim. Araştırmama katılmayı kabul ettiklerinde görüşmenin yerini ve zamanını kendilerinin tayin etmesini istedim. Bu sayede mülakat yaptığım annelerin sosyal ortamlarını yakından gözlemleme şansı yakaladım. Araştırmacı olarak annelerden gönüllü katılım formunu okuduktan sonra imzalamalarını rica ettim. Her bir görüşmenin bitiminde ise annelere teşekkür amaçlı hazırladığım ufak hediyelerden verdim. Görüştüğüm annelerin eğitim seviyesi çoğunlukla ilkokul ve lise seviyesinde olup ve bütün katılımcıların aylık toplam gelirleri Türk-İş tarafından belirlenen Mayıs 2018 yoksulluk sınırı olan 5.492 liranın altında bulunmaktadır. Mülakatlara katılan boşanmış bekâr anneler ya 18 yaş altında ya da 25 yaş ve altında olup öğrenim görmeye devam eden dolayısıyla kendilerine maddi olarak bağımlı olan en az bir çocuklarıyla birlikte yaşamaktadırlar. Yazında da belirtildiği üzere hâlihazırda en hassas toplumsal gruplardan biri olarak kabul edilen bu gruba bir de annelerin düşük eğitim seviyesi ve dolayısıyla yüksek gelir getiren işlere sahip olamamaları eklendiğinde bu hassasiyet daha da katlanmaktadır. Bu sebeple derinlemesine mülakatlarda görüştüğüm ve en hassas sosyal gruplar arasında üst sıralarda yer alan boşanmış bekâr annelerin deneyimleri Türkiye'nin sosyal politikalarının ne derece yeterli ve eşitlikçi olduğunu anlamak adına son derece yol gösterici olacaktır.

## Tezin temel bulguları

Bu çalışmada yer alan annelere boşanma öncesi ve sonrası sahip oldukları ve eksikliğini hissettikleri kültürel, sosyal ve finansal kaynakları ile ilgili sorular yönelttim. Bu anlamda boşanma öncesi dönem oldukça öznel bir zaman dilimini yansıtmaktadır. Annelere boşanma öncesi dönemdeki deneyimlerini sorduğumda her kadın kendi evlilik deneyimlerinden akıllarında kalan anılarına atıfta bulunmuştur ve böylece her katılımcının boşanma öncesi dönem algısı birbirinden farklıdır. Bununla beraber katılımcıların büyük bir çoğunluğu boşanma öncesi deneyimlerini anlatırken evliliğin en son ve travmatik dönemlerinden bahsetmişlerdir. Bu çalışma boşanmış bekâr annelerin hassas bir durumda olmasının sebeplerinin çok yönlü olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Kültürel, sosyal ve finansal aile kaynaklarının bu annelerin boşanma öncesi ve sonrası deneyimlerine etki ettiği kadar sosyal politikaların da katılımcıların ve birlikte yaşadıkları çocuklarının sahip olduğu aile kaynaklarına son derece etki ettiği görülmüştür.

Kültürel kaynaklar araştırıldığında katılımcıların düşük eğitim seviyeleri ve toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı iş bölümü sebebiyle boşanma öncesi dönemde çoğunlukla ücretli istihdamda yer almadıkları, birikimlerini geliştirecek herhangi bir aktivitede bulunamadıkları ve hane içindeki ücretsiz emeği sürdürürken eşlerine her anlamda son derece bağımlı olarak yaşadıkları görülmüştür. Bu bağımlılık sebebiyle evdeki çoğu konuda hiçbir söz sahibi olamadıkları, markette en temel ihtiyaçlarını alırken bile eşlerinin iznini almak durumunda kaldıkları anlaşılmıştır. Bu bağımlı yaşam şartları altında anneler boşanma öncesi dönemde kendilerini özerk ve özgür hissetmediklerini son derece net biçimde ifade etmişlerdir. Kültürel kaynakların eksikliği bu anlamda boşanma sonrası döneme de son derece negatif etki etmiş ve katılımcılar oldukça düşük maaşlı, çoğu zaman düzenli gelir getirmeyen ve sigortasız işlerde çalışmak zorunda kalmışlardır. Ayrıca boşandıklarında ortalama yaşları 35,8 olan anneler ücretli istihdama katılımda en verimli olduğu kabul edilen yaşları geride bırakmış ve boşandıkları zamana kadar da kişisel gelişim adına gözle görülür bir adım atma şansını yakalayamamışlardır. Bu durum boşanma sonrası dönemde düşük gelirli ve düzensiz işlerde çalışmalarının temel sebeplerinden biri olmuştur. Dolayısıyla bu annelerin boşanma sonrası dönemde de kendilerini

kültürel, sosyal ve finansal kaynaklar bakımından yeterli bir biçimde geliştiremedikleri anlaşılmıştır.

Sosyal kaynaklar araştırıldığında araştırmaya katılan annelerin boşanma öncesi dönemde çoğunlukla eşlerinin ve eşlerinin ailesinin baskıcı ve kısıtlayıcı tutumları sebebiyle evlerinden dışarı çıkamadıkları, bu nedenle aile ve akrabalar dışında çok sınırlı bir sosyal çevreye sahip oldukları anlaşılmıştır. Bu baskının yoğun olarak hissedilmesinin sebeplerinden biri annelerin genellikle eşlerinin geniş ailesi ile ya aynı evde ya da aynı semtte ikamet etmeleri olmuştur. Bu sebeplere ek olarak katılımcılar boşanma öncesi dönemde kendilerine neredeyse hiç zaman ayırmadıklarını ve zamanlarının çok büyük bir çoğunluğunu ücretsiz ev içi işlere ve çocuk bakımına ayırdıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Anneler boşanma öncesi sosyal kaynaklarından çok kısıtlı olarak bahsetmiş ve büyük bir çoğunlukla da o zamanları kendilerine ait hiçbir zamanın ve sosyal çevrenin olmadığı bir nevi esaret dönemi olarak nitelendirmişlerdir. Onlardan sadece toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine dayalı olarak anne ve ev kadını olmaları beklenmiş ve bundan fazlasını olmalarına hiçbir şekilde müsaade edilmemiştir. Annelerin bu dönemden oldukça sıkıntılı ve bıkkın bir şekilde bahsetmeleri onların bu toplumsal rolleri benimsemediğinin, aksine özgürlükleri kısıtlandığı için rahatsızlık duyduklarının göstergesidir. Nitekim kıskançlık, baskı, kötü muamele ve eşin ailesinin kendi aile içi işlerine fazlasıyla müdahale etmesinin boşanma sebepleri arasında sıkça dile getirilmesi bunu destekler niteliktedir.

Boşanma sonrası sosyal kaynaklara bakıldığında ise ortaya iki yönlü bir tablo çıkmaktadır. Anneler sahip oldukları kültürel ve finansal kaynaklarda gözle görülür bir değişme olmamasına rağmen ellerindeki kaynakları nasıl, nerede ve ne kadar harcayacaklarına kendileri karar vermenin onları boşanma sonrasında özgür hissettirdiğini belirtmişlerdir. Hemen hemen bütün anneler boşanma sonrası ev işlerine ayırdıkları zamanda azalma olduğunu, bunun yerine ne zaman iş yapıp ne zaman kendilerine zaman ayıracaklarına artık sadece kendilerinin karar verdiğini belirtmişlerdir. Böylece sosyal aktivitelerinde ve sosyal çevrelerinde oldukça fazla bir artış olduğunu, kendilerini artık topluluk önünde daha iyi ifade edebilir hale geldiklerini, çocuklarıyla çok daha rahat ve güzel diyaloglar kurabildiklerini ve onlarla son derece kaliteli ve mutlu zamanlar geçirdiklerini ifade etmişlerdir.

Böylece bu çalışma için çok önemli bir bulgu elde edilmiştir. O da boşanmış bekâr annelerin baskıcı bir ilişkiyi bitirdikleri ve özerk ve özgür bir hayata sahip olmaktan son derece keyif aldıkları gerçeğini görmek olmuştur. Bu da bize sosyal politika önerileri yapmak için çok önemli bir ipucu vermektedir.

Boşanma sonrası sosyal kaynakları sorulduğunda annelerin mutsuz ve üzgün hissettikleri nokta ise ailelerinden gelen destek konusunda olmuştur. Katılımcıların büyük bir çoğunluğu çocuklarıyla beraber yaşadıkları özerk bir hane kurmuş gibi görünseler de boşanma sonrası dönemde arkadaşlarının ve ailelerinin devam eden duygusal ve sosyal desteklerinin son derece önemli olduğu anlaşılmıştır. Anneler ailelerine özellikle çocuklarının bakımı ve büyütmesi konusunda çok fazla ihtiyaç duymuşlardır. Bunun temel sebebi ise devletin gerekli kreş ve gündüz bakım evi hizmetlerini sunmaması ve kadınların anne rollerinin öncelikli görevleri olarak kabul edilmesidir. Ne var ki eve ekmek getiren erkek zihniyetine dayalı bu sistem boşanma ile birlikte işlemez hale gelmekte ve bu durumda ücretli istihdama katılmak için çabalayan boşanmış bekâr anneler çocuklarını mecburen ailelerine emanet ederek bunu gerçekleştirebilmektedirler. Anneler bu destekten minnettar bir yaklaşımla bahsetseler dahi dışarıdan gelen destek mekanizmalarının hayatlarında bu denli önemli bir yer kapladığını bilmek onların özerklik duygularını zedelemiş ve ailelerine bağımlı olma duygusu sebebiyle üzüntü hissetmişlerdir. Bu da bize sosyal politikaların ne derece yetersiz olduğunu ve ne tür politika önerileri yapılması gerektiğine dair önemli bir fikir vermektedir.

Boşanma sonrasındaki sosyal kaynaklara ek olarak eski eşlerden birkaç anne dışında duygusal ve sosyal anlamda özellikle çocukların bakımı ve yetiştirilmesi hususunda hemen hemen hiçbir destek alamadıkları ortaya çıkmıştır. Eski eşlerden alınan destek konusunda boşanma sebeplerinin önem teşkil ettiği görülmüştür. Öyle ki annelerin çoğunluğunun belirttiği gibi eşlerinden kötü muamele/şiddet gördükleri, aldatıldıkları ya da eşlerinin alkol/kumar problemi olması sebebiyle değil de anlaşamama, tartışma, uyumsuzluk ve sevginin bitmesi gibi daha kişisel sebeplerle ayrılan annelerin eski eşleriyle diyaloglarını boşanma sonrasında sürdürebildikleri fark edilmiştir. Annelerin büyük bir kısmı ise eski eşlerinin çocuklarını hemen hemen hiç görmediğini, özellikle okulla ilgili sıkıntılarda ve ergenlik çağı problemlerinde bunun çocuklar üzerinde ciddi etkileri olduğunu söylemişlerdir. Bu

da hâlihazırda fazlasıyla hassas bir sosyal grubun bir parçası olarak büyüyen çocukların bir de babalarının duygusal ve sosyal desteğinden mahrum kalarak daha da hassas bir dönemden geçmelerine sebep olmaktadır.

Finansal kaynaklarla ilgili sorulara verilen yanıtlarda ise annelerin çoğu boşanma öncesi dönemdeki hanenin finansal durumunu kötü olarak tanımlamışlardır. Bu tanımlamadaki en etkili faktörlerden biri maddi durumları olsa bile eşlerinden izinsiz market alışverişi bile yapamamaları, dolayısıyla haneye giren paranın kullanımında hiçbir şekilde söz sahibi olmamalarıdır. Annelerin büyük bir kısmı boşanma öncesi dönemde maddi kaynaklarının yetersizliği sebebiyle hem eşlerinin hem de kendi ailelerinin maddi desteğini almak zorunda kaldıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla evlilik ile kurdukları ailelerinde hâlihazırda son derece kısıtlayıcı bir hayat yaşayan bu anneler geçinmekte güçlük çektiklerinde ilk olarak ailelerin kapısını çalmak durumunda kalmışlar ve bu sebeple geniş ailelerin normları ve baskılarını çok daha fazla tecrübe etmişlerdir. Böylesine kısıtlayıcı bir deneyimin temel sebeplerinden biri sadece eksik gelir kaynakları değil en hassas gruplara dahi ulaşmakta yetersiz kalan sosyal politikalarlardır. Nitekim katılımcılar boşanma öncesi dönemde sosyal yardımlardan neredeyse hiç yararlanmamış, özel kuruluşlardan destek alabileceklerinden ise haberleri dahi olmamıştır. Bu da boşanma öncesi dönemde bu kadınların sadece kültürel ve sosyal kaynaklar bakımından değil finansal kaynaklar bakımından da aileyi temel alan destek mekanizmalarına mahkûm olduklarını göstermektedir.

Boşanma sonrası finansal kaynaklarla ilgili yöneltile sorular neticesinde annelerin hepsinin hane gelirinin yoksulluk sınırı altında olduğu, annelerin çoğunun ücretli istihdamda yer alsalar bile çok düşük maaşlı, düzensiz ve genelde sigortasız işlerde çalıştıkları görülmüştür. Annelerin düzenli bir maaşı olsa bile maaşları çocuklarının ve kendilerinin asgari yaşam koşullarını sağlamaya yeterli gelemeyecek kadar az miktarlardadır. Bu noktada boşanmış ve en az bir bağımlı çocuğu ile yaşayan annelerin en çok ihtiyaç duyduğu finansal kaynaklardan biri nafakadır. Bu çalışmaya katılan annelerin çok büyük bir çoğunluğu hiç nafaka almadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Geriye kalanlar da genellikle ya düzenli alamadıklarını ya da düzenli alsalar bile miktar olarak son derece yetersiz kaldığını ifade etmişlerdir. Anneler nafaka ve ya tazminat istemeleri durumunda eşlerinin boşanma konusunda zorluk

çıkaracaklarını ya da çocukların velayeti konusunda anlaşmaya varmayacaklarını söyleyerek kendilerini tehdit ettiğini ifade etmişlerdir. Türkiye’de her yıl yüzlerce kadın erkekler tarafından öldürülmektedir ve öldürülme sebeplerinin en baş sıralarında boşanmak istemeleri yer almaktadır. Nitekim bu çalışmaya katılan anneler de eski eşleri tarafından fiziksel veya sözlü tacize ve şiddete uğramayıp sadece nafakadan mahrum kaldıkları için kendilerini şanslı saydıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Dolayısıyla gerekli devlet denetimi ve yaptırımı olmadan nafaka konusundaki ciddi sıkıntıların aşılamayacağı ortadadır. Nafaka alamayan çocuklar hâlihazırda hissettikleri babanın sosyo-psikolojik eksikliğini bir de maddi yoksunluk olarak tecrübe etmekte ve bu sebeple son derece yoksul koşullarda hayatlarına devam etmektedirler. Eski eşlerinden özellikle çocuk konusunda hiçbir şekilde destek göremeyen anneler ise kaldırabileceklerinin kat kat fazlası bir maddi yükün altında kalmaktadırlar.

Boşanma sonrası finansal kaynakları oldukça kısıtlı olan bu annelerin ailelerinden gelen maddi ve/ve ya aynı yardımlara oldukça fazla gereksinim duydukları görülmüştür. Aynı sosyal kaynaklarda olduğu gibi finansal kaynaklarda da ailelerine bağımlı olduklarını hisseden anneler bu konudan üzüntü ile bahsetmişler ve aileleri dâhil kimseye muhtaç kalmadan kendi ayakları üzerinde durarak yaşamak istediklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu noktada onların devlet kurumlarıyla ve sosyal yardımlarla olan deneyimleri de çok önemlidir. Bu çalışma boşanmış annelere yönelik herhangi bir sosyal yardım programı olmamasının bu annelerin çektiği maddi güçlüklerde çok büyük payı olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Sosyal yardımlara başvurduklarında dul değil de boşanmış oldukları için ayrımcılığa maruz kalmışlardır. Aileyi önceleyen sosyal politikaların aile kurumunu kendi isteği ile bitiren kadınlara karşı aldığı tavır adeta cezalandırıcı niteliktedir. Anneler sosyal yardımlardan ara ara düzensiz olarak ve çok kısıtlı miktarlarda yararlanmış olsalar da sırf sosyal güvenceleri olduğu için bu yardımlardan çoğunlukla mahrum bırakılmışlardır. Genellikle de yaşlarının genç olduğu ve çalışabilecekleri söylenerek yardımlar kesilmiştir. Çocuklarını bırakacak yerleri olmayan anneler devletten de neredeyse hiç destek göremeyince kendilerini ailelerinden gelecek olan yardımlara son derece bağımlı hissetmeye devam etmişler ve bu durumdan üzüntü ve stresle bahsetmişlerdir. Bu da kadınların özerk bir şekilde çocuklarının bakımını devam



ettiremediklerini ve bu hususta gerekli sosyal politikaların geliştirilmesinin son derece önemli olduğunu göstermektedir.

### **Sosyal politika önerileri**

Bu çalışmada katılımcı olarak yer alan, kendilerine bağımlı en az bir çocuklarıyla birlikte yaşayan, düşük eğitim ve gelir seviyesine sahip olan boşanmış bekâr annelere aile kaynakları çatısı altında yöneltilen sorular sayesinde ihtiyaçları olanın aileyi önceleyen ve kadını sadece aile içinde konumlandıran değil kadınları birey olarak gören ve sosyal vatandaşlık haklarını önceleyen sosyal politikalar olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Aile kaynaklarıyla ilgili sorulara ek olarak annelere ihtiyaçlarını hangi yollar aracılığı ile –aile desteği, devlet yardımı, kendi kaynaklarını kullanarak– karşılamak istediklerine dair de sorular yöneltilmiş ve bu soruların cevaplarında annelerin günlük hayat deneyimlerine dayanan son derece uygulanabilir ve pratik sosyal politika önerileri ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışmadaki bulgulara ve katılımcıların kendi önerilerine dayanarak altı başlık altında sosyal politika önerileri yapılmıştır. Bu başlıkların başlıca önerileri şu şekildedir; (1) Yasal süreç boyunca bu annelerin ve çocuklarının haklarını savunmalarına olanak sağlayacak şekilde avukat tayin edilmeli ve adli yardım mekanizmalarından yararlanmaları sağlanmalıdır. (2) Nafaka ve tazminat ödemeleri ebeveynlerin isteğine bakılmaksızın çocuğun velayetini almayan taraf için zorunlu hale getirilmelidir. Ödenemeyen ve eksik kalan kısımlar devlet tarafından kurulacak bir fonla karşılanmalıdır. (3) Boşanma aşamasında kadınların ve çocukların tehditlere maruz bırakılmaması ve gerekli güvenlik önlemlerinin alınması gerekmektedir. (4) Annelerin iş ve çocuk bakımı görevlerini dengeleyebilmeleri adına kamu kreşleri ve gündüz bakım evleri açılmalı, bu kurumlarda boşanmış annelerin çocuklarına öncelik verilmeli ve bu çocukların en temel ihtiyaçlarının karşılanabilmesi için bir fon oluşturulmalıdır. (5) Boşanmış bekâr annelere boşanmalarını takip eden 3 senelik iyileşme ve toparlanma sürecinde düzenli bir gelir temin edilmelidir. Hâlihazırda var olan meslek edindirme ve iş bulma programlarında öncelik verilen gruplardan olmalıdır. (6) Sosyal yardımlar gelir testine dayalı olarak değil birer vatandaşlık hakkı olarak temel gelir şeklinde geliştirilmeli, sosyal konut projelerinde bu annelere öncelik verilmeli ve boşanmış ailelerin çocukları Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu'nda kalan çocuklara sağlanan bütün temel ihtiyaçlardan faydalanmalıdırlar.

## APPENDIX B: THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

### ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

- Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü** / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences ☐
- Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü** / Graduate School of Social Sciences ☒
- Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü** / Graduate School of Applied Mathematics ☐
- Enformatik Enstitüsü** / Graduate School of Informatics ☐
- Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü** / Graduate School of Marine Sciences ☐

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**Bölümü** / Department : Sosyal Politika Ana Bilim Dalı/ Social Policy

**TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS** (**İngilizce** / English) :  
STEPPING INTO A NEW STRUGGLE: LOW-SES DIVORCED SINGLE  
MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES IN RELATION TO FAMILY RESOURCES AND  
SOCIAL POLICIES IN TURKEY

**TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE:** Yüksek Lisans / Master ☒ Doktora / PhD ☐

1. **Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır.** / Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide. ☒
2. **Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.** / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of **two year**. \* ☐
3. **Tez altı ay süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.** / Secure the entire work for period of **six months**. \* ☐

**Yazarın imzası** / Signature

**Tarih** / Date